



Stronger
Together

***Smoke and mirrors – Brexit reflections and concerns
from ethnic minority communities and BME sector***

Ola Sobieraj

Stronger Together Network Support Worker

www.strongertogetherni.org

 HSC Public Health
Agency

Stronger Together Network

Stronger Together Network is a
inclusive, democratic, participative
network of 350+ individuals &
organizations working in the fields of
Racial Equality, Diversity and Ethnicity
in Northern Ireland



Stronger Together Network – what we do

AIMS:

1. Share information and knowledge
 2. Provide a useful and central shared resource to connect service providers within the sector
 3. Identify new opportunities for partnership and innovation
 4. Deliver thematic projects: BME Health Inequalities, BME Mental Health Pilot, Policy & Practice
- Website www.strongertogetherni.org
 - E-alerts & newsletters to members with information provided by members (policy, research, events, reports, news, opportunities relevant to BME sector)
 - Quarterly seminars on topics identified as relevant by our membership
 - Annual Conference
 - Social media networking



ST Brexit Related Work in Ethnic Minority Sector

- Feb 2017 'BME Voices in Shaping post-Brexit NI' Conference
- Feb 2018 'The Implications of Brexit for Migrant Workers – What to Watch Out For' Conference in partnership with STEP and BrexitLawNI Project
- 4 Bilingual 'Life After Brexit' workshops on proposed settled status & rights
- Liaising with STEP Immigration Advice Service to disseminate information via ST communication channels



The Big Bang – Leave Vote

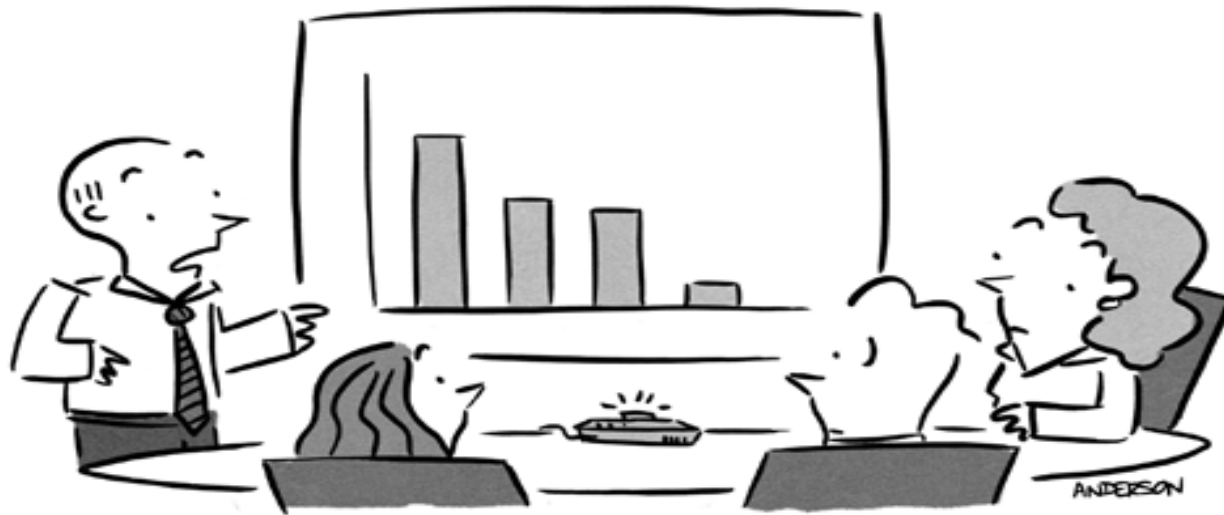
- Referendum result: shocking, hurtful on personal level
- Caused a perceived overnight change in attitudes & feeling of not belonging and not being welcome here
- Legitimised racist language and jokes and dismissed it as locker-room/canteen ‘banter’
- Noted increase in racist hate crime and violence (although coinciding with ‘usual’ July hike and Euros 2016 so perhaps not all attributable to referendum result)



