

Racial Discrimination in The London Metropolitan Police Service

Yesufu S*

*The University of Limpopo, Department of Research and Development, Limpopo, Republic of South Africa

1. Abstract

It is practically impossible for police officers to do their jobs without biases or prejudices. Even when the office of the Police Constable does not allow it. The purpose of this paper is summed up in three headings: first, to highlight the extent of racism in the London Metropolitan Police for over three decades This is evidenced from several case studies of black police officer's mistreatment in the London Police Service. Second, the effect of police culture as a breeding ground for racism in the police and third, providing an understanding of the trio concepts of prejudice, discrimination, and stereotype. The author relies on racial Postcolonial theories that have created and sustain a culture of racial superiority over the years. This is a qualitative study; the author relies on the reviewing of previous literature relating to the topic of police racism. Some of the findings are: it has proven very difficult to find a solution to racism so long as the racism in the wider British society has not been dealt with effectively enough to accommodate the constructed other. Police culture needs to be outlawed in the police service and racism needs to become a dismissible police unlawful act.

2. Keywords: Stereotype; Prejudice; Discrimination; Racism; policing

3. Introduction

London is one of the world's most vibrant cosmopolitan cities. It has a diverse population which

comprises of over 100 nationalities and with over 150 languages spoken. It has a population of over 8.2 million (Census 2011). London is the largest city in the United Kingdom with over 32000 serving police officers.

Black Londoners have complained over the years that they were been over-policed and harassed by police officers. The history of such contentious encounters between the members of the black community and the police service dates back to the 1970s, an era that was characterized by the implementation of the 'Suspicion Laws' popularly referred to as the 'Sus Laws' which emanated from the legislation of the Vagrancy Act of 1824. It was an era most black people would prefer not to talk about due to the level of injustices melted on them by the police. To have a clear insight into the modus operandi of the London Metropolitan Police concerning the treatment of black police officers. There has been a problematic and complex relationship between black Londoners and the police in some instances resulting in public riots [1].

In this article, the author looks at several interesting landmark cases where the London Metropolitan Police Service has treated his black officers within its rank and file in a very despicable way. These cases

***Corresponding author:** Yesufu S, The University of Limpopo, Department of Research and Development, Limpopo, Republic of South Africa, E-mail: Shakazulu17@yahoo.co.uk

Received Date: August 26, 2020; **Accepted Date:** August 27, 2020;

Published Date: September 12, 2020.

Superintendent Leroy Logan, Chief Superintendent Ali Dazei, Sergeant Joy Hendricks, and Constable Sarah Locker and Sergeant Norwell Roberts.

The Lord Macpherson Report not only labeled the London Metropolitan Police as an institutionally racist organisation but also provided a good definition of institutional racism. Institutional racism according to this report was defined as:

‘The collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture, or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racial stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people’ [2].

In one study carried out by the Institute of Race Relations (1987) entitled *Policing Against Black People* identified eight factors that have led to a contentious relationship between the police and members of the black community in London. They are: (a) black people are often given no reason for being stopped and searched; (b) unnecessary violence is used to arrest blacks; (c) juveniles are particularly subject to harassment; (d) the assertion of one’s right would seem to lead to arrest; (e) witnesses or bystanders may also be at risk; (f) repeated arrest is used to persecute individuals; (g) black homes and premises are entered at will; and (h) both ‘Suspicion Laws’ and immigration laws were used indiscriminately and without evidence (Institute of Race Relations 1987).

This article is divided into five parts. The first part is the introductory part. The second part deals with understanding the trio concepts of prejudice, stereotype, and discrimination as a basis for the manifestation of racism in the United Kingdom. The third part of the article deals with police culture and theoretical framework informing the article. In the fourth part of the article, the author looks at several case studies where it was widely reported that the London

Metropolitan Police Service has treated it, black officers, very badly. The fifth part of the article is the discussion and concluding part of the study. Next, the author looks at the trio concepts of racism namely: prejudice, stereotype, and discrimination.

