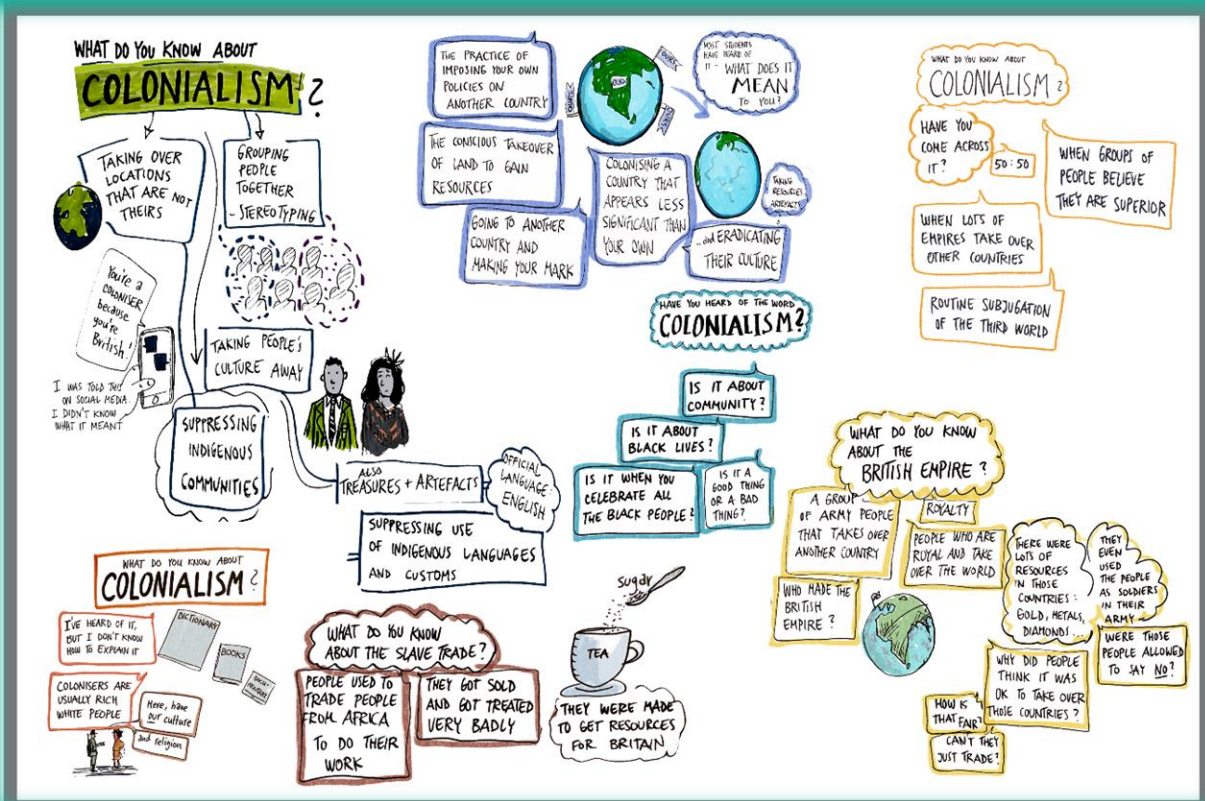




THE BLACK CURRICULUM



THE BLACK CURRICULUM'S CONVERSATIONS WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

November 2022

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Introduction

The Black Curriculum's '**Conversations with Young People**' series, which were carried out throughout Black History Month in October, explored young people's understanding and perspectives of colonialism. This report presents the key findings from the conversations.

WHY DID WE START THESE CONVERSATIONS WITH YOUNG PEOPLE?

Recent events and discussions on colonialism in broadsheets and across social media platforms, following the death of Queen Elizabeth II, highlighted the need for a wider debate on this topic. Our aim was to explore whether young people were aware of these discussions, and how the discussions had influenced their current knowledge on the subject. In addition, we wanted to examine gaps in their knowledge on the subject.

