

Subject: Black abolitionists
ACT Now issue: Spring 2007
 Item responded to: Linda Ali's article

Dear Editor

I was intrigued by your recent coverage of the transatlantic slave trade which is often hijacked and distorted by the media for political purposes. Well done for highlighting the Christian role in stopping this abominable enterprise. White Christians, like David Livingstone, also vehemently opposed the Arab-Islamic slave trade which took millions of Black Africans to the Middle East. But what is never mentioned at all is the fact that Muslims from the Barbary Coast of North Africa captured up to two million White slaves from Southern Europe (even as far afield as Cornwall), decimating the coastal population of what is modern day Italy.

Peter Worsley

Dear Editor

I feel compelled to write in response to Linda Ali's excellent 'Black abolitionists ...' contribution to the Spring 2007 edition of *ACT Now*.

I am a White teacher, and so are the overwhelming majority of my colleagues. But whilst, as a Bible-believing Christian, I see that racism is wrong because it offends our thrice-holy God, I am appalled to find that some of my church-going co-workers hold views that range from ignorant and unhelpful on the one hand to downright supremacist and fascist on the other. My head-teacher, a long-time Lay Reader in the Anglican Church, is apt to make sweeping generalisations about asylum seekers and immigrants in staff meetings.

In short, our school Anti-Racism Policy is not worth the paper it is photocopied on. I feel powerless and isolated. When I approached my local union representative to voice my concerns he told me in no uncertain terms that he was 'more concerned about defending the rights of British teachers against a tidal wave of teachers from Poland and Zimbabwe' than 'promoting multiculturalism just for the sake of it.'

In my classroom I try to promote race equality and do my utmost to make all students and their parents feel welcome, but I feel that I am in a minority. I simply do not know what to do.

Sometimes I challenge the racist comments which are expressed in the staffroom on an almost daily basis but, much to my shame, I often find myself steering clear of shared spaces altogether because I want to avoid stress and confrontation.

God is not racist. But can we say the same of every *ACT Now* reader, let alone every Christian working in education in the UK?

God does not care about ethnicity or nationality. 'God has shown me that I should not call anyone impure or unclean ... I now realise how true it is that God does not show favouritism, but accepts people from every nation who fear him and do what is right' (Acts 10:28, 34-35). Do we show favouritism? Do we discriminate?

God is 'colour-blind'. 'There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus' (Galatians 3:28). Are we colour-blind in the way we assess, plan and teach? Are we colour-blind in the way we think, speak and act in the classroom?

God does not prejudge people on the basis of skin colour. 'The Lord does not look at the things people look at. Humans look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.' (1 Samuel 16:7b). Do we stereotype people on the basis of ethnicity or family background? Do we challenge racial stereotypes whenever we come across them – in the classroom, the playground and the staffroom?

Linda Ali's article reminded me that Evangelical Christians are called to 'love mercy, act justly and walk humbly' (Micah 6:8), and that sometimes, like William Wilberforce and his contemporaries, this means preaching prophetically to fellow believers in the hope that they will come to see that their attitudes and actions are ugly and ungodly.

Anon (ACT Member)

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Dear Editor

The cover of the Spring 2007 edition of *ACT Now* is, I think, the most striking I can remember. It is a wonderful advertisement for Linda Ali's outstanding article.

David Kaye