

The Sylvans

Detailed summary powered by AI

11 May 2026

Motion: On balance, our society remains as prejudiced as ever.

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Analysis of the outcome powered by AI:

The motion "on balance, our society remains as prejudiced as ever" carried, concluding a highly analytical and philosophically diverse debate. The result was ultimately driven by the proposition's successful framing of prejudice as an inescapable biological heuristic, combined with a myriad of floor contributions that identified new, evolving forms of modern bias. While the opposition made a valiant case for historical and legislative progress, they failed to overcome the psychological trap set by the proposition: if prejudice is an innate human survival mechanism, it is mathematically impossible for society to eradicate it.

The proposition's strategy: biological inevitability and modern grievance

The proposition secured a strong foundation by stripping the word "prejudice" of its purely negative connotations. By defining it through an evolutionary and psychological lens—citing System One and System Two thinking—the proposing speaker framed prejudice as a fundamental cognitive shortcut necessary for human survival. This was a highly effective rhetorical trap; by equating prejudice with human intuition, a vote against the motion became a vote against basic human biology

However, the proposition then executed a sharp pivot from evolutionary psychology to contemporary cultural grievances. The speaker argued that modern diversity initiatives and anti-racism campaigns are simply new forms of systemic prejudice, citing alleged discrimination against white men in the job market and charity sector. While this resonated with some, it exposed the proposition to accusations of relying on "white grievance" politics. Nevertheless, the closing argument skillfully retreated to the safety of the biological premise, reminding the

audience that because society is made of inherently prejudiced individuals, the motion must logically be true.

The opposition's strategy: historical progress and personal preference

The opposition attempted to counter the proposition by focusing on legislative and structural progress. The second speaker rightly pointed out that modern society possesses mechanisms—such as the Race Relations Act, equal opportunities legislation and an awareness of neurodiversity—that actively combat discrimination.

However, the opposition's argument suffered from a fatal conflation. In an attempt to show that bias is a natural part of life, the speaker heavily focused on harmless personal preferences, such as a fondness for Italian food over Indian food or a preference for puddings. This semantic dilution of the word "prejudice" was quickly seized upon by the floor. By failing to draw a hard line between innocuous preference and harmful societal bigotry, the opposition surrendered the philosophical high ground and left their core argument—that society is structurally less prejudiced than before—underdeveloped.

The ebb and flow of the floor debate

The floor debate was vital in determining the outcome and it revealed a deep fracture in how the room interpreted both the word "prejudice" and the phrase "as ever".

One distinct faction of the audience focused on the historical timeline. A highly incisive contribution noted that ancient Roman society was rigidly stratified by uniform and medieval England was divided by Norman and Anglo-Saxon caste systems. Alongside a customer service worker who argued that modern globalisation and international travel have forced integration, these speakers provided the strongest defence for the opposition. They argued that compared to the overtly segregated past, modern Britain is demonstrably less prejudiced.

Conversely, a powerful coalition of speakers supported the motion by arguing that prejudice has not decreased but merely shape-shifted. The debate saw arguments from across the political spectrum converging on the same conclusion. Some speakers pointed to the rise of right-wing populism, anti-immigrant sentiment and everyday microaggressions (such as the clutching of handbags) as proof that traditional racism remains a potent force.

Simultaneously, other speakers attacked the progressive left and modern institutions. These contributors argued that universities and media outlets have abandoned Enlightenment values of objective truth in favour of identity politics, cancel culture and ideological purity. Examples such as the banning of historical operas, the no-platforming of university students and a perceived rise in left-wing anti-Semitism were cited as evidence of a new, institutionalised prejudice.

Crucially, the floor also introduced the distinction between internal prejudice and external discrimination. One speaker astutely noted that while outward discrimination was legally acceptable in the 1960s, internal prejudice remains firmly lodged in the human psyche today. It is simply hidden by societal norms and exacerbated by social media echo chambers.

What drove the result

The motion carried because the proposition's definition of prejudice was ultimately too expansive and deeply rooted in human nature for the opposition to dismantle. The opposition relied on the idea that because we have laws against discrimination, we are less prejudiced. However, the floor speakers collectively painted a picture of a society where prejudice has simply migrated from legal statutes into social media algorithms, institutional identity politics, class divides and quiet internal biases.

While the opposition successfully persuaded a few voters that historical progress has been made—causing a slight swing against the motion by the end of the night—they could not prove that human nature had fundamentally changed. The room ultimately concluded that while the targets of prejudice may alter across generations, the sheer volume of bias within the human condition remains remarkably constant.

Detailed transcript:

I will introduce tonight's debate. The motion is: on balance, our society remains as prejudiced as ever. Proposing that will be the first speaker, opposing the second. Over to you.

Definition before we start, what actually is prejudice? So I looked it up in the Oxford English Dictionary, and prejudice is a preconceived opinion, not based on reason or actual experience. Interesting, I thought prejudice was a bad word, but here it doesn't mean negative, it could be a good one. So, for example, you have a prejudiced opinion about a group of people, and it's positive, but you have no logical reason for that opinion. So, we had a show of hands, we got 10 people, including myself, that believe society remains prejudiced. So, why do you feel others are prejudiced? For a biological reason, you believe that I am prejudiced too; you can't see inside my head, but you can see inside yours. So, if you recognise prejudice in society, that means you know in your heart that you too may be a little bit prejudiced, or at least capable of it.

Let's start off with a little bit of System One and System Two. I used to watch the Discovery Channel, and that had me believe that humans are the most rational, logical, super species that's ever walked on the planet. Now, maybe we are logical, along with some other animals, like beavers. I watched some wildlife with David Attenborough the other day, but we're still 95% ape species. There are three tenets of life. I don't know if you know these ones. The first tenet of life, the number one rule against all costs, is survive. Whatever happens, we must survive.

Everything's considered a threat. Once we know it's not a threat, then we can go forward. Number two, now we've survived, we need to save energy. Whatever we do, we have to save energy at all costs. And number three, once we've survived and saved energy, things are good, time to have babies now.

