**CDPF Disability Equality Training**

**Course Book Module 11**

**Racism and Disability: Developing Anti-Racism Perspectives for Disabled People**

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# **i. Introduction**

Racism and racist attitudes and behaviour shaped the British Empire and then the Commonwealth. Ideas of European superiority gave them a sense of entitlement during the European Age of Exploration predicated upon better boat building, new navigational skills and population expansion. This led onto to an Age of European Exploitation first by crude plundering of gold, silver and then by setting up plantations and mines to extract commodities such as sugar, coffee, tobacco, cotton tea and silver. For this to occur efficiently a ready support of cheap labour was needed and Africa was the provider for slaves to the Americas justified by an ideology of racism and white superiority. This colonial sense of entitlement led to Europeans laying claim to India, Malaya, South Seas, Australia, New Zealand and much of Africa, while ruthlessly exploiting their people and natural resources. Where the climate suited the Europeans, they also settled in larger numbers. The transfers of wealth to Europe and in particular Britain led to the Industrial Revolution and the modern day Global Economic Order, built on exploitation of social class, sexism, racism and environment, leading to our current Global Problems of Inequality and devastation. Underlying all of this was a deep oppression of disabled people who were either left to die, to survive on charity, or to perform with normality when they had a chance to thrive.

**As disabled people** we live our lives on the receiving end of prejudice and discrimination based on generalised perceptions arising from the false idea of ‘normality’[[1]](#footnote-1). Our identified physical or mental impairment expose us to barriers in the built environment, social organisation and attitudes. Many with hidden impairments feel compelled by the disabilist forces in society to pretend they are not disabled and cover up their hidden impairments and resulting barriers they face. Those who are ‘Black’ or belonging to an ethnic group may also experience another oppression-racism which is generally based on visually identified characteristics and so they ‘cannot pass’ as ‘white’.

**Racism according to the Oxford dictionary is ‘**Prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism by an individual, community, or institution against a person or people on the basis of their membership of a particular racial or ethnic group, typically one that is a minority or marginalized’.

At various places and times in history racism has also become an ideology- the belief that different races possess distinct characteristics, abilities, or qualities, especially so as to distinguish them as inferior or superior to one another.

There are more explicit and extreme versions which are backed by false race-science, such as under the Nazis or in Apartheid South Africa. This pseudo-science of eugenics has also been applied to disabled people with devastating results.

Racism isn't just an ideology but an institution. Its origins don't lie in bad ideas or in human nature. Rather, racism originated with capitalism and the slave trade. As the writer CLR James put it, "The conception of dividing people by race begins with the slave trade. This thing was so shocking, so opposed to all the conceptions of society which religion and philosophers had…that the only justification by which humanity could face it was to divide people into races and decide that the Africans were an inferior race." As historian Eric Williams writes in his book Capitalism and Slavery, "Slavery was not born of racism; rather, racism was the consequence of slavery."

Racism is a relatively modern concept, arising in the European [age of imperialism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Age_of_imperialism), the subsequent growth of [capitalism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Capitalism), and especially the [Atlantic slave trade](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atlantic_slave_trade), of which it was a major driving force. It was also a major force behind racial segregation especially in the [United States](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States) in the 19th and early 20th centuries and [South Africa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Africa) under [apartheid](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apartheid_in_South_Africa); 19th and 20th century racism in [Western culture](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Western_world) is particularly well documented and constitutes a reference point in studies. Racism has played a role in [genocides](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Genocide) such as [the Holocaust](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Holocaust), the [Armenian genocide](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armenian_genocide), the [genocide of Serbs](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Genocide_of_Serbs_in_the_Independent_State_of_Croatia), as well as colonial projects including the European [colonization of the Americas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colonization_of_the_Americas), [Africa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colonisation_of_Africa), and [Asia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Western_imperialism_in_Asia). [Indigenous peoples](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indigenous_peoples) have been—and are—often subject to racist attitudes[[2]](#footnote-2). Effectively this means that racism and the roots of racism impact in every part of the British Empire and subsequent Commonwealth.

The double ‘wammy’ of racism and disabilism can be powerfully oppressive and disempowering but can also act as a stimulus for social change. Here we hope to reflect both these forces. When sexism is added for Black disabled women it is a triple wammy.

We will use the term ‘Black’ in the political sense to relate to all those oppressed by racism rather than relating to skin colour. Today a broarder definition of racism is used “racism is defined as the expression of racist beliefs (stereotypes), racist emotions (prejudice) or racist behaviours and practices (discrimination) that maintain or exacerbate inequality of opportunity among an ethnic-racial group. Racism is one manifestation of a broader phenomenon of oppression which include sexism, ageism, classism (*and disabilism*)”[[3]](#footnote-3).

# **ii. The Language the CDPF Uses**

**Disabled People:** Why we still choose to call ourselves ‘disabled people’. In the Commonwealth Disabled People’s Forum (CDPF) we call ourselves ‘**disabled people’** because of the development of the **‘social model of disability’.** In the C19th and C20th, a disabled person’s medical condition was thought to be the root cause of their exclusion from society, an approach now referred to as the **‘medical’ or ‘individual model’** of disability. We use the **‘social model’** of disability, where the barriers of environment, attitude and organisation are what disable people with impairments and lead to prejudice and discrimination.To call ourselves ‘persons with disabilities’ is to accept that we are objects and powerless.We also view ourselves as united by a common oppression, so are proud to identify as ‘**disabled people’. When we are talking about the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities** we will use **‘people with disabilities’.**

# **iii. Legal definitions**

Though many countries around the globe have passed [laws](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Law) related to race and discrimination, the first significant international [human rights](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_rights) instrument developed by the [United Nations](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Nations) (UN) was the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Universal_Declaration_of_Human_Rights) (UDHR), which was adopted by the [United Nations General Assembly](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Nations_General_Assembly) in 1948. The UDHR recognizes that if people are to be treated with dignity, they require [economic rights](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economic_rights), [social rights](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Civil_rights) including [education](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Education), and the rights to [cultural](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Culture) and [political](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Politics) participation and [civil liberty](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Civil_liberties). It further states that everyone is entitled to these rights "without distinction of any kind, such as race, [colour](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_skin_color), [sex](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sex), [language](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Language), [religion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion), political or other opinion, [national](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nationality) or [social](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Society) origin, property, birth or other status".

The UN does not define "racism"; however, it does define "racial discrimination". According to the 1965 UN [International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Convention_on_the_Elimination_of_All_Forms_of_Racial_Discrimination):

The term "racial discrimination" shall mean any distinction, exclusion, restriction, or preference based on race, colour, [descent](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cultural_heritage), or national or [ethnic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethnicity) origin that has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life.

In their 1978 [United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/UNESCO) Declaration on Race and Racial Prejudice (Article 1), the UN states, "All human beings belong to a single species and are descended from a common stock. They are born equal in dignity and rights and all form an integral part of humanity." There is no scientific evidence to establish distinct biological races. We are all human beings with different characteristics. However, even if scientists agree that race is, at most, [**a social construct**](https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/race-is-a-social-construct-scientists-argue/), any cursory search of the internet reveals that the broader public is not convinced of this. After all, if an Asian person looks so different from a European, how could they *not*be from distinct groups? Even if most scientists reject the concept of “race” as a biological concept, race exists, undeniably, as a social and political concept.

The popular classifications of race are based chiefly on skin colour, with other relevant features including height, eyes, and hair. Though these physical differences may appear, on a superficial level, to be very dramatic, they are determined by only a minute portion of the genome: we as a species have been estimated to [**share 99.9% of our DNA**](https://www.genome.gov/19016904/faq-about-genetic-and-genomic-science/) with each other. The few differences that do exist reflect differences in environments and external factors, not core biology. Importantly, the evolution of skin colour occurred independently, and did not influence other traits such as mental abilities and behaviour. In fact, science has yet to find evidence that there are [**genetic differences in intelligence**](https://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2013/05/why-people-keep-misunderstanding-the-connection-between-race-and-iq/275876/)  between populations. Ultimately, while there certainly are some biological differences between different populations, these differences are few and superficial. The traits that we do share are far more profound.[[4]](#footnote-4)The UN definition of racial discrimination does not make any distinction between discrimination based on ethnicity and race, in part because the distinction between the two has been a matter of debate among [academics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Academia), including [anthropologists](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anthropology). Similarly, in [British law](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Law_of_the_United_Kingdom), the phrase *racial group* means "any group of people who are defined by reference to their race, colour, nationality (including citizenship) or ethnic or national origin".

In [Norway](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Norway), the word "race" has been removed from national laws concerning discrimination because the use of the phrase is considered problematic and unethical. The Norwegian Anti-Discrimination Act bans discrimination based on ethnicity, national origin, descent, and skin colour.[[5]](#footnote-5) The Preamble of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities makes several pertinent points:-

*“8. Recognizing also* that discrimination against any person on the basis of disability is a violation of the inherent dignity and worth of the human person,…

*9. Recognizing further* the **diversity** of persons with disabilities…

16. Concerned about the difficult conditions faced by persons with disabilities who are subject to multiple or aggravated forms of **discrimination on the basis of race, colour**, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, **national, ethnic, indigenous or social origin**, property, birth, age or other status…

25. *Convinced* that a comprehensive and integral international convention to promote and protect the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities will make a significant contribution to redressing the profound social disadvantage of persons with disabilities and promote their participation in the civil, political, economic, social and cultural spheres with equal opportunities, in both developing and developed countries,..”

**“Article 5 – Equality and non-discrimination**

1. States Parties recognize that all persons are equal before and under the law and are entitled without any discrimination to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law.

2. States Parties shall prohibit all discrimination on the basis of disability and guarantee to persons with disabilities equal and effective legal protection against discrimination on all grounds.

3. In order to promote equality and eliminate discrimination, States Parties shall take all appropriate steps to ensure that reasonable accommodation is provided.

4. Specific measures which are necessary to accelerate or achieve de facto equality of persons with disabilities shall not be considered discrimination under the terms of the present Convention”.

***Follow Up Activity 11.1***

***a) Describe what you think racism is and how it may impact on people it is directed at?***

***b) Why is there no such thing as biologically distinct races of humanity?***

***d) How are the oppressions of disabilism and racism similar and different?***

# **iv. Empire, Colonialism and Racism**

Empires have always been about power and economic aggrandisement and the British Empire was no exception. Some naively argue that colonisation brought economic advance and ‘civilisation’, but this ignores the reality of the struggles for British and other European powers hegemony and the fundamental racism of the whole endeavour, and the many massacres, imprisonments, slavery, indentured labour and control strategies exercised for more than 200 years. Many myths of superiority and good works do not disguise the realities[[6]](#footnote-6). Yet politicians and pundits still roll out arguments about the positive impacts of the Empire. It appears there is a conscious effort to misremember and shore up a history that was far from reality, a history that was taught in textbooks across the Commonwealth[[7]](#footnote-7).

