

PETER GIBSON MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

June 2020

Dear Constituent

Thank you for your email.

I was incredibly distressed by the footage of what happened to George Floyd in the lead up to his death in police-custody. I understand that the police officer involved in the incident has been charged with second-degree murder, and the other officers are being charged with aiding and abetting.

I entirely understand the strength of feeling over this situation and of course fully support the right to peacefully protest. The violence we have seen in the US over recent days is very alarming. People must be allowed to protest peacefully and journalists all around the world must be free to do their job and to hold authority to account without fear of arrest or violence. I urge all sides to de-escalate these tensions. We all want to see America come back together and not tear itself apart over this incredibly distressing incident.

Export of riot gear to the US

I have been assured that the Government will not grant an export licence if to do so would be inconsistent with the Consolidated Criteria. The Consolidated Criteria provide a thorough risk assessment framework – which requires officials to think hard about the possible impact of providing equipment and its capabilities. These are not decisions the Government takes lightly.

I stand alongside all those across the globe who are appalled and horrified by the way George Floyd lost his life. Justice and accountability should follow. In the UK we have a long established tradition of policing by consent, working in communities to prevent crime and solve problems. Officers are trained to use force proportionately, lawfully and only when absolutely necessary but must strive to continuously learn and improve. Both the police and the Government are determined to tackle bias, racism or discrimination wherever we find it.

Member of Parliament for Darlington

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Belly Mullinga

On the topic of Belly Mullinga, I was very concerned to learn that Ms Mujinga had been spat at whilst working. This is utterly unacceptable and I agree that people who work on our public transport system should not have to put up with such abuse.

It was reported Ms Mujinga had been spat on and coughed at while working in the ticket hall with two colleagues. However, media reports suggest that the man who was the main suspect, had a negative antibody test after the incident. I understand that, following extensive inquiries, British Transport Police decided the attack did not lead to the death of Ms Mujinga.

Given this, and following a review of all the information, senior detectives have concluded that there was no evidence to substantiate any criminal offences having taken place. As a result, the matter was not initially referred to the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS). However, I understand that the British Transport Police have since invited the CPS to conduct an independent review of the available evidence.

Coronavirus and the BAME Community

On coronavirus and the BAME community, Public Health England has completed the Report into disparities in the risks and outcomes of covid-19, and the Government has published its findings. PHE has found the following. First, as we are all aware, age is the biggest risk factor. Among those diagnosed with covid-19, people who are 80 or older are 70 times more likely to die than those under 40. Being male is also a significant risk factor. Working-age men are twice as likely to die as working-age women. Occupation is a risk factor, with professions that involve dealing with the public in an enclosed space, such as taxi driving, at higher risk. Importantly, the data show that people working in hospitals are not more likely to catch or die from covid-19.

Diagnosis rates are higher in deprived or densely populated urban areas, and we know that our great cities have been hardest hit by this virus. This work underlines that being black or from a minority ethnic background is a major risk factor. That racial disparity holds even after accounting for the effects of age, deprivation, region and sex. The PHE ethnicity analysis did not adjust for factors such as comorbidities and obesity, so there is much more work to do to understand the key drivers of these disparities, the relationships between the different risk factors and what we can do to close the gap. The Government will seek to work with PHE and others to further understand the impacts.

Black Curriculum

I believe it is vital for young people in this country to learn about Black history. I am therefore pleased that all schools have the freedom to teach it from primary school age onwards, as part of the history curriculum. I am aware that schools have flexibility over how they teach this subject and which resources to use from a range of organisations and sources, including the Black Curriculum if they choose.



I am also encouraged that the national curriculum provides a number of opportunities for pupils to be taught about different societies and how different groups have contributed to the development of Britain, and that this can include the voices and experience of Black people. This includes in history, but also in subjects such as English and citizenship.

I am appalled by the racism experienced by many from a BAME background. It has no place in our communities and we all have a part to play in tackling it. The wealth of diversity across our country is something to be celebrated, so I am pleased that the national curriculum allows us to do exactly that.

I am desperately sad that we need, in 2020, to have to say that Black Lives Matter. Whilst I accept that I hold a position of privilege, to me it should be a universal truth that all are equal and should be respected, cherished and supported – regardless of their race, religion, or sexual preference. I totally understand the concerns that people have about recent events and I understand and share the anger that people feel about racial injustice more broadly.

Once again, thank you for taking the time to contact me and if I can ever be any further assistance to you then please do not hesitate to contact me again.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Peter Gibson".

PETER GIBSON MP