Brexit Means Brexit

© MARK ANDERSON

WWW.ANDERTOONS.COM

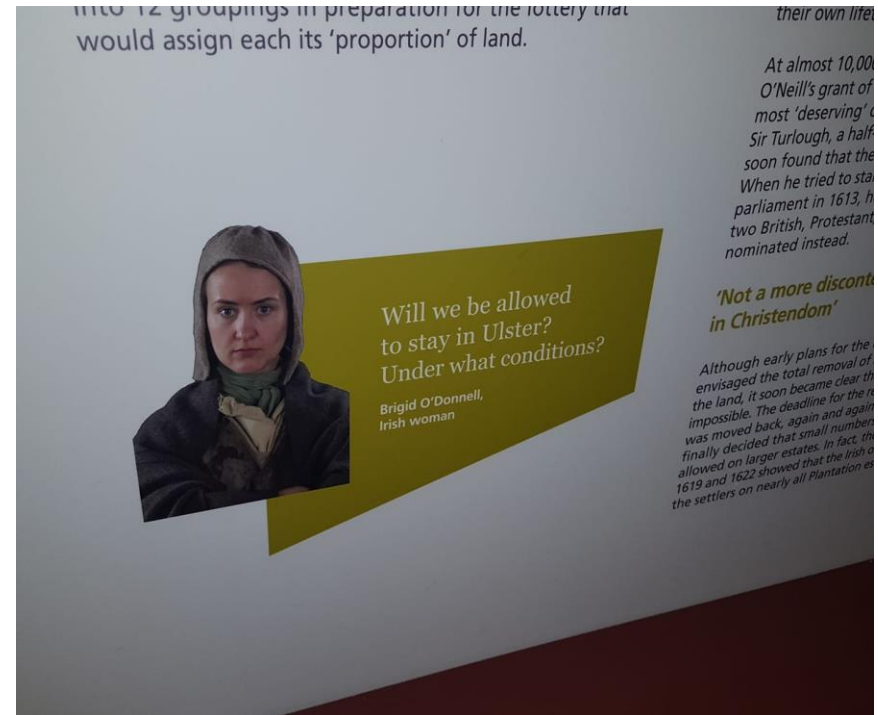


"OK, we can handle this. Thompson, figure out a way to make some smoke. Anderson, go find some mirrors."

 Stronger
Together

Smoke and Mirrors

- Feelings of confusion, fear, uncertainty, lack of security
- Lack of clarity from British government
- Little representation for BME communities
- Using EU citizens' rights as a bargaining chip in negotiations



Concerns - Status of EU Citizens living in the UK

- Who can stay?
- Can people be deported *en masse*?
- Bureaucracy & cost involved in securing your status
- Fear of Home Office errors such as Windrush Scandal or revoking children's British passports due to Workers Registration Scheme issues which will not come into light for decades



Concerns - ability to travel across Europe

- Logistics (border checks, need for visas, cost)
- Effect of travel on status – how long will one be able to stay away before their status is affected?
- Issue of one big border & evidence of racial profiling in border and immigration status checks already
- Immigration rules (already being implemented, but likely to be extended to current EU nationals → e.g. language and income requirements depending on what you want to do in the country; fees)



Concerns - family reunion

- Can relatives visit or join (who is classed as a family member) → panic to bring 3rd country family members while EU regs can still be relied on
- Family members requiring care (can one go care for them in another country, for how long, can they come to UK, if so can they access healthcare, cost involved?)
- Children born in UK and esp. NI – citizenship and identity (feeling forced into British citizenship to secure status)

Concerns – access to rights and services

- Human rights
- Becoming a 2nd class citizen
- Access to services such as healthcare and education
- Employment rights and right to work
- Pensions (transferability of contributions across Europe)
- Voting rights (both in UK and motherland)



Concerns – Racism



- Racist language and discourse more acceptable and omnipresent in the media
- Hostile Environment & One Big Border
- People already feel the pressure and more barriers in accessing work, healthcare, education and housing, opening bank accounts etc.

So with all this in mind the sentiment about Brexit is...



Thank you for listening

Any questions?



Funded by:



Network partners:



Email: info@strongertogetherni.org

Phone: 028 8775 0211

Web: www.strongertogetherni.org