To understand how the British Empire came to dominate we have to go back to the late Middle Ages, nearly 500 years.

By the end of the 15th century, Europeans had made rapid progress in science and technology. They drew heavily on knowledge developed in the ancient civilisations of the world in **Sumer (Babylonian/Persian-Iran and Iraq today), India, Egypt, China, Greece and Rome**. Each civilisation benefitted from the ideas and inventions that had gone before. Each one had a period in which it grew and prospered before it decayed or was overtaken by new different civilisations.

The European builders had learned to erect huge and lofty cathedrals using the principle of the arch to hold up great towers and stone roofs-a technique learned from the domed architecture of the **East.** The use of unwieldy Roman numbers, which are impossible to add together without using a counting device, was replaced by **Arabic** number we know today-making more sophisticated and precise scientific calculations possible. The most advanced medical techniques and understanding that Europe possessed had filtered down indirectly from the great **North African civilisations of ancient Egypt.** The science of astronomy was being developed learnt from the techniques of **ancient Greeks and Egyptians**)- of vital importance to navigation. Some thinkers already understood that the world was round from observing the movement of the planets. Other ideas that came from other civilisations that aided European expansion were nautical sciences (**China** had sailed the world in C10th), printing and paper making for maps and explosives. It was these ideas which, when developed and put into use, enabled Europeans to explore and expand beyond their known world, to sail and chart seas, to publish their knowledge of them and to conquer and rule the peoples who they found beyond them’.

**Why did Europeans do these things?**

Europeans wanted to develop trade and enrichment. The pressures in Europe come from its earlier history. For hundreds of years following the collapse of the Roman Empire Europe developed a feudal system where local Lords were owed loyalty and labour power from the peasants who worked the land. The Lords were supported by the Christian Church who took a 10% tithe of the surplus. Lords fought and plundered each other’s wealth until super-lords or Kings were proclaimed to be appointed by God. In the 12th to 14th centuries this system began to break down as a) more pressure was put on the peasants to support the Lord’s life style and wars and peasants increasingly revolted in England France and Germany. b) Towns were formed where free men became increasingly wealthy based on trading surplus from one part of Europe to another. These Merchants were the beginning of a new way of organising production-capitalism. c) Cooling climate, loss of soil fertility and population expansion led to more pressure and territorial expansion into eastern Europe and Baltic states, Cyprus, Crete Scotland and Wales of the ruling powers in each country. From 1348 onwards plague which wiped out up to 40% of the European population led to a shortage of labour, scarcity and more intense wars between ruling Lords who sophisticated their weapons e.g. Hundred Years War 1335-1435 and the War of the Roses. People were looking for new solutions alchemy turning ordinary metals into gold, challenging the power of the church and for others to seize control of the resources in the world around them led in fits and starts over hundreds of years to the highly organised commercial world we have today.

Land and gold were sought above all else as things in Europe became more desperate. Other motivations such as spreading Christianity as an answer to increasing rationalist challenges to organised religion. The defeat of the Moors (North African Muslims) in Spain and Portugal led to seeking to assert the ‘Kingdom of God’ further afield, curiosity, pursuit of Glory and greatest driving force to increase wealth and food. Trading routes across the Mediterranean and across land of the Silk Road via Samarkand to China led to a growing trade in spices, silks and other exotic products. It was a search for a sea route to India and China that led the Portuguese to explore the coast of Africa. They reached Sierra Leone by 1460, the Gold Coast (Nigeria, Ghana) by 1475 and Angola by 1485 setting up trading posts.

By 1487 Portugal reached southern tip of Africa and by 1499 to India and back for trade. Meanwhile, the Spanish sailed west and by 1492 had reached Antigua which they wrongly called the West Indies, as they were seeking a western route to India. The Spanish conquest of the peoples of America was not by trade, but by plunder. The Spanish conquistadores robbed and murdered peoples on a massive scale.

The highly developed Aztec society of Mexico was destroyed by Cortes with the Gold shipped back to Spain, while Pissarro destroyed the Inca civilisation in Peru. These were well organized empires in which millions lived based on an agricultural technology that maintained fertility and a rich variety of crops, far in advance of what Europe was capable of doing at the time. Their crops of Potatoes, Tomatoes, Maize and Tobacco became global staples. Gun powder gave the Spanish a big advantage, but it was common European diseases such as chicken pox, measles, small pox against which the American First people had no resistance that killed millions. Similarly the Spanish wiped out the Carib and Arawak, the original inhabitants of the Caribbean islands[[8]](#footnote-8). By the C17th European colonisers were using germ warfare deliberately against American First peoples. The Aztec and Inca population had numbered 70 to 90 million when the conquistadores arrived. A century and a half later they had been reduced to 3.5 million.[[9]](#footnote-9) Sources of plunder ran out and the colonists sought to mine silver, grow crops and herd cattle but the First People’s population was dropping rapidly by disease, the sword and insurrections.

The colonists turned to Africa for labour from across the Atlantic, from which they took slaves in great number. There had been slave trading on a small scale before this, carried out by Arab merchants, but this was on an entirely different scale. The Spanish and Portuguese were soon to be overtaken by other European powers. During the C17th they faced increasing competition, as colonisers and for control of the trade, firstly Holland, then France and Britain. They took advantage of political and economic difficulties that Spain and Portugal experienced and their merchants were massively enriched taking over the slave trade and many colonised territories in Africa, Asia and America.

The **Royal African Company** (**RAC**) was an English mercantile ([trading](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trade)) company set up in 1660 by the royal [Stuart family](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/House_of_Stuart) and [City of London](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/City_of_London) merchants to trade along the [west coast of Africa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/West_Africa). It was led by the [Duke of York](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_II_of_England), who was the brother of [Charles II](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_II_of_England) and later took the throne as [James II](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_II_of_England). It shipped more African slaves to the [Americas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Americas) than any other company in the history of the [Atlantic slave trade](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atlantic_slave_trade).

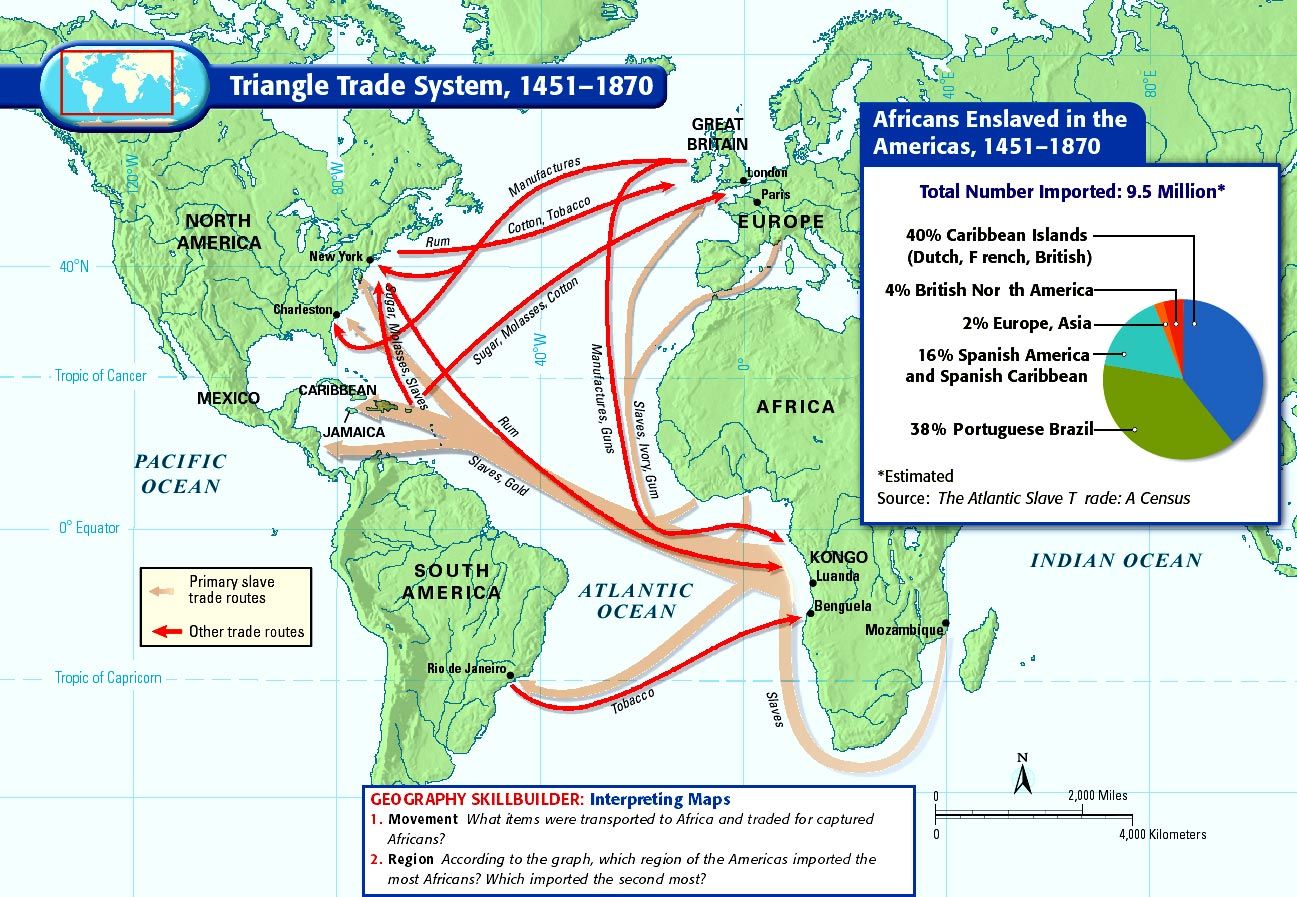
It was established after Charles II gained the [English throne](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kingdom_of_England) in the [Restoration of 1660](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_Restoration).[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal_African_Company#cite_note-4) While its original purpose was to exploit the gold fields up the [Gambia River](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gambia_River), which were identified by [Prince Rupert](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prince_Rupert_of_the_Rhine) during the [Interregnum](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Interregnum_(England)), it soon developed and led a brutal and sustained [slave trade](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slave_trade). It also extracted other commodities, mainly from the [Gold Coast](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gold_Coast_(region)). After becoming insolvent in 1708, it survived in a state of much reduced activity until 1752 when its assets were transferred to the new [African Company of Merchants](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African_Company_of_Merchants), which lasted until 1821[[10]](#footnote-10).

