

1 Is racism a problem in your country? What recent examples of racism have you read or heard about?

Read about it

# Arrest of black lecturer heightens distrust

Michael Leary had arranged to meet his friend at 8pm outside McDonald's in Brixton, South London.

Dressed in smart casual clothes Mr Leary, 39, waited for about 20 minutes. He wandered down the busy street. There was no sign of her, so he returned to his spot outside the fast food store.

At 8.30pm two white men approached him. Mr Leary is black. The men, plain-clothed police officers, said they had seen him "hanging around" and were going to take him to Brixton police station to search him for drugs.

"I was completely shocked," recalled Mr Leary. "I told them I was waiting for a friend, and I was a university lecturer. They started pushing and pulling me around. When I refused to take my hands out of my pockets, the youngest officer got

the handcuffs and forced them on me. They hurt my wrist."

Three police cars and a van arrived. "I was pushed into a car. I said there was no need to use force and one of the officers told me to "shut up" as if I was a piece of dirt."

He was taken to Brixton police station, where he claims he was "pulled" along by his handcuffs "like a cow". He was told to take off his clothes so that he could be searched.

No drugs were found. His credit cards were taken to see whether they were stolen.

There was no apology or explanation. "I was arrested and searched because I was a black man in Brixton. I was just waiting for a friend and minding my own business, but I was made to feel like a criminal."



THE INDEPENDENT

2 Re-tell the story by putting these sentences in the right order.

- a He walked down the street to see if his friend was there.
- b He returned to McDonald's.
- c He waited for 20 minutes.
- d He was approached by two policemen.
- e Michael arrived outside McDonald's.
- f He was handcuffed.
- g He was searched and, finally, released.
- h He was taken away in a car.

3 Which one of these headlines would be suitable for the article? Explain why the others would *not* be suitable.

- a **Police say sorry to black lecturer**
- b **Lecturer accuses police of racism**
- c **UNIVERSITY LECTURER FOUND WITH DRUGS**

**lecturer** university teacher  
**casual** not formal, eg. a pullover and jeans, not a suit and tie  
**wandered** walked slowly  
**spot** place, position  
**plain-clothed** not in uniform (working but pretending to be members of the public)  
**hanging around** being in a place, but not doing anything particular  
**search** look in pockets, shoes etc.  
**handcuffs** metal rings which police use when arresting somebody  
**minding my own business** not interfering with anybody

Key Language

Look at this sentence from the article.

The men, plain-clothed police officers, said they had seen him "hanging around"...

4 In written English we often put extra information ("plain-clothed police officers") between commas. Can you find another example in the article?

5 When speaking, we usually make extra sentences, as in a-h below. Put two sentences together to make one, with information between commas.

- a Dave's a tennis player. He has two children. **e** Soccer is now the most popular international sport in the world. It started in England almost 200 years ago.
- b George Bush is coming to speak at the conference next week. He's the ex-President of the USA. **f** Bill Gates started his career as a software writer. He is the richest man in the world.
- c Ms Santoni is 23. She is a candidate in the general election. **g** The "Mona Lisa" ("La Gioconda") was painted by the Italian Leonardo da Vinci. It is now in the Louvre in Paris.
- d Hong Kong was once a British colony. It is now a city in China.

Talk about it

6 The police in Britain use "identity codes" (*i/c's*) when they are describing people. For example *i/c1* means "white", *i/c2* means Mediterranean, *i/c3* means black. If they say "male *i/c3*, mid-teens", they mean "black boy, about 15 years old". Do you think it is right to use these racial descriptions? Why/why not?

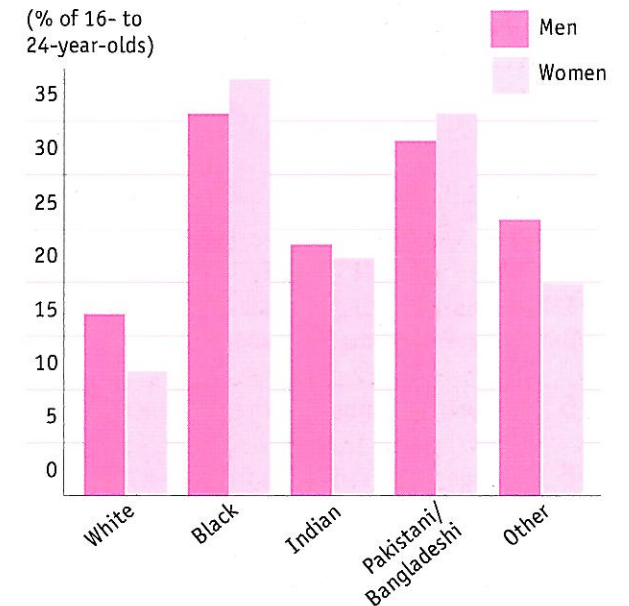
7 Some people are embarrassed to talk about race. They think it might be offensive to others. How do you feel? Should we talk about it, or is it better to keep quiet?

8 The National Front is a racist political party in Britain. It wants to "send back" black and Asian people to "where they came from". Do you have parties like this in your country? Why do some people support them?

9 In the USA, they have tried to increase the numbers of black people in some jobs by "positive action". If a white person and a black person have the same qualifications, the black person gets the job. Is this a good idea?

Youth unemployment rates

Averages for May 1995 - May 1996



10 What does the table above tell us? What could be the reasons for the differences between the various groups?