

# EDITORIAL

Putting together an edition on minorities in the criminal justice system led to difficult questions. Do we keep to the usual focus on black people and criminal justice and if not, how wide do we throw the net? As is immediately obvious, we went for the latter option, going for as broad a look at the issue as we could; even so, there are inevitably omissions, some of which we hope to tackle at some time in the future.

Black people's treatment in the system does, however, remain a central concern, and **Navnit Dholakia** reminds us of the continuing disproportionate use of custody for Afro-Caribbean offenders, and other ways in which they are treated more punitively. He is, however, fairly hopeful for change in the light of criminal justice agencies' policies and new Home Office requirements; **Anne Dunn** tells us how NACRO is helping agencies work together to put equal opportunity policies into practice.

Other subjects that cried out to be included were issues around racial attacks, the problems faced by mentally disordered offenders, and how gay men are dealt with by police and the courts. Women, although not a minority in the general population, are as far as senior legal practitioners are concerned; **Judge Elisabeth Fisher** says something about that. **Southall Black Sisters** also look at a minority of women, this time one which is much too large - women as victims of domestic violence.

Some of the matters dealt with in this issue affect a relatively small number of people, or come from a more idiosyncratic perspective: deaf people caught up in the criminal justice system, the Irish in England, the defence of space by racial groups, dyslexia and criminal justice, and the problem of the greying of the American prison population.

Two groups we could not neglect, particularly at this time, are new age

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travellers and people who go to raves. The Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill presently going through parliament concentrates, inter alia, on these groups, and it is clear that they are already the focus of much police action. **Simon Hallsworth** and **Tim Malyon** give us the background against which this is taking place.

If there is any particular group you feel should have been included, please understand that much as we would like to have done more, we are limited by space; we would, however, be pleased to receive any letters suggesting areas to cover for future issues.

**Yolande Burgin & Julia Braggins**

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