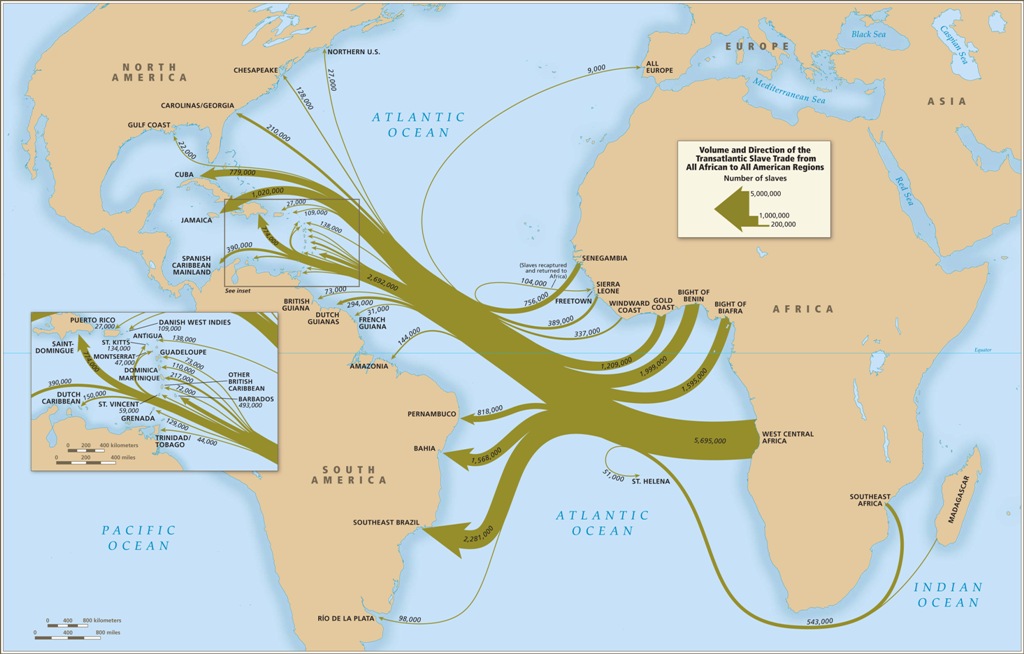
The rulers of these colonising countries backed and benefitted from this huge increase in wealth - slavery, trade in commodities, plantations. They backed the newly formed trading companies with military force to put down any local people who might resist. The colonisation of land and the organisation to produce commodities for sale rather than immediate use stimulated plantations growing luxury crops such as tobacco, coffee, sugar and later cotton. The European economic manufacturing and trade system accrued massive profits. Following success with Tobacco on plantations, French, English, Dutch and Latin American merchants from around 1650 cultivated the Caribbean Islands for Sugar Cane-known as ‘White Gold’. This crop takes around 18 months to mature and the bulk necessitates it being processed on site. So merchants and Investment Houses and Banks began to ships and fund the setting up of factories to process the cane to sugar. This was dangerous, gruelling work and needed a big increase in human labour. To start with much of the labour needs were met by criminals or deportees from Europe, but they were not efficient and were soon replaced by slaves from Africa. This led to a big expansion in the African Slave Trade.

It was called the Triangular Trade where ships from European ports came to Africa loaded with manufactured goods used to trade for slaves. Then the middle passage from African coastal forts collected slaves captured in the interior and loaded them onto ships in overcrowded, unsanitary and degrading conditions. Mortality was high and between 9 and 20% died before arriving for sale in the West Indies and Americas. The ships returned to Europe with molasses, sugar, cotton, coffee and tobacco to be manufactured into luxury items.

Without the wealth gained from colonial trade, commerce and from capitalist production of sugar in the West Indies in particular, there would not have been the wealth to fuel what we have come to call the Industrial Revolution. This started in mid C18th and made Britain and then other European countries and North America even more wealthy and powerful than before.

The next 2 pages are maps showing the middle passage and the movement in numbers of Africans Enslaved in the Americas, 1451 – 1870. The first map also shows a graph of these numbers (40% to the Caribbean Islands, 38% to Portuguese Brazil, 16 % to ‘Spanish America’ and ‘Spanish Caribbean’, 4% to British North America and 2% to Europe or Asia).





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**Slave Voyages 35,000 1500 to 1900** <https://www.slavevoyages.org/static/images/assessment/intro-maps/09.jpg>

**Growth of Slavery and abolition**

From the middle of C17th the trade in Black slaves from Africa grew to furnish the plantations of the Americas and West Indies. This meant for Africa a terrible disruption to its societies because of the enormous loss of its young non-disabled men and women. When the Europeans first made inroads into Africa, there were many different forms of society within the continent- with flourishing trade networks, the development in different regions of cloth-working, gold mining, iron making, different forms of agriculture, fine cities like Timbuktu, centre of the Songhay empire.

Timbuktu was described in an Italian book in 1550 and caused a great sensation. “There you find many judges, professors and devout men all handsomely maintained by the king who holds scholars in much honour. There too, they sell many handwritten North African books and more profit is made there from the sale of books than any other branch of trade.” Much of this development was slowly bled to death making the continent ultimately defenceless against the full colonial conquest at the end of C19th.[[11]](#footnote-11)

To justify enslaving humans, Europeans came to argue Africans were inferior and were not fully human. For centuries Catholicism had held that a person could only fully be human if he or she was a believer within the true church. So non Europeans who worshipped different Gods were seen as inferior human beings. In European history this belief had vented itself against Jewish people with waves of virulent anti-Semitism from C12th to C16th. There was therefore a culture of discriminating against and abusing a whole people. This was easily transferred to African slaves and justified the barbarity of their capture, transportation and treatment on the plantations. Also in the European mind darkness, fear and evil were seen as the very opposite of Christian whiteness and light. The moral argument was won for abolition of the slave trade in 1807 in England and the abolition of slavery in colonies 1835. The slave interest in the UK Parliament meant a massive compensation to many of over 61,000 slave owners which amounted to 40% of GDP and which British Taxpayers were still paying off until 2015 (the equivalent of £300 billion at today’s prices).[[12]](#footnote-12) These are the figures paid in the British Colonies of the West Indies at 1835 prices. Nothing was paid to the ex-slaves.[[13]](#footnote-13) See table below.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Colony** | **Number of Slaves** | **Compensation (£)** |
| Jamaica | 311,070 | 6,149,955 |
| Br. Guiana | 82,824 | 4,295,989 |
| Barbados | 83,150 | 1,719,980 |
| Trinidad | 20,657 | 1,033,992 |
| Grenada | 23,638 | 616,255 |
| St. Vincent | 22,286 | 550,777 |
| Antigua | 29,121 | 425,547 |
| St. Lucia | 13,291 | 334,495 |
| St. Kitts | 19,780 | 329,393 |
| Dominica | 14,175 | 275,547 |
| Tobago | 11,589 | 233,875 |
| Nevis | 8,815 | 151,006 |
| Bahamas | 10,086 | 128,296 |
| Montserrat | 6,401 | 103,556 |
| Br. Honduras | 1,901 | 101,399 |
| Virgin Ils. | 5,135 | 72,638 |
| Bermuda | 4,026 | 50,409 |
|  | **667,925** | **£16,573,109** |
|  |  |  |

**After abolition** the Law provided that after 1 August 1834 slaves were to be called “apprentices”. For an interim period, initially designed to last for six years in the case of field (so-called “praedial”) labourers and four years for other categories, they were to be required to work for their owners free of charge for forty and a half hours per week and to continue to enjoy free accommodation and food. If required to work for longer hours they were to be paid wages. Upon the expiration of these periods they were to be entirely free, but were no longer to receive free accommodation or food.

The slaves were however unwilling to work the apprenticeship system. Anticipating this, the Antigua Assembly decided not to adopt the scheme but to proceed to full emancipation in 1834. The slaves in the neighbouring island of St. Kitts rose in revolt. Faced with the fact that the apprenticeship scheme was not working, the British Government advised the other colonies to abandon it after four years of attempting to operate it. They agreed to do so and full emancipation accordingly took place on 1 August 1838[[14]](#footnote-14).

Previously there was a successful slave rebellion in Haiti in which British troops had been defeated (losing 50,000 men to disease and war). There had been a string of slave rebellions in British colonies and Maroon (escaped slave community attacks). In 1831 there was a major insurrection in Jamaica that was eventually brutally put down by British Army and Militia. However, the Parliamentary Committee investigating took the view that:

“The evidence taken before the Committee of the two Houses of Parliament made it manifest, that if the abolition of slavery were not speedily effected by the peaceable method of legislative enactment, the slaves would assuredly take the matter into their own hands, and bring their bondage to a violent and bloody termination”.

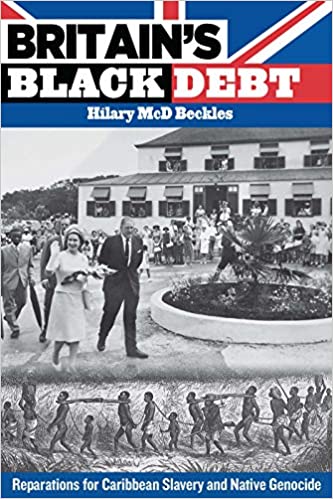
A similar assessment of the rebellion, from a different point of view, was given by Bernard Martin Senior, a military officer engaged in suppressing the rebellion:

“It will not be surprising that so propitious a circumstance as the late rebellion should be seized with avidity for their furtherance and immediate accomplishment. A Bill was brought into Parliament … by which it was enacted that all slavery should cease throughout the British dominions on the first of August 1834 ”.

It is now more widely acknowledged that abolition had more to do with growing slave rebellions and that slavery was less economically viable than moral arguments. However, Slavery continued in the Southern States and elsewhere and so new ‘pseudo scientific ‘ theories of ‘racial inferiority’ began to be more widely promulgated[[15]](#footnote-15).

**The case for Reparations**

Hilary Beckles, in his book *Britains’s Black Debt Reparations for Black Slavery and Genocide*(2013), makes a strong case for reparations. Reparations are payments that are to restore matters as if the criminal act had never taken place. A tall order in the case of slavery. A case that was strongly made at the *UN World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and related intolerance* in Durban, South Africa,2001. Despite the overwhelming case made, diplomats determined slavery was all very legal and moral.



Not a penny was paid in compensation to the freed slaves. Following Williams classic work *Slavery and Capitalism* (1944), Beckles among others has argued for Reparations. Citing the legal principles of unjust and criminal enrichment, the author presents a compelling argument for Britain’s payment of its black debt, a debt that it continues to deny in the face of overwhelming evidence to the contrary.