Also, we have a System One and System Two. Our brain has three parts. The first is the brainstem, so forgive me for having brain surgeons and doctors in the house that really understand this, this is a very simplified version. The first is the brainstem, which is our instincts. The second part is our limbic system, which is memory, emotions, intuition, the things we learn. We work at an automatic level. And then we have the neocortex, which is the thinking part of our brain. So, of course, System One is the instinct and intuition part, and System Two is the thinking part. We usually all day, every day, mostly operate on the human level, which is a System One automatic. Anyone who drives a car will remember, if you think far back to when you were a teenager learning to drive, you'd be like, "Where's the gear stick? Okay, where's first? Where's the clutch? What is the clutch?" But now you can drive instinctively. That's intuition. That's System One. And we do that from learning, but before we learn, we have to guess, and that is our prejudice.

If we want to evaluate something, we will use our System Two to think it through, so prejudice has many cousins, like biases. I mentioned before, imagine let's go for a walk. We're in London. Let's walk to the East End. Well, not so far to Brick Lane. Feeling hungry, let's grab a curry. I've been here for a while. I can see 10 curry houses, which one do we go to? They've all got a sign saying five star reviews on TripAdvisor, they're all the first and best curry house on Brick Lane, which one do we choose? Well, we have to use our prejudices and biases. We basically just guess. How about a movie poster? Have we seen the movie? Well, we haven't seen the movie. Maybe we choose to see the movie by the actor, by the director, by the main song. If we were to use logic, our System Two would have to go watch the movie first, discuss it with a friend, "Alright my friend, what do you think? Should we go and see this movie on Saturday or not?" And maybe we can think about it, and we'll come back and say, "No, that's rubbish, let's not see that one." Well, you've already seen it! And yes, we all still judge a book by its cover.

Where does this saying come from? It comes from the fact that we are prejudiced. So yes, to answer this motion, society remains as prejudiced as ever. We all are, we always will be as humans, it's for our survival. But I don't think we're really here to talk about prejudice in the proper term, we're probably talking about prejudice's two ugly sisters facing us today. We often hear in the media and in society about the two ugly sisters, the first of which is racism. Now, what's racism? I looked it up in the Oxford English Dictionary. It says prejudice, discrimination and antagonism by an individual, community or institution against a person or people based on their membership of a particular racial group, typically the ones in the minority or marginalised. It doesn't mention who can be racist. Everyone can be racist. It's a part of being prejudiced, and it's something we can learn. If we go to our System Two, we can learn to avoid it.

And the second ugly sister is bigotry, an obstinate or unreasonable attachment to a belief, opinion or faction, in particular prejudice against a person or people on the basis of their

membership of a particular group. So that prejudiced society today, if the media is to be believed, is all about racism and bigotry. We often hear about exclusion, people in the workplace being excluded for their race. It's not fair to be excluded. Well, yes, racism in the workplace and exclusion is very real today, and is more so than probably 10 years ago, 20 years ago or 30 years ago. For example, since BLM, Black Lives Matter, 94% of jobs in the United States have been given to non whites. That's 6% given to whites, although they are 60% of the population. I don't have similar statistics here for the UK, but I have plenty of examples. For example, today someone was helping me look for a job. I'm perfect for it. It literally says "no white men" at the top. There's an organisation near where I live where I've applied for four jobs. Many people that know me say you should work there, they need you. I'm qualified for it, but they never invite me for an interview. Yet, of around 20 jobs they've filled in the last two or three years, all except for one have gone to women, and of all those women, only one was white. It's very real. Prejudice and racism are very real in the workplace right now.

I like to help charities. I went to a panel to help charities in the UK, and their top agenda was to change the law to make all charities have five directors or governors, of which three must be non white, which is interesting, because only 15% of the population is non white. So, why should charities be pushing for 60%? There are prejudices in today's world that are there all the time, but we can't talk about them. For example, the prejudice against the rich. We had a witch hunt here recently against social media billionaires. I was a principal of a school, and one of the hardest things I had to deal with was female teachers being absolutely abusive to girls that are not very pretty and cute. It's a real issue. We can't talk about that. They have a prejudice against them. I don't know why, but certainly, I am observing it. Recently, on Question Time, a member of the audience was discussing racial hatred in the UK, as that's a big issue. Somebody in the audience says, "Who is responsible for the racial hatred?" The candidate went, "I don't know, what can you mean? No idea." Fiona Bruce, the host, said, "What do you mean precisely?" There are lots of things in this country we are not allowed to talk about, and there are other things that we've been told are a result of prejudice, but they're not. For example, I mentor a businesswoman, and she talked about the pink tax. Being a female entrepreneur, she believes there's a tax of 2%.

There's no tax, but yet every successful businesswoman I know, and I know some very successful women, they don't talk about this. It frustrates them, the limiting beliefs that many young female entrepreneurs have. There isn't a pink tax. Some people use the term pink tax to mean why are female products more expensive than an equivalent male product? Well, that's because women are willing to pay for it. That's a premium, not a tax. And there's another one as well. VC funding. Why is it that of all the companies that VCs invest in, only 1% are female led? Well, because VCs have very strict criteria of what they invest in, and one of them must be that the business is scalable. Many female businesses, although very good, make money, and have great products, won't really scale. So, there's no prejudice or anything against the female entrepreneur there. So, why are we talking about prejudice all the time? Very often in the media, it's because if they can portray society as bad, NGOs can make lots of money from taxpayers trying to make things better. If they can paint the white person as a bogeyman, they can get extra funding from the government. For example, when Zarah Sultana posts on Twitter to say

we have 40% non whites in London, we're on our way. At a strategy workshop I attended to help schools in Africa, one of the panelists who works at a school in Northern London said, and I quote, "Our school is fantastic. We're down to 1.6% white teachers. We're nearly there." She said that in public. For some reason, the organisation did not post that video on YouTube, although they posted all the other ones. Basically, in life, we are all competing for resources, that's what's going on. There's not enough, and whatever you have, you want more. So basically, by pushing inclusion to get people into jobs, you are excluding other people that should be there.

