



AMR News

MUSLIM YOUTH WORK - THE CHALLENGES *Editorial*

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AMR News

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The London Bombings in July brought into sharp focus issues around Muslim youth alienation and the youth work issues arising. The National Youth Agency addressed this in their newsletter in August and AMR News reproduced the first part of their article (concluded in this issue). In his editorial, AMR's Mohammed Dhalech, who contributed to the discussions in the NYA newsletter, provides an overview of the community's failings in this area.

Following the shocking events of July, what concerns me most and inspired me to put pen to paper, is the blatant lack of any UK or European based Muslim organisation, addressing the real challenges of issues such education, poverty and crime faced by Muslim young people. Indeed many organisations that should be taking responsibility have gone out of the way to ignore and brush important issues under the carpet.



Youth challenge

Recent responses have been unconsidered and knee jerk reactions to the unfurling situation and failing to address the real issues. Young people in the community are being ignored by mosques, community groups and even youth organisations. There is no denying these groups do work with young people and students, but only with a small minority, and then only those who are willing to engage in those groups and their values. But the majority of young Muslim people do not engage whatsoever as they do not see themselves in that environment. Many of these organisations like to organise large camps for thousands of people and other similar initiatives. These are not "sexy" for the majority of young people today, and do not attract them. But the organisations do not recognise this.

I recall back in 1992 raising many of the challenges faced by Muslim young people. I was then criticised for raising the issues, as the so called leaders did not wish to recognise that these issues existed and they needed to respond.

Yes there are some organisations offering useful services such as the Muslim Youth Helpline, but that is very

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CAMPAIGN ON HISTORY SYLLABUS

Prompted by AMR member, Dr. Mohammad Tabarra, the Association has written to key institutions and stakeholders supporting calls for the teaching of History to be reviewed to make it more relevant to all Britain's citizens and to promote inclusion and understanding rather than reinforce racism and Islamophobia.

The initiative has arisen following circulation of news of the findings of the Tackling Extremism task force set up by the Government in the wake of the London bombings. Not unsurprisingly all the Working Parties reported that there was extreme disenchantment and alienation arising out of the injustices and inconsistencies in British foreign policy.

Just as Mrs Doreen Lawrence (mother of murdered black teenager Stephen Lawrence) connected the persistence of racism to the complete lack of inclusion in the History syllabus which resulted in both Black contributions to British history and Black victimisation by the Empire contributing to the racism endemic in institutions, so also, His-

tory as taught for the past 30 years has paid no attention to the problems created in the Muslim world through the colonial experience, decolonisation and then neo-colonialism. The cynical manipulation of supposed British values when dealing with the aspirations for self-determination, democracy and freedom by Muslim peoples has never been studied despite the fact that it is this heritage that if understood more widely in society, would help bridge the gulf of understanding that exists.

Among the institutions AMR has written to are leading newspapers, the Qualifications & Curriculum Authority, MCB, the Home Office and leading historians - some of whom have already raised concerns about the irrelevance of modern History taught in secondary schools, many of whom, especially Black Minority Ethnic (BME) communities, come with a developed understanding of communities' histories which engender a strong sense of grievance.

See Dr. Tabarra's original comments on page 5.

THE STORY OF GOD

A representative from AMR attended the preview of the Professor Robert Winston BBC 1 programme, *The Story of God* held on 28 November. AMR's President, Dr. Hashim Reza had originally been invited but because he was unable to attend, the invitation was issued to the membership and Dr. Hamid Ahmed and a guest were the first to respond with a request for the tickets.

More details in the next issue of *AMR News* when Dr. Hamid returns from abroad.

EID BOWLING GATHERING

Approximately 40 people gathered at the David Lloyd Centre on 20th November in Sutton, Surrey for an AMR / Sutton Muslim community Eid get together.

The younger children bowled for fun with the help of their parents in a private alley hired for the occasion whilst some of the older teenagers played for real on alleys in the main bowling arena where the girls vs boys competition was keenly fought.

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**MUSLIM YOUTH WORK Pt 2 of 2 -
COMMUNITY COHESION THROUGH YOUTH WORK
Written and published by The National Youth Agency***

There have been some useful initiatives including the DfES Neighbourhood Support Fund (which seeks to re-engage young people not in education, employment or training) and the Home Office's Community Leadership Programme (bringing together young people from different communities to develop their leadership skills), both managed by The NYA but using local youth organisations. But while these programmes have had good results, they are short-term, non-sustainable measures and have therefore not been able to deliver appropriate support to the groups to build capacity and ensure that young people continue to receive access to good opportunities which support their progress.

