# Cleobury Mortimer shop probe highlights enduring controversy over Enoch Powell’s legacy



A village shop in Cleobury Mortimer, Shropshire, is currently under police investigation following the display of a portrait of Enoch Powell alongside a portion of his notorious “Rivers of Blood” speech. Shopkeeper Elizabeth Griffiths asserts that her intention was to draw attention to the need for robust leadership during challenging political times. The framed image has sparked considerable debate, with West Mercia Police categorising the display as a “hate incident” after receiving a complaint regarding its content.

Enoch Powell, a former Conservative MP, delivered the incendiary speech in 1968, warning that unchecked immigration would render white British citizens “strangers in their own country.” The remarks caused an immediate uproar, leading to Powell's dismissal from the Conservative front bench, as his words were seen as both inflammatory and deeply divisive.

The term “hate incident,” as defined by policing guidelines, encompasses non-criminal acts that victims believe to be motivated by hostility or prejudice based on characteristics such as race or religion. This concept is particularly relevant in today’s climate, where discussions about immigration and national identity often echo Powell’s rhetoric.

Notably, recent remarks by Sir Keir Starmer, the leader of the Labour Party, have drawn comparisons to Powell’s language. Starmer warned that the UK risks becoming an “island of strangers” and vowed to take a firmer stance on immigration. Critics, including Labour MP Clive Lewis, have condemned the use of such comparisons, labelling them as regressive and potentially alienating communities.

Elizabeth Griffiths has reported receiving praise from customers for the display, asserting that it has been featured prominently since early February. She contrasts Powell’s portrait with images of figures such as Winston Churchill and St Francis of Assisi, attempting to frame the presentation within a broader historical context.

The debate surrounding Powell’s legacy is complex and continues to provoke significant discussion within British society. In 2018, faith leaders from Wolverhampton, including Bishop Clive Gregory, opposed a proposal to erect a blue plaque in Powell's honour, arguing that it would not only celebrate his contentious views but also exacerbate existing divisions.

The impact of Powell’s speech persists, reshaping political discourse on race and immigration over the decades. Observers like Nick Cohen have stressed that the consequences of Powell’s rhetoric continue to haunt contemporary politics, drawing lines between his historical influence and the sentiments of present-day leaders.

Amid this swirling controversy, the West Mercia Police are conducting ongoing inquiries into the situation at Mumfords. The outcome may not only determine the future of the shop's display but also reflect a society grappling with its historical figures and the legacies they leave behind.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4
2. Paragraph 5
3. Paragraph 6
4. Paragraphs 7, 8
5. Paragraph 9
6. Paragraph 10
7. Paragraph 11

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/enoch-powell-portrait-hate-incident-cleobury-mortimer-shropshire-mumfords-b2754554.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/apr/13/row-enoch-powell-plaque-racism-wolverhampton> - In April 2018, a proposal to erect a blue plaque commemorating Enoch Powell in Wolverhampton sparked controversy. Local faith leaders, including the Bishop of Wolverhampton, Clive Gregory, opposed the plaque, arguing it would honor Powell's racist views and exacerbate community divisions. Powell's 1968 'Rivers of Blood' speech, which criticized immigration, had previously led to his dismissal from the Conservative front bench and had a lasting impact on race relations in the UK.
3. <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2024/feb/03/33-pictures-that-defined-british-politicians> - A 2024 article by The Guardian features a photograph of Enoch Powell speaking in Birmingham in 1970, two years after his infamous 'Rivers of Blood' speech. The image captures Powell's fiery oratory style, which had a significant impact on British politics and race relations. The speech, delivered in 1968, warned of the consequences of immigration and was widely criticized for its racist undertones.
4. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/dec/12/how-did-enoch-powell-a-man-with-no-shame-come-to-haunt-our-times> - In December 2020, Nick Cohen reflected on Enoch Powell's enduring influence on British politics. Cohen criticized Powell's 1968 'Rivers of Blood' speech for inciting racial hatred and violence against black and Asian communities. He argued that Powell's legacy continues to haunt contemporary politics, with parallels drawn to current political figures and debates on immigration and national identity.
5. <https://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk/politics/56914.stm> - A 1998 BBC News article discusses the controversy surrounding Enoch Powell's funeral arrangements. The former Conservative MP, known for his 1968 'Rivers of Blood' speech, faced criticism from religious leaders who felt his views were racist. The article highlights the divided opinions on Powell's legacy and the appropriateness of honoring him with a state funeral.
6. <https://www.inkl.com/news/bishop-of-wolverhampton-backs-petition-to-block-enoch-powell-plaque> - In 2018, the Bishop of Wolverhampton, Clive Gregory, supported a petition opposing a proposed blue plaque commemorating Enoch Powell. Gregory argued that honoring Powell would be widely interpreted as endorsing his racist views and could deepen community divisions. The petition was part of a broader debate on how to handle the legacy of controversial historical figures.
7. <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/0098/feb/09/obituaries.mikephillips> - A 1998 obituary in The Guardian reflects on Enoch Powell's impact on race relations in Britain. The article discusses how Powell's 1968 'Rivers of Blood' speech led to increased hostility and violence against black and Asian communities. It also highlights the lasting effects of Powell's rhetoric on British society and politics.