A Submission to the Home Affairs Committee’s Inquiry into Terrorism and Social Cohesion.

September 2004
ABOUT THE FORUM AGAINST ISLAMOPHOBIA AND RACISM

The Forum Against Islamophobia & Racism (FAIR) is an independent charitable organisation which believes in a multi-faith, multi-cultural Britain, where all people, are valued for the positive contributions they make to today’s society whilst simultaneously being protected from all forms of stereotypes, discrimination, harassment and violence.

FAIR strives, in particular, to promote a more balanced understanding of the contributions and concerns of the Muslim community in Britain. It seeks to challenge Islamophobia at all levels of British society by monitoring Islamophobia, challenging discrimination, lobbying for policy and legislative change, and encouraging good relations amongst all communities.


Acknowledgements

We would like to extend our sincerest thanks to all those who participated in the FAIR Survey. The conclusions and recommendations in this response are based upon the experts whose advice was sought and the general findings of the FAIR Survey.

FAIR
September 2004

1 www.fairuk.org
Executive Summary

The response from FAIR to the Home Affairs Committee’s (HAC) enquiry into the impact of terrorism on community relations and social cohesion, aims to highlight the impact of the anti-terrorism legislation on Muslim communities in the UK. FAIR’s response also looks at the subsequent rise in Islamophobia, the role of the media, Muslim community leadership, and representation of positive achievements made by Muslims to British society.

In compiling our response to the HAC, FAIR designed and distributed a community Survey to a cross section of both the Muslim and non-Muslim communities across the UK. The Survey was sent to 400 people, of which a total of 60 people responded. These responses are used as evidence to support the arguments in FAIR’s response.

Results of Survey indicate that the September 11 attacks in the United States have left Britain's Muslim community feeling "under siege" and increasingly the target of racist incidents. This has been exacerbated by high profile media reports of the continued sweeping arrests and house raids of innocent Muslims under the counter-terrorism legislation.

To prevent the stigmatisation of Muslims we wish to call upon the Government to invest in the Muslim community in order to afford Muslims a better level of housing, education, healthcare, and employment. In addition, to overturn the negative perception and victimisation of the Muslim community, we recommend the Government introduce measures which will bind and unify all communities in order to better counter the perceived threat of terrorism. Cohesive measures taken by the Government would allow communities to resolve collective problem more effectively.

FAIR HAC Survey, see appendix 1.
Introduction

In July 2004, the Home Affairs Committee (HAC) announced it would inquire into the impact of terrorism and community relations. As part of its enquiry, the HAC would consider evidence on the impact the threat of terrorism is having on community relations and social cohesion, including public concerns about the terrorist threat, the impact on relations between different sections of the community, any rise in and exploitation of racial tension, and the consequences of anti-terrorist measures.\(^3\)

In compiling our response to the HAC, FAIR distributed its Survey to 400 people across the UK.\(^4\) The Survey was designed to allow participants to express their views on terrorism, Islamophobia, community and leadership, media and representation and Muslim achievements. Results from the Survey are used as evidence to support the arguments in this submission.

Terrorism

In response to the attacks of September 11 2001 on the United States, the UK Government passed the Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001 (ATCSA 2001). The Act which was subjected to little scrutiny in parliament continues to receive widespread condemnation from civil liberties and human rights organisations, and grass-root communities who have expressed their reservations about the negative impact the ATCSA 2001 and the Terrorism Act 2000 (TA 2000) is having on Britain’s Muslim community.

A new perceived threat of terrorism has prompted the Government to take tougher anti-terrorism measures. The enforcement of these measures has led to the victimisation and stigmatisation of the Muslim community. The power to indefinitely detain foreign individuals the Home Secretary ‘suspects’ to be involved in terrorism,\(^5\) is the most draconian of measures taken under the anti-terrorism legislation where the UK has derogated from fundamental human rights.

This power has been used against mostly Muslim foreign nationals. HRW\(^6\) has argued that;

\[\text{“this has harmed race and community relations and undermined the willingness of Muslims in the United Kingdom to cooperate with the police and security services.”}\]

\(^3\) Home Affairs Committee Press Notice, 21 July 2004.
\(^4\) FAIR HAC Survey, see appendix 1.
\(^6\) Human Rights Watch is an international human rights organisation.
Home Office statistics reveal that since 11 September 2001 until 30 June 2004, 609 people were arrested under the TA 2000, 99 people were charged under the Act and 15 people convicted.\(^8\) With an exception of a few, nearly all those arrested under the anti-terrorism legislation have been Muslim and most of those convicted have been non-Muslim. 25% of the Survey’s participants expressed that these statistics proved Muslims were being criminalised under the legislation. 20% of the participants noted that the continuous arrests across the country have exaggerated the threat of terrorism and led to the Muslim community being perceived as the ‘enemy within’.

10% of respondents to a previous Survey conducted by FAIR,\(^9\) cited that they have had their homes raided by anti-terrorism police. Responses to the Survey show that these police raids often appear to be conducted on the basis of speculation, rather than \textit{prima facie} evidence. The repercussions of such raids have been long-lasting, severely damaging the reputation of Muslims within their community. One respondent stated;

\begin{quote}
“my house was raided, I was then detained at the station for a week, my property confiscated, my home cordoned-off by the police, and after all this I was charged with no crime, but still punishment was executed on my family who were humiliated at being perceived as criminals”\(^{10}\)
\end{quote}

40% of participants felt that the threat of terrorism in the UK had increased after the war in Iraq, 55% thought that it was difficult to determine the actual threat because arrests made under the anti-terrorism Acts were being sensationalised in order to get citizens to abide by repressive laws. Furthermore, many of the participants had never heard of Al-Qaida until 9/11.