4. Methodology

This is a qualitative study that involves the use of secondary data to support the author's points.

Secondary data is a process of carrying out a systematic review of previous literature as it relates to the research

topic. It relieves the researcher the burden of participation with research participants, who to identify, access to, and limited time frame available to conduct the research. Secondary data in the context of this study is limited to the following: data collected from previous qualitative studies; data collected may be shaped by the researcher's socio-cultural, political norms, and biases. The researcher’s main task was to ensure that the data analysed is not subject to any form of misinterpretation. In doing so, the author can rely on critical and reflective constant comparison of previous and present secondary data collected to arrive at an objective conclusion.

A. Prejudice

Giddens defines prejudice as ‘opinions held by members of one group about another. It involves holding a preconceived view about an individual or group, often based on hearsay rather than direct evidence’ While Kleg defines prejudice as ‘readiness to act, stemming from a negative feeling, often predicated upon a fixed overgeneralization or false belief and directed towards a group or individual members of that group’. The author is of the opinion that because the police in London are driven by a prejudice mindset, most of them tend to see black people as criminals who do not always conform to the rules of society. Robert Reiner argued that “the crucial source of police prejudice is societal racism, which places ethnic minorities disproportionately in those strata and situations from which the police derive their

property and that this structural feature of police - ethnic -minority relations bolsters any prior prejudice police officers have” [3,4].

B. Stereotypes

Clements and Spinks define stereotyping as a process ‘where you believe that just because people are members of a particularly visible group, they must also share a particular trait which you think is are characteristics of that group.

C. Racial discrimination

According to the Race Relations Act 1976, it is unlawful “to treat any person less favourably on racial grounds than another person would or be treated in the same or similar circumstances.” There are two types of racial discrimination identified under the Act: direct and indirect discrimination. Direct discrimination means when a person is treated less favourably because of his/her race, sex, age, ethnic origins, or nationality. Indirect discrimination means when an employer applies a general provision, criterion, or practice which causes or places the employee at a particular disadvantage as a result.

There is ample evidence to suggest that the British Metropolitan Police Service is a racist organization due to several incidences of discriminatory use of stop and search powers over the years. [1, 2, 5 - 9]

The early research on the MPS carried out by Lambert and Cain [10] identified racial discrimination and prejudices towards black people amongst police officers. Cain argued that “there was a clear pattern of rank and file police prejudice, perceiving blacks especially prone to violence or crime and generally incomprehensible, suspicious and hard to handle” [10].

5. Theoretical Framework

This article is informed by a postcolonial theory that explains some of the reasons why there seems to be inherent racism amongst police officers in London. Dr W.E.B Du Bois in his attempt to explain reasons for high degree crime rates amongst black the United States argued that socioeconomic conditions and

overall marginalization of them can be held responsible. The Negroes according to Dr Du Bois are faced with three possible options: ‘submit permanently to an inferior position; die out or emigrate’ (WEB du Bois 1903, 1911).

John Rex traces the phenomenon of racism to the historical process of the colonial expansion of Europeans and explains the persistent subordinate position of blacks concerning the ownership of the means of production. Frantz Fanon warned that ‘colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying native’s brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts and destroys it’. Fanon (1959) argued that “everywhere the Negro turns in Europe, he is dehumanised by white folks...The white man is convinced that the Negro is a beast’ One can understand the reasons for police brutality directed towards black Londoners. Some of the white officers believe that black people are sub-human beings and they should be treated as such. Next, the author presents a few cases of police racism suffered by black police officers. Their collective ordeal harms the trust and confidence of black people on; it also creates a challenge in the recruitment of black police officers.

