

# The culture war and politics now being injected into UK...

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I noticed this tweet this tweet, published yesterday in response to a letter in The Times, which can be viewed by looking on the link within the tweet (which saves me from suggestion of infringing copyright):

<https://twitter.com/sathnam/status/1353649290447646721?s=21>

I have followed this issue ever since the Tories appointed a former Tory minister to uphold Tory values with regard to charities as chair of the Charity Commission. I have also followed the row about Prof Corrine Fowler and her team who did excellent work (in my opinion) in documenting the links between slavery, slave owning and National Trust properties.

I deeply resent the suggestion by Baroness Stowell that this work, and others of its type, is culture war. It isn't. This is history. And anyone who knows anything about history (and I have my own quite niche interests in history and so have some experience in reading developments in it over quite a number of decades) knows that history is not just about facts. It is about our best current understanding of available data (which always evolves) through the lens that society wishes to use to view it at points in time.

So the argument here is not about party politics (and party politics should always and appropriately kept out of charitable activity). It is instead about how facts develop, and how the view of society develops.

So, for example, now we know Black Lives Matter. It could, of course, be said that we always should have done, but because of developing understanding and events we have finally reached a point where we (I refer to those previously not doing so) seek to view the world through that lens, and ask questions as to why inequality still so very obviously exists, rather than pay lip service to equality in the present without seeking sufficient evidence as to its past cause.

What in any way makes that a culture war? The answer, of course, is nothing at all.

Nor is it non-historical. It is about determining data, as for example the team looking at the National Trust did, and using that to explain events that had not previously been revealed. This makes the approach academic, appropriate, informed and deeply relevant by providing insight into the nature and causes of inequality and its development, as well as perpetuation. Assuming we accept the rather basic maxim for human living that one should love ones neighbour as yourself, which requires that they be treated equally whomsoever they might be, then such work would have to be applauded.

But, apparently it is not. Acceptance of that maxim is apparently party political, which is a little surprising as a suggestion, whilst seeking to explore that causes of current inequality, of various forms, and the nature of the mechanisms of power that maintain it is apparently to pursue a culture war. But, again, it is not. It is about seeking to understand the mechanisms that create disadvantage in our society, and which maintain them through prejudice.

What is true, however, is that there is both party politics and culture war going on here. Both are being pursued by the conservative establishment. The call to respect the opinions of those who support charities provides the evidence of that. It could not be a clearer message. Honour the wealthy philanthropist it says.

And honour too the Sunday afternoon day tripper to the National Trust, it also says, and their right to enjoy a guilt free, unquestioning, cream tea without mentioning anything so sordid as the role of slavery in building the fabric of not just the tearoom but the very fabric of the society in which it is served.

This honouring is about party politics. It is about the politics of wealth, division, and indifference.

And it is culture war too. It is initially about a war on understanding, on inclusiveness and awareness. But it is about more than that. It is a war on changing the lens through which we view society so that the origins of privilege are not questioned. Most especially that is a war on the culture of questioning itself. It is a demand that we all know our place and do not question why it might be what it is.

In so doing this is a war on education.

And also a war on the process of change that good education must always give rise to, and which charities, by asking questions, promoting education, and seeking reform, have always played a critical role. In that sense this is a war on the very nature of charity.

And why? To perpetuate a power structure that oppresses for the benefit of those who have gained from it at cost to those who have paid the very real price. That is what culture war, and politics through the lens of charity really looks like. When the definition

of charity becomes the maintenance of the status quo when it has always been to challenge it by asking the quite essential question as to why charity is ever needed, then a deep malaise is exposed. Baroness Stowell exposes that malaise. Bizarrely, it is of her creation.