The voluntary and community sector (VCS) infrastructure is itself complex and diverse. Differences occur in the size, location, focus, age and culture of local organisations and infrastructure bodies. Parts of the sector are unregulated and accountable only very locally, if at all. Small community-facing organisations may not take advantage of available opportunities for these groups, and are disadvantaged by their lack of access to information and their inability to work to tight time-scales. Youth Matters proposes underpinning legislation providing a framework for the local offer, but is unlikely to improve opportunities in the short to medium term. Indeed, the transition to new arrangements could, if phased inappropriately, make provision worse for the most marginalised young people, through integration, pooling and inspection processes which risk being at too distant a level to be effective.

There are specific issues constraining Muslim young people's access to activities. While there has been considerable recent progress lately in understanding and supporting the role of faith in work with young people, there is less understanding nationally about Muslim youth work in this broader faith context. There has been insufficient curriculum development in youth work for this group of young people, and lack of attention to developing their capacity to generate a reflective approach both towards faith, and from the faith towards the wider society. The formal and non-formal learning environments are under-developed. Schools and colleges may not fully accept their role with disaffected older adolescents or understand how to engage with communities.

In relation to youth work with young Muslims, equalities consultant Mohammed Dhalech has noted the failure of organisations to address the realities of Muslim young people's lives, including their experience of education, racism and crime. Instead, young people can be ignored by organisations such as mosques, community groups and youth organisations, whose provision for young people can fail to engage the vast majority of Muslim young people.

In addition, workforce development has been slow. The workforce strategy should engage effectively with the dimension of young people's learning and should offer comprehensive programmes of training for emerging leadership both for young people – as recommended by the Cattle report – and for adults who work with them. There are pilots such as the

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The Mental Health of Immigrants in England pt1 of 2 Presentation by Dr. Hashim Reza

A survey of public opinion conducted as part of Defeat Depression campaign of the Royal Colleges of General Practitioners and Psychiatrist showed the following: 74% believed antidepressives were addictive. 60% considered them effective treatment. 24% believed depressed patients should be offered antidepressive treatment. 86% considered counselling an effective intervention. 90% wanted counselling.

A quick show of hands suggested that those attending AMR's Regional Forum at the Harrow mosque on 3 December 2005 had very similar views.

Our knowledge of mental health problems of ethnic communities in UK has been slowly improving. Most professional in health service previously thought that mental illnesses in these communities were similar if not less frequent than indigenous populations. But recent studies suggest that this is not the case.

One study of deliberate self-harm in young women showed that Asians were three times more at risk than white young women.

Another research work done in women of

Pakistani origin settled in North London showed high rates of stress related problems. This seemed linked with difference in opinions on child rearing practices between mothers and their mothers-in-law.

Comparing these observation from UK with Pakistan, recent research work there shows that mental health problems have high rates in urban and rural populations in every part of the country that has been studied. Rates of suicide have been rising. The overall risk for men is 15%-30%, but 45%-65% for women, two to three times higher. Young married women emerge as the most vulnerable group.

When mental health problems occur with such high frequency, it is inevitable that everyone searches for likely causes of this worrying trend. Negative impacts of poor housing, education and unemployment have been well recognised in the UK. British-Pakistani communities fare worse than average in these areas. Other important stress factors are common sources of conflicts in gender

and generational roles as well as issues of identity and integration.

In contrast with the aforementioned professional discussions, the public have their own viewpoint. Most Pakistanis believe **Jinn**, evil spirits, magic/sorcery, 'evil eye' and divine punishment are commonest explanations for mental illnesses. A survey amongst a small group of voluntary teachers in a Muslim community school in London showed very interesting comparison: most thought that worries and stresses caused mental health problems. They otherwise also believed that **Jinn**, 'black magic', divine punishment and evil spirits caused mental illnesses.

If the number of advertisements in Urdu language newspapers could be considered a reliable measure, it appears that 'consulting' faith healers is as common in the UK as in Pakistan. In fact, some faith healers from Pakistan are regular visitors to major towns in England.

*In part 2 - What are the **Jinn**? And how and why do people believe in their power?*

TACKLING ALIENATION THAT LEADS TO EXTREMISM - A PRACTICAL STEP

It seems to me one practical government step that will help reduce the alienation felt by Muslim youth is the proper study of recent history of the British Empire and its colonial policies at secondary school. This is timely, as there has been a recent discussion on the relevance and effect of history topics discussed in schools. Perhaps we should raise this in *The Muslim News*.

