

**Mind the Gap:
The Effects of Excessive Immigration and Poor Governmental Policies on
Social Class in London**

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For many years, overcrowding and price inflation have been concerns in most major European cities. With housing costs rising to the highest they've ever been, many young people in these cities are opting to live at home with their parents until they marry, if they marry at all (Mines, W personal interview 6/07). Making a life for oneself is harder than ever due to low wages and high housing costs. Couple high costs with a housing shortage and you've got a large number of very irritated Londoners. The island of Great Britain is slightly smaller than the state of Oregon (244,820 sq. km), yet more and more people are crowding onto it, especially into London. Many Londoners blame the past and current government for their woes, saying they are allowing too many immigrants and asylum seekers into the country for the sake of being politically correct and gaining more money for their economy (Mines, W personal interview, 3/08). What the people of London feel the government fails to realize is the strain that all the non-British people being allowed into London are putting on their daily lives and livelihoods, wanting simply to line their pockets with ample government funding provided by outrageous taxes placed upon working citizens. Natural-born British citizens in London are concerned for the state of their capitol city but also, they're concerned with the growing threat to their social class due to immigration (Mines, W personal interview, 3/08). The social and economical gaps between British and non-British citizens are widening every day with plenty of help from radical media sources using the current situation to fuel the fires of discontent.

To begin, perhaps it would be best to take a look at what sorts of things are troubling Londoners most. According to YouGov polls taken in Britain in 2004 (see figure 1), Iraqis and Pakistanis were the least popular group of immigrants that enter the country, followed closely by Romanians and black Africans. In the same poll, 74% of the citizens said that they thought too many immigrants were being granted leave to enter the country. The most popular reason for this answer being that the new immigrants put too much strain on public services (*The New Blacks* 2004). Things have only gotten worse all around since that poll was taken.

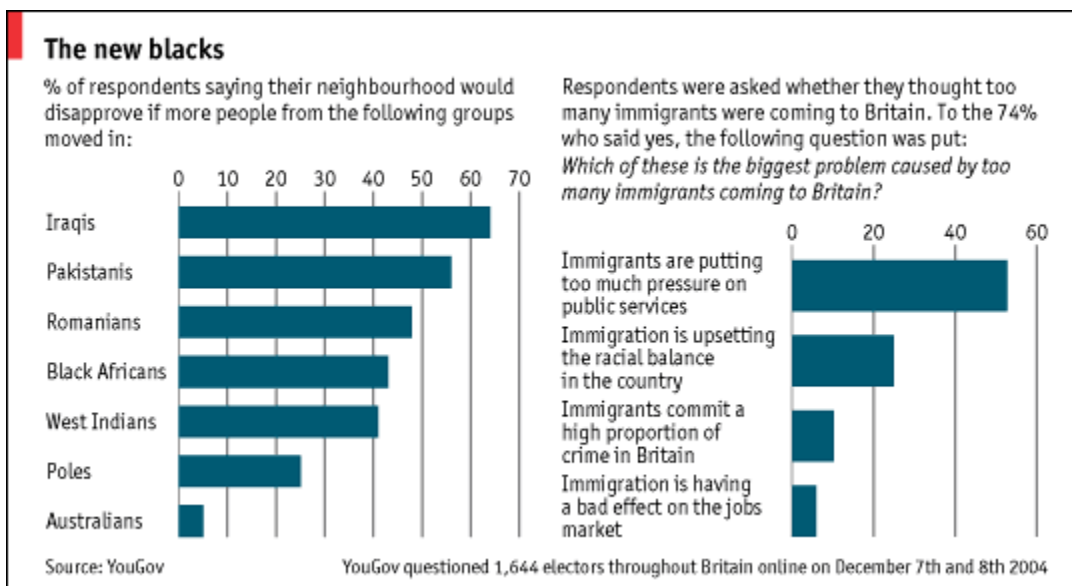


Figure 1

There is a certain amount of Council Housing available in every borough of the city (Baker, personal interview 3/08). Council Housing is government controlled housing available at an economical, fixed price to those in the lowest income brackets, families with children that need shelter, and of course, incoming immigrants needing a way to get on their feet. There is a points system to determine who gets homes before whom, but many white Londoners feel their skin is the wrong color to be able to qualify for Council Housing, even

when they need it most (Mines, W personal interview 1/08). Incoming immigrants, they say, have many children or big extended families and are immediately placed in the front of the line, even before those white Londoners who have been waiting for months and desperately need places to stay. The average wait for a Council flat or home is 3-10 years for a white Londoner, depending on the location of the residence.

