

Book review: Natives

Anti-racist religious education



RE TODAY AND NATRE WORKING WITH THE FREE CHURCHES GROUP
AND METHODIST SCHOOLS





Natives: Race and Class in the ruins of Empire by Akala

Review by: Mugeni Sumba

What is this book about?

This book explores how the issues of 'race' and 'class' are at the heart of the British society. It is a reflection by Akala on his personal experience of growing up in Britain as a Black man. Akala reflects on what it means to be racialised as Black in Britain.

What did you love about it?

- It is a personal story – the life of a black man in Britain (Growing up in London)
- It throws new light to the history of the British Empire and considers the root causes or origins of racism.

How did this book have an impact on you as a teacher of RE? Does it imply new ways of doing your job?

It has opened my eyes to why racism runs so deep in British society. Before, I focused on teaching why racism is wrong – using religious texts as well as the UNDHR and British Values. However, I now know that I need to start with the history – deconstructing the history of racism will help my students understand and engage with the problem better than just exploring why it is wrong. I now see myself as an 'educator' as opposed to a 'teacher.'

I would recommend this book to other teachers of RE because...

It made me realise that the racism experienced today by many people racialised as non-white has its origin in the very structure of British establishment. I can deliver anti-racist RE more confidently because I understand the history and genesis of racism in Britain.

Could the book be used for teacher development and / or for and with pupils themselves? How?

Teacher development:

- a) to understand how black children feel in school/class
- b) the power of media in perpetuating racism
- c) History of racism

Pupils: - to explore racist incidents in Britain

HOW: the book has several examples that can be used in the classroom

Can you give an example of a key quote from the book (keep to about 50 words), and why you chose it?

'...most people in Britain, if they know anything about racial injustice at all, are likely to be far more well aware of American issues and history than those of their doorstep... more likely to know the name Rodney King than Cynthia Jarret...' (page 266)

This quote speaks volumes to me because so long as I use examples that are not local, not national, the danger is that my audience will not see the problem as their own. Using local



and national examples will make the anti-racist RE more immediate to our pupils and students, and all that we engage with on this big task. The closer to home the examples I use, the deeper the impact on my audience.

