# THE DREAM JOB

## 21 Steps to enhance Black & Ethnic Minority opportunities in Scotland

EMPOWER
Ethnic Minorities Participating
On Wider Economic Responsibilities

Centre for Human Ecology

Equal

Europe and Scotland
Making it **work together**

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This 15th anniversary PDF re-published June 2020, in memory of George Floyd

## Foreword to the 2020 PDF edition

As we celebrate the 15th anniversary of the publication of the Dream Job, the world is also shocked by the killing of George Floyd. He died on 25th May 2020 in Minneapolis, Minnesota, after Derek Chauvin, a white police officer, knelt on his neck for almost nine minutes while he was handcuffed face down on the street.

When the Centre for Human Ecology wrote the Dream Job report in 2005, we all hoped that things would get better for the most vulnerable people in our society, i.e. the most economically and politically excluded communities in Scotland. We also hoped then for a better world for all human beings.

However, what we have witnessed in the past 15 years is those who were excluded in 2005 are still marginalised and the feeling of otherness is expanding and togetherness diminishing. The collapse of the banking system in 2008 has affected the lives of the precariat and working-class people more than members of other social classes. Furthermore, the right-wing media has been spreading its cancerous venom against equality groups, and it has succeeded in dividing society. However, the recent killing of George Floyd has sent a clear message to the world as it has brought many black and white, young and old people together against those who want to divide us.

Thank you to the Centre for Human Ecology and associates for dedicating the Dream Job publication anniversary in memory of George Floyd.

Tesfu Gessesse, former chair of EMPOWER Scotland

JOB

This report is also on the internet at **www.che.ac.uk**

SPRING 2005

minority**opportunity**

# FOREWORD

by the Chair of EMPOWER Scotland

**Tesfu Gessesse**
Chairman, Empower Scotland

**It gives me great pleasure to introduce this very important report about minority ethnic communities in Scotland and their desire to contribute fully to Scottish culture and economy.**

I am particularly delighted to be associated with the work of the Centre for Human Ecology, an organisation that tries to bring issues to the front that others want to bury under the surface.

The 'Dream Job' report highlights current issues about the BME community in Scotland, their experience of living and working in Scotland and their aspirations.

The report also provides the reader with 21 steps that guide policy makers and practitioners to address the issues that the research highlights. These summarise this report and may be read on pages 23-24.

Finally I would like to thank the authors Alastair McIntosh, Vérène Nicolas, Tara O'Leary, Jane Rosegrant and Nick Wilding - all of whom are fellows of the Centre for Human Ecology.

**Vérène Nicolas**
Community Programme Manager, CHE

# How is it that a report on minority ethnic job opportunities was written by an organisation called The Centre for Human Ecology (CHE)?

**Well, "human ecology" is the study of what makes healthy communities. It is about people and the environments they live in.**

But at the CHE, we don't just do research. We also work for community empowerment. In 1999 our staff undertook the research for a study called People and Parliament. In this, 500 groups told MSPs how they felt about Scotland and its future.

Some of these were ethnic minorities. They made it clear that racism was their biggest worry. That led us to us doing a follow-up - Who's a Real Scot? The Report of Embracing Multicultural Scotland. It shocked the nation. Every one of the 28 black and minority ethnic (BME) groups who participated had experienced racism.

But the report also suggested creative ways forward. It showed that hospitality and fostership are core Scottish values. And multiple identities are part of Scottish identity. (There's a summary at the end of this report). All this led to CHE being invited to work with EMPOWER. This time we posed a simple question.

## Most white Scots aspire to find a "DREAM JOB": does the same go for ethnic minorities?

Read on, and find out....


## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Not all participants wished to remain anonymous - quite the contrary - but many did, and so all material presented here is anonymously presented. Sometimes, where it is relevant to do so or where people clearly wished their point to be linked to their identity, an indication has been given of the type of ethnic group concerned. Ethnic minority organisations that participated by organising focus groups are as follows, and their help is acknowledged with warm thanks:

Black Community Development Project (Pilton)
Ethnic Minority Enterprise Centre (Glasgow)
Glasgow Central Mosque • Skillnet (Edinburgh)

# A SCOPING REPORT ON BLACK AND MINORITY ETHNIC OPPORTUNITY IN SCOTLAND.

## A STUDY FROM THE CENTRE FOR HUMAN ECOLOGY

By Fellows of the Centre for Human Ecology, Edinburgh, in alphabetical order, Alastair McIntosh, Vérène Nicolas, Tara O'Leary, Jane Rosegrant & Nick Wilding.

## BACKGROUND

**Many white Scots take it for granted that they can aspire to a "dream job". We asked, would the same be true for black and ethnic minority people? We were aware that social class might be a bigger determinant of aspiration than race - many participants indicated this by commenting that their success in achieving aspirations was substantially helped by having had family support - but we believed that the notion of a dream job would be valuable in any case for opening up discussion.**

We also wished to probe the importance of role modelling in broadening people's aspirations. What light, we wondered, might possible BME role models be able to shed by way of expanding people's vision in Scotland today?

This document reports on the research that we undertook with individuals from a range of BME backgrounds traversing Scotland from the North-East to the extreme South-West.

Even with this small survey, a rich body of insight has emerged. This report summarises the findings. It mainly uses quotes, or descriptions, from both the individuals themselves and the focus groups.

Obvious care must be taken in using this report. We have tried to be sensitive in how we have generalised from some BME people to many or all, but such generalisation will inevitably, on some occasions, be questionable. For example, faith sensitivity in places of work is a matter of over-riding concern for some groups, but an irrelevance to others. As a report like this has inevitably had to generalise at times, we urge sensitivity in the uses made of it.

