



Shadow equalities minister wants any explanation other than racism for Black maternal deaths

## Description

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Coutinho

Shadow Equalities Minister Claire Coutinho [has suggested that we need to be](#) *clear-eyed* when considering the issue of Black maternal deaths. Apparently, *the left* [and also, you know, the NHS](#) are too quick to blame racism for the fact that Black people are three times more likely to die during childbirth.

We're having this whole ridiculous *debate* again because, over the last week, [Reform leader Nigel Farage](#) has redoubled his attacks on DEI (Diversity, Equity and Inclusion) initiatives. Those of us who don't receive our talking points directly from Trump's fascist America may know these better as EDI (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion).

Obediently, swathes of the mainstream media have begun to platform *debates* on EDI. Or, you know, just jumped straight to saying that [the police force have been ideologically captured](#) by the idea of not being racist. No, seriously.

## Maybe society isn't equal?

In today's case in point, Claire Coutinho appeared on *Sky News* with interviewer Sophie Ridge. The two had a friendly chat about whether Black people disproportionately dying during childbirth is actually racism, really, if you think about it.

Ridge kicked off [by making an obvious point](#) *sadly necessary* when arguing with a Tory. She stated that we have equalities guidance in the first place:

because at the minute we don't have a society where people of every race are treated equally? [â?]

Black women are more likely to die during childbirth than white women, because they're not being listened to. So, is there a balance here to be struck, if we really are trying to get to the place where everyone is treated equally?

Coutinho, at first, ignored the issue of deaths in childbirth. Instead, she turned to the education system, and immediately displayed her fundamental misunderstanding of the issue:

Well look, Kemi Badenoch did this work in government. She looked at racial disparities where things are going wrong, and the problem that you've got is that the left want to say is that all of the reason those things are going wrong is because of racism. That is not the case.

Take the education. You have a system where Black African children are doing well, and Black Caribbean children are doing so well, but the left wants to say the problem is racist teachers.

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That statement â that the left wants to blame racist teachers is meant to conjure up a very specific image. It suggests a teacher stood at the head of a class, being unambiguously cruel to black kids, whilst treating white children like angels. The watcher is meant to think âbut my teachers never did thatâ, and then dismiss âthe leftâ.

(Let's ignore for a moment that some of them *did* do that, and we didn't pay attention because we were eleven at the time).

However, that bigotry isn't the be-all-and-end-all of systematic, institutionalised discrimination. It's a gross simplification of a vast, complex, deep-rooted problem. What's more, it's that systematic discrimination that equality initiatives are meant to target.

## Coutinho â Look at the evidenceâ

Ridge [moved on to ask](#)

If you look at the NHS and the way that Black women are however many times more likely to die during childbirth. That can't be right, can it?

In a recent study, campaign group MBRRACE-UK (Mothers and Babies: Reducing Risk through Audits and Confidential Enquiries across the UK) found that Black people [are three times more likely than white people](#) to die during childbirth or shortly thereafter.

In reply to Ridge's question, Coutinho [said](#)

No of course not, but then you should go and look at the evidence. Every single time there is a serious death in the NHS, when it comes to maternity, you should look at the evidence. Is it because a Black woman was not listened to? Is it because there was some other health factor happening that we need to go and change?

What you need to do is root out the ideology that says that everything is racism â?? actually it might be other things, it might be that youâ??re more susceptible to some other form of heart disease or whatever it might be thatâ??s causing harm.

The problem here is that we *have* already listened to the evidence. Weâ??ve [done so many times](#) [ad nauseam](#) but racism is deeply entrenched in our system. Change, where it does happen, is slow, and hampered at every step by people looking desperately for any explanation *other than* racism.

## â??Not anecdote but evidenceâ??

As an example, we can look at the campaign group Five X Moreâ??s [2025 Black Maternity Experiences survey](#). It reported that almost 60% of Black people were denied pain relief during labour. Likewise, almost half of them received no explanation.

As the *Canary*â??s Vanessa Viljoen [wrote at the time](#)

This was not anecdote but evidence â?? data from more than a thousand women across the country.

Coutinhoâ??s call to â??look at the evidenceâ?? â??every single timeâ?? someone dies during childbirth might seem sensible. However, at its worst, a focus on individual cases seeks to blame individuals suffering discrimination for their problems.

Even at its best, a relentless focus on individual cases also works to obscure the bigger picture. More specifically, it works to obscure systematic inequalities.

Itâ??s easy to dismiss one Black woman being denied pain relief during labour. Maybe the doctor just made a mistake. Maybe she didnâ??t seem to be in much pain. However, if the doctors â??just make a mistakeâ?? far more often in relation to Black peopleâ??s pain, itâ??s evidence of a systematic issue.

## Coutinho â?? â??Evidence-based and clear-eyedâ??

Coutinho concluded by [arguing that](#):

The problem is that people are no longer able to be evidence-based and clear-eyed about this. And Iâ??m afraid the dominant ideology, the real problematic ideology that we have, is that the root cause of all of these differences is racism. That is not the case.

Well that's just fab, isn't it. Except, [just yesterday, we saw a perfect example](#) of how being evidence-based and clear-eyed isn't enough for the right.

You see, Black people are twice as likely to receive a prostate cancer diagnosis compared to white people. However, the NHS isn't blaming racism for that fact.

Rather, there's an androgen receptor protein which is strongly involved in the growth and spread of prostate cancer. That protein has a far higher prevalence in Black people.

However, when a prostate cancer screening study worked to target the Black community because of that fact, Reform's Zia Yusuf stated kicking off about it being racist towards white people, and evidence of a two-tier system.

It's a common refrain of the right that 'facts don't care about your feelings'. However, if the right were as cold and logical as they want to believe, they wouldn't be getting het up about targeted prostate cancer studies.

And, more to the point, why aren't we having this ridiculous debate about institutional racism in healthcare yet again. Sure, the fact that institutional racism might hurt their feelings. However, it was, is, and will continue to be a fact for all the time we're running yet another study to check it hasn't gone away on its own.

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