

The Golly in the Cupboard: The Emergence of Identity – Imposed or Self Absorbed

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Abstract

My new book, *The Golly in the Cupboard*, published by Tamic (www.tamic.co.uk) contains files kept on me as a 'mixed-race' child in the 50s and 60s. I will use these files and extracts from the book to illustrate the emergence of identity, imposed or self-absorbed.

In 1950s Colonial Britain, when I was born, racist prejudices and attitudes existed across all areas of society. My Nigerian father, a prince, and my white, middle class, English mother were punished for having an affair. Days after my conception, he was forced to leave England.

I, in turn was abandoned at birth to the care system and left there for 18 years, and, for the first fourteen years, denied any knowledge of my parents, or any other relatives. For many who have spent substantial time in care, the files kept on them are part of the key to their self-identity via memory. Parented children have childhood memory reinforced by parental memory (distorted or otherwise). Many moved around in care have childhood memory (truth) challenged by adults, and consequently have memory and self-identity undermined.

I will illustrate

- how identity can be recklessly imposed without responsibility
- the multiplicity of identities – Black, mixed race, carechild, British
- the pain of the identities of the oppressed

Two new identities are emerging in Britain and North America, especially – mixed race/dual heritage/mixed ethnicity and careleaver. The former is fast emerging, the latter in its kernel.

Mixed race young people largely self-identified as black/Asian or white in the 60s. This reflected the absence of a large Black/Asian community, when skin colour was the focus of a colour prejudiced society. The emergence of strong Black/Asian communities with their own cultural heritages, has placed many mixed race on the periphery of these communities yet still the object of racism from the white community.

Whether mixed ethnic self identity will grow is uncertain. 'Mixed race' is a confused legacy of colonialism and its child, racism, a pseudo-scientific concept.