Another problem being faced by citizens of London is excessive taxation. Few things are certain in life except death and taxes and it can be said that these people are being taxed to death. The current government believes that allowing immigrants into the country stimulates the economy and provides more competition, but in reality, it's doing nothing but making more taxes for the working citizen who is subject to government taxation. Since it is now a custom of the government to give housing to new immigrants, they also have a program, similar to our Welfare program, allowing these same people not to work, but to survive off of the taxes that are taken out of every working person's salary every month (Mines, J personal interview 3/08). A young Londoner has accounted a tale of being harassed and mocked outside of London Underground stations by middle-eastern immigrants, who seemed only to have stepped out to taunt and curse at those going to work for the day because they did not have to; because the citizen's work was paying for the immigrants to live and eat instead of being able to provide for their own family (Mines, W personal interview 6/07). Every year, as always, taxes are set to go up, but in some London boroughs like Lambeth, the residents this year are paying a 4.03% increase in their taxes from the 2007/2008 tax year ("Council Tax" 2008). The heavy taxation and reverse discrimination that British citizens are facing during their normal daily commutes are factors that only further fan the flames of discontent that are already running very high in the streets.

Street gangs in London are also at an all time high (Baker, personal interview 3/08). Killings among teenagers are rising dramatically in the recent months. All deaths seem to be gang related and are typically knife and gun crimes. According to police force statistics, the majority of these gangs are made up of Afro-Caribbean youths and Asian youths. Many opinion blogs, including one written by the Aberdeen Independent British Nationalists highlights this fact, citing “police figures” as their source and couple it with a menacing SIM character picture of two dark-skinned men both wielding large guns; a typical stereotype (“Ethnics Commit” 2008). The mere fact that these gangs are present in many London neighborhoods is frightening enough in itself, but many Londoners are finding that gang crimes are occurring right on their own streets, which makes them even more uneasy about when they go out and where they go out to. According to USofA-First.org, Scotland Yard has been quoted in saying that immigration is fuelling the increase in gang violence in the streets of London, and that gun and knife crime have become regular (“London: The Truth” 2008). These two blogs both present another reason for Londoners to want to halt immigration.

So what exactly does all this mean for London? It means that the threats surrounding the indigenous people of the city are making them feel closed in, threatened and as if they are not even considered citizens, especially first class citizens, in their own country. There are many in the city that are now joining up with the British National Party (BNP) in an attempt to stop free movement of peoples into Britain (aka, stop immigrants from becoming first-class citizens). The BNP makes promises to return Britain and London to the citizens and to make sure that they are being taken care of just as well as the immigrants, if not better (*British National Party News* 2008). A look at the BNP website shows a lot of what could be, at first glance, considered propaganda, outrageous and racist claims, and abundant finger-

pointing in the direction of immigrants as the perpetrators of heinous crimes. It's this kind of media coverage that is affecting the minds of the British people in London because many feel they have nowhere left to turn. Many of them feel mistreated by the current government, and see joining up with the BNP as a way to send a message out to the other parties of just how affected they really are. A large link on the side of the website that quickly draws the eye is a picture of a double-edged razorblade with blood spurting out from underneath reading, "Racism Cuts Both Ways," with one edge reading White, the other reading Black. The link takes the viewer to an entire page splattered with white murder stories and race hate crimes committed against native, white Londoners. This portion of the site has a header filled with photographs of presumably murdered white Londoners to drive home their point. This website is where British people come when they need information about the BNP, so this is the kind of thing they're seeing when they actively go looking: overblown "truths" and exaggerated patriotism. If Britons think that they are being treated as second-class citizens in their own country, they need look no further for affirmation than <http://www.bnp.org.uk> (*British National Party News* 2008).

A more moderate and neutral view of the situation can be found on sites like migrationwatchuk.com, in blogs like "The Shield of Achilles" found at <http://www.shieldofachilles.net> and in local newspapers like *The Voice*, a London newspaper published by Black residents of the city. If the reader wants real statistics to help formulate an objective view on the subject, the Migration Watch site has them aplenty. They include movement within and out of areas with high minority concentrations, the number of immigrants that come into the country each year, and how many of those settled in London. They do not attempt to make their numbers look bigger to fool the reader, they simply present the information as it is and lets the reader decide for themselves what they want to

believe. It highlights changes in white population in boroughs with respect to the amount of minority residents that are coming in, addresses the high birthrates among immigrants, and also touches on the housing shortage in an unbiased way (Migration Watch UK, 2005). In *The Shield of Achilles*, the author of the blog also takes a resigned look at the situation. He or she clearly doesn't like what's going on, but they do not go about demonstrating their disapproval in the same manner as the BNP. They do, however, raise the question of why, exactly, it is considered racism when white people want to live in a community of people similar to themselves, but it is not considered so for minority groups. He claims that "the British have been squeezed out of their own capitol" ("London Housing Costs" 2008). (see figure 2) Finally, he compares the city to a boat that is taking aboard passengers: if too many people try to get on at once, the boat will capsize and send them all overboard.