As a parent, I know the kids spend much time on Henry VIII, the Tudors, as well as the Second World War and Nazism, the American History, The Opium War in China, etc. But there is far less syllabus coverage of the role of Britain in India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Palestine and Jordan, Iran, Iraq, and other Middle East and African countries. In fact I have not heard my kids ask me anything about these issues of interest, whereas I am constantly asked about the six wives of Henry VIII (to which I jokingly reply - upto four was *halaa!*)!

This is key to a muslim youngster's identity crisis. He or she sits in the class next to John, Joe or Jane, listens hard and is expected to contribute to class discussion about all these other events in history, whereas the events that are much closer to him/her gets no
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mention. British policies that are partly responsible for the sorry state of the Muslim World today, events that their grandparents talk about at dinner table and recall as eye witnesses, or have heard their parents talk about (see a sample list below), the frustration of where they were and where we are now - all of these need to be raised in the classroom with Abdul sitting attentively next to John, Joe and Jane.

Then and only then, he or she will have something tangible to talk about, a sense of identity, integration and a feeling of respect and importance, of being listened to among other British kids. Then, he can look upto John and say: "See? I told you I was somebody, not just a foreigner, an immigrant, a Paki!" - And John will also appreciate Abdul. Perhaps then Abdul will find this a better way of relieving his bottled-up anger than blowing himself up.

And perhaps Tony Blair could publicly apologise for the role of the Empire in suppressing freedom around the globe. After all, he did apologise to the US congress after Sep 11, about the role of the English red coats in murdering American Independence soldiers, and looting their homes and burning libraries, etc, so

why not say sorry to Muslims?

History topics Abdul likes to discuss at secondary school:

1. The Balfour Treaty; the disintegration of Shaam into individual nation states of Jordan, Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine, and the role of Britain in the creation of Israel
2. "Lawrence of Arabia" & the role of Britain in whipping up Arab dissent from the Ottomans
3. The fall of the Ottoman empire in 1924; the loss of Jerusalem
4. The role of Britain in oil rich nations of Arabia, the creation of the sheikhdoms: SA, Kuwait, UAE, Oman, Qatar, Bahrain (when & how?)
5. The Persian Empire in 1800 and 1900s, the murder of Amir Kabir at the time of Queen Victoria, support for the Shah and his father, plus the CIA coup against Dr. Mossadeq in Iran, at the instigation of the British - a revenge for nationalising the oil industry
6. The support for Saddam Hussain in Iraq - 1970-90s
7. The role of Raja in India, the suppression of independence movement and the subsequent partition of Pakistan
8. The Suez canal crisis, the rise of Jamal Abdul Nasser and Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt.

by Mohammad Tabarra

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Home Office Community Leadership programme or the programme currently being led by the Prince's Trust (with a range of partners including The NYA) which aims to develop disadvantaged young people's ability to make an active contribution to their local communities.

Taken together, these factors mean that some young people, particularly from BME communities, either fail to access any youth provision at all, or in some cases, only have access to provision which is of poor quality, is generally unregulated and is inappropriately resourced and staffed.

The NYA has suggested a number of steps that should be taken to improve the situation, both in the short and medium term.

Short term:

- ❑ Urgent consideration on how better accountability can be secured, for instance by the registration of VCS units with the local authority; by training and qualification of personnel; or by Ofsted inspection. All of these are, in the first instance, matters for government policy.
 - ❑ An immediate review, managed through a cross-government working group in partnership with The NYA and others of:
 - ❑ Existing local practice on community cohesion.
 - ❑ The implications of Youth
- AMR News*

Matters for BME young people and organisations.

- ❑ An action plan on responsibilities, nationally and locally.

Medium term:

- ❑ A 'curriculum' in youth work which is relevant to the differentiated needs of young people and offers a means towards their personal and social development and shared sense of citizenship.

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- ❑ Building the capacity of the VCS to offer this curriculum in a sustained way and to secure bridges for young people into the mainstream providers of education, employment and housing and back into and across communities.
- ❑ Clarity on how the infrastructure for the implementation of Youth Matters identifies responsibilities nationally, regionally and locally.
- ❑ A strategy to ensure that partners work together to ensure that the relationship between faith and youth work is better understood, better practised and is inclusive of all faiths including the Muslim faith.
- ❑ Access to the extended schools initiative for Muslim schools.
- ❑ Workforce development

ensuring that current staff are skilled to work in this context and there is better recruitment of young people as trainee youth workers.