# REPORT STRUCTURE

We asked:

1 "Could you tell us of a story of an experience of work in Scotland?"

2 "What would be a dream job for the young people in your community?"

3 "Do you know anyone from your community that has a dream job?"

4 "What would help more young people from your community to get a dream job?"

There is necessarily considerable overlap between some of these categories in the material chosen to be quoted. Also, some of the quotes used have been composite quotes reconstructed from notes after the meeting was over. Where this has been the case, care has been taken to capture the spirit of what was said without elaboration.

# IN THEIR OWN WORDS...

A HEALTH SERVICE EXECUTIVE WHO DESCRIBES HIS MULTIPLE IDENTITY AS SCOTTISH, NIGERIAN AND JEWISH

*"To get to where I'm at now I've had to do lots of dogsbody work. At times you feel like a caged animal. But perseverance is the key. I think a lot – I'm a deep thinker. Having a strategic vision and endurance is important. Don't lose that sense of direction – know that detours will eventually take you back.*

*I've also been lucky – I've been in the right place at the right time with the right set of skills. You have to market yourself so your employers buy your skill-set. Family matters too – my father and mother told me I possessed leadership qualities from a very early age.*

*My dream job is to be making the strategic decisions for which I have been providing advice ... I want to be part of the 'new leadership for the NHS' – which is why I'm taking an MBA degree. I want to be able to motivate people and really make a positive impact on people's experience of health-care."*

WE ASKED:

# 1. Could you tell us a story of an experience of work in Scotland?

THIS WAS THE WARM-UP QUESTION, OPENING OUT PARTICIPANTS' PERSONAL EXPERIENCE. SOME HAD VERY POSITIVE EXPERIENCES:

"I worked at Gap over Christmas – got nothing bad to say about it – good pay, they treated me well."

"I've moved beyond what I thought I could do by breaking the barriers and getting to the position I now occupy. Moving from working in a fast food restaurant in 1982 to where I am now has been a major leap forward. I was the first Black woman on the General Council of the Scottish Trade-Union Congress. I also helped set up the Black Workers Committee within the STUC."

Others had negative experiences:

"I've had loads of jobs. I worked in a recruitment agency where I was the only Asian person; I'm working for the Royal Bank now. I got disciplined the other day for speaking to a customer in our language – the manager thought I might be telling secrets about information in the bank. They're very inflexible, too – I wanted a holiday for my tradition but they wouldn't give me one. I think it's racism."

Vicki was trying as a student to get part-time work. She tried McDonald's and was left waiting outside an office for three hours before someone saw her. She was then left another hour before being told that here were 'no vacancies'. This confirmed another report of an African man who had professional qualifications from Zimbabwe but couldn't get work here. He noticed a sign on McD's window inviting members of the public to 'apply within today'. However, on entry to the shop, he was told that all vacancies had been filled.

"I have a friend who's a chartered accountant. Over 20 years she still hasn't reached £20k. They'll take in new people over her head."

## A FORMER IRAQI ARMY SOLDIER, NOW A RESTAURATEUR AND LANDSCAPE ARTIST

*"I started off as a petroleum engineer in Iraq. In 1982 I was called up to serve in Saddam Hussein's army against Iran. It was horrible, but when not fighting, I'd sketch and paint the officers' horses. After getting wounded in my back I was given light duties as a cook, and later, I was given a state scholarship to go and study painting in Dundee. So that's how I now run a seafood restaurant for one part of my living, and I'm an artist for the other. Painting is my passion in life. I paint elemental Scottish landscapes, often with spiritual themes – such as Moses in the West of Scotland!*

*Yes, I often get racist comments that I look like Bin Laden or the Yorkshire Ripper, but it's just coming from ignorant people. You're better staying with the nice ones, but if you show them you're as good as they are, they'll maybe apologise, shake your hand or even want to buy you a drink!"*

# 1. Could you tell us a story of an experience of work in Scotland? cont'd

**Indeed, one Nigerian women in Aberdeen had compiled a list of some 30 Africans in the area who had found it impossible to get jobs commensurate with their experience.**

Several had PhDs, or were doctors, or fully qualified teachers. Some had been forced to take jobs such as cleaners or hairdressers. It was believed by Aberdeen African women that the problems are greater in Scotland than in England:

"If Africans want to get a job here they have to go down South, but not stay in Scotland. Equal opportunities for ethnic minorities are acknowledged and more visible down South. Here the ethnic minorities are still not visible. There are more down South so there's more opportunity, and awareness has been created."

There was clearly a diversity of experience and perception on this matter amongst BMEs. One young job-seeker in Glasgow said:

"Some foreigners come here and think they can get jobs even if it's a recession, and then call it racism. But [native] Scots accept that there's a recession and not so many jobs around."

There was also a recognition that experience in the jobs market will vary with one's own attitude. Some of those who had achieved most appeared surprisingly philosophical about the difficulties they had faced along the way.

*"What you do in life comes back to you ... smile at the world and the world smiles back."*

Indeed, the above respondent suggested that race is not the only barrier, but that poverty and structural poverty are intertwined with it. It is important to disaggregate these factors so that problems are not targeted in the wrong way. What is perceived as a problem of race may, in fact, be more one of belonging to a disadvantaged social class or even an aspect of individual personality. In any ethnic group there will be a wide range of individual dispositions as well as various different strata of structural problems. An appreciation of, and where appropriate, sympathy towards how these all interact is prerequisite to tackling discrimination.