So, is prejudice good or bad? It's a big part of us. It's a big part of our System One. Look at all the progress we've made over the last hundreds of years with civil rights and the economy. Look at the luxury life we have. Look at this, we've got beer, it's cheap, we're in a lovely place. We came here on the tube, we've got trains, we've got all this. If we didn't have our luxury life we have now, we'd probably still be subsistence farmers digging with blunt tools just trying to make a potato grow. We wouldn't even have time to discuss this. When do we drop down to our System One, our prejudiced state? When we're tired or hungry. What turns your brother into your fiercest foe? Hunger. When you're tired and hungry and feeling threatened and in danger, you slip to your System One and you do anything to protect yourself, and you do anything to protect your family as well. So the way to make our life better is not to talk about prejudice. It will always be here as part of ourselves. The way is to boost the economy, so everybody can live well and feed their family. Life is hard, life is tough. We have agency; we need to apply ourselves to succeed. Complaining about prejudice will not help. I have the privilege of knowing some very, very successful people, and none of them talk about this, and some of them came from very, very poor families. Prejudice is a buzzword used by the tyrannical few to get an unfair advantage over others. To paraphrase Malcolm X in a half an hour speech into just one sentence, forgive me: Ignore the liberal elites that manipulate you by talking about prejudice. Everyone is prejudiced, and we need it to survive. Thank you.

Thank you. Over to the opposing speaker.

Mr. President, fellow Sylvans, friends and anybody who doesn't come into that category, can I thank the President for actually inviting me after so many months to actually oppose the motion? I certainly thought that I could only speak for a couple of minutes given my track record, either for 10 or 15 minutes, and those of you who know my style of speaking will know that I'm very elastic normally with the motion. But I want to be respectful both in word and the spirit of the motion. For this to happen we need to take a deep breath to digest the words, as it's my natural style to expand the concept, to use poetic licence to find the truth. Let's analyse the motion. On balance, our society remains as prejudiced as ever. Yes, I had it there, just on a different sheet of paper.

Now I don't know what timeline we are comparing, whether we're going back to when a long time member was a lad, when Victoria was on the throne, or at the start of this esteemed debating society that another of our members was probably a founding member of. Now, I did promise that I wouldn't attempt to make any jokes tonight, although that happened the other

Thursday. And I understand the Labour Party have been instructed to go and see that film, *Starmer Wears Prada*, but I'm falling into bad habits. I don't want to. I want to be respectful to the motion and try and make sense of it. Has it already been three minutes? I've got 12 minutes left then. Thank you very much. Now it's a snapshot, it's not the whole picture, and yet I somehow agree with my learned friend. You are learned, aren't you? Yes, I thought you were, because he's articulated with his usual suave manner, and he's mentioned famous people. I don't know any famous people, or successful people, for that matter.

What I do agree with him is that prejudice is at the nucleus, it's the building block of our own personality. Bias, prejudice and discrimination are all there in our DNA, and that's pretty essential. The proposing speaker mentioned Brick Lane. Anybody who knows me knows that I like food, and I want to illustrate my prejudice about food. My preference is Italian, as opposed to Indian. Now, if I'm encouraged to go for an Indian meal, I prefer a South Indian dosa rather than a korma. These are all types of prejudice, something that we all experience, no doubt. Talking about food, I prefer puddings to the main course. I understand a week on Thursday they're actually having Windsor soup by royal command. I was going to save it for next week, but I can't help thinking that I should bring it in now, because I'm quite an authority on the establishment. I don't know whether you're aware that King Charles has actually jumped ship from being a member of the Church of England, and is actually now a spiritualist. He channels, because he couldn't have thought of those jokes on his own last week. I'm sure our long time member might enlarge upon who the Goons are. Were you the sixth Goon? Charles is the fifth Goon. Okay, so I fall into bad habits again. I'm sorry, Mr. President. I so desperately wanted to prove myself one of the most eloquent of all speakers.

Let me carry on with some of my own personal prejudices. I belong to this debating society because it's an authentic one, even though there are many that are a pale imitation of us, imitation debating societies that you can find in various places in London. I'm sure if you don't know where they are, one or two of our friends will direct you there, but this is the genuine article. That's my prejudice, of course. And then we get on to theology. For those who don't know me, I'm an interfaith minister, and I practise at Stratford Unitarian Church in the East End, so I thought I would bring a bit of theological content to this debate. Now, my prejudice is that God is a Unitarian. How do I know that? Because he's got freedom of thought and freedom of thinking that makes him a Unitarian. Likewise, how do I know God has got a sense of humour? I can prove that, because I look in the mirror on a regular basis. Okay, we've got a very serious group tonight. I think they've been listening to Charles too much.

Now, the proposition was going on about various people who are successful in their struggle. Let's go back to perhaps when I was a lad. We hadn't yet had a female Prime Minister, but subsequently we've had three. We've recently had Ministers of the Crown from different ethnic backgrounds, and indeed we've had a Prime Minister also from an ethnic background. Now, where this equal opportunity falls down, of course, is that the head of state can only come from one tribe and one religion, despite me suggesting that he was a spiritualist. Now the proposing speaker articulated his rules very articulately, and I want to leave you in no doubt that these motions tend to be swayed not by the main speakers, but by the floor speakers, and I hope

there are going to be some very experienced and inspiring floor speeches tonight. I'm looking around the room, and I am inspired, and I'm confident that you are going to support my attempts to dislodge this logical argument, because prejudice, bias and discrimination is not a logical process, it's a feeling process. You feel it. I feel Italian food going down my body, and what an experience that is. Gelato ice cream, tiramisu, minestrone soup, as opposed to Windsor soup. Who wants Windsor soup? Talking about job creation again, I heard from a reliable source that they are going to turn Windsor Castle into a comedy club. I did suggest that Mr. Charles Windsor might like to re-establish Sunday Night at the London Palladium and be the compere. Those days of the Footlights in Cambridge were wasted in his present position.

This is all about what the proposing speaker was saying regarding why people haven't progressed, and the reason isn't about prejudice or discrimination, it's about the structure of society. We know too well, because we've rehearsed it week after week in these debates, that a large percentage of the wealth is controlled by a small percentage of the population. They are the ones in charge, despite who gets into Number 10. I understand there are rumors that Crown Workspace or Harrow Green are getting ready to move somebody from there, but perhaps that's a prejudice against somebody who's got more doctorates than I've had cans of minestrone soup. I understand he's got 18, and I blame the BBC, of course, because if they had offered him the role of Doctor Who, he wouldn't have become Prime Minister. And it's the same with Boris. I don't want to be prejudiced against the Conservative Party, but if he had been granted the chairship of Have I Got News for You, he wouldn't have become Prime Minister. So blame the BBC. That's my prejudice, of course.

