

26th June 2020

Her Majesty The Queen
Buckingham Palace
London
SW1A 1AA

Your Majesty

The British Association of Social Workers (BASW) is the professional association for social work in the UK with offices in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. With over 20,000 members we exist to promote the best possible social work services for all people who may need them, while also securing the well-being of social workers working in all health and social care settings.

We are writing to you as an organisation, in partnership with the signatories below, who have a shared commitment to the profession of social work. We are united by this and by the common cause of working to highlight and eradicate racism in the United Kingdom, and beyond. You will undoubtedly be aware of the Black Lives Matter movement, and the current moment of national and international tension that we are all living through. Racial tensions are not new, nor sadly is racism. However, public debate about racism has been marginalised and muted for many years. We consider that there is beauty and power to be found in the current national and international conversation about these issues. We therefore seek to engage in this conversation, and to highlight the many instances of institutional racism that continue to exist.

One instance that has come to our attention is of direct concern to the Royal family. This is the KCMG medal – ‘The most distinguished Order of St. Michael and St. George’ – awarded for service to the United Kingdom. What concerns us is the image on the front of this medal. The award portrays St. Michael trampling on Satan. However, in the majority of versions, including the current iteration of this award, it appears that ‘Satan’ is depicted as a black man. St Michael is uniformly portrayed as white. The white ‘Angel’s’ foot is portrayed as being on the neck of a black ‘Satan’. The resonance of this image with the way that George Floyd was killed this year in the United States of America is impossible to ignore and viscerally distressing.

As you know, George Floyd’s murder by white police officers has caused huge unrest, not only in the U.S.A but across the world. This has led to very many culturally accepted images being seen with new clarity in the U.K. Statues to slavers have fallen, and our colonial history is being re-evaluated by many who had hitherto never questioned this. The KCMG medal can at many levels be read as a reward for colonialism. It might be argued that it no longer rewards this, and should be understood as an award for diplomatic service for our country. The image on this award does not support that reading. Rather it is a small yet insidious reminder of the long racist and colonial roots of our culture (<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/jun/07/britain-is-not-america-but-we-too-are->

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[disfigured-by-deep-and-pervasive-racism?utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=twitter](#)). We believe that it is time for images that celebrate the U.K.'s colonial past to be rejected. The glorification of white supremacy is unacceptable and dangerous. This is not an aesthetic point; the Black Lives Matter movement tells us of the impact on the lives of black people, possibly to the point of putting people in our communities at risk of violence and death.

Social work is by no means free of the history of oppression. However, as a profession we strive always for social justice, equality and empowerment. When Mr Wayne Reid, Professional Officer for BASW, drew the attention of his colleagues to this medal as a symbol of how insidious racism is in our culture, the response was very strong. Here is a weblink to the recent [Twitter discussions](#). Mr Reid is a leader in anti-racist education and professional standards. He has done a huge amount of work for our profession in addressing racism and supporting social work education to de-colonise the curriculum. We are grateful to him for this, and for his raising of this particular issue with our professional community. We are deeply ashamed to think that this image be considered an appropriate way to thank anybody for their service to this country.

We, the undersigned, support BASW's campaign to have the image on this award changed and request that this campaign be given the highest priority. We are living through turbulent times of change, and we need new icons, that better represent the true spirit of equality and justice'. Here is a weblink to an [online petition](#) of people supportive of our campaign.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully



Geraldine Nosowska, BASW UK Chair

Signatories

Dr Ariane Critchley, Social Work Academic and BASW Member

Professor Brian Littlechild, University of Hertfordshire

Clarah Jekeny – Social Worker

Daniel Wilding - Community Mental Health Practitioner, Mount Gould Hospital, Plymouth

Diane F Evans - Workforce Quality Development Officer (Practitioner), Lincolnshire County Council

Dr Donna Peach – Lecturer in Social Work and Integrated Practice, University of Salford

Erin King - Lecturer in Social Work

Georgina Holland – Newly Qualified Social Worker

Georgina Lodge - Student Social Worker - BASW member - Frontline graduate scheme

Jack Skinner, Social worker, Team Manager, City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council

Jen Ellis – Adoption Support Social Worker

Jennifer Burton – Independent Social Worker

Jo Warner, on behalf of the social work team at the University of Kent

Kathryn Brooks - Independent Social Worker

Kelly Bentley-Simon - Student Social Worker, University of Bradford

Liz Howard - Professional Officer, BASW England

Mark Trewin - Mental Health Social Work Lead, Office of The Chief Social Worker, Dept of Health and Social Care

Majella Greene FRSA – Director, Majella Greene & Associates Ltd

Olatomiwa Olowe - Social Worker

Oonagh Smyth – Chief Executive Officer, Skills for Care

Rebekah Pierre - Professional Officer, BASW England

Richard Vickers OBE - Independent Social Worker
Ros Gowers - Independent Social Worker & Practice Educator
Sara Linnane – Student Social Worker, Staffordshire University
Sean Hibberd – Chairman, Brunsmeer Athletic Football Club
Shabnam Ahmed – Social worker / Team Manager in the London Borough of Camden
Stephen Jacques - Group Chief Executive Officer, Key Assets Group (Europe)
Suzie Cooper - Principal Social Worker
Teresa Halliday - Social Worker & Practice Educator, BASW Member
The National Organisation for Practice Teaching
Victoria Hart - Social Worker