The discussions on colonialism on social media platforms during this period emphasised the importance of teaching British Black history, a fundamental part of our mission at The Black Curriculum. Our commitment is to ensure that the teaching of Black British history in our schools is mainstreamed and embedded within the national curriculum. This will not only help all young people to understand how our past shapes events in the present, but it also equips them with the skills to be involved and contribute to future discussions on aspects of Black British history in a productive way. Teaching all young people about Black British history means that they will not have to learn from conversations and discussions in social media, and other outlets, which may not necessarily be accurate.

HOW DID WE ENGAGE WITH THE YOUNG PEOPLE?

The '**Conversations with Young People**' series involved visits to schools in the last two weeks of October. The four schools that participated in the conversations were quite diverse, and included an Independent school, a Special Education Needs (SEN) school, a Primary school, and a Secondary school. Approximately 60 young people were involved in the conversations across the four schools.

The conversations were set up as focus group sessions during which we asked specific questions and captured, using visual notes, what the young people had to say in response to the questions. All the sessions involved an element of critical thinking where young people were shown images and conversation pieces linked to discussions on colonialism. The young people were then asked to feedback their thoughts and their understanding of what these images and conversation pieces conveyed. We followed this with a short briefing session on colonialism and the facts around the subject.

The groups of young people that participated in the sessions varied with regards to diversity and age. In the Secondary school visited the session was held with members of the African Caribbean Society, in the Primary school, those involved in the sessions were mainly from Asian backgrounds and were members of the Student Council. In the SEN school we delivered three separate sessions involving groups of young people that worked with specific SEN tutors, the majority of the learners were white. At the Independent school, which was new, and a small school, we delivered the session to all those in the school, all the learners were white. A few teachers from all the schools visited sat in at the sessions.

WHAT DID THE CONVERSATIONS COVER?

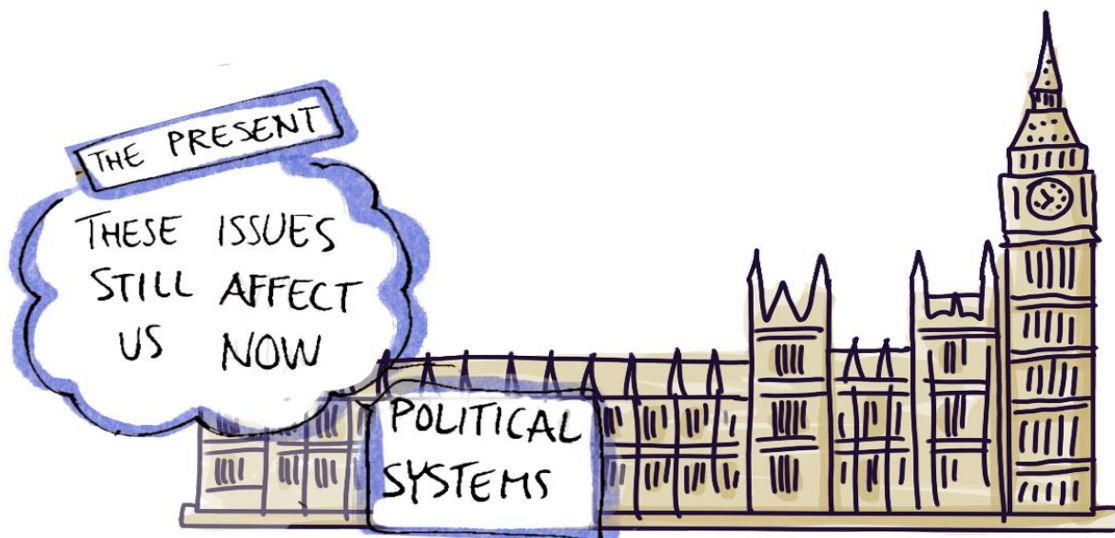
The main discussion points covered in the conversations were as follows:

1. *What do young people know about colonialism?*
2. *Are young people aware of recent debates and conversations around colonialism?*
3. *What messages have they picked up from different media outlets about colonialism and Britain's role in it?*
4. *Why do they think recent events have triggered conversations around colonialism?*
5. *Where are the gaps in the current national curriculum and with regards to their own knowledge about colonialism and the British Empire?*
6. *What other areas would they like to know about Black British history?*

WHAT ARE WE DOING WITH THE FINDINGS?

