



Blair Mimics Bush: The Making of an Enemy Within.

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Black Britons are now a Suspect Class

***Publisher's Note:** NorthStar Contributor Simon Woolley, director of London based Operation Black Vote, details the manner in which Black Britons have been targeted in a racially charged environment stemming from a wave of nationalist sentiment brewing over the international crisis over Iraq. Woolley was a participant in the massive peace mobilization that was held in London on February 15.*

As the United Kingdom blindly follows the USA into an unjust war against Iraq, we witness the creation of an enemy within. The demonisation of Black Britons: Africans, Asians and Caribbeans has been gathering apace. In fact, it's not just Black Britons, but anyone who is not white is being targeted as a potential national threat. Ever since American President George W. Bush waged war, first on terrorists, then Afghanistan and very soon Iraq, some newspaper editors in the UK have used the climate of hostility as never before to fill their columns with bigotry, race hatred, and bile. Not just against the threat of terror but against anyone they perceive threatens a narrow and often mythical sense of Britishness.

To fully understand the motivation of some newspaper editors and some politicians we need to look at a complex economic and political global picture that brings disparate groups and agendas crashing together.

For the last few years the illusion of dramatic economic rise in western countries, in particular America, has been exposed as just that, an illusion. For example, thousands of people invested billions of dollars in the Dot.com industry that produced, by and large, nothing. Most people could see that the Dot.com emperor had no clothes, yet blinded by greed and avarice, investors chose to ignore reality until it was too late. But the Dot.com absurdity was dwarfed by the trillion dollar, doubling dealing, cheating executives of Enron and WorldCom. Their downfall exposed the fact that the success of some of America's largest companies was based not on illusion but lies, blatant barefaced lies. As confidence fell the western markets plummeted, leaving many countries, including the US and the UK, teetering on the brink of recession.

In most countries around the world the economy is king. Presidents and Prime Ministers are elected *or not* on the basis of keeping the nation's financial house in order. Only the threat of a challenge to the nation's sovereignty takes greater precedent over "king economy." Not surprisingly therefore, the prosecution of war against Iraq is being sold to us as a direct threat to western values and our freedom. Furthermore, to ensure we understand that the threat is real, the United States and United Kingdom have sought to link the conflict of Iraq with Osama bin Laden and his Al Qaeda network that perpetrated the terrorist attacks on 9/11.

The problem for George Bush and Tony Blair is that very few outside their immediate administrations see a credible and irrefutable link between the secular governance of Saddam Hussein and the religious fundamentalism of Osama bin Laden. What the outside world does see is the economic imperative of America and Great Britain to control Iraq's oil fields, which amounts to nearly 20 percent of the world's oil supply. As a result, we witnessed the biggest peace march in the history of the United Kingdom as 1.5 million people took to the streets of London, including many thousands of Black people. Collectively they proclaimed that this war is unjust.

So what has ghastly warmongering got to do with the demonisation of anyone who is not white? An enemy must be real. They must be seen as threatening the British way of life, whatever that may be, and they need to be easily recognisable. For reasons that go beyond the spurious justification of war, Africans, Asians, Caribbeans, and other people of colour, conveniently become the usual suspects - the enemy within.

With an enemy in sight politicians and newspaper editors have sought to wreak havoc, playing upon the nation's fear factor.

Recently twenty tanks and four hundred soldiers were deployed around British airports as the government announced the Islamic celebration of Eid could be used as cover for a major terrorist attack. The question arises: did the government need to mention the sacred Muslim festival of Eid? Some newspaper editors needed little encouragement to raise the spectre that all Muslims are a potential threat to British national security.

The other bogeyman that forms the "axis of evil within" is the asylum seeker. Not the white Asylum seeker from Zimbabwe, but the one that has a darker skin. Long before September 11th the loathing of asylum seekers has been, in some quarters, a national sport.

"They're swamping are schools." "They take our homes." "They bring in their filthy diseases." "They drain our resources." This was the rhetoric even before September 11, 2001. Now the language is much more strident. The country's largest selling newspaper, *The Sun*, has been leading the charge. After claiming that asylum seekers are "terrorists," "gangsters," and "drug dealers," they called upon the British public to halt immigration and asylum to save the nation.

The fear factor worked, and over 400,000 readers signed the petition that stated: "I call upon the Prime Minister to protect Britain before it is too late."

Politicians too jumped on the bandwagon of race hatred to reintroduce "dead in the water policies" that could only be debated in the present climate. The leader of the opposition, Ian Duncan Smith, argued the only way to resolve the nation's threat would be to lock up all immigrants and asylum seekers until the security forces felt it safe to let them go. To add insult to injury, and to the surprise of many people, the highest figure in British Christendom, the Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams, agreed with the proposals.

Fear has brought thuggery and death to the streets of the UK. Recently an asylum seeker, Mohammed Isa Hasan Ali, who fled the brutality of the Afghanistan Taliban, paid the ultimate price in this climate of race hatred when a white youth stabbed him to death on the streets of Southampton.

In a country that perceives itself under siege, British Caribbeans are also viewed as the axis of evil that threatens the British way of life. One best selling magazine, that has a Member of Parliament as its editor, published an article about a tragic incident involving rival gangs that are Black that resulted in the shooting deaths of two girls. *The Spectator* argued:

"Finally, only a moron would not surmise that what the politically correct newspaper refer to as 'disaffected young people' are black thugs, sons of black thugs and grandsons of black thugs, in it for the money."

"West Indians were allowed to immigrate after the war, multiply like flies, and then the great state apparatus took over the care of their multiplications. The Rivers of Blood speech by Enoch Powell was prophetic, as well as true, and look what the bullshitters of the time did to that great man. Britain is being mugged by black hoodlums."

Sadly, there is no end in sight to this racist political and media onslaught. As a consequence Britain's far right party, The British National Party, has become politically stronger as their racist agenda becomes mainstream discourse. Furthermore, the prospect of a generation of British-African, Caribbean and Asian youths, veering towards extremism as a way of fighting back becomes ever real.

In the absence of politicians showing leadership, our communities must take the lead. Our lawyers along with like-minded white lawyers must sue the racist publications. Our communities must serve notice on the politicians, who will need our vote for re-election in the months ahead that we demand that the racist editors and politicians are dealt with.

Lastly, we must show solidarity with other minority ethnic groups. The present focus has been on Muslims and Caribbeans but tomorrow it'll be Sikhs and West Africans. It is a difficult time but Black unity will see us through it.

Simon Woolley is the director of *Operation Black Vote*, the United Kingdom's leading Black advocacy organization promoting equal access to the political process.

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