I want you to savour each morsel of what I'm saying, that prejudice is a part of life. I have displayed my own prejudice against certain foods. I like Italian food, I don't mind Indian, I like Japanese sometimes. This is part of life, individual choice, having sufficient willpower to actually not be pressurised by society, but to think for yourself. Like God does, think for yourself. Now, regarding our social and political interactions where discrimination takes place, as the proposing speaker says, in the workplace. Since I was growing up, we've had several Acts of Parliament: the Race Relations Act, the Disability Discrimination Act, the Equal Opportunities Act etc. So we have progressed. And so, although individuals themselves may well be prejudiced, our society compensates for that by setting up legislation and tribunals to deal with it, like any other legal system. Now I'm focusing on the UK, and I'm sure that's the case in most countries, but there is still discrimination. A few years ago, the term neurodivergent came about. Now I know quite a bit about this, because I was neurodivergent before neurodivergence was discovered. So that's something else that we have worked on to alleviate discrimination against different people. I've demonstrated that it's possible to experience almost any situation regardless of who you are or where you come from. I will finish on that, and everybody is welcome to come and disagree with me, but I'll save the rest for the concluding remarks. Thank you.

Thank you to the opposing speaker. Sometimes in these longer debates, we have all the points covered by the main speakers. Sometimes it leaves many points still to be covered, and I think that tonight's debate might be falling into the latter category. That remains to be seen. So, I hope we have some floor speakers who come up and add to things. For those who haven't been with

us before, come up, speak from the front. You have up to five minutes. If someone raises their hand, you can take a question. If you raise your hand, the speaker has the floor, though. If they don't want to take a question and want to keep their time for themselves, they can do that. Otherwise, they can take a question. It needs to be a question, not a speech from when you're sitting down. Everyone's got their five minutes to give their particular views. So, I will take hands now.

Hello, it's been a while since I've been here, and I'm glad to be back. Yes, to the opposing speaker, I will disagree with you. I think that when I was growing up, I was born in 1996, at that point it felt like everything was progressing in every dimension: technologically, economically, politically, globalisation, openness. It doesn't feel like that now. Maybe since the financial crisis, things have changed. Tolkien wrote about societies declining. Indeed, Gondor and Minas Tirith were grand, though they were a lesser version of prior civilizations. His view was that things were getting worse. Maybe that's the case right now. I think you're seeing the fact that economics being on the decline seems to have bad political ramifications in the UK. What is the trajectory for our economy? Who knows. The right wing is insisting all the time that immigrants are the problem. It's quite an easy tactic for them to take, and they've certainly taken it. Immigration has gone up since Brexit. I don't actually know mechanically why it's gone up. People just say it.

Tensions have gone up concomitantly, but not necessarily because of it. My girlfriend is Singaporean, and Singapore has a very heavy handed government, and successfully so. What they do is they have lots of immigrants from China, from Malaysia, from India. They randomise the allocation of where people go; they tell people where to live, basically, and mandate a proportional amount of population representation in any given area. It's quite good at preventing the ghettoisation and tribalisation that you see in London. I was in Deptford, and my friend and I were at the cinema, and we were the only two white people out of like 500 people. Obviously not a problem, but it shows a route to tribalism. I personally am seeing a lot of increased amounts of racism and bigotry, which is why I oppose this motion. Lots of buzzwords are coming up, lots of emphasis on "third world" people being discussed, lots of disdain, not sympathy. I was always comfortable using the word "third world" until I got told it's a bad word. Now in the way I see it used, I don't really like it. Lots of emphasis on low IQ people, lots of animosity towards Nigerians has suddenly come up in the last couple of years. It seemed to correlate with Trump's attacks on Nigeria, almost as though there's a media orchestrated creation of opposition.

My landlord dislikes Nigerians. Then my colleague was ranting about them. I've got a colleague, a really nice guy. I have lunch with him every day. We laugh. But he's a very racist guy, a very anti Semitic guy. I watched an interview with a neo Nazi, and he said 90% of the same things as this guy. I use him as a guide, an insight into the very racist and bigoted right in the world. There seems to be an interesting shift where previously there would have been more opposition to just black people. It seems now that it's more about outsiders, regardless of their skin colour, which is progress of a kind. If you're black, but you speak with an English accent, and have been here for a while, especially if you're Christian, then it's all good. But if you're from Nigeria, or you

speak with a foreign accent, you're met with more suspicion amongst racist people. I think there's a big push as well amongst some groups to heighten the animosity towards Muslims. There's tension between the Christian and Muslim worlds, and some commentators like Sam Harris and Douglas Murray are very critical of Islam.

To the opposing speaker, I liked your speech, sir, but I do think you could have tethered it more to the motion. I think you focused on preference, not prejudice. Prejudice to me is more of an assertion of fact that is wrong, whereas liking Italian food is a preference. I do agree with you, though, that dosas are good. To the proposing speaker, I really liked your opening part. I think you set up the framework of the motion in a really good way, giving great context with the brain and setting up a definition. I think you structured your speech really well, though you focused more on white people and white grievances than people might have expected. They might have expected a more woke speech, like the one I'm giving. I do think you contradicted yourself. You said at the end that prejudice is a buzzword used by the tyrannical few, but yet you brought up a lot of grievances about white people and job hiring, so is there a contradiction there? Were you complaining as well about prejudice? I'll leave that to be debated. Thank you.

Mr. Chair, fellow Sylvans. I did get one question from the opposition here: why does God need to think? If he's God, why does he need anything? God should not need anything, therefore he should not need to think. But to the motion. Yes, prejudice is rampant in our society, and certainly on social media it is growing like a virus. People post things on social media, they take a video of something without any context or bigger picture, and invite comments. What you get, of course, are knee jerk reactions, completely missing the bigger picture. It is very prejudiced, and that is growing. People post on social media because they think thousands of people are going to read what they say, maybe it will go viral. It's all driven by ego, and it is all very prejudiced.