# 1. Could you tell us a story of an experience of work in Scotland? cont'd

**Racial disadvantage can have a rural face as well as the more widely recognised urban one.**

"Rural life teaches independence and this has helped. But many ethnic minorities in the Highlands do not come forward. Some even feel that I have been creating issues that don't need addressed. They are so scattered and there are not real communities [with which they can ethnically identify]; only isolated families. They have no chance to become politicised; they just keep their heads down and quietly go about their business rather than facing up to the issues. Ethnic minorities buy into the myth of the rural, that it's happy and safe. When they also experience isolation and racism, it is difficult to speak up. Rural areas can be quite difficult places in which to be different, whether that is racially, sexually or, for instance, if you suffer domestic abuse."

Young men at a Glasgow mosque said that they experience disadvantage in the workplace at two levels. There is the personal and institutional racism common to all BMEs that, as they see it, can only be eradicated through education. But in addition, there are the restrictions that they face deriving from their religion. This prohibits them from participating in some types of work - e.g. alcohol sales, the financial sector (where money-lending at interest, usury, is concerned), involvement with food that is not halal, and the free mixing with women in private space.

*"I have been there, sitting with my orange juice feeling uncomfortable. I don't want to be in that situation. I shouldn't have to compromise my ideals. If I could explain that first, it would be OK, but sometimes you just don't feel able to. I didn't have the confidence to explain it."*

They explained that it is difficult to take a job where business may be done over a pub lunch if your interpretation of your religion is that you should avoid the presence of alcohol. In such situations. Confidence is pivotal in feeling able to stand up for your culture and values.

# 1. Could you tell us a story of an experience of work in Scotland? cont'd

**For many groups, the workplace entailed a two-way dynamic: on the one hand, the question of whether the white mainstream were prepared to invest confidence in them, and on the other, finding the confidence to function on an equal footing in the mainstream.**

Sometimes the simple fact of colour could wrongfoot that equality of footing. For example, it was reported that one interviewee, a successful businesswoman running her own training consultancy,

"... notes that often during a training course she is leading, she will be the only black person in the room. This has a strong impact on many participants, although it is difficult to know how long this lasts or what they actually "do" with it."

Another found that his natural confidence had enabled him to lead, but had also led him into some danger:

"My enthusiasm increases when I can share it with others; I talk the language they talk. But sometimes my vision is taken up by a group, but it clashes with the agenda of those in power, and I feel the doors closing. That happened in a meeting that was supposed to be an open meeting and I made a suggestion that wasn't on the agenda and people liked it but I was told off very severely afterwards."

This experience, of course, could be called, simply, "politics" - but the lesson that can be drawn from it is that many BMEs experience being pushed into a precocious and unasked for politicisation of their roles simply because they have to express heightened confidence to succeed.

Developing appropriate confidence is, however, something that can draw people into a deeper empowerment in their own lives, and it is on this basis that training perhaps needs to proceed:

"Not believing in yourself can be a major barrier, and letting other people's opinions rule your life. This is actually something you can work on. You can make that change. It's your choice, unlike a lot of the other bigger issues."

WE ASKED:

# 2. What would be a dream-job for the young people in your community?

THERE WAS A WIDE VARIATION HERE, FROM THOSE WHO HAD A CLEAR VISION OF THEIR DREAM JOB, TO THOSE WHO FELT IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO THINK IN SUCH TERMS BECAUSE MAINSTREAM WHITE SOCIETY BLOCKS THEM FROM THAT OPTION.

There was no doubt that people had dreams. Some, as we shall see, were well on their way to being realised; others - especially those of some of the young - were self-confessed pipe dreams:

"I want to own a record company- for the money. But it's a dream."

"I want to be the manager of a football club - even if you fail a thousand times, if you have the right attitude and persistence you can get there. It's possible. It's like the film where the actor tried a 1000 agencies, then got the right one and is now a big star."

Tension existed between a desire to "get on in the world" and the wish to respect traditions and religions of origin that had a different worldview to that of the "world" or the "West". A young Muslim whose parents were of Asian origin said:

"I'm dealing with a multicultural environment. I respect their needs and want them to respect mine. To be honest, we want the best of both worlds.... I'm into getting a sports car. I want those things too. You feel pressures like to get as much money as you can and to have a big wedding, etc.."

## A WOMEN'S RIGHTS WORKER

"*I spent a year away in the Indian sub-continent and South Africa. I worked on environmental issues and want to do more of it. I want to travel and become an International Aid worker. If other people can do it,why couldn't I?*

*Most of the racism I experienced was at school. Since I left school, I haven't really experienced racism.*

*I have come back from my year away with a lot of confidence. I don't want to work in the Black sector anymore. I want to work in the mainstream. The Black sector is under-funded and overworked. If the Scottish Executive is serious about social exclusion, Black women should be able to access these mainstream facilities. If, as a Black woman, you go and work in an area when there aren't other Black women, you can feel uncomfortable.*

*My father is a community leader. My father came to Britain with nothing and has now established his reputation. He is the Chair of [a leading ethnic representative organisation] and he mixes with a lot of people. I think I have got a very good father in the sense that he hasn't prevented me doing what I have wanted to do. I know other people for whom reputation in the community is more of a concern for them.*"

# 2. What would be a dream-job for the young people in your community? cont'd

**African women in Aberdeen were particularly articulate about the racism they have experienced. They asked what was the point of encouraging the children to dream when the adults find their dreams frustrated.**

They mentioned the close connection many of them had with the oil industry, and they wondered whether there would be differences in experience between those of them permanently settled in Scotland (through marriage or because socio-economic structures in Nigeria have become so impossible to live with), and those who were temporarily over from Nigeria on placement with Shell plc, and whose social status and security was therefore relatively high.