Floyd Morris of Jamaica has recently argued to the UN to pursue reparations because of the heritage of high level of disability and poor health infra-structure in Caribbean[[16]](#footnote-16)

**Racism and British Rule in India**

The control of Bengal by the East India Company after the Battle of Plessy (1757) meant a move from trading posts to territorial control. There was now a huge increase in trade with India. A system developed for profit, buying cheap raw materials and labour and selling products expensively both in Europe and the colonies set the pattern for the modern world.

In the seventeenth century, India was a relatively urbanised and commercialised nation with a buoyant export trade, devoted largely to cotton textiles, but also including silk, spices, and rice. India was the world's main producer of cotton textiles and had a substantial export trade to Britain, as well as many other European countries, via the East India Company.[[17]](#footnote-17)

According to British economist Angus Maddison, India's share of the world economy went from 24.4% in 1700 to 4.2% in 1950. India's GDP (PPP) per capita was stagnant during the Mughal Empire and began to decline prior to the onset of British rule. India's share of global industrial output also declined from 25% in 1750 down to 2% in 1900. At the same time, the United Kingdom's share of the world economy rose from 2.9% in 1700 up to 9% in 1870, and Britain replaced India as the world's largest textile manufacturer in the 19th century.

After the British victory over the Mughal Empire (Battle of Buxar, 1764) India was de-industrialised by successive EIC, British and colonial policies (see Calico Act above). As the British cotton industry underwent a technological revolution during the late 18th to early 19th centuries, the Indian industry stagnated and was deindustrialized[[18]](#footnote-18)

Britain’s exploitative, racist imperial project in India was awesome in its savagery and vindictiveness, what Tharoor calls a “long and shameless record of rapacity”[[19]](#footnote-19). The recent books are a welcome antidote to the nauseating righteousness and condescension pedalled by Niall Ferguson in his 2003 book *Empire*, which argues that British imperialism gave to the world its admirable and distinctive features (language, banking, representative assemblies, the idea of liberty) and that India, “the world’s largest democracy, owes more than it is fashionable to acknowledge to British rule”. Tharoor sets out energetically, bluntly and hurriedly the litany of exploitation and theft, and the support given to the East India Company. This was before the Government of India Act of 1858 led the British crown to assume direct control. The company had a private army of 260,000 at the start of the 19th century, and the champions of the British industrial revolution plundered India’s thriving manufacturing industries.

Under British rule India’s share of world manufacturing exports fell from 27 per cent to 2 per cent as East India employees made colossal fortunes. The marquess of Salisbury, secretary of state for India in the 1870s, remarked that “India is to be bled”, and by the end of the 19th century it was Britain’s biggest source of revenue.

“To stop is dangerous; to recede ruin” was the logic, as enunciated early by Robert Clive, commander in chief of British India in the mid-18th century. The Indian shipping industry was destroyed and Indian currency manipulated while tariffs and regulations were skewed to favour British industry.

This fostered a court culture for Indian princes to follow, and there were many dissolute rajas, but just 4 per cent of the coveted positions in the Indian civil service were filled by Indians as late as 1930. The nationalist leader Jawaharlal Nehru was cutting in his dismissal of a civil service that was “neither Indian, nor civil, nor a service”.

By 1890 about 6,000 British officials ruled 250 million Indians, but there was also a “cravenness, cupidity, opportunism and lack of organized resistance on the part of the vanquished”. Ultimately, it was the rise of Mahatma Gandhi and his promotion of the moral values derived from *satyagraha* (nonviolent resistance) that “proved a repudiation of British liberalism and not its vindication”.

**Racial theories** Racism was also reflected in the penal code: “there had never been a taboo against homosexuality in Indian culture and practice until the British Victorians introduced one.” Crucially, Britain also “helped solidify and perpetuate the iniquities of the caste system”, which was made out to be more uniform and pervasive than it had been. Religion became a useful means of divide and rule, with the fostering of a two-nation theory that eventually divided the country and made partition inevitable; one million were killed and 17 million displaced.Tharoor’s assertion that “stories abound” of Hindu and Muslim communities “habitually working together in pre-colonial times” is a bit loose and ambiguous, but Lord Oliver, the secretary of state in the 1920s, admitted a predominant bias in British officialdom in favour of the Muslim community to offset Hindu nationalism. The British also sponsored a Shia-Sunni divide in Lucknow and generally transformed religious differences into public, political and legal issues.

There are also reminders of the vile racism of Winston Churchill: “I hate Indians. They are a beastly people with a beastly religion . . . Let the Viceroy sit on the back of a giant elephant and trample Gandhi into the dirt.” Tharoor seeks to demolish the myth of “enlightened despotism” given brutalities like the Jallianwala Bagh massacre of 1919, with soldiers “emptying their magazines into the shrieking, wailing, then stampeding crowd with trained precision”. It is a pity he does not give the context for the comment of William Joynson-Hicks, home secretary in the 1928 Conservative government of Stanley Baldwin, that “we conquered India by the sword and by the sword we shall hold it. I am not such a hypocrite to say we hold India for the Indians.”

Up to 35 million died unnecessarily in famines; London ate India’s bread while India starved, and in 1943 nearly four million Bengalis died. It was their own fault, according to the odious Churchill, for “breeding like rabbits”. Collectively, these famines amounted to a “British colonial holocaust”. Tharoor finds the argument that modernisation could not have taken place in India without British imperialism to be “particularly galling”. In response to the claim that empire laid the foundations for eventual success in a future globalised world, he quite rightly observes that “human beings do not live in the long run; they live, and suffer, in the here and now”. And although the “gift” of the English language cannot be denied, there was only a 16 per cent literacy rate at the time of Indian independence.[[20]](#footnote-20)

So overall in the Indian sub-continent a white superiority was first used to dominate trade and then territorially colonise and diminish the economy and well-being of Indian people creating much death and impairment for British interests.

**Follow Up Activities 11.2**

***a) How did slavery in the Caribbean come to be established?***

***b) How did slavery and its after-effects lead to high levels of impairment?***

***c) How was British colonisation of India the same and different to that in the Caribbean?***

***d) Write a letter to be published in a local paper or sent to a local politician arguing why reparations should be campaigned for, from ex-colonial powers for your country and why the money should be used to benefit disabled people.***

**v. Systemic Racism for First Nations People of Australia**[[21]](#footnote-21)



In Australia, discrimination and racism towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is a reality that is exacerbated by collective experiences and memory of abuse, dispossession, and intergenerational trauma from colonisation. No peace treaty was ever made with Aborigines. After British colonisation in 1788 mainly as an alternative to sending convicts to, who could no longer go to a newly liberated USA and to counter French aspirations of settlement. Disease as in America decimated the indigenous population. Reynolds argues that continuous Aboriginal resistance for well over a century belies the myth of peaceful settlement in Australia. Settlers in turn often reacted to Aboriginal resistance with great violence, resulting in numerous indiscriminate massacres by whites of Aboriginal men, women and children[[22]](#footnote-22).

According to the 2014–2015 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey, 33% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 15 and over reported they had experienced unfair treatment in the previous 12 months because of their indigenous origins[[23]](#footnote-23). Moreover, a study from the state of Victoria found that 17% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults had experienced at least one episode of racism in the last year compared with 4.5% of their non-indigenous counterparts[[24]](#footnote-24). A study conducted among young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children showed a high prevalence of perceived racism from either adults or peers[[25]](#footnote-25).

First Peoples Disability Network (Australia) research work “*Culture is Inclusion”*, found that First Peoples are included in their communities across social, cultural and community events, and that this is the sole exception to the exclusion they experience in all other aspects of life in Australia. This is “a contemporary expression of a culture of inclusion that has survived in spite of other disruptive influences upon community functioning.”

\***45% of Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islanders are living with disability or longer-term health conditions-2.1x more than other Australians**

**\*19% of Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islanders participate in the workforce**

**\*7.7% are living with severe or profound impairments**

**\*5x more likely to experience mental illness than other Australians[[26]](#footnote-26).**

The health and social inequities that are experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, particularly those who are disabled, is a travesty for a nation with Australia’s resources. Policy for structural reform which enables them to enjoy the same quality of life readily enjoyed by other Australians requires sustained commitment, to urgently implement what is an immediate priority under all Human Rights frameworks, and to strategically work through the more entrenched and complex issues of racism.

Advocates report that interface issues with education and justice systems are particularly acute, as well as wider barriers caused by racism and poverty.

***Barriers to access***

\*Research has also found that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disabled people were more likely than non-disabled people to be removed from their families, as well as be more likely to experience violence and threats.

\*Australia has one of the fastest growing prison populations, presenting significant challenges within the justice system (from arrest to imprisonment) with no proactive disability support needs for First Nations disabled people throughout the system to understand the double disadvantage our community face, with racism being an overarching factor to many being incarcerated.

\*There is no clear human rights-based framework for integration, and delineated responsibility between the sectors and jurisdictional justice systems. The majority of all jurisdictions within a life of First Nations people, lack Disability and Justice Strategies to support rather than marginalise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

\*There needs to be in-depth discussion on how the interaction of these systemic barriers creates a unique society where Aboriginal people who are most in need of support, suffer high levels of racism from the institutions that are there to support them. Data showing the prevalence of disability among the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population coupled with the research on the social, health and wellbeing inequality they experience, provides sufficient evidence to justify a policy focus on disability within Closing the Gap government priorities, supported by mandatory reporting against a target for equitable access across all de-restriction’s

\*Failing to acknowledge the health and wellbeing factor of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disabled people will only result in the known gap in inequality to this access widening.

**Justice including indefinite detention**

The criminalisation and incarceration of disabled First Peoples must be understood within the broader intersecting dynamics of colonialism, racism and ableism. To address the over incarceration of our people, these underlying structural issues, and the trajectory that leads to interactions with the criminal justice system, must be acknowledged and understood, and community led solutions identified and implemented through a strategic approach based on the principles of ‘self-determination; person centred care; holistic and flexible approach; integrated services; and Culture, Disability and Gender-informed practice’.

**The trap of the criminal justice system for First People with disability**

The impact of dual discrimination for disabled First People is often misunderstood and absent from both Aboriginal justice and disability justice dialogue, and too often lost within siloed Government policy and funding. This leads to poorly designed initiatives, that are either disability or culturally inaccessible – most likely both.  For example, the National Disability Strategy 2010-2020 did not prioritise justice, and were notably absent in initiatives to respond to First Nations people with disability over-representation in the criminal justice system. These systematic barriers across all streams of life for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from birth, is the racial ableism that needs to be addressed urgently and a measure of any civil society is how they support their most venerable and disadvantaged[[27]](#footnote-27).