Prejudice also extends to our universities. Universities should be a place where ideas are examined and nothing is off the table. But universities have become very focused on no platforming speakers whom they don't agree with. Somebody who has views that are not fashionable is no platformed because the fragile students have to have a "safe space". Universities shouldn't be safe spaces for anything; they should be places where ideas are discussed, dissected and debated. This no platforming is a definite form of prejudice. In one university, Royal Holloway, there was an incident during Freshers' Week. One student who supported Israel took issue with the President of the Friends of Palestine Society. She taunted him by saying, "You're a wannabe Jew. Where's your Jewish hat?" He likened the keffiyeh she was wearing to a tea towel. She complained to the university authorities, who suspended him from his course, kicked him out of his accommodation and he was reported to the police for a hate crime. I ask you, for likening a keffiyeh to a tea towel? Can't anybody take a joke anymore? That is absolute prejudice, because no action was taken against the President of the Palestinian society; it was all against this chap who simply made an off the cuff remark.

I noticed another thing just recently. The Surrey Opera Society was due to mount a performance of the opera Lakmé in an open air theatre in Cornwall. No doubt the Surrey Opera had

rehearsed for weeks, and mounting an opera is no small feat. But it was pulled completely from performance because one person objected. The opera Lakmé was composed by Delibes in 1883, it's set in India, and it deals with colonial themes. The objection was that it exemplifies colonial themes, and on that basis alone, the whole production was shelved. That is absolute prejudice. The opera Lakmé, for heaven's sake! The Flower Duet is part of it, which is often played and very popular, as is the Bell Song. What are they going to ban next? Are they going to ban Tosca because it deals with murder and suicide? Are they going to ban Carmen because it offends the traveller community? Honestly, we've got no common sense anymore in this country. It's all prejudice. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chair. I've thought about this motion as really representing a betrayal of reason. But to understand how that's happened, we need to distinguish between the people and our institutions. Are our people more prejudiced, or as prejudiced as they were, or are the institutions of our country more prejudiced? That distinction is important, because without any doubt, as a population, we are the least prejudiced of any version of us that has ever been. When the opposing speaker and I were growing up, 40% of people admitted that they would be uncomfortable with their daughters marrying somebody of a different race. Now that number is less than 5%. That's a huge difference. As a population, I think we can easily see that we do not have signs saying "No Irish, No Dogs", etc. We have moved on. We are not prejudiced against same sex relationships, which in the 1970s we certainly were.

So we've changed, but what about our institutions? What have academia, the BBC and the civil service done? They've abandoned the Enlightenment values that we built our society on. The Enlightenment gave us reason, objective truth and the idea that we should be judged by the content of our character, not the colour of our skin. That is Enlightenment thinking. These were the values that ended slavery, quite possibly the most important removal of prejudice in all of history. So, what have our institutions done? They've replaced those values by trading reason for identity, facts for feelings. This obsession with vibes isn't progress; it's just a new religion. It's a low rate religion that isn't even written in Latin. The new dogma tells us that feelings are sacred and facts are problematic. We can see this domestically here with definitions of Islamophobia, a new word for a new thing, which is just a semantic shield. By wearing the clothes of anti racism, we now have laws about Islamophobia. Those are the behaviours that facilitated prejudice by omission. Those are the institutional behaviours that silenced everyone who would speak up for the girls raped by grooming gangs across the country in many towns, because the feeling of being offended was prioritised over the brutality meted out to those children.

The same abandonment of reality is in the NHS, which routinely dismisses women for stating biological facts. When an institution treats a biological, scientific fact as a disciplinary offence, then I think we've lost the Enlightenment. We're living in a new dark age of state sanctioned misogyny. And of course, this intersectional cult provides perfect cover for rampant anti-Semitism. If you view everything through a very crude lens of bad white imperialists versus the good global South, well, the Jews don't fit. They're outside the circle of protection. We've seen over the last three years the number of attacks on Jews go through the roof because they're the

wrong kind of minority, they don't fit the narrative. The great irony is that these champions of unconscious bias are the most biased people in the room. If it doesn't fit their model, it's just dismissed without reason.

So, Mr. Chair, I thought I could conclude not with one of the opposing speaker's jokes, but with a poem that you may be familiar with, with a couple of adaptations. First they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out because I was told it was anti colonialism. Then they came for those who spoke for the girls who'd been raped, and I did not speak out because it was Islamophobic. Then they came for the women who spoke biology, and I didn't speak out because that would have been transphobia. Then came the truth tellers who demanded facts were more important than vibes, and I didn't speak out because I wanted to keep my job. Then they came for me, and there was no one left to speak for me. Two and a half thousand years ago, Cyrus the Great gave us the first Declaration of Human Rights. It is a tragedy that, while that flame was historically extinguished by an unreasoned theocracy, here it is being extinguished by this cheap ideology. So I ask you, vote against the motion to stand for reason.

Good evening everyone. Thank you to both speakers. I liked the introduction of positive prejudice, which was quite amusing, and that obviously exists. That's the girl I'm seeing at the moment; she wants me to speak in a Spanish accent. That's her particular kink. I'm not Spanish, but she wants me to speak it for her. That's a particular positive prejudice, which is fine, because I want her to speak in a Swedish accent, so it works both ways. Whatever gets us off!

When I looked at the motion, the first thought that came to mind was prejudice, and then alongside that came the word discrimination, and the two words have been used interchangeably. In my mind, I wanted to define the difference. I think prejudice is internal thinking and your biases, whereas discrimination is actually acting on it to the detriment of the target. To me, this motion is about what we internally think and believe. We have peer pressure and societal norms that prevent us from expressing our internal thoughts. Then there's the phrase "our society," and I thought, does that mean the UK, or does that mean the rest of the world? Expanding it to the globe is really interesting, because that takes out the whole racial dynamic. You can have people of different colours who are prejudiced against each other, and that brings in human nature and our natural tribalism. The in group versus the out group dynamic exists all around the world. When I was travelling in Pakistan, I realised what Pakistanis thought about Afghans who came across the border, and I found that to be quite telling. It's human nature, a part and parcel of tribalism.