They felt a strong sense of indignation that their superior qualifications had not been recognised here, and that many of them had been reduced to taking jobs that they would never consider in Nigeria such as hairdressing and cleaning. Issues of both race and class seemed to intertwine here: the acceptance that they looked for was both ethnic and pertaining to their perceived superior social class. They indicated that they were very conscious of their professional standing and even had with them a list of the degrees held by members of their network. They felt that racism had robbed them of the opportunity to make use of these qualifications and experience. They felt cheated and even bitter about this. With a profoundly articulate and passionate voice they described how their children were caught up in a spiral of negative aspiration; something they felt was a problem with being in Scotland much more than would be the case if they lived in England.

*"What was the point of encouraging the children to dream when the adults find their dreams frustrated..."*

"Where we all came from the children all look up to the status of their parents. You have a mother who's a lawyer and the father's a doctor and the children look up to that. But when the parents can't get jobs for which they're qualified, the children say to their parents, "I don't have to be a doctor to be a cleaner", and they don't try. Unless they [white Scots] acknowledge it, our children will become useless and they'll become pains in the butt for everybody, because they'll develop low aspirations, or no aspiration at all. The only way they can get out of it is to go down South."

# 2. What would be a dream-job for the young people in your community? cont'd

**Asked to expand on Scots-English differences in the reception of BME people, they said:**

> *"Our children are growing up here. Their approach to life is different from ours. The youth hate the label 'ethnic'. They are 'Asian-Scot' or 'African-Scot'."*

"In England equal opportunities for ethnic minorities are more acknowledged and greater awareness has been created. In England they have black people who are MPs and have good jobs, and I think the English are more open to other cultures than Scottish people. Scottish people are proud of their culture which is good, but when you pretend that others don't exist it is not good."

There were echoes of this in other groups too. Some comments about it by Scots sociologist Andrew Samuel are given further on. But there was also a counterpoint position of some groups and individuals finding that they were able to find a footing in Scotland. This showed where they had felt able to embrace Scottishness as part of their identity:

"Our children are growing up here. Their approach to life is different from ours. The youth hate the label 'ethnic'. They are 'Asian-Scot' or 'African-Scot'."

And it showed in some of their dream job aspirations, especially for those who were well on their way towards achieving these visions:
"[Miss X's] dream-job is to be in the Scottish Executive in charge of Youth Work for Scotland, and European Funding - she has a firm sense that this is where she is heading."

"I want to be making the strategic decisions for which I have been providing advice ... I want to be the 'new leadership for the NHS' [and] really make an impact. My vision is to be in a position to make decisions to make a positive impact on peoples' experience of healthcare."

"I'd like everybody to be able to be able to do in their lives what I've done here. I have kids with a Dundonian accent and I'm very lucky to have two lives - my life here, and that in Iraq."

# 2. What would be a dream-job for the young people in your community? cont'd

**It was noteworthy that these individuals gave responses that suggested an easy and convivial sense of confidence, as distinct from one born out of pushing itself assertively as a result of their understandable frustration. There is obviously a huge Catch 22 at work in all this. The decision whether to consider Scotland as your home or just a stopping off point is likely to affect your experience of Scotland and how Scotland relates to you; but unless you are in a position to make that decision, and thereby develop a commitment to Scotland, you are unlikely to be able to develop the convivial confidence that allows you to experience it as home.**

The difficulty for some BMEs is to break through that Catch 22 situation in the first place by pushing at racist barriers in ways that do not cause higher ones to be erected. It is a difficulty fraught with the tension between BME Individuals learning how to relate to the host culture, and finding themselves the object of victim blaming if they do not quite get it right.

Many participants commented on the importance of recognising difference amongst BMEs, and the question does therefore arise as to how these differences interact and fit in at a time when the white mainsteam in both Scotland and England are wrestling with their own identity questions.

Young professional Muslims acknowledged with respect to their special faith-based needs:

"There's a problem of fairness - if you allow the Muslim privileges, such as time off to pray, how do you balance those needs so that other employees don't think the Muslim's getting privileged treatment?"

One privately wrote:

"It is a difficult problem to resolve. A possible solution would be not to allow time off for Muslims such that they are working less hours, but to allow Muslims to make up for time spent fulfiling their duties such as praying by working overtime, as long as such allowances do not compromise their performance at work. Most practising Muslims would agree to such an arrangement as they too would be sensitive to the perception of unfair treatment by their work colleagues and would not expect any special treatment."

# 2. What would be a dream-job for the young people in your community? cont'd

**A Glasgow Muslim woman sympathetically remarked that one of the difficulties for everybody was just finding the energy to be inclusive:**

> *"Peoples own barriers become your barriers"*

"Other people's tiredness and lack of confidence, in other words, people's own barriers become your barriers. Most people have principles of equality, equity, etc. but they don't always have the energy (or confidence) to put them into practice. [We have been through] a political system that, for 18 years, didn't respect diversity and equity [and there's the] Scottish continued "uncomfortableness" with diversity, not necessarily racism, but just being uncomfortable with differences."

It is arguably the case that England, particularly in the South East, is a more competitive and opportunity-orientated society than Scotland, which often prides itself on having a more communitarian and co-operative ethos. We see this reflected, for instance, in Scotland's socialist politics. We find it expressed as an ideal, though often not put into practice, that stretches back to Scotland's historic preference for a Presbyterian (i.e. bottom-up and egalitarian) rather than an Episcopalian (i.e. top-down and hierarchical) basis of Established church government, and its political reflection in the national constitution.