The NYA has an extensive list of useful case studies on its website, which can be accessed at www.nya.org.uk

Resources

A sense of respect: inter faith activities for young people, Maxine Green and Carmel Heaney, The NYA, 2005. Activity pack focusing on issues of faith-based youth work and community cohesion, intended for use with young people of any or no faith. It offers a series of ideas, activities, advice and background information to help young people learn about others in their community. Price: £9.50. E-mail: sales@nya.org.uk. Tel: 0116 242 7427.

Youth work in a time of conflict, PJ White, The NYA, March 2003. Briefing/resource paper for youth workers, produced during the Iraq war, which includes sections on curriculum; listening, advice and counselling; racism, bullying and islamophobia. Website: www.nya.org.uk/shared.asp/files/uploadedfiles/C8859AEF-7707-42DF-B338-E907FA44EE8D_YWatatimeofconflict.pdf

***This article was written and published by The NYA in Aug 05 and not by M Dhalech, as stated in the last issue.**

*Youth Work
continued from p1/*

much based around London. There are some professional youth workers across the country, who are working on these sensitive issues but without any support and at times the community are against them.

Good practice needs to be shared and further developed, whilst at the same time the need to support fellow professionals in addressing these challenges, and the Muslim community needs to use their expertise and skills to develop a long term strategy.

The evidence of these challenges already exist -

we know that the youth are over represented in the criminal justice system, educational attainment is an issue, poverty and many others. The evidence can be found in many reports over the last few years.

There is a need to address the challenges which many have talked about over the last few weeks, effectively and with a clear strategy that honestly address the real issues. That strategy must involve a variety of organisations that can ensure support from Muslim communities but also the wider public sector such as the Government at both local and national level and organisa-

tions such as the police.

If the Muslim organisations are not doing this then maybe it is the responsibility of those within the youth work profession to look at how we do this.

Mohammed Dhalech is Equality Consultant and is active on Youth issues in the UK and in Europe and was a former editor of The NYA journal on community action by Black young people, 'Shabaab'.

He participated in the national Youth Work conference held on 4 December 2005 at the University of Birmingham.

Contact Mohammed by email at:

youth@midhal.info

*Eid bowling gathering
continued from p2/*

The function provided a good opportunity to socialise in a relaxing but fun environment in which the needs of both adults and children were met.

After the bowling, the children enjoyed a fish and chips dinner and there were party bags for the youngest children.

**HAVE
YOU
RENEWED?
Please remit
your fees
promptly**

AMR News

LETTERS

Thank you for the write up in the last issue of *AMR News*.

I do not seem to have many people signing on for the course under my direct tutorship at the moment - but at the same time, there has been a huge increase in the numbers of students getting my materials and going it alone, as I had so hoped.

I think I can now number 'my' students in many hundreds. I was fascinated to see that the Edexcel Exam Board had difficulties finding enough examiners to cope with the unexpected increase in candidates for Religious Studies GCSE - I am sure that our Muslim students account for a great part of

that success.

I continue to get emails from leaders of small groups springing up all over the country, and an increasing number of schools - both Muslim and non-Muslim state schools are now making this course available, since the students are so motivated, score so well, and do not need a special teacher to be employed to teach them if they follow my course carefully. It has been a wonderful success, and I still hope for the time when *madrassah* schools will realise that this opportunity is there to be taken up. One great development for me was to get a huge order from Islamia Schools.

Ruqaiyyah Waris Maqsood



Dates For Your Diary

Sunday 29th January, 11.30 am.
Muslim Family Fun Day at Croydon High School. Swimming for men at 11.30 am and for women at 12.30 pm. Use of sports hall and lunch included.

Saturday 5th February 3.30 pm -
AMR Forum (*tbc*): **Horrid History.** A Forum dedicated to looking at the prospects for putting the need to revise the History syllabus, to make it more relevant to BME communities' students, on the Educational agenda.



Bowling Eid Party

“Recommended Site-Seeing”

AMR’s Turkish-Irish IT expert, Seref O’Holik, cherry-picks some of the most interesting websites he has recently visited:

📱 The National Youth Agency
www.nya.org.uk

📱 The Story of God, BBC TV series with Professor Robert Winston
www.bbc.co.uk/storyofGod

📱 Museum of London site where stories of Muslim London histories can be told and read. Do you have a story to share?
www.untold London.org.uk

📱 Earthquake Relief organisations:
www.muslim hands.org.uk
www.islamic-relief.org.uk
www.muslimaid.org.uk

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