In the 2019 Election First Peoples Disability Network made the following demands in their manifesto[[28]](#footnote-28). Our Ten Priorities to address disability inequity in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities for the National Disability Strategy and the National Disability Insurance Scheme informs this policy platform in line with our strategic directions.

TEN PRIORITIES TO ADDRESS DISABILITY INEQUITY

The plan should be based on the ten priorities identified by FPDN and be developed by using three pillars:

A. Build the capacity of communities and individuals to understand their rights and entitlements

B. Invest to create a First People’s Community Controlled service sector

C. Develop and support an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce

1. Invest to create an Aboriginal Community Controlled Disability Service Sector for the provision of disability supports by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability for their communities

2. Address the barriers facing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in accessing the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)

3. Prioritise timely intervention to ensure supports and services are provided, and available over the long-term, and at the right time in people’s lives

4. Recognise and value the existing knowledge, skills and expertise within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. We are leaders in the inclusion of people with disability

5. Resource a community directed research strategy which specifically focuses on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disability

6.Endorse and support peer-to-peer leadership to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability lead the engagement with community themselves

7. Develop and implement an access to justice strategy for First People with disability, particularly those with cognitive impairment, sensory and intellectual disability

8. Develop and implement programs for inclusive education and employment for First People with disability in line with national strategies for their full social participation

9. Create links between the National Disability Strategy and Closing the Gap Framework for coordinated policy and programs at the Commonwealth, State and local levels in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability and their organisations

10. Develop an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Disability Performance Framework for the independent monitoring of the social and economic outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability.

# **vi. Canadian Disabled First People’s subject to race and disability discrimination**

“Indigenous persons residing across Canada continue to deal with the generational effects that European contact has had on all aspects of our lives. It is well documented that the health and disability status of Indigenous people in Canada, is significantly lower than that of our non-Indigenous population. The Indigenous population of Canada experience a disability rate much higher than that of the general population, at approximately 30% to 35%.

Additionally, many Indigenous communities are affected by minimal economical and employment opportunities, remoteness, accessibility barriers, transportation issues, limited access to necessary disability, health and social services and their associated professionals, limited community amenities and so forth, all of which impact their memberships ability to reach their full social and economic inclusion”.[[29]](#footnote-29)

* In 2017, 32% of First Nations people living off reserve, 30% of Métis (mixed European and First Nations) and 19% of Inuit had one or more disabilities that limited them in their daily activities. Twenty-two percent of the non-Indigenous population had a disability.
* Rates of disability among First Nations people living off reserve and Métis were higher than for non-Indigenous people. This remained true after accounting for differences in age, geography and population centre size between the population groups. Rates of disability among Inuit were lower, largely because Inuit are younger.
* Among First Nations people living off reserve, Métis and Inuit, disability rates were higher for women than for men. Disability rates increased with age for both men and women.
* Of all severity levels, mild disabilities were most common among all three Indigenous groups and for both men and women.
* Among all Indigenous groups, pain-related disabilities were most prevalent.
* Differences in disability rates were observed by province and territory as well as by Inuit region in Inuit Nunangat. Among First Nations people living off reserve and Métis, disability prevalence was higher in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Ontario, British Columbia and Alberta while among Inuit it was higher in Nunatsiavut.
* Indigenous people made up 4.9% of the Canadian population in 2016, according to the Census of Population. Of the Indigenous population in Canada, 58% were First Nations people (living both on and off reserve), 35% were Métis, and 4% were Inuit. The majority reported a single Indigenous identity (Statistics Canada, 2017c). More than half of First Nations people lived off reserve (56%).[[30]](#footnote-30)

‘Indigenous peoples differ from the non-Indigenous population in several ways, including different demographic characteristics such as a younger age structure and unique regional concentration. Access to supports and services such as health care is an additional challenge more pronounced among Indigenous peoples. In addition, the historical and ongoing impacts of colonization, such as the forced placements of children in residential schools, removal of children from their families, and relocation of communities are all important factors, unique to Indigenous peoples that should be reflected on in the forthcoming analysis. In this study, rates of disability among the non-Indigenous population are provided as context for the focal analysis of Indigenous populations’.

**Indigenous Canadian Disabled Children and equality of service[[31]](#footnote-31)** Although Indigenous peoples are accorded the same rights as everyone else in the states in which they live, they also have certain rights that aim to protect and promote their rights as Indigenous persons. However, there is a large controversy concerning who can be beneficiary of these rights ascending from the long struggle of defining the term Indigenous. Nonetheless, the UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations provide a definition for the term “indigenous”:

**Indigenous communities, peoples, and nations are those which having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of societies now prevailing in those territories, or parts of them. They form at present non-dominant sectors of society and are determined to preserve, develop, and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories, and their ethnic identity, as the basis of their continued existence as peoples, in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions, and legal systems**[[32]](#footnote-32).

Research consistently shows that the most prominent health disparities in Canada are those existing between Indigenous people and the rest of the Canadian population.[[33]](#footnote-33) Factors creating a disabling environment, **poverty, disease, alcoholism and unemployment** among Indigenous Canadians continue to be an issue. The statistics are dismal and disgraceful. Children raised in this environment have more physical and emotional problems than other children and are more likely to become disabled or become chronically ill than children from the general population. Estimates indicate that nearly 80 percent of all disabling conditions among Indigenous communities are preventable. **The lack of appropriate services** is evident in many rural areas and reservations as well as in urban areas. Moreover, ‘appropriate’ usually means culturally appropriate, which is what services to any minority group should be but often is not. **Jurisdictional disputes** about service provision actually lead the list of major headaches for Indigenous communities. Such disputes are the source of some of the most inhumane acts ever committed against innocent people, all carried out within “the letter of the law”. These situations come about because each agency declares itself the “provider of last resort”, which means it is not going to provide the “first dollar” for a service if another agency might provide it. For Indigenous people who have multiple providers (Indian Health Service, Bureau of Indian Affairs, provincial services, federal programs and tribal programs), the last-resort declaration is a nightmare. When there is a stalemate between Indian Health Service, Bureau of Indian Affairs and a state agency, each declaring that a particular service (e.g., providing a wheel chair) is the jurisdiction of another agency, the Indigenous child is caught in a no-win situation and usually ends up without any service at all.

**Jordan was a young boy from Norway House Cree Nation in Manitoba** who was born in 1999 with multiple disabilities. He lived for more than two years in a hospital because the Manitoba and federal governments could not agree on who would pay for his at-home care. Consequently, Jordan was deprived of receiving the services he deserved until the governments established the payment issue. The responsibility for services to First Nations children is often shared by federal, provincial/territorial and First Nations governments. In contrast, funding and delivery of these same services to most other children in Canada falls solely under provincial and territorial jurisdiction. Jordan’s wait for a resolution to settle the federal and provincial jurisdictional disagreement ended when he died in a Winnipeg hospital on February 2, 2005, at 5 years old, hundreds of kilometres away from his family’s community and before Jordan could experience living in a loving home. Jordan’s death exemplified the severity of the inequality, challenges and disparity Indigenous children with disabilities face and stressed the need for a mechanism for ensuring their human, constitutional, and treaty rights. Consequently, a new child-first principle for Indigenous children – a principle that is consistent with government commitments set out in the CRC and the Charter – was unanimously voted in favour by members of Parliament in 2007: **Jordan’s Principle. Unfortunately problems continued even after the principle was adopted by Parliament.**The government’s poor implementation of Jordan’s Principle gave rise to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, political and research organisations collaborating together to respond to Canada’s efforts “to control, deny, minimise and delay funding to vulnerable Indigenous children”.The Canadian Human Rights Tribunal on whether this was a discriminatory practice according to Canada’s own Human Rights Act strongly ruled against the Governments practice. The Tribunal also made orders that have yet to be implemented. In Canada there is a lot of denial of unequal treatment which in itself is racism.

**Canadian Indigenous adults face racism most in the Health Service.** Racism in the Canadian health care system is endemic. Recent reports[[34]](#footnote-34) have highlighted its preponderance in central Canada, where Indigenous women have been coerced into sterilization and Indigenous men have been ignored in emergency departments, left to suffer and, in at least one tragic case, to die. Canada’s current model of delivering health care fails either to show an understanding of or to address the subset of health determinants that affect Indigenous patients. Ingrained problems of racism and discrimination will not be solved until the system is changed so that health care is delivered in a way that is culturally competent and inclusive of an Indigenous model.

In July 2017, the Saskatoon Health Region commissioned an external review in response to media reports of Aboriginal women being coerced into tubal ligation immediately after childbirth in a Saskatoon Health Region hospital; the review found several structural problems. Sixteen Aboriginal women contacted the reviewers and seven interviews were completed. All of the women felt coerced into having a tubal ligation postdelivery in the Saskatoon Health Region, most believing it to be reversible as a type of birth control. The women shared that nurses, social workers and physicians pressured them while they were at their most vulnerable, either in the throes of labour or immediately postdelivery. They stated they felt powerless to resist the coercion and have suffered immensely as a result of having tubal ligation. The report concluded that the Saskatoon Health Region promotes racist and discriminatory health care for Indigenous women. It suggested structural change that is inclusive of culturally relevant health care, and that health professionals be educated and made sensitive to Indigenous history and the unique health care requirements of the people they serve.

An interim report released in September 2017 after a multidisciplinary inquest into the death of Brian Sinclair[[35]](#footnote-35) — a 45-year-old First Nations man who died of a treatable bladder infection in 2008, after being ignored for 34 hours in the emergency department of the Health Sciences Hospital in Winnipeg — detailed systemic failures at many levels. When evaluating the circumstances of his death, the working group identified a sequence of racist events that had occurred. For instance, Sinclair was visible to the emergency department staff, who ignored him because they assumed he was homeless or intoxicated or just hanging around. The staff did not question why he remained in the waiting room at any point during the 34-hour interval after he wheeled himself in. Even when he began vomiting and slumping further in his wheelchair, the staff did not consider him to be in distress. When the public intervened, the staff quickly quelled their concern by insisting that Sinclair was either sleeping or intoxicated and not sick at all. The working group report suggested that an antiracist policy be implemented immediately, with a monitoring mechanism to evaluate its ongoing effectiveness[[36]](#footnote-36). Many more recent reports show that endemic racism in the health service continues. The dismissal of a First Nations man with a hole in his oesophagus from a Vancouver Island Hospital . Staff told him to go to a homeless shelter. Or in the same location staff playing a racist game to guess how much alcohol a patient had in his blood.[[37]](#footnote-37)

“Indigenous Services Minister Marc Miller pauses as he responds to a question during a news conference in June in Ottawa. On Friday, Miller and other federal officials will meet Indigenous leaders to discuss racism in the health-care system.  The systemic racism endured by Indigenous people in Canada's health care system exists because the system was designed that way, Health Minister Patty Hajdu said today after a meeting with representatives from the provinces, Indigenous groups and the health care sector”.