Whilst these differences are buried in a history that goes back at least 900 years, and certainly to the Reformation Parliament of 1560, it ought not escape consideration that the psychology of "Scottishness" and "Englishness" may lead to different types of BME cultures experiencing different degrees of acceptance in different parts of Britain. A competitive culture based on opportunity can address racism through meritocratic measures. A culture based around cooperation will tend to base its anti-racism measures more around contribution to the community. If these differences between Scotland and England are not recognised, we risk only part understanding the causes of racism and we risk recommending inappropriate measures to alleviate the problem in different parts of Britain. The difficulty is that to recognise these differences is itself contentious, and sometimes divisive, within mainstream white culture. We therefore find ourselves in a situation that demands great sensitivity, careful new research, and perhaps the gradual opening out of more profound understandings of both inclusion and respect for one another when ancient constructs of national identity confront the "globalised" implications of living in one world.

This is ground that is shifting all the time. Some of that shift offers hope, especially when it opens possibilities for dual or multiple identities that help people to reconcile, and celebrate, their diversity:

We asked:

# 3. Do you know anyone from your community that has a dream job?

THIS QUESTION WAS ASKED TO ELICIT THE EXTENT TO WHICH ROLE MODELLING WAS IMPORTANT. AGAIN, A SPECTRUM, OR RATHER, A POLARITY OF VIEWS EMERGED. SOME HAD ROLE MODELS, BUT THERE WERE NOT MANY:

"When we talk of role models, I suppose I wanted to be like my father. There are only two women from the Pakistani community in Edinburgh who could have been role models for me when I was growing up, although I didn't agree with their politics. But I am not sure now if they are still feminist. I am not quite sure about role models today."

Young Muslim men said:

"Yes, it's not all negatives. For example, I've got a friend who did an MBA and then went for a management job in a bus company. He said at the interview that he wanted time off for prayer on Friday and he was told that they welcomed that sort of person. He's now doing very well."

Another added:

"I've got a friend who came over from Pakistan. He's a very visible Muslim with a big beard, etc. During his interview he made it clear what his religion was, and that there would be some constraints on how he could work. The interviewer [who was white] told him that this was to his advantage, and he got the job."

## AN AFRICAN WOMEN'S GROUP

*"When I went to apply to be a supply teacher, the woman looked at me and asked, "Are you sure?" She was expecting me to ask for the application form to be a cleaner. All the time we're patronised. Just treat me as a individual – don't patronise me.*

*I feel that I have not reached my full potential here. Nobody has given me the challenge to reach the potential of what I could be, to really shine, to dream the dreams I'd like to be able to dream. You don't want to hurt your children by encouraging them to dream what you know they won't be allowed to achieve. It is a particular problem for the educated minority who are well read and who want the same for their children."*

# 3. Do you know anyone from your community that has a dream job? cont'd

**However, these experiences were the exceptions rather than the rule. Without the interviewer raising it, some of the people we talked to mentioned the fact that, at least here in Scotland, they lack sufficient "dream job" role models. In this, various participants corroborated the views of the Aberdeen Africans.**

"I don't think we have role models that we can look at and admire in terms of what they do in the same way you can in London. They have role models they can look up to; we don't have the same role models."

*"What would different BME's consider to be a good role model?"*

Part of the problem here was the enormous diversity between what different BME individuals would consider to be a good role model. The potential for incongruity and outright conflict is massive. It will be evident, for example, that a Hindu, for whom cows are sacred, might not see an Indian-Scot running a beef farm as a successful role model. Thus:

"You have got to be careful with role-models. Some of them are themselves prejudiced and racist against other communities. Prejudice needs to be challenged even within ethnic minorities."

Equally, the very act of holding up a role model can be a culturally relative, contentious and challenging exercise. It raises questions as to the power of who it is that chooses the role models to portray.

"Another issue in all of that is whether people actually see you as a role model. Even those that people might criticise as having dubious values will be seen as a role model by someone. It is important for black and minority ethnic people to break out from being critical of ourselves, of others within our communities and of jealousy and envy which are so destructive."

White people can maybe get through much of life without being challenged by the role models held up to them. For BMEs, that challenge is in their faces every day and in every media representation. Role model issues were therefore seen as important, but difficult. The biggest reason for the shortage of them in Scotland was simply a crushing lack of opportunity. Many participants spoke of their frustration at not having their qualifications recognised:

"You are bringing loads of skills talents and energy but they are not trying to recognise them."

"You have a huge barricade in front of you even though you have qualifications and experience."

# 3. Do you know anyone from your community that has a dream job? cont'd

**There was also the concern that dream job opportunities tended to be ghettoised for the sake of mutual support and solidarity.**

"All the staff at the project wanted to set up their own businesses either on their own or with other colleagues from the BME sector."

Too often success therefore remained within the confines of an ethnic niche:

"You can end up doubting your own self as you keep questioning and then lose confidence because you voice is not being heard. [You might] feel that the voluntary sector can be a place to build up skills and feel supported by members of your community. However many BME people tend to end up working on race issues no matter what their qualifications are beforehand. [Black people in white organisations have to] become 'experts on all ethnic minority cultures. [You end up feeling] like this is the only work that you can do. This is not desirable and reflects an abdication of responsibility for the whole on the part of officers in mainstream institutions and projects."