a. Superintendent Robyn Williams 2019

Robyn was charged to appear before the “Old Bailey” one of the highest criminal court in the United Kingdom for her sister (Ms Jennifer Hodge) sending to her pictures of downloads of child sexual abuse and that she failed to report the incident to the police after receiving it. Williams before the court case was commended for her sterling police career. Williams was sentenced to 200 hours’ community service. The supportive role she played at the Grenfell Tower fire disaster was reported in the media as exemplary police service work. She was awarded the Queen’s Police Medal (QPM) for distinguished service in 2003. Appointed Borough of Sutton Commander in 2017. Williams served the police for over 36 years of

her life starting her police career in Nottinghamshire Constabulary. Many believe that her case was a clear manifestation of years of a witch-hunting campaign against Ms Williams who over the years has championed the course the National Black Police Association in the United Kingdom. The NBPA is a supporting network found in most constabularies in the United Kingdom. Its objective was to provide emotional and psychological support to its members who have suffered racism in the police service.

b. Constable Sarah Locker v Metropolitan Police (1993)

Sarah Locker joined the Metropolitan Police at the age of 18. She served as a police officer with 16 distinguished eventful years, gaining several commendations. However, she was verbally abused by her colleagues, often reminded in a derogatory way of her Turkish origins. In 1993, Sarah Locker took her employers, the London Metropolitan Police to the employment tribunal for both racial and sexual discrimination. ‘when Sarah became a policewoman, she says she learned quickly that women in the force were treated “as second class.” It was literally “you make the tea.” She recalls, “I did not fit in Most days it was the gross abuse. You’d go in and they’d say ‘Did your husband f---you last night? Are you wearing stockings? Come and sit on my cock.’” She found pornography in her tray. “I was on the phone and a man was kneeling under my desk simulating oral sex in front of the rest of the office.” Sarah tolerated this as long as she could but began to be passed over for promotion in favour of men who had less experience than her. The strain made Sarah ill. She felt almost suicidal and her marriage was affected—her husband who was and still is a policeman, had to endure the taunts about his wife’s case....She was interrogated during her pregnancy, and she received anonymous threats over the phone. She ended in hospital and nearly lost her baby. She claimed that “women and ethnic minorities are both used and abused in the police....There is no point in

just paying lip-service to clean it up.” [11, 12].

c. Constable Joy Hendricks v Metropolitan Police Service (1999)

Joy Hendricks, of Enfield, North London was a member of the Metropolitan Police Service. She was appointed to the anti-vice territorial elite squad which was a predominately white male. Joy joined the Metropolitan Police in 1987. She took her employers to an employment tribunal for racial and sexual discrimination. Her problem started when she was accused of assaulting a male officer, Sergeant Mark Workman with a pool cue, an allegation she denied. She claimed she acted in self defence and that Sergeant Workman called her derogatory and provocative names: “dodgy” “Stevie Lawrence two”—this was said in mockery of the teenager Stephen Lawrence whose unfortunate death led to the Macpherson Report in 1999. Joy also claimed that as she was black, she was made an object of ridicule. She alleges that she was given white paint to paint her face by her colleague who claimed that she behaved as if she was white. As reported in the Daily Telegraph, The Metropolitan Police Service again accepted no liability on the part of the commissioner but settled before the case could go forward.

d. Superintendent Leroy Logan v London Metropolitan Police 2004

Leroy Logan is a distinguished black serving police officer and a founding member of the National Black Police Association. He was awarded an MBE in 2001 by Her Majesty the Queen of England for his work in promoting racial equality in the United Kingdom. Logan was born in Islington London to Jamaican parents. Before Logan joined the police, his father was seriously assaulted by officers of the Metropolitan Police. His parents and family members could not believe he was joining the same organisation who seriously physically assaulted his father. Logan was not discouraged by his parent's opposition to his joining the police.

In an interview Logan granted to [13] reported by

Simon Hattenstone, Logan said, “My family and friends said, why are you going into a racist organisation that persecutes us, and I questioned myself on that several times, but I believed I was being called to do it.

According to Logan, “...as a sergeant I was in the back of a car and a female white officer on seeing a black person driving a very nice car just said ‘I wonder who he robbed to get that?’ and she then realised she was voicing an unconscious assumption” [2].

