

HELEN GRANT MP



House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA

Dr Mark Carney
Governor, Bank of England
Threadneedle Street
London
EC2R 8AH

5 February 2019

Dear Dr Carney,

Re: #BanknotesOfColour campaign

I am writing to ask that as the Governor of the Bank of England you urgently review and take action on the lack of representation of ethnic minorities on British banknotes. This has been highlighted by the #BanknotesOfColour campaign which aims to secure the first ever ethnic minority on a British banknote. The joint campaign was the result of the merging of two campaigns initiated by social activists Zehra Zaidi and Dr Patrick Vernon OBE for ethnic minority representation on the new £50 polymer note.

Ethnic minority communities represent 14% of the UK population according to the 2011 UK Census and this figure will continue to grow – by some estimates this figure could double by 2050. We talk so much of cohesion and integration and of active and engaged citizenship. I believe passionately that all our communities should feel as if they have had, and will have, a stake in Britain's past, present and future. One part of this effort is to ensure we show how different communities have helped build Britain and reflect that history.

The #BanknotesOfColour campaign argues that the Bank has a duty to ensure that wider diversity is represented on our currency. As you will know, there have only been four women in history on banknotes (including The Queen) and no ethnic minorities. Indeed, one of these four women, Jane Austen, was only secured for the £10 note after the online campaign in 2013.

As a result of the Government's Race Disparity Audit, the Government has taken targeted action in 'hotspot' areas where there are pronounced gaps in outcomes and experience for those from our ethnic minority communities. I believe as a public institution, the Bank also has a responsibility to promote and, indeed, advance equality of opportunity. Advancing equality with regards to certain under-represented groups involves removing or minimising disadvantages, taking positive steps to meet the needs of under-represented groups and encouraging people to participate in public life. The two campaigns that preceded the joint #BanknotesOfColour campaign inspired members of the public from ethnic minorities to engage with the selection process for the new face of the £50 polymer note in ways that they had not done so before.

During the Jane Austen banknote campaign former MP Mary Macleod wrote to you and spoke of the whitewashing of women from banknotes. Undoubtedly, the absence of ethnic minorities from UK banknotes also sends a damaging message that ethnic minorities are invisible and have done nothing at all of significance in our history.

On 16 December 2018, the Sunday Times published an online letter signed by 220 people in public life, including cross-party MPs and peers, asking that the Bank of England actively seek strong ethnic minority

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candidates to feature on the next re-issue of any polymer note (i.e. £5, £10, £20 or future post science-£50). There is no shortage of potential candidates, to name a few:

- **Mary Seacole** - the Jamaican British nurse who supported British troops during the Crimean war, whose contribution has been recognised as equal to that of Florence Nightingale.
- **Noor Inayat Khan** - a Muslim of Indian origin who was the first female radio operator to infiltrate enemy occupied France in World War II.
- **Sophie Duleep Singh** – the prominent Indian suffragette who was a member of the Women’s Social and Political Union.
- **John Edmonstone** - a freed black slave from Guyana, South America who lived in Edinburgh and taught students, including Charles Darwin, taxidermy.

I believe that the case for ethnic minority representation is strong. The Bank’s own guidance notes that its banknote characters should reflect the diversity of UK society and those chosen are on the basis of their contribution to our society and culture through their innovation, leadership or values. Yet the Bank of England’s recent choice of scientist to feature on the new £50 is particularly problematic from the perspective of ethnic minority inclusion. The Bank’s method of ensuring a diverse set of science nominations relies on public nominations. However, as the #BanknotesOfColour campaign has highlighted, science is one category where ethnic minority figures are not as prominent, given historical inequality.

The Bank’s own guidance also notes that when selecting banknote characters, the Bank must look at who has been featured on banknotes in the past so that diversity is also reflected in the professional fields that are represented. Science is, of course, a hugely important subject area but there have already been several scientists appearing on banknotes in the past in England and Wales, including on the current £50 paper note.

In its choice for the next face of one of our banknotes, it is imperative that the Bank remembers that our country was not built just by people from these islands but by people from all across the world who came to Britain to seek a better life and embrace the values of liberty, personal independence, and individual effort. It is surely time for this change, if we are to send a message that the contribution of ethnic minority communities to Britain’s history, culture and economy truly matters.

I am joined in signing this letter by many senior cross-party Parliamentarians as we very much hope that you will review this issue and take urgent action to correct this injustice.

Yours sincerely,

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The Rt Hon Maria Miller MP

Chair of the Women and
Equalities Select Committee

James Cleverly MP

Deputy Chairman of the
Conservative Party

Helen Whately MP

Mims Davies MP

Minister of State for Civil Society

Victoria Atkins MP

Minister of State for Women

Sarah Newton MP

Minister of State for Disabled
People, Health and Work

Tom Tugendhat MBE MP

Ms Nusrat Ghani MP

Parliamentary Under Secretary of
State for Transport

The Rt Hon Dr Julian Lewis MP

David T.C. Davies MP

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Mrs Pauline Latham OBE MP

Mrs Sheryl Murray MP

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The Rt Hon Justine Greening MP

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Dr Andrew Murrison MP

Eddie Hughes MP

The Rt Hon Sir Oliver Letwin MP

Bill Grant MP

Jeremy Lefroy MP

Antoinette Sandbach MP

The Rt Hon Theresa Villiers MP

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**The Rt Hon Baroness McGregor-
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The Rt Hon Diane Abbott MP
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**The Rt Hon Harriet Harman QC
MP**

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Shadow Minister for Disabled
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The Rt Hon Caroline Flint MP

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