In short, there was very little evidence of those we interviewed being aware of positive role models within their own communities. Some, however, showed evidence of themselves becoming a role model, expressing aspirations of high achievement which, in some cases, built on an existing platform of impressive career development. Some of these have already been mentioned. Another is this:

*"If we are experiencing this with right qualification and experience what about those who do not have the experience..."*

"My dream job would be to work in the UN and reform this institution. I would also love to work with an international charity. When I was away, I met a lot of donors for projects in the Indian sub-continent. They didn't have a clue of what was happening in the grassroots. I want to do things differently."

Monitoring the progress of such promising young people would offer a valuable longitudinal research exercise (i.e. an exercise carried out to follow developments over a considerable period of time).

WE ASKED:

# 4. What would help more young people from your community to get a dream job?

AS WAS OFTEN THE CASE, THE ABERDEEN AFRICAN WOMEN CRISPLY CRYSTALLISED WHAT A NUMBER OF OTHER GROUPS ALSO SAID. MAINSTREAM WHITE SOCIETY NEEDS TO SET THE EXAMPLE AND NOT JUST MAKE PLEDGES:

"If all the local governments and the government itself showed by example, then the blockages would shift because they would become a mentor to others and encourage them to apply."

Several people pointed to the special attributes they bring that have usually been invisible to the mainsteam. This theme of unrecognised gifts and uncounted blessings could be worthy of further research and recognition:

"In a Muslim employee who is practicing his religion, you see discipline, honesty, integrity, responsibility and abstention from the vices - so he's an ideal worker. But I've never once heard the chairman of IBM or a chief executive officer coming out and saying these are the qualities we want. The problem is that a lot of companies put emphasis on collective work, including socialisation. A Muslim can do all that if it is limited to the workplace, but not if it is carried over into social activities with alcohol."

## YOUNG MUSLIM MEN

*"Because socially we cannot mix because we do not drink it means that I can't go out in the same way, even as a moderate Muslim. In a lot of work places it gets taken for granted that you'd do business over a pub lunch. I therefore get stereotyped as an antisocial person because I don't go to pub lunches. This is not intentional racism; it's just a lack of awareness of how we're different.*

*The trouble is that most Muslim people are not educated enough, or they lack confidence to bring it up, so it is difficult to be themselves. They want to be free to wear the headscarf, do their prayers, eat food that is halal, etc., and so they tend to gravitate to places where they can do this without being under social pressure to do something they believe is wrong The non Muslim population are not aware of these difficulties that we experience – they tend to take too much for granted."*

# 4. What would help more young people from your community to get a dream job? cont'd

**Too often, fear of discrimination has caused people's gifts to be played down. It has resulted in racial, ethnic or religious stereotyping to an extent that is nothing less than a denial of oneself:**

"I used to have membership of an Islamic university organisation mentioned in my CV, but then I started looking for work and I took this mention out because I'm not a fundamentalist and I was worried that it would work against me."

Another explained, in an e-mail following up the focus group:

"Variation in opinion amongst the Muslim population within Scotland is quite prevalent. As I am sure you are aware, Islam is an ideology that sets down prohibitions and restrictions for its adherents in order that they may live in accordance with the Divine Will as detailed in the revealed texts i.e. Shari'ah law. Now, a Muslim is a person who should not only be aware of what the Divine Will is, i.e. be knowledgeable about what Shari'ah dictates, but also be willing to conform to the prescribed laws, i.e. be practicing. These two qualities of awareness will vary within Muslims according to the level of Islamic teaching he or she has received. There is no concept of relativism in Islam, whereby individuals interpret Shari'ah according to their own opinions. It's like saying, "I think it is acceptable to drive at 40mph within a 30mph speed zone".... You need to identify what is meant by a Muslim. You must understand that the problems facing devout, knowledgeable Muslims (whom society may refer to as "extremists"), are greater than those who are not (i.e. "moderate" Muslims). Any reformation in the employment sector aimed at accommodating the non-devout element within the Muslim community, but not the devout element, would be a failure to integrate Muslims within Scottish society. As it is, the devout Muslims are the ones who feel marginalised and isolated."

This communicant pointed out that terms such as "extremist" and "moderate" are, in fact, offensive to devout Moslems. He also suggested that it would be valuable to have recognition of "Faith-sensitive Employers" to help people like him find work in places where their beliefs will be respected.

In a tragic but understandable twist, a number of participants felt that backstabbing and envy within and between ethnic minority communities was a problem which, by its nature, can be little recognised.

"I feel that there is a significant amount of backstabbing professionally within the black community and this harms careers, but is also extremely painful on a personal level. I do not feel that the wider Black community is supportive of those who make a success of their careers. I sense that those who have already succeeded and have a reputation cling on hard to this and do not take risks for others."

Those who have not succeeded do not want to see others break through. There is a real need to develop and maintain personal support networks in order to feel more confident and part of something, rather than feeling overwhelmed and isolated. Such support networks should include people who have faith in you as a person, not necessarily focused on your business."

# 4. What would help more young people from your community to get a dream job? cont'd

**Inclusive behaviour from people in authority was especially valued:**

"The kind of person who you are working with makes a big difference. A more open person can give support and encouragement and open training opportunities to everyone."

"We need (ethnic) Scottish people to ask where are the black teachers, doctors, actors, etc. - where are the black role models - and not in England - they have them - but here in Scotland...."