"Sadly this is not shocking to me," Hajdu said. "Racism is not an accident. The system is not broken. It was created this way. And the people in the system are incentivised to stay the same." Hajdu made the comments after attending a meeting with Indigenous Services Minister Marc Miller, Northern Affairs Minister Daniel Vandal and Crown-Indigenous Relations Minister Carolyn Bennett to discuss racism in Canada's health care system. The meeting with some 400 participants from across the country was called following the death of Indigenous mother of seven Joyce Echaquan, who died in a Quebec hospital last month. Echaquan, 37, recorded some of the last moments of her life on a video later released on Facebook. The video captured Echaquan screaming in distress, along with the voices of staff members making degrading comments, calling her stupid and saying she would be better off dead."It's always a very powerful experience to be trusted to hear these very personal experiences and there's so much to reflect on. I have a deep gratitude for all speakers who shared fearlessly about their personal experiences of racism in the health care system and in the health care education process," Hajdu said[[38]](#footnote-38).

The Council of Canadians with Disabilities (CCD) and a member of CDPF, a national human rights organization of people with disabilities working for an accessible and inclusive Canada, called for the Canada Health Act to make anti-racism the Act’s sixth pillar. The Working Group’s call comes in the aftermath of the death of Joyce Echaquan, a member of the Manawan First Nation, who endured systemic racism at a Joliette hospital. “In the lead-up to a January 2021 high-level Canadian meeting on addressing systemic racism in the health care system, we are speaking out in support of an anti-racism pillar for the Canada Health Act to demonstrate to Canadian decision makers the groundswell of support for the measure from all Canadians,” states Roxana Jahani Aval, Chairperson. Systemic racism in the health care system is not a Quebec problem; it is a Canadian problem. For example, Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond is investigating systemic racism in British Columbia’s health care system.

“Fast-tracking this amendment of the Canada Health Act to mandate immediate and substantive actions is necessary to address racism at all levels of the health care system.  This would demonstrate to Ms. Echaquan’s community and all Canadians that the federal government is actively and without delay developing the policy mechanisms to begin to address systemic racism which is a cause of inequitable health care outcomes for racialized people in Canada,” states Heather Walkus, First Vice-Chair. “Permanent, episodic or temporary disablement can be a consequence of this discrimination.”

“We call on all social justice, human rights, and disability organizations and all Canadians to add their voices to the call for addition of an anti-racism pillar to the Canada Health Act,” states Chair Roxana Jahani Aval.[[39]](#footnote-39)

***Follow Up Activities 11.3***

***a) Why do you think indigenous people have been treated so badly in Canada, Australia or other ex-colonies?***

***b) Explain why indigenous people have a higher rate of disability than the general population in their county.***

***c) Explain the reasons why DPOs need to show solidarity with indigenous disabled people’s organisations.***

# **vii. South Africa Post-Apartheid**

**Antecedents “**Formal apartheid originated in the legal and social structures that followed the settlement of southern Africa by Europeans in the mid-seventeenth century. After agents of the Dutch East India Company created the first permanent European settlement in modern-day Cape Town in 1652, they soon transformed their supply station into a base for European expansion. Over the next 250 years, the settlers consolidated their control of land and livestock, conquering the indigenous Khoisan and Bantu peoples through war and disease. The British colonial authorities, who administered the Cape Colony from 1806 perpetuated the Dutch policies of segregation and discriminatory legal standards. While the British abolished slavery and granted putative equality of political rights to the Khoisan in the Cape Colony in 1828, they denied meaningful political representation to the indigenous population who came increasingly under colonial control.

The discovery of vast diamond and gold deposits in the interior of South Africa in the late 1800s spurred colonial settlement and British interest in areas that had been declared independent republics by Afrikaans-speaking settlers of Dutch, French and German descent. It would take the devastating South African War (Anglo–Boer War) of 1899–1902, during which a British force of 200,000 troops stamped its authority on the independent republics, to settle the territorial claims of the Boer, British, and local people. While the 1902 peace treaty entrenched the property rights of white settlers, the Union of South Africa, established in 1910, reasserted the race-based policies of the formerly independent colonies, denying the franchise to non-whites in all but the Cape Colony. The 1913 Natives Land Act delineated reserves for indigenous people, eventually barring them from owning land in 87% of the country and forcing thousands into the labour market by banning share-cropping on white land.

During the 1930s, political leaders became increasingly successful in stimulating the nationalist ambitions of the Afrikaans-speaking population. Heavily influenced by the strict, Calvinist, Dutch Reform Church, the Afrikaaners largely constituted a white underclass of small farmers and workers. The Reunited National Party's promise to overturn British domination, campaign against the South African government's military alliance with Great Britain, and an economic and social platform that focused on preserving white privilege and segregation earned them a surprise victory in the 1948 general election. Some ideologues within the National Party (NP), many influenced by Nazi ideology, sought complete separation between whites and all other people. Complete separation, however, would have removed the source of abundant cheap labour on which white wealth relied, undermining the National Party's plans for uplifting Afrikaaners economically. Apartheid evolved over the next half-century as an attempt to resolve the dilemma of how the outnumbered whites could exploit black labour while maintaining political control and racial separation.”[[40]](#footnote-40)

**The African National Congress** had led opposition to Apartheid and after Sharpeville shootings in 1961 went into armed struggle realising that Gandhi’s peaceful means would not work in South Africa. Mandela and other leaders were imprisoned on Robben Island and the ANC leadership continued from outside the country. However, new generations of school students challenged the regime in Soweto and elsewhere. Meanwhile the international boycott against the racist state was having its impact and the Nationalist (white) Government opened secret talks with the ANC leadership leading to a National Government and the first ever free elections. Mandela was president and the Constitution guaranteeing equality was adopted in 1996. The Peace and Reconciliation process headed up by Archbishop Tutu eased in successful power sharing. There was political freedom but the ANC’s wish to not confiscate white property and being forced to go along with neo-liberal economic thinking limited public expenditure against their wishes and has led to continuing economic inequality.

‘The World Bank reported . . . that the top 10 percent of the population receives 58 percent of the country’s income, while the bottom 50 percent receives less than 8 percent. . . . From 1995 to 2008, white mean per capita income grew over 80 percent, while African income grew by less than 40 percent. Poverty remains overwhelmingly black: In the poorest *fifth* of households, 95 percent are Africans. Members of this segment of the population struggle to feed their families, allocating more than half of their total expenditure just to food. At the other end of the scale, almost half of the wealthiest 20 percent of households are white, even though whites make up less than 10 percent of the total population’.[[41]](#footnote-41)

**What about the disability equality rights guaranteed in the South African constitution?** The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act No 108 of 1996) protects the rights and dignity of People with Disabilities and promotes and supports the full equalization of opportunities of People with Disabilities; and their integration in society; within a social model and human rights policy(Section 9.3).In South Africa structural stigma is associated with Ethnicity, being a black disabled South African is not the same compared to being white disabled South African as well as socio-economic.[[42]](#footnote-42) It has also been found that disabled Individuals, especially black disabled individuals, were victims of discrimination against their race and physical and/or cognitive limitations. South Africa is one country that has two worlds of the rich and the poor and discrimination is based on race.

Discrimination in terms of the denial of opportunities is one of the most daunting challenges faced by black disabled people in South Africa. South Africa has various laws, policies and programmes in place to address poverty and inequality. However, these initiatives are often fragmented and cannot sufficiently address the structural issues that perpetuate extreme poverty and inequality. It is often about a lack of privilege and franchise, which prevents people from confronting discrimination and other rights violations from a place of power. Studies by the World Bank have found that empowerment is not only helpful for governance and growth — it intrinsically improves people’s lives, but as we have seen above the gap is growing.

**Respect for Law and policies** We need to ensure that the UNCRPD is backed by detailed national legislation. This will involve:

* Monitoring implementation with DPOs and publicly report regularly
* Legally pursuing hate crime and discrimination against black disabled people in the Judicial System
* Running campaigns of public awareness in the mass media to change attitudes and know that the impact of racism and discrimination is rife amongst disabled people
* Developing the capacity and run Disability Equality Training so that public servants, educators and employers understand the human rights/social model approach to disability and develop disability friendly policies and practices
* Improving the role of white organisations, especially large companies working with black organisations to work together
* In 2017, a survey conducted by the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, found that more than half of all respondents occasionally or frequently experienced racism[[43]](#footnote-43)
* Importantly, since the inception of the institute’s survey in 2003, income inequality followed by race has consistently been revealed as the most significant dividing feature in contemporary South Africa
* There have been challenges against the state's implementing progressive measures to ensure that Black Disabled People attain their much needed equality within the country.

**Racial Gaps** Dupper argues that 'the constitutional right to equality ... envisage[s] a two pronged strategy to achieve the goal of "substantive equality" – the elimination of existing inequality, and the implementation of measures designed to protect and advance those people disadvantaged by past discrimination ...'[[44]](#footnote-44) Disabled people have not only experienced unfair discrimination in the past, but they continue to be at the receiving end of 'unjustified' perceptions which leads to their continued discrimination and marginalisation.[[45]](#footnote-45) It has been argued that 'the marginalization of persons with disabilities particularly black people still arises in large part from biased attitudes and a lack of awareness and knowledge rather than from a lack of economic resources alone, yet persons with disabilities remain among the most vulnerable and marginalized'.[[46]](#footnote-46)

**Action That Is Needed** The UNCRPD Convention’s lack of implementation is a factor and urgent action is needed.A human rights-based approach to disability needs to be taken by Governments of the Commonwealth and needs to help shape a better understanding about Black disabled people. The Commonwealth Disabled Peoples’ Forum (CDPF) is to push to erase and eliminate such stereotypes of the Commonwealth Countries to bring desired change[[47]](#footnote-47).

**viii. Colonialism** [[48]](#footnote-48)

For Imperial Britain other forms of colonial control operated, apart from the long-established colonies in the West Indies. By the end of C19th, there were white settler colonies in Australia, New Zealand (where the Maoris had been tricked into selling their land to the British with the treaty of Waitangi) and South Africa. Cecil Rhodes was prime minister of Cape Colony and under his influence and the control of his trading company exploited Rhodesia (Zimbabwe and Zambia today). British India was only ever controlled by around 6,000 Europeans, but an Indian middle class was educated, schooled and advantaged in English ways to control the subcontinent. However, from the 1880s there was an acceleration of European powers laying claim to territories in Africa, South East Asia and the Pacific and attempts to control trade with China. This was both economic and nationalistic in motivation and competition between the European powers led eventually to the First World War.