Logan was also investigated with Chief Superintendent Ali Dizaei for financial regulating and false accounting concerning the National Black Police Association (BPA) finances. Mr. Logan was being investigated for the misuse of £80. He said, “I think they lost objectivity and were on a personal vendetta. They thought, take the shepherd out the sheep will scatter—divide and rule.”

The Metropolitan Police Service reportedly paid Mr. Logan over £100,000 in an out-of-court settlement for the suffering and humiliation he put up with during the investigation [13].

e. Commander Ali Dizaei v London Metropolitan Police

In a recent book written by Chief Superintendent Ali Dizaei [14], he shares some of his experiences. He states that the investigators tried to bully me into submission, I nearly cracked. Some days i would just lie in bed, depressed, suspended from the job I loved, frightened to death that I would be sent to prison, shunned by former friends who thought i was guilty. It was a bitter, underhand war: my evidence was countered with their innuendo. I presented facts, they struck back with gossip and rumor. Perhaps we expect it of politicians or pop stars. When the country’s largest and oldest police force conducts anonymous briefings against one of his officers, something, in my opinion, has gone badly wrong. Commander Ali Daizei was later sentenced to four years imprisonment in 2012 for perverting the course of justice.

Dizaei explains his ordeal:

I was no stranger to criticism and hostility. But this was different. Whatever I had done wrong in their eyes was serious enough that they wanted me not just humiliated and out of my job, but locked up as well...I had quickly discovered that when I joined the police my colour was a daily topic of comment, much of it abusive, for others both inside and outside the force. Race problems have a deserved reputation for being difficult to handle and sensitive, not least because the police force does not look like the rest of the population. The police have never had their fair share of officers from the non-white population, and when they recruit, they don’t retain enough...so that often non-white police officers were discriminated against, and would have to try twice as hard for recognition. It was hard not to be “obsessed with race” on the beat in Reading when a fellow Pc tells you out of the blue that he has just seen your wife walking up Harland Road with a monkey under her arm. The “monkey” he was talking about was my new baby. He was supposed to be my friend, someone I could rely on, but I would often find that race hate was a daily topic of conversation in the police force. [14]. Dizaei was arraigned before “Old Bailey,” the highest criminal court in Britain, to face charges. NB Reason for this correction as stated earlier Daizei actual went to prison for 4 years.

f. Sergeant Norwell Roberts

Norwell Roberts the first black policeman in the Metropolitan Police Service, gave an interview to Whitfield about his experiences of racism in the 1970s. According to Norwell, “I had no trouble with members of the public. The police don’t like change. My only troubles were inside the job. My reporting sergeant said to me ‘Look nigger, I will see to it that you will never pass your probation, I will make sure you are the first and last [8]. In a much earlier interview, Mr. Roberts gave to The Guardian newspaper, it was reported “As Mr. Roberts patrolled in Covent Garden one day, an officer leaned out of the

window of a police car and hurled racial abuse at him. When he complained to senior officers he was told, ‘What do you want me to do about it?’ He found match sticks in the locks of his car and the buttons ripped off his uniform. He was cold-shouldered. He said, ‘I stayed because I had something to prove. If I had not done it, no one would have. They realise I was not leaving and came round.’” [15].

6. Police canteen culture as a breeding ground for racism

The Police Service is no different from other organisations that make up the British criminal justice system. Every organisation has its own culture, values and ethics that are associated with it. In the police service, one can argue that a dominant occupational culture exists. This is sometimes referred to as the “canteen culture” and ample pieces of evidence suggests that the canteen culture serves as a breeding ground for racism in the Police Service [16-18]

The police service is a hierarchical organisation where powers and social control are generally channeled from top to bottom, but this is not always the case. The rank-and-file officers in the police service have considerable statutory powers. They are more likely to come into contact with members of the public than senior police officers.