The motion also says "as ever", comparing the past to today. As the last speaker said, in the 60s, when we had segregation, it was overt. You were allowed to express what your prejudices were, and there was less blowback. Now, we have moved on legally, but I'm asking myself internally, do those prejudices still exist? The rise of populist parties makes me think that they do. When trying to define the different types of prejudice, race came up, and I thought another member was going to talk about that if she decides to get up, as that's her area of expertise. Then ethnicity comes up, like the Arab versus Jew dynamic. My opinion, in response to the last speaker, is that it's not anti Semitism; it's a reaction against genocide, ethnic cleansing and

annexing the West Bank. You have lots of prominent Jewish people, like Bernie Sanders, saying this is a stance against those actions, not against Jewish people themselves.

We also have colonial prejudice. I thought this was really interesting when considering leaders like Maduro. There's this kind of prejudice where we in the West believe it's our right to be able to go into another country and remove the head of a nation, whereas we would be resistant to doing that within Western nations. There are all these types of different prejudices. I've only got one minute left, so I'm going to conclude. In my mind, this is a clash between history and what is hidden. We have moved on since the open segregation of the 60s, but does it still exist hidden in our minds? My conclusion is that it does still exist in our minds, it's just surfacing more openly now because of certain political narratives. It's causing this great intolerance that seemed to diminish in the 90s, but has come back up now. So, on balance, I do believe that our society remains as prejudiced as ever. It's just hidden because we are often not allowed to express it. That's my thinking.

Let's come back to order, please. To our next speaker, do you want to start us off?

Ladies and gentlemen, I haven't said much in these debates in the last month, basically because I didn't actually understand many of the motions. I'm having difficulty understanding this one too. We have to realise that we hold in our brains about 30,000 words, and we access each word in a millisecond, and the meaning that each of us puts on a particular word isn't necessarily the same. So prejudice, to me, doesn't really have very much relationship to what's been spoken here today. What I will concentrate on is the word "ever". I think that implies that things have not really changed over a long period of time. People have come up with examples, but I can't really get a feeling for a definite trend of what's been happening.

As some of you know, I do know a bit about the Roman world. I want to briefly go back a long way in the past and invite you to consider how different these societies were from the ones that you are aware of now. One of the vast differences in Roman society was that it was enormously status conscious, and you dressed according to your status. If you were in the top aristocratic order, the senatorial order, you had a broad purple stripe on your toga. If you were the next rank down, the equestrian order, you had a narrow purple stripe on your toga. If you were a Roman citizen, you just wore a standard toga. If you were not a Roman citizen, you were not allowed to wear a toga. Everyone was in uniform. I don't think we have anything like that in our society today.

Now I'm going to suggest we go back to where we have come from, and take Richard II, a quite prominent monarch, about two or 300 years after the Norman conquest. Richard II actually hated the Anglo Saxon conquered people; he viewed them almost as conquered scum. If we go further to my youth, the idea of the "gentleman" was important. The gentlemen would be the descendants of the Normans. You were a caste of your own. You actually were entitled to the epithet "Esquire" after your name, and you were entitled to the word "Mr." If you weren't a gentleman, you were not entitled to any of those things. I remember when I was going to university, every letter would have Esquire after my name. I didn't inherit it from my father, who

couldn't really claim to be a gentleman. My mother was quite high born, and her mother was even higher born. So perhaps I get some status from my mother. That has almost disappeared, hasn't it? I don't think any of you here regard yourselves as entitled to the term Esquire just because you are descended from William the Conqueror. So we have had a huge change.

If prejudice is a way of looking at different peoples and how you rank amongst them, I would also mention what I have to do in a lot of the work I do: I need a working knowledge of anthropology. Anthropology has its origin in the study of simple hunter gatherer tribes. You wouldn't understand them if you were suddenly dropped into one of these tribes. To understand their behavioural patterns, you have to realise that concepts like gods and magic are very important to people in that status. If you take it back that far, which the motion seems to imply, then there has obviously been a big change since Roman times, and since Richard II, who spent most of his time fighting on the continent before getting killed. Even the First and Second World Wars brought very big changes. Before the First World War, to be an officer in the Navy or the Army, you had to be a gentleman. The First World War killed all of them in the first year, and then the Army had to work out how to pick officers on merit. So, if I'm right in what the motion means, then there has definitely been a change over the long term.

Hello. You would think that I would be for the motion. You would think that I would agree that on balance our society remains as prejudiced as ever. You see, I work in a bastion of prejudice, the hotbed of ignorance that is customer service in London's West End theatres, the Barbican Centre, and Shakespeare's Globe. You see some of the sheer idiots coming towards you, and you wonder how the hell they found their way out the front door that day. How can they be so prejudiced just because I don't understand the question they ask? Why do they assume that I'm a foreigner and not speaking Queen's English? They think, "Oh, you silly foreigner." Prejudice is alive and well in British society. I know it. We all know it. We've seen it in the news headlines.

To take the view of positive prejudice, let's flip it back. As someone who works in customer service, I have had my own prejudices built up over many years. I do a microsecond scan of a person coming up to me with their ticket or their drink, and see: are they stupid looking, are they posh, are they friendly, are they drunk, are they looking for the toilet? You can usually tell. Yes, that's me being prejudiced, and honestly I stand by them. It's prejudice based on little nuances of the clothes, little nuances of the eyes. Never race, never religion, never class, except tourists struggling with the English language. I have learned to overcome many of my prejudices and test them against the news headlines. I don't follow the news very well because I have enough things to worry about, and as we all know, the news from different sides is very biased. You would think that things are getting worse in Britain, either because of all these nasty racists or because of all these nasty immigrants. I have a great idea to test that: go out into the world and test it.

I've actually come to the conclusion that Britain is not as prejudiced as it was before. What's the reason? Well, it could be due to the fact that we've gone from a world of 4 billion people only 50 years ago to a world of 8 billion people, and the white British have had to learn to share. It could be that we have smartphones and the internet, where anyone can just type in the name of a

random country and watch a travel video to test these prejudices. Better yet, go out onto the streets of Britain. Don't let the news media tell you what's happening. What do your eyes tell you?