BMEs who had, themselves, made substantial achievements could more fully recognise the mentoring role that they can offer to others:

"Black and minority ethnic people have come to me and used me to legitimise their issues. I am used as a sounding board, to promote their own aspirations and to unlock doors. I build bridges for people. They can use me - or use my name - to fight discrimination. I am available to be used by my own community and I am called upon quite a bit for a variety of reasons- to step in where there are cases of racism in the workplace, to act as a referee, to support grant application forms, to help write applications, to act as a vocal agitator on behalf of others."

A number of people mentioned the importance of family support and women especially mentioned the influence of supportive fathers or husbands:

"I was brought up in my family to achieve. I also have a husband who is very supportive and who takes his share of the work of bringing up the family. I have been lucky to know people who have gotten into positions of influence and have not pulled the ladder up. I hope I can do the same for others. Many others have not had the opportunities I have and I need to work on addressing the issues that hold them back."

## AN ASIAN-SCOTTISH PROFESSIONAL WOMAN

"*Networking is vitally important. You have got to find your community, whether it is a political community, or at work or the family. Otherwise you'll become a lonely person and that ruins your confidence. It doesn't have to be a geographical community. Without a community, you can't make it!*

*As a mother, I have also been a role model for my son and daughter, in different ways. To my daughter, I say "this is as much your place as it is your brother's". To my son, I say "women are equal to men and I am the living proof of that!"*

*Women, mothers have an important modelling role to play with their children.*

*It is really important to give back (thoughts, money, time, whatever). I got to where I am now because of what other people have given me. It is important to give that back, otherwise you become very isolated anyway.*"

# 4. What would help more young people from your community to get a dream job? cont'd

**A culture of support needs to be recognised and upheld at various different levels – both personal and professional. There is a need for:**

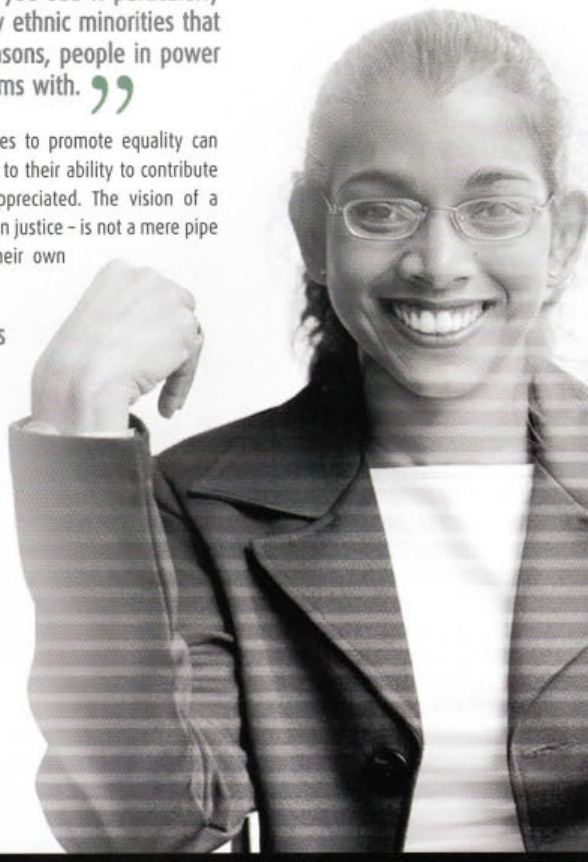
"Appropriate support for diversity trainers who face opinions/attitudes/comments/actions which they may find very offensive within the course of delivering their work."

Amongst the mainstream white Scots population, there may be grounds for recognising that what comes over as racism is not always intended as such. This would have considerable implications for how racism awareness should be addressed in Scotland. While conducting this study, some of the preliminary results were discussed with the University of Abertay's Scottish sociologist, Andrew Samuel. He kindly agreed to the following quotation from the discussion being included into this document:

"I think we have to be careful that some of what's taken as racism in Scotland is not in fact racism, but is what I'd call critical engagement. It's an initially challenging form of welcome that tests the newcomer before accepting them into the community. It's a "Scots directness" that's deeply embedded in the national psyche and you see it particularly strongly in our pub culture. It's not only ethnic minorities that can find it ambiguous. For different reasons, people in power also find it very difficult to come to terms with."

Far from being mere tokenism, earnest measures to promote equality can make a very real difference to people's lives and to their ability to contribute to the Scottish economy. Authentic effort is appreciated. The vision of a potentially inclusive Scotland – a Scotland based on justice – is not a mere pipe dream, as some individuals can testify from their own experience:

"I am the living proof that this organisation has made a start. It is much more difficult for those colleagues who are working in other organisations where no awareness of these issues exist."



# 21 STEPS TO ENHANCE MINORITY OPPORTUNITIES IN SCOTLAND

A number of summary points emerge as measures that would help policy makers, organisations and communities address the problems identified in this report. We commend these for discussion, action and further research.

They include:

1. Educate employers that there is a potential reserve of honest hard working talent that they're perhaps not using.
2. Actively encourage job applications from BME candidates so that they'll know they're not going to hit a glass door as soon as their application goes through the letterbox.
3. Show positive role models in the media and other communications, because employers may not have seen BME people outside of certain stereotypical jobs.
4. Recognise that it is both the mainstream white population and, equally, BME people that need to see BME representatives in positive role models.
5. Give awards and, possibly, a kite-mark for excellence, to exemplary employees and employers.
6. Young people's career services in schools and universities could be more active in approaching employers in non-stereotypical occupations and widening the horizons of BME children.
7. Tackle the issue of employers and employment law being unwilling to recognise overseas experience and qualifications or having difficulty in ensuring commensurate value.
8. Tackle racism in the workplace like we have tackled smoking: challenge it wherever it lights up.
9. Develop awareness of the ways in which people can feel put down because of their accents, religions, names, dress code, dietary requirements and other markers of cultural identity.
10. Recognise that racism is not only an urban issue, and that in rural areas it is compounded by isolation from minority ethnic support structures. As such, awareness of invisible racism should be integrated into Scotland's rural policy.

