

Brexit is entrenching some dangerous myths about 'British' culture by Afua Hirsch Britain has always had a warped sense of its own history, excluding ethnic minorities. It was also the reason why, according to an Opinionium poll, ethnic minority British people are now less likely to identify as British since the EU referendum. Instead, many are more likely to claim the identity of their ethnic minority heritage. British people who are not white feel less British now because that hostility is palpable, because there is an agenda of regressing to a time, before the European Union, that many remember not for the joys of complete sovereignty, but for the absence of protection from racism in the workplace, or at the hands of the police, or for being openly chased in the streets by white racists. PA 30 The idea that British "culture" is somehow opposite to the presence of ethnic minorities is a historical nonsense. There were Africans in Britain, it's now widely accepted, before there were any "English". 35 No society ever has a perfect grasp of its history, and that doesn't matter, it's perceptions that count, and the harm that they cause. Britain's sense of self has become so warped, so divorced from reality, that it is demonising its visible minorities, including the 6 million or so British people of minority heritage among them. In this context, when I hear politicians appeal to patriotism, I feel very nervous. Not because there is anything wrong with patriotic feeling—like populism, it's a term that only becomes malign" by its context. Roads and cities were built by the Romans, banks were founded by Huguenots, a royal household established by a broad cross-section of European aristocracy. Now a sense is becoming something more hostile and alarming. On the one hand, there is something deeply ironic about the wave of nostalgia sweeping political discourse in modern Britain. On the other hand, it harks— increasingly since the Brexit vote— back to the age of empire.