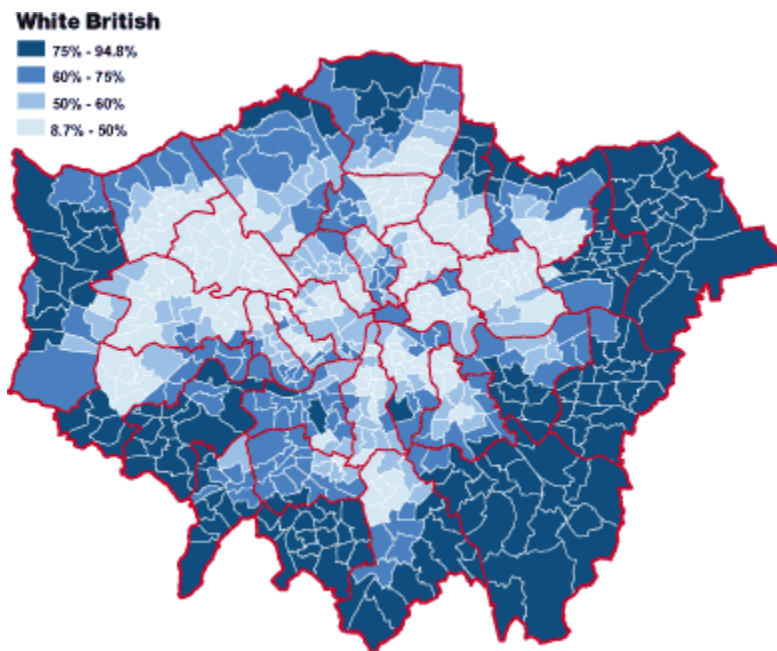


Figure 2

The article that was the least biased was from the Black community newspaper, *The Voice*. In an article entitled "The Politics of Fear," Bascombe (2005) takes an objective look at immigration and its effects on British society and concludes that if anyone is losing in the

argument, it's the immigrants and asylum seekers, no one else. The people that need the most help are the ones being persecuted for seeking it out. They pinpoint a Tory party leader, Michael Howard, as a hypocrite. As the son of Jewish Romanian asylum seekers, he seems to have no empathy towards those that seek shelter in the UK when their own countries are being torn apart. They also link Howard to an infamous British politician of the late 60s, Enoch Powell, whose "Rivers of Blood" speech struck fear into the hearts of many British at the thought of more "outsiders" coming into the UK (Bascombe, 2005). He claimed that rivers of blood would flow in London if the immigration continued.

The Voice presents all of their information in an unbiased, informative matter. They do not proclaim to have the truth, as does the BNP, but they show sympathy for all involved in the situation. It can be said that black British people are just as proud of their country as their white counterparts, but they will always hold a spot in their hearts for the less fortunate, as they once were. These three sites say nothing about social class, but they make their messages clear in a way that those who read with open hearts will understand and try to apply in their lives. They are not attempting to inspire fear or hatred with their words; they are simply seeking to inform those who seek a different way than radicalization and racism. In this way, it can be surmised that they *are* speaking of social class; that no one is besting anyone else, that no one is gaining more power. All citizens of London are in the same boat, the same social class. This is their message, but unfortunately, it is hardly the reality.

Mayoral elections in London are coming up quickly, and as expected, many Londoners will be going to the polls in support of the BNP (Mines, W and Mines, J personal interview 4/08). Many feel as though they have no other choice but to join the ranks of the radicals if they want change in their city. The threat of a change or downward movement in their social class is so frightening, they are willing to take up the name of a group that is

blatantly racist, bigoted and possibly worse for London in the long run than the current government. In British society, honor and duty have always been common threads. I believe that many Londoners feel it is their duty to do all they can to fix their beloved town before it falls to bits and pieces at the hands of their leaders. This does not make them racist; it does not make them bad people. It simply makes them afraid. Afraid of what would become of their social class and status in their own country if things continue on in the same way they are now, all done in the name of multiculturalism. How far can multiculturalism get a society when its founding members' social status is being threatened? We will have to cross our fingers and wait, hoping that civil war doesn't break out, and that London doesn't fall and die in the ever-widening gap between its citizens, dug by their own politicians and their policies; all promoted in the sake of good will, but brewing much more trouble than governmental policies ever should.

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