

Oxford Anti-Racism Charter

Vision: Collectively committed to being proactive, in making Oxford an anti-racist city.

About this Charter:

We're a city making an active and conscious effort to have difficult and sometimes uncomfortable conversations about what it means in practice to be anti-racist – both as individuals and across our organisations and institutions.

We are a city working together to change our thinking of racism as conscious, intentional and explicit actions **to also** understanding when it is unconscious, unintentional and indirect actions too.

We recognise that although racism does happen to, and by individuals, it can often be institutional too – racist actions which are embedded in an organisation and the way it behaves towards certain groups and individuals.

Without understanding the root causes of racism and how it affects people we cannot dismantle the institutional structures which give rise to it, that result in inequality and unfair outcomes for people from ethnic minorities and people of colour.

Therefore, this Charter demonstrates Oxford commitment to being both anti-racist and lays the foundation to advancing equality of opportunity for all our ethnic minorities and people of colour.

Defining Racism in this Charter¹:

- a) A belief or doctrine that inherent differences among the various human racial groups determine cultural or individual achievement, usually involving the idea that one's own race is superior and has the right to dominate others or that a particular racial group is inferior to the others.

- b) Also called institutional racism, a policy, system of government, etc. that is associated with or originated in such a doctrine, and that favours

¹ <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/racism>

members of the dominant racial or ethnic group, or has a neutral effect on their life experiences, while discriminating against or harming members of other groups, ultimately serving to preserve the social status, economic advantage, or political power of the dominant group.

- c) An individual action or behaviour based upon or fostering such a doctrine; racial discrimination.
- d) Racial or ethnic prejudice or intolerance towards ethnic minorities and people of colour.

Steps to becoming an Anti-Racist City:

On the 9th of August 2019, Oxford City Council, through a democratic decision making process at its Full Council meeting agreed to make Oxford an Anti-Racist City. The full motion and its commitments can be found [here](#).

This agreement to become an Anti-Racist city, is supported by other commitments adopted through this process, including the All Party Parliamentary Group definition on [Islamophobia](#)², the [International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of Anti-Semitism](#)³ and to become a [City of Sanctuary](#)⁴. These commitments lay down the building blocks for the creation of this charter. This Charter, and all signatories to it, adopt these definitions as part of our evolving understanding of racism and the actions we take to tackle it.

However, this list is not exhaustive of all the many types of racism people in our city might experience. In June of this year, following the murder of George Floyd, the leader of Oxford City Council, Councillor Susan Brown, made the following statement in [support of the Black Lives Matters](#) movement. Additionally, during the same period COVID -19 has shone a light on the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on minorities and people of colour.

² Please find more about the motion here:

https://mycouncil.oxford.gov.uk/mgAi.aspx?ID=21400#x_ftn1

³ Please find more about the motion here:

https://www.oxford.gov.uk/news/article/832/response_to_petition

⁴ Please find more about the motion here:

<https://mycouncil.oxford.gov.uk/ielIssueDetails.aspx?Id=22367&Opt=3>

As a result of all these racial injustices, and the poor outcomes that the black community repeatedly experience Oxford is adopting a specific definition of Anti-black racism in this Charter⁵:

“A specific form of racism that refers to any act of violence or discrimination including racist hate speech, fuelled by historical abuses and negative stereotyping, and leading to the exclusion and dehumanisation of people of African and Caribbean descent. It can take many forms: dislike, bias, oppression, racism and structural and institutional discrimination, among others”.

Accordingly, Anti-black racism can be seen as “the result of the social construction of race to which generic and/or cultural specificities and stereotypes are attributed (racialisation)” which “is deeply embedded in the collective European imagination and continues to impact the lives of people of African and Caribbean descent / Black Europeans”.

Moreover, we recognise, that there are minority groups in the UK, such as the [Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Communities](#) (GRT), who face pervasive prejudice and discrimination in their everyday lives. These experiences of prejudice are seemingly so common that they have almost become normalised. We are committed to developing a definition with the GRT community, and drawing on [recent international work in this area](#), that can be incorporated in future iterations of this charter.

Until we do that, we restate our ongoing commitment to the United Nations International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination⁶ and our obligations under the Equality Act 2010⁷, in ensuring inclusivity for all our communities in recognising the racism and discrimination they face.

We also recognise that there are multi-layers to racism and discrimination. This means such racism could impact on people differently because of other

⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/document.cfm?doc_id=55651 (Anti-Black racism was agreed by focus groups in Oxford as a more acceptable term, instead of Afrophobia) European Network Against Racism is an international human rights and racial justice organisation that co-produced the anti-black racism definition incorporated in this charter <https://www.enar-eu.org/>

⁶ https://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=IND&mtdsg_no=IV-2&chapter=4&lang=en

⁷ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>

human characteristics⁸ based on age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, or socio-economic status. All of these characteristics intersect⁹ - overlap and impact on each other - and must be reflected in the difficult and sometimes uncomfortable conversations we need to have to realise our collective aspirations to be a just, fair and more equal anti-racist city.

Principles:

Support and actively recognise that ethnic minorities and people of colour are not one homogenous group. We will continue to develop meaningful relationships that cut through the barriers from within communities preventing people from being seen and heard and engaging in two way dialogue to understand and address the issues that impact disproportionately on minorities.

Actively promote and celebrate the history and achievements of ethnic minorities and people of colour in communities, schools, colleges, universities, workplaces and through arts and cultural events to realise our shared history as core to British history.

Nurture, showcase and award the talent in our diverse communities, so that people of colour and ethnic minorities are recognised and celebrated as role models too, not just by ethnic minorities, but also the wider community.

Community spaces used by the public are accessible, affordable and inclusive for everyone's use, reflecting the diverse needs of the people in the city. Work together to ensure the governance structures of organisations in this city are diverse and representative of the people they serve.

Tackle institutional and structural racism. People in positions of power and leadership exhibit the moral leadership and conscience to raise their voices against racial injustice, and empower people to speak the truth in a fear-free, supportive environment.

⁸ In line with our commitments our obligations under the Equality Act 2010

⁹ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/intersectionality>

Understand fully the damaging impact of the “Hostile Environment”¹⁰ on ethnic minorities and people of colour in our City including the legacy of the Windrush scandal that impacts on the black community to the present day.

Acknowledge that ethnic minorities and people of colour will have a ‘lived experience’ of racism that all communities and generations need to learn from, to prevent future generations experiencing the same systemic discrimination and outcomes.

Represent and equitably resource initiatives that advance equality for ethnic minorities and people of colour, as a key feature of local democracy and future equality, diversity and inclusion initiatives.

Young people from working class communities and ethnic minority backgrounds are provided with equitable access to places, facilities and opportunities that may be perceived by them to be reserved for people with privilege. Young people are recognised as enablers, educators and agents for change.

Actions we will take:

- ❖ Every October we will review this Charter, review the definitions and reaffirm our commitment to be an Anti-Racist city.
- ❖ Every year we will showcase the talent and achievements of ethnic minorities and people of colour across the city – at awards ceremonies, through arts and cultural events, exhibitions and storytelling conversations.
- ❖ In the first year of the Charter we will launch an Oxford specific Anti-Racist City Quality Mark that organisations and community groups can download and incorporate in their stationery, after they have signed and committed to the principles set out in this Charter.

Declaration:

By signing this Anti-Racism Charter I commit/our organisation commits to the principles set out in this charter to be an international anti-racist city.

Signature

Date

¹⁰All ‘policies which make life difficult for migrants living in the UK’, see: <https://www.jcwi.org.uk/the-hostile-environment-explained>

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