Holdaway [17] mentioned the concept “verballing”—the unofficial adjustment of evidence by police officers to get a successful prosecution. “A verbal is an oral statement of admission or incrimination which is invented by the arresting officer and attributed to a suspect” [17]. Holdaway argued that some police officers use verballing in their day-to-day policing and that the technique is an accepted tool of the police investigation process. He argued that “an officer who is going to use a verbal has to trust any colleagues who may know what he is doing. Corroboration and/or secrecy have to be assured, trust cannot be secured unless a colleague shows an initial willingness to verbal” [18-27]

The canteen culture places a low value on the social

aspects of police work. For example, domestic violence and missing persons are sometimes classed as less important and too degrading amongst the rank and file neither falls under the ambit of real policing. Some officers approach domestic violence with some level of acceptable cynicism. Domestic disputes, for instance, are often messy and unrewarding business—two adults hurling insults at each other and both demanding that the policeman adjudicates on their claims and counterclaims. Next, the author looks at the issue of stop and search [28-35].

7. Stop and Search

Black people living in Britain have complained that the ways and methods of the police in deploying stop and search towards them is unfair, unjust, and discriminatory. They have complained of harassment and over policing which have not been taken seriously or properly investigated to their satisfaction. It is a common notion within the black community in London that the Metropolitan Police deliberately target them daily. This has led to a breakdown of the relationship between black people and the police service. The breakdown and antagonism between the police and black London have sometimes led to race riots. The Brixton riots 1981 and Broadwater Farm riots 1985 where there was loss of lives and millions of worth of properties destroyed. remind us of what to expect when there is a complete breakdown of community relations [36-40].

8. Discussions

British society does not fully embrace other cultures or immigrants. They are often kept at bay found outside the mainstream of society or placed at the bottom pile of society. Racism in the police service cannot be separated from racism in society. Police officers are a microcosm of society. Within the last few months, the incidence of arbitrarily use of police stop and search powers have resurfaced back again. Member of parliament Dawn Butler was stooped in Hackney East London, police inspector Charles Ehikioya was stopped in Croydon, London and

finally, commonwealth gamed gold medalist sprinter. Bianca Williams was stopped and handcuffed by police with her husband in presence of their three months old baby in Maida Vale North West, London. All these stops have a discriminatory element in them which portrays racial profiling in practice by the London Metropolitan Police Service. The call by black Londoners to be treated humanely by the police has not to be listened to. The antagonism between the police and black Londoners remains deeply pronounced with no lasting solutions in sight. Surely, one can safely conclude that lack of trust and confidence in the police by black Londoners is not the kind of police service Late Sir Robert Peel had in mind when he coined the concept of “policing by consent” at the formation of the Metropolitan Police Service in 1829.

10. References:

1. [Scarman L. The Brixton Disorders. Cmnd. 8427. 1981.](#)
2. [Macpherson W. The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry. 1999.](#)
3. [Reiner R. Race and criminal justice New Community. 1989; 16: 5-22.](#)
4. [Reiner R. The Politics of the Police. London: Harvester Wheatsheaf. 1992.](#)
5. [Small S. Police and People in London: A Group of Young Black People. London: London Policy Institute. 1983.](#)
6. [Smith DJ. Police and People of London: A Survey of Londoners. London: No 621. London: London Policy Institute. 1983.](#)
7. Britton N J. Black Justice? Race Criminal Justice and Identity: London: Trentham Books; 2000.
8. [Whitfield J. Unhappy Dialogue: The Metropolitan Police and Black Londoners in Post-War Britain. London: Wilan Publishers. 2004.](#)
9. [Rowe M. Policing, Race and Racism. United Kingdom: Willan Publishing. 2004.](#)
10. Cain M. Society and the Policeman's Role.

