

The 2021 Euros & questions of racism

How do we know - if we don't question what seems to be going on?

The death of George Floyd moved very many people from different backgrounds, across the world, to raise concerns about racism. Yet even a symbolic gesture like 'taking the knee' became the focus for division.

- ❑ **How do we generate open discussion about these matters?**
- ❑ **How do we avoid trivialising the issues - as part of a 'culture war'?**

The Government indicated that Black Lives Matter should not be promoted in schools. There was a risk that schools interpreted this to mean they should not discuss the issue at all. To do this, we would suggest, is to fail to meet young people's learning needs. An understanding of the cause is fundamental, if not BLM the organisation as such.

We illustrate the dilemmas by looking at what happened at the European Football Championships in summer 2021. Events suggest that **anti-racist sentiments are more widely held than seems to be assumed by some politicians and some media.**

A row began over the decision of the England team to 'take the knee'. It soon escalated. The Home Secretary condemned the decision as 'gesture politics', and did not condemn people booing their own team, saying it was a matter of personal choice. As the situation became more inflamed, a leading footballer, Tyrone Mings, intervened on social media. [See p 7]

It soon became clear that the matter was more complex. As educators it is vital that we allow students to explore complexity, and that we avoid falling into the trap of fighting what might be mythical 'culture wars'.

Social media can give voice to distorted messages. We need to provide opportunities for students to consider more nuanced views and develop skills to critically assess messages, wherever they come from.



You don't get to stoke the fire at the beginning of the tournament by labelling our anti-racism message as 'Gesture Politics' & then pretend to be disgusted when the very thing we're campaigning against, happens.

Link: [Tweet: Tyrone Mings - England international and Aston Villa footballer](#)

Social media has been a key resource in giving our players a platform and has been a positive tool in so many ways. In fact, I feel like this generation of England players is closer to the supporters than they have been for decades. Despite the polarisation we see in society, these lads are on the same wavelength as you on many issues.

There are things I will never understand.
Why would you tag someone in on a conversation that is abusive?
Why would you choose to insult somebody for something as ridiculous as the colour of their skin?
Why?

Unfortunately for those people that engage in that kind of behaviour, I have some bad news. You're on the losing side. It's clear to me that we are heading for a much more tolerant and understanding society, and I know our lads will be a big part of that.

Link: [What is national pride?](#)
from Gareth Southgate's article [Dear England](#)

First they took on the England team. Then they lost. And now, in their infinite wisdom, they're taking on the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI). They're going to lose that too....

They made two mistakes. The first was setting themselves up against the national football team, which is a frankly insane thing to do, but becomes more insane when they reach the finals of an international tournament. The second was to forget that the public is anti-racist. You can motivate people to the right on immigration, free movement and asylum. But when it comes to basic anti-racist sentiment, the vast majority ascribe to it.

Link: [Ian Dunt writing in politics.co.uk Weekly Review](#)

The 2021 Euros

Every day we are presented with news which can confuse, anger, baffle, even frighten. Information or ideas that are contested are all too often reduced to simplistic slogans.

In this context attitudes to race, both historically and today, are important. They are also core to the suggestion that we should develop 'Commonwealth Awareness'. There is a need for approaches that enable students to review messages and consider possible underlying attitudes.

The Euros 2021 illustrated how over-simplifying complex ideas can quickly lead to division and polarised argument. Argument that, even in the classroom, does nothing to help understanding.

Political leaders often suggest certainty rather than explaining dilemmas and difficult choices. They imply 'right answers' to what are complex issues. In these circumstances exploring such complexity can seem controversial.

However, for young people to **become thinking and engaged citizens** it is vital that they are encouraged and supported to engage with complexity, and to consider their own values in relation to the different positions taken on issues such as those raised by the Euros 2021.

Such ideas are core to the **Tide~ Connecting Dialogues** initiative - soon to be launched.



Taking the knee is not about a political view - not, as some say, about Marxism.

It is about ending inequality.

Image from Mirror Newspaper online.



The Elephant Times [2.4]



Danny Lawson's photo captures the support for Marcus Rashford after comments were written on a mural in Withington, Manchester.

Euros 2021 - Useful Stimulus Materials

Ipsos Mori Opinion poll

Articles about the opinion polls: [New Statesman](#). [Sky News](#).

Focus group enquiries. [Dousing the flames](#).

An Explanation of taking the knee, its origin and meaning - [from iNews](#)

Opinions [See page 7]:

- ◇ [Ian Dunt in 'politics.co.uk'](#)
- ◇ [David Allen Green](#)
- ◇ [Gareth Southgate 'Dear England'](#) – on the question of National Pride.



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