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TWENTY YEARS SINCE THE MACPHERSON REPORT, HOW MUCH DO BLACK* CHILDREN'S LIVES MATTER IN THE UK?

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The world was shocked witnessing the murder of George Floyd, who was brutally killed under the knee of a white police officer in Minneapolis, on 26 May 2020. The impact of this murder has resonated across the world and has prompted numerous global demonstrations and destruction of property, as well as the destruction and taking down of statues which reflect oppression. It has led to a global debate on racism and on the impact of racism on the individual, a debate that has been unparalleled in recent years. The terms 'I can't breathe' and 'take your knee off my neck', which represented George Floyd's suffering in his last moments, have become potent symbols of racism.

In 2000, I wrote an article for *Seen and Heard* about the implications for children's guardians of the Macpherson Report. Twenty years later, I look back to see how much, if anything, has *really* changed?

George Floyd's murder evokes memories of the shocking murder of Stephen Lawrence in the UK. Twenty-seven years ago, Stephen Lawrence was murdered at the hands of racist thugs. At the time his murder highlighted social inequalities and laid bare a woefully inadequate institutional response to seeking out and putting his murderers to trial. It particularly highlights the impact of racism in society. The police's inadequate response to Stephen Lawrence's murder prompted the Macpherson enquiry and subsequent report, which was significant in the response to racism in the police force but has also wider implications. The Macpherson Report significantly defined that the police were 'institutionally racist'.

On 17 November 1999, the Queen's Speech signalled the enshrinement of the recommendations of the Macpherson Report into law. Interestingly, the same speech also signalled the changes to the Guardian ad litem service, which led to the establishment of Cafcass.

The Macpherson Report was significant in that it defined the term 'Institutional Racism'. Although this term was meant to refer predominantly to the police force, it can equally apply to other institutions, such as to social services departments, since the inequalities that black children faced then evidenced that social work practice was also institutionally racist.

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