The findings from these sessions, starting from this report, will be used to build consensus with our education partners about broadening the history curriculum, thus ensuring that young people are well informed and have the critical thinking skills and confidence to contribute to future debates.

The Black Curriculum will continue to advocate and work towards ensuring that learning about Black British history becomes the norm in all educational spaces for young people.



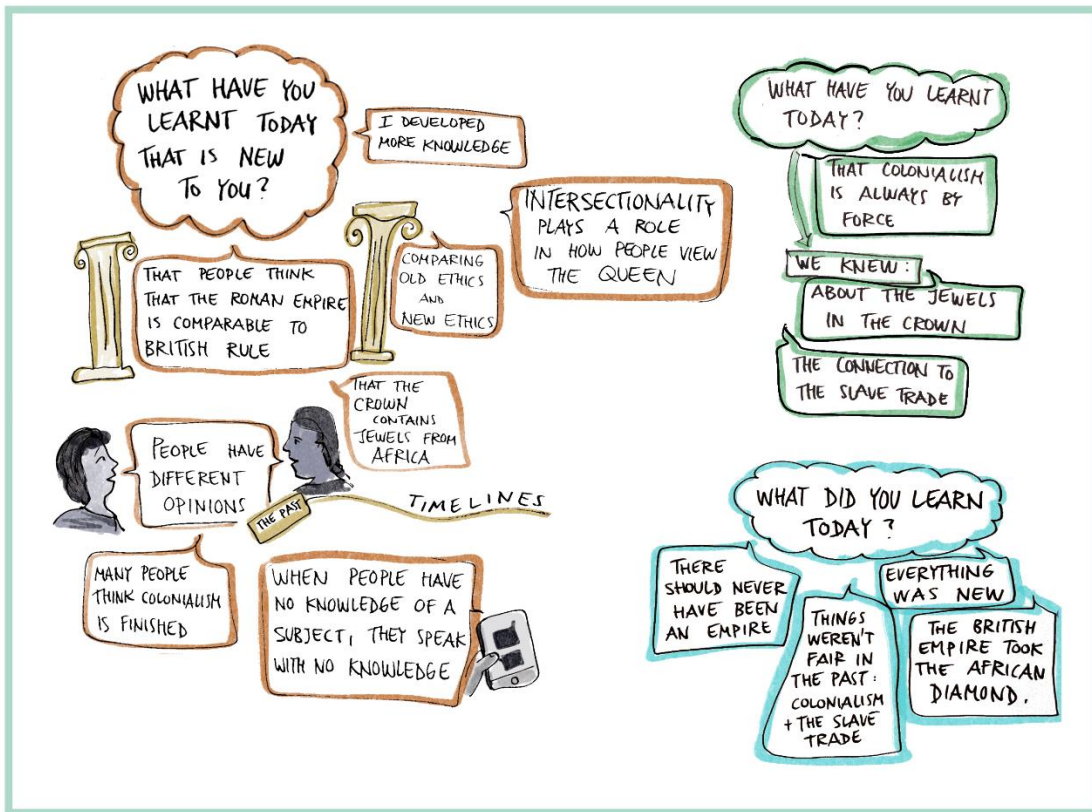
HOW DID THEY HEAR ABOUT COLONIALISM?

Most of the young people who said they knew what colonialism meant had heard about it through **social media platforms and the internet**. There were others who said they came from a colonised country and knew about colonialism through their parents and grandparents. Only a few mentioned learning about colonialism in school.

WHAT DID YOUNG PEOPLE LEARN FROM THE ‘CONVERSATIONS’ CARRIED OUT BY THE BLACK CURRICULUM?

