# Five years after Edward Colston statue toppling, government fails to tackle racism's root causes



Five years on from the controversial toppling of Edward Colston’s statue in Bristol, it’s clear that the promises of meaningful change have largely been hollow. The relentless pursuit of superficial gestures masked the deeper failures of the current government to address Britain’s systemic issues with racial inequality. Rather than fostering unity or tackling the root causes of discrimination, the government’s vacillating policies and dismissive inquiries have served only to inhibit genuine progress.

Despite initial media buzz and supposed commitments to diversity, the political landscape remains dominated by complacency. The government’s reaction to the Black Lives Matter protests, particularly through tokenistic reports that downplay the persistence of racism, exemplifies a disinterest in tackling the structural barriers faced by minority communities. Their refusal to acknowledge the depth of the problem reveals a government more interested in placating critics than in implementing real change. The so-called inquiry led by Tony Sewell was nothing more than an attempt to divert attention and dismiss the very real experiences of those suffering systemic bias.

Meanwhile, the societal trends reflected in disturbing rises in hate crimes and xenophobic hostility signal a retreat into old prejudices. Riots targeting Muslims, refugees, and minority groups have shattered any illusions that Britain has moved on from its darker chapters. It’s a regression fueled by a government that has failed to curb the tide of intolerance, and instead, some factions have exploited these fears for political gain. The resistance to discussions around critical race theory and diversity initiatives further demonstrates a government more concerned with silencing dissent than promoting equality.

Institutions that once showed tentative signs of progress now find themselves retreating under pressure or confusion. While a few, like the Co-op, cling to their commitments, the overall landscape of racial equality initiatives is bleak. The promises of reform are met with empty rhetoric and a lack of enforcement, leaving many communities feeling abandoned and betrayed.

As we reflect on the anniversary of the statue’s removal, it is evident that the movement for racial justice remains alive—bolstered not by government action but by the unwavering voices of ordinary people demanding accountability. The protests five years ago were more than symbolic; they were a clarion call for change that has yet to be heeded. The current administration must wake up and realize that superficial measures and dismissive inquiries will not suffice. The fight for true equality and integration in Britain needs real leadership, not political distraction. Until then, the promises made are just that—empty promises in a nation still grappling with its racial divisions.

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/jun/07/edward-colston-statue-bristol-five-years-race-equality> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/jun/07/edward-colston-statue-bristol-five-years-race-equality> - In this article, Simon Woolley reflects on the five-year anniversary of the toppling of Edward Colston's statue in Bristol, discussing the initial optimism for racial equality sparked by the Black Lives Matter protests. Woolley highlights the challenges faced in achieving systemic change, citing the government's response to the protests and the rise of anti-racism demonstrations across the UK. He emphasizes the ongoing efforts of activists and the need for continued commitment to racial justice.
3. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/jun/07/blm-protesters-topple-statue-of-bristol-slave-trader-edward-colston> - This article reports on the Black Lives Matter protesters in Bristol who pulled down the statue of 17th-century slave trader Edward Colston. The statue, erected in 1895, had long been a focal point for anger at the city’s role in the slave trade. The protesters attached a rope to the statue, pulled it to the ground, and then pushed it into Bristol Harbour, drawing attention to the city's historical ties to slavery.
4. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/jun/08/edward-colston-statue-history-slave-trader-bristol-protest> - Historian David Olusoga discusses the toppling of Edward Colston's statue in Bristol, arguing that the act was not an attack on history but a significant historical moment. Olusoga highlights Colston's role in the Royal African Company, which transported thousands of Africans into slavery, and the broader context of confronting Britain's colonial past. He emphasizes the importance of acknowledging and addressing historical injustices.
5. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jun/07/anti-racism-mass-protests-take-place-in-cities-across-the-uk> - This article covers the widespread anti-racism protests across the UK following the death of George Floyd. Demonstrations took place in cities including London, Bristol, Edinburgh, and Glasgow, with protesters calling for an end to systemic racism and police brutality. The article highlights the toppling of Edward Colston's statue in Bristol and the broader movement for racial justice in the UK.
6. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/jan/05/four-cleared-of-toppling-edward-colston-statue> - This article reports on the trial of four individuals who were cleared of criminal damage charges for toppling Edward Colston's statue in Bristol. The defendants argued that their actions were motivated by anti-racist convictions and frustration over the statue's presence. The article provides details of the trial and the legal arguments presented by both sides.
7. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jun/20/uk-demonstrators-hold-fourth-weekend-of-anti-racism-protests> - This article discusses the fourth weekend of anti-racism protests in the UK, with hundreds of thousands participating in demonstrations across the country. The protests were sparked by the death of George Floyd and aimed to confront the UK's history of imperialism and racial inequality. The article also covers clashes between protesters and counter-protesters, as well as the government's response to the demonstrations.