**“I have made up my mind there must be (race)class legislation. ..The Native is to be treated as a child and denied Franchise.. These are my politics and these are the politics of South Africa ‘ Cecil Rhodes 1894**

As can be seen from the map, Africa under European Rule in 1914 (fully described at the end of this this section), this was universal with the exception of Ethiopia and Liberia.

Africa under European rule, 1914

Many countries were turned to monoculture where previously rural people had grown a variety of produce to meet their own food needs, they were now forced to grow in large quantities one crop which was sold in bulk to Europeans at highly disadvantageous terms of trade. Africa became the supplier to Europe of cocoa, palm oil, ground nuts, rubber and cotton. Where European colonial regimes came so did missionaries. Everywhere the British flag flew, they went. Convinced like their countrymen of the superiority of the Christian religion, culture and values they offered to save the souls of millions, inculcate British values and offer rudimentary education. As an African saying goes:-

‘When they first came

They had the bible, we had the land

We now have a bible and they have our land.’

This largely held these populations in subjugation until the independence struggles of the 1950s and 1960s. Sometimes these were peaceful but in Kenya with the Mau Mau or in Zimbabwe armed struggle. The legacy for many African countries of the Commonwealth with supplying slaves and imperialism is underdevelopment, high levels of impairment in the population, dependence on production of raw materials and political instability, as their boundaries, language and culture were framed by their colonial masters.

The map above shows the European countries colonies:

Belgium – Congo

Britain – Egypt, Nigeria, Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, ‘British East Africa’ (Kenya, part of Tanzania), Uganda, Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), Nyasaland (Malawi), Bechuanaland (Botswana), South Africa, part of Somaliland, Sierra Leone, The Gambia, Gold Coast

France –Algeria, much of Morocco, Tunisia, French West Africa (Mauritania, Senegal, French Sudan, French Guinea, Ivory Coast, Upper Volta, Dahomey and Niger), French Equatorial Africa, part of Somaliland, Madagascar

Germany (all became British protectorates/Colonies after World War 1) – South West Africa (Namibia), German East Africa (Burundi, Rwanda, part of Tanzania, Kionga Triangle (later incorp into Mozambique), German Kamerun (Cameroon)

Italy – Eritrea, part of Somaliland, Libya

Portugal – Angola, Mozambique, Guinea

Spain – Rio de Oro, western saraha, part of Morocco

# **ix. Impact of Empire Racism in the UK**

The racist ideas developed to first justify slavery, exploitation and the colonialism and empire have had, as we have seen, huge lasting impacts in Australia, Canada, South Africa, but also in many other parts of the previous British Empire most importantly in the United States and now existing Commonwealth countries. In the United Kingdom itself though, there have been many changes towards a more multi-cultural country after immigration, based on equality.

There have been successive waves of immigration from Caribbean, Asia and Africa that have led to a continual restriction in entry since 1961, based on race-based criteria.

The UK at the height of Empire in the Victorian era believed in free trade and free movement of people, as long as most people did not have the means of travelling.

Anti-Semitic Pogroms in Eastern Europe and Russia inspired by the Tsar led to around 100,000 refugees settling in UK and after racist agitation the passing of the Aliens Act of 1905. This prevented leave to land to a) those without possessions and a means of supporting themselves, b) disabled people c) criminals or d) previously expelled under the Act. After this with, exception of special measures during the 2 World Wars, immigration was handled by a slowly growing number of Immigration Officers and the Home Secretary.

In the aftermath of the massive disruptions to civilian populations in the 2nd World War the United Nations introduced in 1951 the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees which the UK was a major mover in adopting.

Shortage of Labour in the Health Service, transport and manufacturing led to the encouragement of migration from the Caribbean, India, Pakistan and later Bangladesh and Africa. There was a backlash from some of the UK White population with much discrimination, riots and the growth of far right anti -immigration parties. This led to the Commonwealth Immigrants Act of 1962. Up until this point anyone with a Commonwealth passport had a right of abode, this was now more limited. However, in the 1960s more racist agitation took place and UK had joined the European Union. Many East African Asians often brought to Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania by the British now had their status challenged by these newly independent countries and sought refuge in UK. The 1971 Immigration Act was rushed through. The key point was it distinguished between patrial and non-patrial immigrants e.g. those who had a grandparent or parent born in UK and those who did not. Immigration became a bigger political issue in the UK for the next 50 years, in many ways motivating leaving the European Union in 2020 and a whole spate of repressive laws[[49]](#footnote-49). Throughout this period there was (and still is) a strong anti-racist and anti-fascist movement that successfully countered compulsory repatriation of immigrants and eclipsed the power of overtly racist political parties such as the National Front.[[50]](#footnote-50)

Now there is a points system that gives advantage to those with money, a job on higher pay and having a Doctorated Degree. In 2012 the UK **Home Office hostile environment policy** is a set of administrative and legislative measures designed to make staying in the [United Kingdom](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Kingdom) as difficult as possible for people without [leave to remain](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indefinite_leave_to_remain), in the hope that they may "[voluntarily leave](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Self-deportation)”[[51]](#footnote-51) The policy has been cited as one of the harshest immigration policies in the history of the United Kingdom, and has been widely criticised as inhumane, ineffective, and unlawful. The [United Nations Human Rights Council](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Nations_Human_Rights_Council) has stated that the policy has fostered xenophobia within the UK, while the [Equality and Human Rights Commission](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Equality_and_Human_Rights_Commission) has found that the policy broke equalities law. It has notably led to significant issues with the [Windrush generation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Windrush_generation) and other [Commonwealth citizens](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Commonwealth_citizen) being deported after not being able to prove their right to remain in the UK, despite being guaranteed that right.

The Windrush scandal was a 2018 British [political scandal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political_scandal) concerning people who were wrongly [detained](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Immigration_detention_in_the_United_Kingdom), denied legal rights, threatened with [deportation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/UK_immigration_enforcement) and in at least 83 cases wrongly deported from the UK by the [Home Office](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Home_Office). Many of those affected had been born [British subjects](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_subject) and had arrived in the UK before 1973, particularly from [Caribbean countries](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caribbean) as members of the "[Windrush generation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Windrush_generation)" (so named after the [*Empire Windrush*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMT_Empire_Windrush), the ship that brought one of the first groups of West Indian migrants to the UK in 1948). As well as those who were deported, an unknown number were detained, lost their jobs or homes, had their passports confiscated or were denied benefits or medical care to which they were entitled. A number of long-term UK residents were refused re-entry to the UK; a larger number were threatened with immediate deportation by the Home Office. Linked by commentators to the ["hostile environment policy"](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Home_Office_hostile_environment_policy) instituted by [Theresa May](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theresa_May) during her time as [Home Secretary](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Home_Secretary), the scandal led to the resignation of [Amber Rudd](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amber_Rudd) as Home Secretary in April 2018 and the appointment of [Sajid Javid](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sajid_Javid) as her successor. The whole process doubly impacted on disabled people identified who were denied treatment or benefits. The scandal also prompted a wider debate about British immigration policy and Home Office practice. This was partly ended when Commonwealth leaders attending the Commonwealth Heads of Government Conference in London in 2018[[52]](#footnote-52) challenged the UK Government who were forced to offer compensation to those impacted. Prime Minister May was forced to apologize and then pledged to “do whatever it takes” to fix the problem and promise compensation to “resolve the anxieties and problems which some of the Windrush generation have suffered.”[[53]](#footnote-53)

# **x. Disability and forced migration in UK: What are the problems and what needs to change? [[54]](#footnote-54)**

I’m disabled… we are in the same boat, kind of… they tell me things to do as a disabled person, you can go here, do this, do that… But at the end of the day, I’m an asylum seeker, it changes everything[[55]](#footnote-55).

I have worked with disabled asylum seekers in the UK for almost a decade. I first started trying to bring together a group of disabled people seeking asylum, as part of a wider project with UK Disabled People’s Council[[56]](#footnote-56). My first hurdle was finding people. I spoke to the disabled people’s organisations that I knew but found none that were aware of asylum seekers among their members. I rang a major charity working with refugees and was told **‘disabled asylum seekers … don’t really exist’.**

I had been involved in the disability movement for many years and was prepared for the everyday barriers and routine disregard for the needs of disabled people. I am the daughter of a refugee and grew up with stories of the traumas of losing one’s home. I had been volunteering in the asylum sector. I was therefore prepared for the injustice and hostility of asylum policy. However, I was not prepared for the casual denial of people’s very existence, even within organisations designed to provide support.

Eventually, a group of seven disabled asylum seekers came together. They worked with artist Andrew Bolton to create a mural showing their key messages.

This is a Mural showing key messages of disabled asylum seekers



This group taught me of the relentless and systematic restrictions hindering access to the services and support necessary to meet basic human needs. At the time of writing, seven years later:

* one has been murdered, after unsuccessfully seeking police protection.
* two have died of cancer, having delayed seeking medical advice in the knowledge that secondary healthcare is unavailable to people without legal migration status.
* one has disappeared, having been excluded from multiple support organisations for disruptive behaviour related to mental distress.

It is important to be clear that the injustices of the UK asylum system are not restricted to people who are already disabled. The lives of many asylum seekers are reduced to struggles for basic survival.  And many of these injustices are not the result of oversights. The UK asylum system is deliberately designed to restrict access to basic services and support. The UK asylum system is deliberately disabling. I am focussing on the UK because that is where I am based. I am aware in some countries, disabled people and asylum seekers may have better access to services and support, and in other places, it may be worse. Our focus must be on building solidarity not the unhelpful distraction of ranking degrees of shame.

I will outline what I have learned about the injustice that disabled asylum seekers are facing. I will describe what I see as the causes. Then I will explain why I believe some current initiatives actually reinforce the core problem. Finally, I will explain what Ibelieve really needs to change. If we are to build effective resistance to these injustices, we need to think through what the problem is. We need to avoid putting all our energy into reducing some immediate symptoms of disadvantage for some individuals but leaving the causes untouched.

**What is the problem?**

When I listen to disabled asylum seekers and refugees speak of their experiences, I wonder how we have come to a point where people can be treated SO badly. The injustice is widespread. For example, among people I have met:

*A blind man was released from immigration detention and left on a street corner with no assistance, in a town where he knew no-one. He was only helped after collapsing and being taken to hospital.*

*A woman was in hospital ready for an operation when her migration status was checked and the operation was cancelled. Her support was cut off and she could not walk as far as the foodbank.*

*A young person with haemophilia was detained and denied medication until after he had been bleeding for three days. He was then taken to hospital – and treated, in handcuffs.*

None of these experiences are unusual. None of them received any media attention. These are everyday occurrences. There appears to be increasingly widespread acceptance that some people deserve human rights, but others do not.