We asked the young people what they had learnt from the sessions. Overall, those that were not aware felt that they now knew “*the proper meaning of colonialism.*” The young people that felt they knew about colonialism mentioned that the sessions had **further developed their knowledge in this area**. Others felt that they now had a better understanding of why colonialism had made the headlines after Queen Elizabeth’s death. However, mostly, the young people realised that people’s views on colonialism differed, and that in some cases, this was based on a lack of knowledge.

Diagram 2: Young people’s feedback on what they had learnt from the sessions



WHAT MORE WOULD YOUNG PEOPLE LIKE TO KNOW ABOUT BLACK BRITISH HISTORY?

Overall, the young people were keen to learn more about Black British history. In some sessions, particularly those held in the Primary school, there were more questions than answers as we began to discuss what colonialism actually meant, the definition of the word, what it involved and why some people felt uncomfortable talking about it.

Most young people were keen to learn more about the subject, mainly in relation to understanding the timeline from when colonialism started up until when countries started getting their independence. Others were keen to learn more about the effects of colonialism on the culture of the countries that were part of the British Empire including religion. There were a few mentions on understanding other themes around Black British history, such as specific historical figures, slave trade, pre-colonial histories and post-colonial systems.

Diagram 3: Young people's feedback on what else they would like to learn about Black British history



Conclusions

The 'Conversations with Young People' sessions highlight **gaps in their knowledge on a subject which is a core part of Britain's history**. The young people that were aware of it, or felt they understood what it meant, mainly knew about colonialism from social media. This is not a practical way to learn about a topic that is a fundamental part of Britain's history considering the different opinions on the topic. Young people's interpretations as discussed also varied a lot.

The findings demonstrate that **young people should be taught the facts around Black British history, so they have the knowledge to be able to tell the difference between fact and fiction**, particularly in the world where fake news is peddled across social medial platforms. **Learning about Black British history also helps them to understand how our past shapes events in the present.**

Ensuring that all young people know about Black British history prepares them to become fully rounded citizens, ready for an increasingly globalised world. As was clear from the sessions, the young people were keen not only to learn more about colonialism but to understand how this era in our history has shaped events in the present, '*the timeline*' up until modern day Britain.

Our aim at The Black Curriculum is to be evidence led and to use research to highlight that teaching Black British history is key in preparing young people for the global society in which we live in. Every young person will come across snippets of our history across broadsheets and social media as they transition into adulthood, it is important to make sure that they understand how and why our history shapes events in the present. **Black British history is British History.**



Annex: Young People's understanding of colonialism

Takeover of a country/land

“Conscious takeover of land to gain resources”

“Taking over the country to better the country”

“Colonialism is taking over land to gain and benefit from it”

“An act of going to an inhabited place and taking it as your own”

“Takeover of land”

“Conscious takeover of land that may contain precious resources e.g., European race for Africa”

“When people take over lands”

“When one country colonises a country and kind of takeover the country and government”

“Colonialism is when another country colonises a country, and kind of takes over the country and the Government”

“The act of colonisation towards a country that appears to be less significant”

“Occupation by force and inflicting power which benefits the colonising country (e.g., good and trade)”

“People taking over another country in the name of bettering that country – eradicating the original’s country’s original culture, religion and practices”

Taking over people’s culture/freedom and independence

“Colonising a country with less power than yours and forcing your culture and policies on the Indigenous people

“Injecting beliefs into another country, taking their freedom, stealing their culture and taking away their independence”

“When a race takes away another country and wipes their culture and lifestyle away and replacing it with their own culture”

“When a country takes over another country and imposes their culture and lifestyle”

“When you take peoples culture away”

“Robbing a country of its history and culture and religion to impose your own”

Other

“When Britain used to rule other countries”

“Going to another country and making your mark”

“Art of colonising a country that is less significant than your own”

“When you group people together and be disrespectful”

“Colonisation is when a group of people take over a group of countries after a war finishes”

“When you colonise a group of people together often stereotype them, which is disrespectful”

“I think it means white people taking other locations that are not theirs”

“The colonising of another country for selfish reasons and suppressing its values and people”

“The practice of imposing your policies on another country

“It is the practice of imposing your own policies on another country forcefully”