To give a very good example, last year at the Globe, we had an open Iftar. The Ramadan Tent Project invited a couple hundred Muslims to break their fast. As I am Jewish on my mother's side, I was interested to know what would happen if I wore a yarmulke. I was fully prepared for prejudice to be thrown my way, for people to say, "I don't want him greeting me on the door. I don't want him there while I'm breaking my fast." Nothing happened. Everyone greeted me on the door. It was fine. The crowd was actually fairly westernised in their dress compared to what I was expecting. My prejudice was challenged. However, I must say the Ramadan Tent Project was the most disorganised event organiser I'd ever seen; it was an absolute shambles, overrunning long after the sun had gone down. So yeah, I stand by my prejudice that nobody in Britain knows how to organise events; you have to rely on the customer service staff to do it for you.

Earlier this year, we had the Playing Shakespeare season at the Globe, sponsored by Deutsche Bank, which gives tickets to schoolchildren whose schools would normally not be able to afford it. There are many ignorant, prejudiced things I could say about British schoolchildren today, but they came to the Globe and they enjoyed the show. They were allowed to be schoolchildren. I don't believe there is prejudice against people of other skin colours like their forebears had. I don't believe there is prejudice against people of other religions statistically. One individual in the crowd might be the most ignorant kid you could possibly imagine, but he's the exception. Kids today can learn about each other, they have to. We live in a globalised world. Even more isolationist cultures like Japan are having to learn to embrace the outside. Prejudice is breaking down in the face of international travel and globalisation. We are less prejudiced today simply as a fact. It's a fact that's often resisted by people who want us to go back to how things were, and they're going to lose. I believe my time is up. Thank you.

I'll try to keep it short. I think prejudice is quite subjective, because different groups seem to think that they experience prejudice themselves. You have the white population saying that in 15 or 20 years time they're going to become a minority, and then you have other ethnic groups saying that they are also experiencing prejudice. Looking at race and religion, one example is anti-Semitism. We recently heard about the anti-Semitic attacks in Golders Green. It does seem like there are certain groups, certain leftist groups and certain Islamist groups, that try to foster this anti-Semitism. There seems to be a conflation between somebody who's Jewish, somebody who supports the concept of the state of Israel and somebody who supports the government of Israel. They are different factors, and I think some people erroneously assume that just because you're Jewish, it automatically means you agree with what's going on between Israel and Palestine.

There are also prejudices with far right groups, supporters of figures like Tommy Robinson, who rally against certain ethnic groups. I think there's a lot of confusion in terms of who they're actually rallying against. These groups seem to treat brown people or black people as one

homogeneous group. With South Asians, for example, there are so many different countries and religions, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka. Would these far right supporters be able to tell the difference? It's difficult to say.

I think there's also class prejudice. Since the rise of Thatcherism, you've seen an increase in class prejudice. There is more poverty, more homelessness, and difficulty accessing public services. I would say this is a form of class prejudice. You have elitist institutions, like the BBC, saying they want somebody from a working class background, but if that person is still spouting the elitist agenda, it doesn't really matter. They could have the voice and the working class background, but if they're still serving the ruling elite, it's quite deceptive.

The last thing I wanted to say is about The Guardian newspaper, which claims to be a liberal media outlet against racism, religious discrimination and misogyny. Yet in 2020, they published a very anti Indian, Hinduphobic caricature of Priti Patel, depicting her like a cow with a ring through her nose. And this is from the so called woke media. I think that this media outlet is actually a pro establishment newspaper disguised as a liberal rag. So yes, I do think that there is prejudice around in different forms and perspectives. I am going to vote for the motion. Thank you.

I won't let you guess which way I'm leaning tonight; I'm supporting the motion. On balance, there's as much prejudice as there's ever been. When I think of balance, I get this image in my mind of an acrobat on a tightrope; it sways a little bit this way, a little bit that way, but there is a point at which it's fairly balanced. Our perception of prejudice might depend on whether you're receiving it or giving it. Across the globe, at any one point in time, there will be hotbeds of prejudice. You go to the Middle East, there's an active kinetic war right now. Is that prejudice? Is that economic extermination? I'd say there's a lot of racial prejudice down there. Now, is this the first war that the world's ever fought? I don't think so. I think back to World War Two, which was probably the world's worst expression of ethnic cleansing. To balance that, a generation went and fought it, came to Europe, took it on headfirst, and fought the Nazis.

There have always been warring tribes based on prejudice. Now, it's whether you're experiencing it or giving it that frames the argument today. It's far less impactful to give prejudice than to receive it, because when you receive it, that prickles your emotions. That's when you feel offence. Offence cannot be given; it can only be taken. I would argue that on balance, throughout human history, these have been fairly recurring themes. There's more here, there's less there. I could argue that London is one of the most metropolitan cities in the world. From my lived experience, it's fairly non prejudicial. You can walk down the road and find every ethnicity under the sun getting along, but you can also find some bad actor who's just being mean and a bigot.

Where does that leave us? I think it's about perception. I'm surprised there wasn't more discussed about social media and the echo chamber, and how that prejudice seems to be growing and reinforcing. If you're seeing prejudice on social media because you're engaging in

it, you are multiplying it. My social media feed is mostly kittens, rainbows and ice cream. I'd suggest you all go do an algorithm purge and get rid of the prejudice in your life. Thank you.

I wanted to hear everyone's views before I gave mine. I don't actually understand what the two main speakers were fully saying. Normally I can say I think they were both good speakers, even if I didn't agree with one of them, but tonight I don't know. The proposition speech felt like a Reform UK speech. I've heard a lot of generalisations. When I walk down the road, people grab their handbags as if they think I'm going to steal them. That to me is racism, because they weren't grabbing their handbags before they saw me. I know that sometimes it can just be adjusting a bag, but if you walk from here to there and five people do it, checking all their pockets, you know what it is.

Yes, racism exists in marriage. In the 70s, Jamaicans couldn't get married to a Grenadian, and forget about Caribbean people getting married to anybody from Nigeria. So there are definitely isms. But I need to address the statement the proposer made about America and the 94% statistic. Stats don't always tell the story. Companies did not decide to recruit only people of colour; rather, they significantly changed their recruitment priorities by focusing on diversifying their candidate pools and internal promotions. When I was starting out in the 70s and 80s as the child of an immigrant, you'd get told there was no chance of promotion. You believed that company, and you wouldn't push for the job because they assumed you wouldn't get anywhere. You learn later on that's a lie, but you don't know that when you're just starting out.

