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*By Pierre Smith Khanna**



Residents of London borough of Brent staged a protest at Kensal Green tube station voicing their discontent with the UK Border Agency's (UKBA) recent campaign to send immigrants home. In July, after mayor of London Boris Johnson had agreed to pilot the scheme in six boroughs of London, vans were driven around carrying slogans telling immigrant to "Go home or face arrest".

UKBA agents and police were already conducted checks across tube stations in Brent, and many have accused them of employing racial profiling to conduct their stops. As the Kilburn Times reported [last month](#), such checks in Kensal Green tube station were accused of being 'heavy handed' - UKBA officers even threatened one resident who queried what was going on with arrest.

For the residents self-defined under the banner "I love immigrants", such racial profiling has made many to feel insecure in their neighborhoods. "I don't even feel safe talking about this issue in public. Our neighborhood is and has always been a melting-pot. We cherish diversity and want to keep it that way. The UKBA's stance on immigration is a serious threat to our community's cohesion and we want it to stop", says one of the residents.

The protesters gave out cupcakes printed with pro-immigration and anti-UKBA slogans, and 'freedom passports' listing people's rights in the event of being questioned by a UKBA officer.

Whereas Boris Johnson and Downing street have defended the need for the "harsh" slogans, MPs from all parties have denounced the pilot scheme as [nasty](#) , [stupid](#) , [racist](#) and [pathetic](#) . Most recently, Conservative cabinet minister Eric Pickles questioned the scheme and stated that, should it be rolled out across the country as Downing Street would have it, "I need to see some very persuasive evidence that this should be passed out nationally."

Yet what residents are concerned about is not so much the scheme's effectiveness but its incitement towards division along racial lines. Indeed, the Advertising Standards Authority has launched an investigation into the pilot, in response to a number of [complaints](#) expressing concern "that the ad, in particular the phrase 'Go Home', is offensive and irresponsible because it is reminiscent of slogans used by racist groups to attack immigrants in the past and could incite or exacerbate racial hatred and tensions in multicultural communities." Similarly, the Equality and Human Rights Commission is now enquiring whether the spot checks at tube stations did not involve [racial profiling](#) .

In a recent article in [the Metro](#) , statistics about immigration are juxtaposed to things such as "Britons think immigration is the 2nd most important issue facing the country, behind the economy" and "64% say: Immigration has had a bat effect on Britain." Such confusion is by no means exclusive to the Metro but goes to show how sensitivities towards immigrants are sure to be aroused should campaigns under the innocent banner of 'applying the law of the land' be spread nationally.

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