



## **Crime, order and social control**

*Taking racial abuse seriously*

### **SIMON BHARDWAJ:**

One day coming home school I was like 'cos I finished a little bit late, and my bus I missed it, which I had to walk home that day, and I come under the subway, just before I did the boy got me. He got me in a headlock and started kneeling me in the face and punching my head. Then this other boy's brother got this piece of wood and slapped it straight round my neck twice, which has left big, white marks there.

### **INT:**

Do you know who they were?

### **SIMON:**

Yeah I know who they are.

### **INT:**

What happened to them?

### **SIMON:**

Nothing now 'cos the police, we called the police on a 999, they come down, they said that the next day that they'd send somebody down, and we're still waiting for them, this is two days now.

### **INT:**

What are you going to do when you grow up?

### **SIMON:**

I want to be a solicitor.

### **INT:**

Why?

### **SIMON:**

Well I'd like to lock them away.

### **V/O:**

Simon Bhardwaj and his family live in the East End of London. Though their mother is white, their father is Asian and they've been the victims of racial harassment and attacks for over five years.

### **JANE BHARDWAJ:**

Well I was moved from Blaney Crescent in East Ham for racial harassment, violence to my elder son in particular when he was slapped across the head with lumps of wood and called racist names, and here we've had cigarette boxes full of stones put through the letterboxes, we've had actually twelve windows broken, attempts to actually kicking my front door in, green wheelie bins thrown across the driveway, and children as young as ten and twelve holding knives up at my bedroom window. There's been no prosecutions whatsoever which I think is absolutely disgusting. I'd like to really know what the police, what their real, what their job role is really.

### **ADIL REHMAN:**

Racial harassment can take many forms, for example, shit through the letterbox, you know you've got racist graffiti on the door, letters through the thingy, the constant door knocking,

the constant, you know, racial abuse which, you know for example, is seen by some authorities that you know that low level harassment's nothing, it's minor; the actual psychological effect of that is, you know, amazing.

**V/O:**

Adil Rehman works for the Newham Monitoring Project in East London, one of the few community projects looking after the interests of victims of racial violence and harassment. Since 1980 it has campaigned locally against racism and fascism, bringing all sections of the community together, and informing people of their rights. Through his work, Adil visits home and families in the neighbourhood.

**ADIL REHMAN:**

I've walked into a house and I've seen a 7, 8 year old kid sat in a corner trembling because I've just knocked at the door. Children when they go to school they'll have characteristic changes, ach....problems, etcetera, and then again what happens is that the school because it doesn't recognise the racial aspect of it, and you've got young black kids being expelled, etcetera, you've got this family who's suffering racial harassment, you know, fearing for their own safety, their own lives, and yet you've got the police saying well, unless you come with us in the panda car and point him out, we're not going to do anything.

**CHIEF CONSTABLE PAUL WHITEHOUSE**

We believe very strongly that there should be a much more easily provable offence, perhaps one that doesn't require that someone is specifically annoyed by it. In other words a police office discovering someone spraying some racially unacceptable slogan on a wall, should be able to show that not just criminal damage which is the ordinary charges in those cases, but racial harassment was not, I mean one doesn't have to prove the intent of the person then, the fact that the slogan being sprayed was racist, in our view, should be sufficient to conclude the offence.

**ADIL REHMAN:**

There needs to be that message sent out that racial harassment is going to be taken not only seriously, but then people are going to actually, you know, actually going to be convicted.

**NICHOLAS BAKER:**

The offences which affect many of citizens day to day are connected with racial harassment, and that's where we felt there was a gap in the law and we've taken action. The new offence of Intentional Harassment in the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act, 1994, allows the court to deal adequately with the sort of intentional constant racial harassment which stops short of direct assault, but makes people's lives such a misery.

**ADIL REHMAN:**

What our experience is that time and time again laws will be introduced or polices will be introduced, and yet they'll be all paper policies, absolutely brilliant in black and white, and yet when it actually comes down to the implementation and you need action on the street, you need action on the ground, well it's not only that we've seen a lack of willingness, we've just seen a lack of actually any, you know, any results at all.

**NICHOLAS BAKER:**

Now we drafted the section dealing with racial harassment but didn't actually specify the word 'race', and we did this because we decided that if we did so, it would make it more difficult to get a conviction, because the Prosecutor would have to prove not only the fact of the intentional harassment, but also the motivation of the doer, and proving motivation beyond reasonable doubt is very difficult so it would be, consequently, much more difficult to get a conviction. And we have left the word 'race' out and it is therefore easier to get a conviction.