



RACE IN ACTIVISM

This covers activism and voluntary organisations within the UK, and does not cover the risks associated with protesting in other countries or the importance of climate justice. As there are too many resources here (it was so hard to distil it all down!), the key resources are in bold and there are summary sections and key facts included.

Lack of diversity in environmentalism

- Only 9 % of voluntary sector employees are from BAME backgrounds, a lower proportion than in both the public and private sectors (both 11 %), and lower than in the UK population as a whole (14 %) ([NCVO, 2019](#)).
- “I think that [desire to downplay racism] comes more from the white society in self-denial ... especially charities, because they feel themselves as a good guy. It’s almost to say it’s a reflection of them. They don’t want to look in the mirror and say, you know, I’m actually part of the problem” ([Interview](#))
- “Climate activism is seen as a white middle-class movement and many activists of colour aren’t recognised, despite the fact that they are often working as hard if not harder than their white counterparts” (Ishaa Asim, Youth Strike MCR & Fridays for Future)

Resources:

1. Extinction Rebellion and race: <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/oct/04/extinction-rebellion-race-climate-crisis-inequality> - written
2. Racism in the environment sector: <https://youtu.be/XQhhr-bp7kA> - video, 1 hour. Particularly relevant at 7:55 - 23:08; 36:40 - 44:55.
3. The Unbearable Whiteness of Green: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sWFMi_1j7jU - video, 2 hours 40. Relevant at 24:25 - 28:40 ; 35:30 - 37:31 (some outdated information elsewhere)

Barriers to participation

Policing during activism

Resources:

1. The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts bill: <https://youtu.be/7Ca9eRbZk8g> - video, 2 minutes
2. Proposed changes to the bill: <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5802/cmpublic/PoliceCrimeSentencing/memo/PCSCB05.htm> - written
3. Timeline of the bill’s progress: <https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2839#timeline>
4. Use of force by the police: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-44214748> - written



5. Racist policing of BLM protests: <https://vimeo.com/478270414> - video, 10 minutes
6. Police targeting black bystander at protest <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EREH6-AkDkc> - video, 30 seconds
7. Use of anti-terror laws on protesters: <https://time.com/5506750/stansted-15-britain-protest-court-immigration/> - written. Similar arrest of Muslim man in Extinction Rebellion under the anti-terrorism act (undocumented)

Summary:

The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts bill aims to completely change peaceful protest, with maximum noise limits, start and finish times, and place restrictions on protests that are classed as a 'serious annoyance', a 'serious disruption to the public', or causing 'serious unease'. These rules would even affect single person protests. A £2500 fine to 10 years in prison face those who do not follow these rules, and there will no longer be a need for the police to show protesters are aware of the rules before they arrest.

Ministers said this bill was drawn up with Extinction Rebellion in mind, and it also is targeted at the Black Lives Matter movement, raising the penalty for damage to statues to 10 years imprisonment (a harsher punishment than some attacks on women). Whomever the target of the changes to the policing of unauthorised encampments, it seriously discriminates against gypsy, Roma, and other travelling communities. The bill makes trespass a criminal offence, criminalised residing in a vehicle on land without permission, and increases the powers of the police to seize property where individuals reside.

The bill undermines the freedom of assembly and association protected under the European Convention on Human Rights and the Human Rights Act. Many organisations have submitted evidence for it to be changed, finding it will entrench further racist practices into policing.

Already, a black person in London is four times more likely than a white person to have force used against them by a Met Police officer, as a proportion of the population (MET Police Use of Force report, 2018). This means the risks taken by people of colour attending protests are much higher than those for white people. At black-led protests such as BLM, there is evidence of excessive use of force against black protesters, and even in some cases, black legal observers.

Time and wealth (intersection with class)

Resources:

1. Karen Bell, Working-class environmentalism, chapter 6
<\\MANFILE2\Sustainability\Intersectionality\Staff race learning group\Race and activism\20210826-Karen Bell - Working-class environmentalism chapter 6.pdf>

Summary:

- BAME households in the UK are twice as likely as their white counterparts to be amongst those hardest hit by austerity and BAME workers are over-represented in insecure and low-paid forms of employment (Runnymede Trust and the Women's Budget Group, 2016).
- View that working class were too preoccupied with meeting basic needs to be involved in environmental activism and environmental concern increases with affluence
 - the theory of 'post-materialism' (Inglehart 1977, 1990, 1995, 1997, 2000) - with increasing wealth there is a shift in citizen values from predominantly materialist, focused on survival and security, to predominantly post-materialist, concerned with identity, rights and quality of life.
 - the 'affluence hypothesis' (Diekmann and Franzen 1999; Franzen 2003; Franzen and Meyer 2010) - wealthier people 'not only have a higher demand for a clean

environment, but [are] ... more willing and able to reduce their standard of living in order to devote more resources to global environmental protection'

- the 'environmental Kuznet's curve' (EKC) hypothesis (Yandle et al. 2002) - nations will see environmental improvements only after a certain level of national income is exceeded
- But there is a large body of evidence to the contrary, showing affluence is not related to climate *concern*
 - Indigenous cultures have valued living in harmony with nature, with respect for its limits, for thousands of years (Pellow 2018).
 - there is now rapidly accumulating evidence of environmental activism in low-income countries (e.g. see Martinez-Alier 2002, 2003; Pellow 2007)
 - Quantitative evidence that post-materialism and economic affluence are not consistently positively correlated with environmental concern (e.g. Dunlap and Mertig 1997; Dunlap and York 2008).
- That said, working-class people have different ways of expressing that concern, focusing more on maintaining environments that are adequate for health and physical survival immediately.
 - Less likely to carry out green activities that directly or indirectly affect finances (e.g. buying organic, buying long-lasting but expensive products)
 - Lower uptake of some green activities can be attributed to the environment (e.g. high density housing with poor recycling facilities meaning less recycling in those communities)

Bearing the burden

Resources:

- [Mental Health Foundation](#) - section "Are rates of mental ill health different for people from a BAME background?", written
- <https://walltrace.com/2021/03/climate-anxiety-unbearable-whiteness/> - written
- "Climate change exacerbates mental distress, particularly among young people, even for individuals who are not directly affected (e.g. 'eco-anxiety')" ([Lawrence et al. 2021](#))
- "...compelling evidence that protests even when nonviolent can be associated with adverse mental health outcomes" ([Ni et al. 2020](#))

Things to think about

1. How can activism be more inclusive?
2. How can activism groups better platform non-white voices and allow them to lead the way, without increasing their burden?