If commitment to universal human rights is broken, it becomes an easy step for rights to be removed from ever more people. Recent UK laws show how the denial of rights has been extended from one group to another.

* **in 1999** the Immigration and Asylum Act removed the rights of asylum seekers to access mainstream benefits. There was no longer any financial recognition of the costs of being disabled for those people also seeking asylum. acknowledgement of the costs of being disabled. People also lost the right to choose where to live and may be forced to move to areas of cheap housing, away from support networks.

There was no organised resistance from the disability movement. Perhaps people’s attention was set on the more positive goal of the **UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**. This was passed in 2006, after many years of campaigning. But when the British government signed the Convention it added a reservation excluding immigration policy from the government’s obligations. There was little organised resistance. Perhaps the reservation was seen as a minor issue in comparison with the ground-breaking international recognition of disability rights.

* However, in 2012 the **Welfare reform act** drastically cut support available to disabled citizens. It introduced the bedroom tax, forcing people to move to areas of cheap housing. This legislation, together with wider cuts to services and support, led a **UN investigation** to report the British government’s approach as ‘grave and systematic violations of the rights’ of disabled people.

Even now, similarities with policies imposed on disabled asylum seekers more than a decade earlier are rarely mentioned. Different standards seem to be widely accepted for citizens compared with for asylum seekers.

I suggest that the removal of rights from disabled citizens in the UK, is the price we are paying for the lack of resistance when the rights of asylum seekers were removed.

**The asylum system itself is disabling.**

Some people arrive in Britain as disabled people, but others become disabled when here. Disabled asylum seekers often describe the system as psychological torture. If someone is tortured then symptoms are inevitable. The despair one person felt led him to jump off a bridge. This caused physical impairment as well as the ongoing mental distress. Another person developed serious back problems, after having to sleep on park benches.

**What action is already taking place?**

Some initiatives are already taking place or have been proposed in relation to the experiences of disabled asylum seekers. Perhaps doing something is better than doing nothing, but I suggest some action distracts us from the fundamental causes of the problem, sometimes even reinforcing divisions.

**Labels of ‘vulnerability’**

In the Home Office and other institutions, there is increasing focus on the need to identify ‘vulnerable’ people, who are then eligible for ‘safeguarding’. Of course, support should be provided to people in crisis. And of course, this is better than ignoring people’s existence. But labelling disabled people as ‘vulnerable’ takes us back to before the disability movement began. All humans are vulnerable. Disabled people have the same needs as anyone else. The issue is whether people face barriers getting those needs met. As disabled people - citizens or migrants - know too well, if support is available and our needs are met, then our conditions may improve; if support is removed, then conditions may deteriorate. Labelling certain individuals as ‘vulnerable’ risks labelling the person as the problem, distracts from the barriers faced and reinforces ideas that some people are more deserving than others, which, I suggest, is the core of the problem.

**Deserving and undeserving**

The negative effect of labelling someone as undeserving may be obvious. But labelling certain people as particularly deserving also implies that others are not.

* If Syrian families selected for resettlement are particularly deserving, does that mean asylum seekers are not?
* If the children of Calais are particularly deserving, does that mean single adult men are not?
* And most relevant to the experiences of disabled people: If someone deserves support because they are labelled as vulnerable, does that mean that others do not?

Of course, sometimes we have to use any means necessary to save the lives of those affected, but the basis of our campaigning must be about solidarity and equal rights, not anyone’s exceptional status. The issues faced by asylum seekers also challenge wider campaigning goals.

**Inclusion**

Sometimes it is assumed that the solution to the exclusion of disabled people must be inclusion. But inclusion in an oppressive system is no solution – we do not want ramps in immigration detention centres, we want rid of detention centres. Or, as one disabled activist put it, campaigning for inclusion in the asylum system is like campaigning for sign language interpreters at the gallows.

**Counting people**

I am often told we need to know how many disabled asylum seekers exist. I ask why? And how? I have met many people who do not define themselves as disabled but who do experience barriers based on physical, psychological or sensory impairments. Do we count people as disabled who say they are not? If the problem is the barriers, then why not focus on addressing the barriers? Surely, injustice is injustice however many people are affected.

More worrying perhaps is that assumed definitions of disability appear to be different for asylum seekers than for citizens. People tell me that not many asylum seekers are disabled, but then tell me it is **normal** for asylum seekers to experience serious mental distress. It is not new, or radical, to include mental distress in definitions of disability. And the idea that if something is ‘normal’ then it is not disabling, is particularly problematic

**What does need to be done?**

If we accept that the problem is systemic then we need to change the system, not choose who is deserving within it, include people, or count people in it. I am not suggesting that reducing immediate suffering is unimportant, but focussing only on symptoms is like pulling drowning babies out of a river without stopping the person throwing them in.

If we had had a movement strong enough to resist the removal of rights from disabled asylum seekers in 1999, then perhaps those policies would not have been extended to citizens a decade later. We can, and should, blame the government for many things – but until now the government has known that removing rights from asylum seekers, and particularly disabled asylum seekers, will not cause protests. That is our collective responsibility and that is in our power to change’.

# **xi. Conclusions**

* We have learned that:
* Black Lives Matter and we must learn the history of racism and disabilism and how they interact.
* Attempts to deport people lead to increased mental health and make worse the impairments people already have .
* First Nations people need compensation and justice for the high levels of disability they experience.
* The underdevelopment of much of Africa and Caribbean due to Slave Trade have led to high levels of disability and reparations must be paid.
* Human rights and justice are still required as racism continues to impact on disabled people in many parts of the Commonwealth.
* Our DPOs and we as disabled activists have to be engaged in ant-racist struggles and ensure those organising campaigns recognise disabled Black people are an important part of those struggles.

***Follow Up Activity 11.4***

***Racism is on the rise around the world but so is opposition to it.***

***a) Explain how you would organise a local campaign to unite disabled people and those subject to racism together?***

***b) Write a letter to the editor of a British Newspaper -Guardian or Times explaining why UK people should be angry about cuts in aid to your country, using some arguments you have developed in earlier activities linking disability prejudice and race prejudice.***

**The activities below are only suggestions to take into your DPO as a general follow up and are not for credit on this course.**

**C. Future Implementation Strategies Disability, Anti-Racism, Equality and Respect for Ethnic Minorities**

i) Create space within DPOs for education discussion on roots of racism and policy development on anti-racism.

ii) Encourage the formation of groups of disabled people from indigenous and ethnic minority or majority groups subject to racism to meet together to share their common experience and develop policy positions to take into the wider DPO community.

iii) As racism is fundamentally a responsibility of the perpetrator community, then all DPOs need to educate themselves on the origins of racism, its current manifestations and impact on disabled people and demonstrate solidarity in challenging racist thinking, behaviour and policies.

iv) Investigate, track and publicise instances of intersectional discrimination based on a combination of disabilism, racism, sexism and other forms of unequal treatment.

v) DPOs to support judicial challenges to multiple discrimination and the subsequent development of guidance and training to cease the behaviour and discrimination identified.

# **Appendix 1 Commonwealth Disabled People’s Forum Statement on Anti-Racism 29th June 2020**

**Commonwealth Disabled People’s Statement on combatting Racism, Supporting Black Lives Matter and accelerating race equality and decolonization of the media, culture and school and college curricula throughout the Commonwealth.**

The Commonwealth Disabled People’s Forum representing the more than 450 million disabled people in 54 countries of the Commonwealth support the current global protests against racism. We further recognise the impact on disabled people of the history of racism in the Commonwealth and the need to challenge the impact of colonisation, dispossession, current and historical colonial acts of oppression, and continuing injustice and inequality especially to indigenous peoples. The CDPF works to ensure that measures are in place to address these issues so that reconciliation can take place.(Constitutional Object 3.i of CDPF).

We further recognize and reaffirm the Lusaka Declaration of the Commonwealth Heads of Government (1979),which helped created a climate to get rid of apartheid in South Africa, but was aimed at all countries. The Declaration committed the Commonwealth:

“United in our desire to rid the world of the evils of racism and racial prejudice, we proclaim our faith in the

inherent dignity and worth of the human person and declare that:

1. the peoples of the Commonwealth have the right to live freely in dignity and equality, without any distinction or exclusion based on race, colour, sex, descent, or national or ethnic origin;

2. while everyone is free to retain diversity in his or her culture and lifestyle, this diversity does not justify the perpetuation of racial prejudice or racially discriminatory practices;

3. everyone has the right to equality before the law and equal justice under the law;

4. everyone has the right to effective remedies and protection against any form of discrimination based on the grounds of race, colour, sex, descent, or national or ethnic origin” and ….

“We reaffirm that it is the duty of all the peoples of the Commonwealth to work together for the total eradication of the infamous policy of apartheid which is internationally recognised as a crime against the conscience and dignity of mankind and the very existence of which is an affront to humanity.

We agree that everyone has the right to protection against acts of incitement to racial hatred and discrimination, whether committed by individuals, groups or other organisations.

We affirm that there should be no discrimination based on race, colour, sex, descent or national or ethnic origin in the acquisition or exercise of the right to vote; in the field of civil rights or access to citizenship; or in the economic, social or cultural fields, particularly education, health, employment, occupation, housing, social security and cultural life.

We attach particular importance to ensuring that children shall be protected from practices which may foster racism or racial prejudice. Children have the right to be brought up and educated in a spirit of tolerance and understanding so as to be able to contribute fully to the building of future societies based on justice and friendship.

We believe that those groups in societies who may be especially disadvantaged because of residual racist attitudes are entitled to the fullest protection of the law.

We recognise that the history of the Commonwealth and its diversity require that special attention should be paid to the problems of indigenous minorities. We recognise that the same special attention should be paid to the problems of immigrants, immigrant workers and refugees”.

The CDPF recognise that 40 years of free market economics, globalisation and COVID-19 have acted to increase racism and further marginalise many social groups, especially disabled people and that false science and outdated racist tropes and stereotypes are again circulating in the media magnified by the new largely uncontrolled social media.

The CDPF calls on all civil society organisations and the leaders of Commonwealth countries to:

* Declare their support for ‘Black Lives Matter’ and promote racial and ethnic harmony
* Work with community organisations and educators to decolonise school and college curricula
* Ensure that galleries, museums and public statues recount the real history of colonialism, slavery and empire
* Promote a spirit of peace, environmental sustainability, reconciliation and collaboration.
* Ensure reparations are made to indigenous and minority ethnic peoples wronged by colonialism
* Ensure laws are in place and prosecutions carried out to those who peddle race hatred
* Governments to challenge institutional racism in the police and other state agencies.
* Ongoing equality training is established for all Parliamentarians, civil servants, professionals and business managers.

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