9. Conclusion

Racism is the treatment of others in a less favourable manner because of their skin colour, race, nationality or ethnic origins. A racist society promotes inequality rooted sometimes in our belief system. A belief that one race is superior to the other. Black police officers facing the risk of double rejection. First, by their white colleagues and second, by their black communities who see black officers as “sell-out, Uncle Tom and Coconut” For a person to be subjected to two rejections found in their two socialization processes is a bitter pill to swallow. Some black officers have moved into a self-denial mode in pursuit of acceptance from colleagues. In looking at the way black police officers are treated in the police service, it will be very frightening for other black people wanting to join the police.

London: Routledge; 1973.

11. [The Independent. I feel like the most hated woman in the Met. 1999.](#)
12. The Independent. Black officer cleared of cue attack. 1999.
13. [The Guardian. ‘Vicious racism’ costs Met £250,000 2003.](#)
14. [Dizaei A. Not One of Us: The Trial that changed policing in Britain forever. Serpent's Tail. 2007.](#)
15. O'Byrne M. Changing Policing. London: Russell House. 1998.
16. [Holdaway S. Changes in urban policing. British Journal of Sociology. 1977; 28: 119-137.](#)
17. [Holdaway S. Inside the British Police: A Force at Work. Oxford: Basil Blackwell. 1983.](#)
18. Holdaway S. Recruiting a Multiracial Force. London: Home Office. 1991.
19. [Banton M. The Policeman in the Community. London: Tavistock. 1964.](#)
20. Critchley TA. A History of Police in England and Wales. London: Routledge. 1978.

21. The Daily Telegraph. Race slur policewoman gets £3000,000 payout. 2004.
22. FitzGerald M. Searches in London Under S1 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act. London: Metropolitan Police. 1999.
23. [FitzGerald M, Sibbit R. Ethnic Monitoring in Police Forces: A Beginning, Research Study 173. London: Home Office. 1997.](#)
24. Gilroy P. The myth of black criminality, in P. Scraton Law, Order, and the Authoritarian State. 1987; 1: 107-120.
25. [Her Majesty Inspectorate of Constabulary, Policing London: Winning Consent. London: Home Office. 2000.](#)
26. [HMIC. Winning the Race: Embracing Diversity. London: Home Office. 2001.](#)
27. [Kappeler VE, Sluder RD, Alpert GP. Forces of Deviance: Understanding the Dark Side of Policing. Prospects Heights, IL: Waveland Publishers. 1994.](#)
28. [Landau S. Juveniles and the police. British Journal of Criminology.](#)
29. Mason G. The Official History of the Metropolitan Police. Carlton Books. 2004.
30. Maguire M, Corbett C. A study of the police complaints system. London. HMSO. 1991.
31. Morris, Sir William. The Case For Change: People in the Metropolitan Police Service. Report of the Morris Inquiry. London: Morris Inquiry. 2004.
32. [Reiss AJ. The Police and the Public. New Haven: Yale University Press. 1971.](#)
33. [The Runnymede Trust. This Is Where I Live: Stories and Pressures in Brixton. An Account of Young Peoples Views and Perceptions. 1996.](#)
34. [Skolnick J. Justice Without Trial: Law Enforcement in Democratic Society. New York: Wiley. 1966.](#)
35. [Stone V, Tuffin R. Attitudes of People from Minority Ethnic Communities towards a Career in the Police Service. Police Research Series. 2000.](#)
36. Waddington PAJ. Policing Citizens. London: University College Press. 1999.
37. [Waddington PAJ, Stenson K, Don D. In proportion: Race, and police stop and search. British Journal of Criminology. 2004; 44: 889–914.](#)
38. Willis C. The Use, Effectiveness and Impact of Police Stop and Search Powers, Research, and Planning. 1983.
39. Willis C, Stevens P. Ethnic Minorities and Complaints against the Police. Research and Planning. 1981.
40. [Wilson D, Ashton, J, Sharp D. What Everyone in Britain Should Know about the Police. London: Blackstone Press. 2001.](#)

Citation: Yesufu S. Racial Discrimination in The London Metropolitan Police Service. SunKris Social Res J. 2020; 1: 1005.

Copy Right: © 2020 Yesufu S. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.