11. Increase racism awareness amongst both children and adults: "Adults know how to pretend [that they're not prejudiced] but you get the racism from their children".

12. Listen! Learn to see people from other ethnic groups not just in the way that you're maybe conditioned to see them, but also as they see themselves.

13. Tackle underlying psychology to change attitudes at a deep level, and not just to the shallow depth that can be achieved in statutory training.

14. Research how the social psychology of racism could become better understood at a "street" level.

15. Spread awareness of the historical relationship between the cultures of host indigenous communities within Britain and those of BME people settling amongst them.

16. Research how behaviour that may appear racist is seen from within the indigenous Scottish psyche, and increase awareness of how unintended cultural clashes may cause offence.

17. Recognise the special support needs of those undertaking training and mentoring work where they are likely to be exposed to hurtful attitudes and difficult dilemmas.

18. Put resources into approaches that would bolster confidence, so that people can better stand their ground without seeming pushy.

19. Recognise and celebrate dual and multiple identities. They bring colour, richness and diversity to the workplace.

20. Develop and implement criteria for becoming a "Faith-sensitive Employer".

21. Cultivate empathy: "A man's a man for a' that."


# WHO'S A REAL SCOT?

**A SUMMARY OF THE REPORT ON EMBRACING MULTICULTURAL SCOTLAND PUBLISHED IN APRIL 2000 BY THE CENTRE OF HUMAN ECOLOGY.**

Nearly all black and minority ethnic Scots describe having experienced racism. For many, it is a constant, painful and wearing fact of life.

Being a Scot should not necessarily mean being white, or even being born here. Tolerance must yield to acceptance.

Many felt they had dual or multiple identities - for example, Scottish and Pakistani. As one man put it, "I'm Scottish, Nigerian and Jewish. That's what it means to be a 'Real Scot'!"

Scotland's oldest constitutional document, the Declaration of Arbroath of 1320, affirms multiculturalism. It says, "There is neither weighting nor distinction of Jew and Greek, Scotsman or Englishman."

In the old Scottish history books, the name, Scotland, is taken from Scota. She was the daughter of Pharaoh and came from Egypt. As such, the mythological "Mother of the Scottish Nation" would have been ... black!

Many Scottish traditions testify that hospitality is for the short term, and by mutual acceptance, fostership's for permanence. Both are "sacred duties" and central to national identity.

Gaelic proverbs confirm that fostership is valued more than blood lineage. For example, "Blood to the twentieth, fostership to the 100th degree," and, "The bonds of milk are stronger than the bonds of blood."

In his most famous song, "A Man's a Man for a that", Scotland's national poet, Robert Burns, concludes: "Man to man, the world around, shall be brothers in spite of everything."

In The Freedom Come-Ye-All, one of Scotland's anthems, Hamish Henderson looks to a future where "black an' white, ane ither mairriet" (black and white will marry one another).

Racism amongst white Scots has its roots in colonial associations of the past. Education and Fair Trade are ways of moving beyond those.

People need to be trained in awareness of the psychology and social structures of racial prejudice.

To read the full text, go to **www.che.ac.uk/publications/emsreport/reportcontents.htm**

# Who are we?

**Osbert Lancaster**
Executive Director, CHE

**The Centre for Human Ecology (CHE) exists to stimulate and support fundamental change towards ecological sustainability and social justice through education, action and research.**

CHE offers a postgraduate degree in Human Ecology for activists, professionals and others who wish to be more effective agents of social and ecological change.

CHE's Community Programme works in partnership with people who are passionately concerned about the challenges that they face as "active citizens". As part of EMPOWER Scotland, we work with Black and Ethnic Minority grassroots organisations and individuals. Participants in our training programmes develop practical and sustainable leadership, including organisational responses to the deepest issues confronting their community - such as social break-down, discrimination, "apathy", ill-health, and unemployment.

Centre for Human Ecology

CHE is committed to carrying out research, which is directly relevant to the achievement of ecological sustainability and social justice. Building on our links with academics, and with practitioners in NGOs and other organisations, in Scotland and beyond, CHE aims to provide a focus for collaborative research, which not only crosses disciplinary boundaries, but also actively and effectively engages with practitioners and with communities.

## Afterword to the 2020 re-publication in PDF

For me, things that were seminal about the Centre for Human Ecology's reports of fifteen to twenty years ago were: 1) They gave evidence that racism was a reality in Scotland; 2) They showed that we had cultural strengths in our poetry and mythology that augurs for an inclusive sense of national identity; 3) They communicated the notion of a multicultural Scotland based on multiple identities; 4) They argued that the faith and cultural richness of BMEs (now known as BAMEs) could and should be seen as part of the richness that comprises Scotland, and in the job market, offers strengths that employers might not have thought of. The Dream Job report is a report conducted in thecontext of its era. It has some of the limitations of our vision of that era. But its basic findings remain as important today as they were when first published.

Alastair McIntosh, CHE Fellow, June 2020

Link to the CHE's earlier Embracing Multicultural Scotland report (2000): http://bit.ly/2uS5mXy

Link to BBC report on the launch of Embracing Multicultural Scotland: https://bbc.in/3gXm4rQ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# THE DREAM JOB

**21 Steps to enhance Black & Ethnic Minority opportunities in Scotland**

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