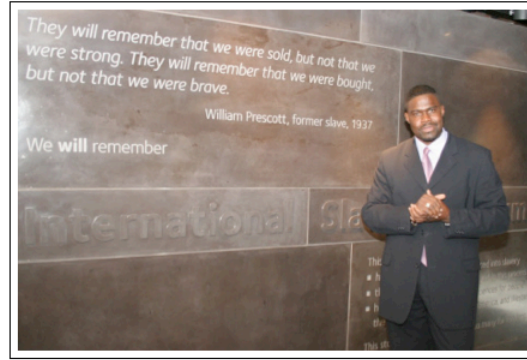


An Insider's Perspective: The Riots In Britain Part Two



Photos provided by Garth Dallas

By Garth Dallas, BSc, MSc, MBA, LL.M

I have had a working relationship with Garth Dallas for nearly two years, thanks to technology and the marvels of Google and social networking. So when the riots broke out nearly three weeks ago in Britain, Garth, who lives and works in Liverpool, was there to give an accurate perspective on what was really going on in England.

I lived through the 1967 riots in Detroit, Michigan and vividly remember how afraid my family was with the possibility of losing our house to fire. So I can only imagine the fear some residents are experiencing with this recent outbreak in England.

Here is Part One of this important "insider's perspective" on what really happened in Britain in the Summer of 2011.

-Carole Copeland Thomas

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The Oldham Riots

Around 572 race-related crimes were recorded in 2000 in the town of Oldham, home to a strong South Asian population. While racial violence was not uncommon, May 26, 2001, marked a particularly deadly day of protests, spurred by a small quarrel between young White and Asian men outside of chip shop. A series of small attacks followed, many at the hands of White youth, and in the matter of hours, an army of 500 Asian men were confronted by riot police, dogs and helicopters in the streets of Oldham. Upwards of 300 people were injured, and hundreds arrested.

Tony Blair blamed White extremists for instigating violence in Oldham, but insisted that young Asians should refrain from participating in racially driven conflict.

Following the Oldham violence, similar protests broke out in Bradford and Leeds.

Now in 2011 England seems to be suffering from a deadly case of *deja vu*, or perhaps, a wake up call. As politicians and the police struggle to restore order, and begin to digest the devastation, the underlying causes of the riots must be addressed, or these won't be the last riots to rip apart the streets and hearts of Britain.

It is clear that the causes of the recent riots are vastly different to those in 1981 – which were predominantly associated with young black men, in particular, feeling victimised by the use of the “Sus” law, which enabled police officers to stop and search members of the public even if they had no hard evidence that a crime had been committed.

In the clamour by politicians, media and police alike to dismiss what happened this week as the acts of “mindless thugs”, it is worth keeping in mind that riots don't tend to happen without a reason. The tragic loss of Mark Duggan's life requires a thorough investigation from the relevant authorities. But we must also go beyond the initial spark, and try to learn more about the relationship between the police and the community, and the ways in which this can be improved.

Whilst nothing can excuse or justify the behaviour of rioters, it is very clear to me that the reasons for the widespread riots are rather complex. However, it is also indisputable that inequalities in our society have played a key role. There were many commentators warning of possible disturbances in Britain, due to the widening gap between the haves and have-nots in our society that glorifies celebrity and deprive others from becoming stakeholders.

Too many of our young people feel they have no stake in society. Indeed some young people see the choice of joining gangs as their only means of ‘belonging’ and being ‘protected’. It was quite remarkable to me that many of the rioters and looters showed very little fear of the police. They simply did not care.

Disadvantaged young people are at risk of becoming ever more marginalised from society. Alongside the growing gap between affluent and less affluent communities, the gap between disadvantaged young people and their more affluent peers is also growing. Many of these young people face multiple challenges – they are disengaged from the labour market and education.

We need to address those issues as a matter of urgency. A stake in society requires rungs on the ladder that are in reach; not so far-fetched that opportunities appear impossible.

Britain must deal with the deeper issues of inequality that scar our society or history will continue to repeat itself, manifested by further disturbances on our streets.

End of Part Two

Garth Dallas is CEO of Global Diversity Partners, Editor of Diverse Magazine and Chair of African Caribbean Business Support Group. He has over 17 years corporate, agency and entrepreneurial experience in Global Diversity Management, Business Development, Marketing and International Business Relations with clients in the public and private sectors. He lives in Liverpool, England.

For more information on Garth Dallas, visit his website at www.diversemag.co.uk