



2014 Annual Curriculum for Cohesion Dinner

Address of the Rt. Hon. Sadiq Khan MP

Shadow Secretary of State for Justice

Shadow Lord Chancellor

Shadow Minister for London

Thursday, 26 June 2014

I would like to open with the Greeting of Peace used by almost 3 million British Muslims and going on 1.6 billion Muslims worldwide: *as-salamu 'alaykum*.

First, I would like us to show our appreciation to my fellow Patron, Sir Anthony Figgis, Chairman of the Royal Over-Seas League, for again so kindly making it possible for us to be here tonight to celebrate our third Annual Curriculum for Cohesion Dinner.

As Lead Patron of Curriculum for Cohesion, it gives me great pleasure to welcome such a distinguished group of guests as Brian [Barker], Rebecca [Poulet], David [Anderson], Eoin [McLennan-Murray], Nicholas [Hilliard], Max [Hill], Ali [Bajwa], Baljit [Ubhey], Alan [Norrie], Imran [Khan], Nazir [Afzal], Jacek [Brant] and Matthew [Ryder] who are responsible in a hands-on way for the justice, civil rights, protection and education of the nation.

The fact that you are doing us the honour of being here tonight is testimony to the fact that you recognise that there is essential work to be done to create a proper understanding and education about Islam and Muslims for use in your various fields, and that Curriculum for Cohesion is a



research project that can discover and implement answers to your concrete problems in practical ways.

In a moment, Matthew is going to give an account of what he and the academic team have accomplished this year, but I would like to tell you a little of the political history of our work in order to demonstrate that this is a cutting-edge research project that deserves your support.

First, it is my pleasure to congratulate the whole team on the publication in November of our ground-breaking book for teachers, *A Fresh Look at Islam in a Multi-faith World: a philosophy for success in education*.

In particular, I would like to thank and congratulate the Academic Team that is here:

Dr. Matthew Wilkinson himself;

Professor Roy Bhaskar, World Scholar at the Institute of Education, University of London;

my co-host Sheikh Abdal Hakim Murad, Dean of Cambridge Muslim College and Shaykh Zayed Lecturer in Islamic Studies at the University of Cambridge;

Sheikh Salah Al-Ansari, Visiting Lecturer at Heythrop College, University of London and the Imam of the Margate Mosque;

and

Mrs. Basma El-Shayyal former Head of Religious Education at Islamia School for Girls.

The full and distinguished Academic Team is listed in the Prospectus on your chairs.



This book could not have been completed without the generosity and hard-earned money of our Donors including:

Our Chair of Donors, Mr. Mohammed Amin;

Mr. Bashir Timol and his colleagues at 1st Ethical Charitable Trust;

Mr. Williyet Khokhar and Mr. Abu Akeem and their colleagues at Muslim Aid;

Dr. Taha Afshar of Ahmed Tea

and

Mr. Saif Shah, Senior Vice President of Habib Bank

and other donors who are quietly here tonight.

Also, in absentia, I would like to mention His Excellency Easa Saleh Al Gurg, who is a significant benefactor of this research project.

For this book, Matthew and the Academic Team have also called on the advice and support of my fellow Patrons who have generously made space for this research project in their busy lives, including:

Sir David Calvert-Smith, Chairman of the Parole Board;

my colleague the Rt. Hon. Simon Hughes, Minister of State for Justice & Civil Liberties;

Mr. Farooq Murad, Secretary General of the Muslim Council of Britain;

Bishop Richard Cheetham of Kingston;



Mr. Aaqil Ahmed, BBC Head of Commissioning for Religion & Ethics

and

Dr. Mohammed Abdal Bari, Trustee of the East London Mosque.

Others of you who are leaders in your fields and have supported us year-in, year-out and for which the whole team is grateful including:

John Keast, Chairman of the Religious Education Council of England & Wales;

Ms. Ingrid Stellmacher, Chief Executive Officer of the Mary Initiative

and

Jonathan Freeman, National Director of Mosaic.