Regarding the Oxford Dictionary definition that was read, prejudice is an unreasonable, unfair, irrational opinion or feeling formed beforehand, often resulting in hostility towards a particular group, race or religion. AI defines it similarly, as a typically negative attitude. It has to be negative. It's an unreasonable attitude. If somebody is grabbing their handbag when they see me, that's a negative attitude. Let's stick with what it actually is, not what we want it to be. I love that phrase, "facts over feelings," because the stats did not tell the true story about what was happening in America.

Prejudice exists in all areas of life. Even wearing a man's coat, which I love, shows prejudice. Why are men's coats made better than women's? It has inside pockets that are theft proof; you can't get into them easily. You think any woman's coat is made like that? The West has a hierarchy, and even in fashion, it shows. These are £10 trainers, but there's a status difference if you're wearing Burberry. Normally, you see Burberry as upper class. If I see a white person wearing Burberry, I might prejudge them, just because Nigel Farage wears it.

For me, prejudice isn't just about race, and I hate that some people in this room think I only talk about race. Race affects not just me, but white people and all nationalities. Prejudice in all areas of life is bad: sexism, racism, ageism, fatism, sizeism. My great grandmother was Chinese. Sometimes I will tell people that I'm mixed race, but because of the colour of my skin, because I'm dark and not fair, I'm told that I can't say I'm mixed race. So even in these minute instances, there is prejudice around. On that note, I'd better finish because I can see my time is up.

Thank you to our last floor speaker. Seeing no further floor speeches, we will come back to the main speakers to wrap up, and then we will go straight to the vote. We start with the opposer.

Mr. President, indeed, it's been one of the finest debates that I've heard in this debating society, because there are different interpretations of what the motion is. Because we are human, ultimately it comes down to individual responsibility to be aware of what's going on around us, whether it is prejudice, bias or a lack of education and ignorance. It's there, it's in our DNA. It's about how we react and whether institutions are amenable to change, which depends on our timeline. When an earlier speaker was speaking about hunter gatherers, my mind straight away went to people queuing up for food banks. We behave depending on our DNA or our socialisation and where we come from. But ultimately, it is about personal responsibility and your willingness to become aware of neurodiversity, feminism, and all the education that has taken place not just in our universities and schools, but in life, using the internet and other means of communication. We are communicators, and I still maintain that we have progressed, depending on where you are measuring from.

I'm well known for my views regarding war, and I've been accused of being an idealist. I'm a pacifist through and through; that's my prejudice. I don't think the human race will go any further without evolving to the state where we solve our conflicts and differences by peaceful means, rather than spending our resources and being told by the establishment to create conflict. That is my fundamental view, that we are by our nature peaceful people. It's the conditioning that creates wars. When it comes down to prejudice, bias and discrimination, you've got to use your own judgement. Are you prejudiced? If so, acknowledge it, and then change your behaviour as necessary. That's what it's about, not being conditioned by institutions or the establishment. I want you tonight to use that judgement. I find it very difficult to challenge the proposer; he made an excellent speech, very logical, using a lot of evidence to back his case, whereas I was coming from a feeling perspective. What have you experienced? You have a duty tonight. I don't mind if you vote against me, but it's a fundamental issue that you should not abstain on. Do not abstain. Thank you.

Mr. President, I heard some fantastic arguments. Let's go back to the original motion, which we've perhaps forgotten. On balance, our society remains as prejudiced as ever. Society is made up of people, and people are innately prejudiced. It's the way we work. So, you have to vote that the motion is true.

I'd like to thank the previous speaker for mentioning the definition from the Oxford English Dictionary and using AI. I suggest anyone wanting information use actual dictionaries, because AI can be very left leaning, based mostly on Reddit and Wikipedia. To get real information, it is best to use primary sources. Now, to give some examples of biases, I heard someone say that only the right wing is bigoted, there's no left wing bigotry. That's a prejudiced thing to say in itself. Has anyone ever read Steven Pinker? His book *Better Angels of Our Nature* talks about how we work on System One. At a base human level, we might fight someone or steal from them, but as we rise to a civilised level, we can work together for a better civilization. We all

have our prejudices, but we should control our base human level, rise to civilisation, and work together.

People talk about how Reform UK voters hate foreigners, which is a prejudiced thing to say. On Thursday, we had an election, and I was a poll clerk. It was my first job in England in 40 years! I wore these specific clothes as a bit of fun. People absolutely ripped into me, assuming I was a horrible Reform supporter. I didn't say anything to them; I just showed them how to vote. Conversely, someone came up and said, "I voted for you, I helped you win." That's an example of positive bias or prejudice, assuming my political affiliation based on my appearance, when I was completely neutral as a poll clerk. Although we are all prejudiced, I spoke to about 500 people that day. Some were annoyed because they thought I was canvassing, but I made nearly all of them laugh. We had a fantastic time. There were people of every race and background, a total melting pot, true civilisation. In London society, you find every race, and it's a fantastic place. Polling day brought 500 people of every type together. Everyone is prejudiced, but everyone came together and had a laugh.

I'll finish by saying that feelings do trump facts in life, because we're prejudiced. It shouldn't be that way, but it is. Ironically, somebody says facts should trump feelings, but then their actions show that their feelings trump the facts. We are prejudiced; admit it, love it. It's the way we are, it's humanity. It makes our world a very beautiful place. But remember to rise to a civilised level, get on together, and make society as prosperous as possible. We should all vote for the motion; it is true, we are just as prejudiced as ever. Thank you, President.

Thank you to our main speakers and everyone who contributed from the floor as well. We will now move straight into the vote. I will repeat the motion for another time: On balance, our society remains as prejudiced as ever. All those in favor of the motion after the debate, please raise your hand now. Okay, and our online participant is coming in from online. Thank you. All those against, okay? And any abstentions after the debate? One. Okay, so we have a clear result. With a vote of 11 in favor, 5 against and 1 abstention, the motion has carried, although not quite as strongly as the pre vote. We had a few people swing towards opposed, but it was a good debate.