

Sir,

Warning: this letter includes language which some readers may find offensive. A similar warning was given on the BBC News on 10th November before a report on Greg Clarke's (the Football Association chairman) appearance at an online parliamentary hearing.

As baby-boomers, my wife and I were intrigued as to what the language might be; we replayed the piece before deciding that the language may have been 'Afro-Caribbean' or 'coloured'. We then, of course had to lie down in a dark (can I say that?) room for some minutes to recover.

However, we see from the page-and-a-quarter devoted to this issue in the Times today (Nov 11) that Adie Mings, the Aston Villa player, cited the use of the words 'South Asian'. If only we had known, our recovery would have taken longer.

Regarding the use of 'inclusive' language, the Government itself gets tied in knots. On its webpage on disability, it says: "Use 'disabled people' not 'the disabled' as the collective term" then "Don't automatically refer to 'disabled people' in all communications – many people who need disability benefits and services don't identify with this term. Consider using 'people with health conditions or impairments'". On ethnicity, the Government's webpage says: "We do not use the terms BAME (Black, Asian and minority ethnic or BME (Black and minority ethnic) ... Similarly, we do not use 'people of colour' as it does not include White minorities". Then "We avoid using 'broad' and 'specific' when referring to ethnic groups. For example, the 'broad Asian group' or the 'specific Pakistani group'" and "If we need to, we refer to either 'aggregated' ethnic groups or ethnic groups 'as a whole'. For example, 'the Black ethnic group as a whole'" and "In research, 'people from a Black Caribbean background', 'the Black ethnic group' and 'Black people' were all acceptable phrases. 'Blacks' was not" and "Similarly 'people from a White British background', 'the White ethnic group' and 'White people' are all acceptable" and "However, we don't say 'Mixed people' or 'Mixed race people'. We usually say 'people with a Mixed ethnic background' or 'people from the Mixed ethnic group'".

We are asked in many application forms for our 'ethnicity', a common descriptor, from government guidance, being 'black' or 'white'. These are not ethnicities but colours. I always refuse to select any of the descriptors given as, apart from the principle, they do not (in England) include 'English' (just plain English).

In these hyper-sensitive days of woke where taking offence has been made into an industry, I long (mistakenly, no doubt) for the fifties and sixties when, as an avid rugby league and football supporter, I watched (black) heroes of the Wigan RL and Halifax RL clubs, Billy Boston, John Freeman and Colin Dixon, without much thought of their colour, just their ability. Similarly, on moving south in the early-sixties and adopting Swindon FC as my new local team, I marvelled at the skills of Albert Johansson, the Leeds winger.

No doubt Greg Clarke was trying, in a clumsy way, to say the right thing. He then apologised for his errors but that is not good enough for the agents of industrial offence-taking. In his recent book 'The Madness of Crowds', Douglas Murray devotes a chapter to forgiveness. We have become inured to a mentality that pursues an agenda of vindictiveness but is not able to forgive. Vindictiveness is one of the worst human traits.

Yours etc

Paul Turner