This ground-breaking book - A Fresh Look at Islam in a Multi-faith World: a philosophy for success in education - shows how Islam and Muslims can become a vital and well-understood component of the educational landscape of a multi-faith world, in a productive and life-affirming way.

It is the cornerstone of our work in humanities education and will be put to use in teacher-training courses throughout the country and abroad for years to come. It could not have been written without all your collaboration and support.

I welcome its forthcoming publication by Routledge in the series that Roy [Bhaskar] edits and Alan produces.



Our first annual dinner here at the Royal Over-Seas League took place during the National Curriculum Review in 2012, when our focus was on ensuring that the new National Curriculum for History provided a broader and truer history education that enabled all Britons to gain a handle on our national history.

At this dinner, I highlighted that the potential consequences of writing important components of our nation's past out of school history were dire, and that all British children needed to be shown in school how they were connected to the past of the country and to the achievements of humanity.

At that time of the National Curriculum Review, Curriculum for Cohesion, on the basis of a detailed and balanced report, A Broader, Truer History for All, fought tooth and nail to get these messages through to Government.

But only an exhausting media campaign and hard lobbying by us with some powerful academic allies would eventually persuade the Government to listen and respond to some of our well-evidenced ideas.

Now, in the light the Trojan Horse affair and the recruitment of young British Muslims by the so-called Islamic State of Iraq & Sham (ISIS) to the insurgency in Syria and Iraq, we can see that some Muslim young people have not been shown how they naturally belong in Britain and do not know how to channel their frustrations with global politics peacefully and transformatively through the democratic institutions of society.

The Government is now saying what we had said two years ago about the relevance of the school curriculum in showing young people how they belong and can participate in British life.



At the time of the National Curriculum Review, the Government had a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to make some evidenced modifications to the school curriculum to create a broader, truer History for all, but Mr. Gove was not ideologically pre-disposed to listen. He was opposed to what he wrongly perceived to be 'multi-cultural education'.

Now the Government is learning the hard way about the truth of our research and the need for the types of modifications to humanities education that we were putting into practice.

This is another way of saying that this research project is ahead of the curve in addressing concrete, urgent problems through well-theorised education.

While the penny has dropped about the importance of a good Humanities education in nurturing mindsets that resist radicalisation, we are waiting for the Government to ask us how to implement this education.

But it should not need a crisis or two to prompt the necessary educational steps by Government to help our society educate our young people in a more informed and intelligent way.

To extend the classical reference to the Trojan Horse, we do not want to be Cassandra shouting the truth about the Trojan Horse, with no one listening until it is too late.

This is why I, as Shadow Minister for Justice, especially welcome the next phase of the research project in which the team will develop practical, sustainable and theologically sound methods to distinguish between Islam, Political Islamism and Violent Extremism.



This is being done primarily, but not exclusively, to support the judiciary, the police and the prison service in your sometimes difficult and always vital task of distinguishing between people who are religious and law-abiding citizens, and people who use skewed quasi-religious understandings as a pretext to do themselves and others great damage.

I do not need to explain why there is no more pertinent a moment for this natural development in the research project's work.

As Matthew will detail in a moment, we have laid an educational platform whereby slowly but surely the history and theology of Islam can be better and more productively understood in schools. We will now, God willing, provide a similar platform for the judiciary in your vital work.

Justice is the defining feature of civilisation and so I know of no work more important work than yours.

And I know of no educational research project that is more vital at this time or more worthy of your support than Curriculum for Cohesion.

Those of you who have supported Curriculum for Cohesion for a number of years now, I want to thank you for your invaluable foresight. And I ask, indeed implore you, to continue to support this research project however you can.

Those of you who are learning about this research project for the first time, thank you for your presence here tonight and I ask you to support and get involved in Curriculum for Cohesion as much as your professional duties allow.