**Islamophobia**

Muslims welcome measures the Government takes to protect its citizens from acts of terrorism, equally, such measures must be proportionate to the actual threat citizens face. The enforcement of current measures has lead to the profiling of Muslims and misuse of police powers has only served to discredit the Government’s attempts to counter the perceived threat of terrorism. As a consequence, this has resulted in alienating many in the Muslim community who have consequently suffered from Islamophobia.\(^{11}\)

Victimisation of Muslims under the anti-terrorism legislation has lead to increased incidences of Islamophobia and racism against Muslims. This has manifested itself in

\(^8\) [http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/docs3/tatc_arrest_stats.html](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/docs3/tatc_arrest_stats.html)

\(^9\) FAIR Community Survey, see FAIR’s response the Government’s Counter-Terrorism Discussion Paper, July 2004, Appendix 1.

\(^10\) Quote from FAIR Community Survey.

\(^11\) Islamophobia can be described as dread, hatred and hostility towards Islam and Muslims perpetuated by views that attribute negative and derogatory stereotypes to Muslims.
the form of vandalism of mosques, Muslim graves, and homes.\textsuperscript{12} The increased hostility towards Muslims has also seen an increase in hate campaigns against Islam and Muslims from far-right groups.\textsuperscript{13} Sections of the British press have also used this opportunity to demonise Muslims and slander Islam only to enforce their own agendas.\textsuperscript{14}

Islamophobia is a reality which Britain faces today. As part of the Government’s community and social cohesion initiatives, the Government must provide Muslims the necessary legal protection in all areas. ‘The worm of Islamophobia’, as described by Bunting,\textsuperscript{15} ‘has now entered the very heart of a quintessential British institution’, and thus must not be ignored.

A significant cause and source of Islamophobia is ignorance, in the words of one participant:

\textit{“an inability (and in some cases, intention) to disregard the poverty, lack of opportunity, and feeling of exclusion amongst young British Muslims, as well as the failure of local bodies to engage with Muslim youth, all contribute to a feeling of alienation of and amongst British Muslims”}.\textsuperscript{16}

40% of Survey’s participants felt that any backlash towards Muslims in the event of a terrorist attack would be determined by how Muslims are represented in all areas of British society. There was also a consensus amongst the participants for building stronger relationships with the non-Muslim community in order to mitigate the chances of a backlash.

\textsuperscript{12} FAIR Islamophobia log.

\textsuperscript{13} For example, see the British National Party’s political broadcast aired in June 2004, \url{http://www.bnp.org.uk/}

\textsuperscript{14} For example, see the string of articles written in the Sunday Telegraph by ‘Will’ Cummins; “Muslims are a threat to our way of life” \url{http://www.telegraph.co.uk/opinion/main.jhtml?sessionid=D5P01UD5EORIDQFOQGMSM4AVCBQWTVC?xml=/opi\nion/2004/07/25/lo2504.xml&secureRefresh=true&_requestid=133718}

\textsuperscript{15} Bunting, referring to the British Council’s decision to terminate the employment of Islamophobe Harry aka Will Cummins. ‘Cummins & Co’, by Madeleine Bunting, The Guardian, 4.09.2004 \url{http://www.guardian.co.uk/comment/story/0,3604,1297063,00.html}

\textsuperscript{16} Quote from HAC Survey.
Media Portrayal of Islam and Muslim

The inflammatory and derogatory language used by the media has also promoted a climate of fear in the community. Key phrases such as ‘radical Muslim cleric’ or ‘Islamic extremists’ consistently used by the Government are also then adopted by the media and, in some cases by public authorities. Language which is insensitive towards the Muslim community and stereotypes used in the media will inevitably raise anxiety levels amongst all communities across the UK, making Muslims vulnerable to Islamophobia.

Press reporting is frequently unbalanced and uses sensational language, this can be seen in the reporting of stops and searches and arrests of Muslims under the anti-terror laws which frequently make headlines, yet those who are subsequently released without charge receive little or no media coverage. Images which vilify and portray Muslims in a negative light can also exacerbate increased hostility towards the Muslim community.

Answers to the Survey revealed that some respondents were annoyed that radical figures such as ‘Abu Hamza’ and ‘Omar Bakri’ were given a great deal of press coverage. One respondent said;

“The media always highlight radical elements to corner a whole group of people they use these characters and groups to discredit Islam”\(^7\).

55% of participants said it was important to have a British Muslim mainstream media source, and that The Sun and more recently the Telegraph were deemed to be the most Islamophobic of British media sources.

Community and Leadership

Participants of the Survey were asked who they look to for leadership in their immediate community for building and maintaining community relations. 30% of participants said that they were engaged in community work for Muslims. 40% stated leadership from an imam and/or mosque. 30% of participants stated they were forced to look to their mosque for leadership on community issues because there was ‘no one else around’.

Evidence would suggest that imams and mosques are unable to deal with many community cohesion issues due to a lack of resources and funding.

30% said they look for leadership from Muslim organisations, whilst 10% of respondents said that they look to leadership from people who are active in their

\(^7\) Quote from FAIR HAC Survey.
local community, e.g. doctor, teacher. 15% of participants said that they look up to their local council or MP but according to one individual, ‘[their local council or MP] had failed to deliver on initiating projects which are aimed at building positive relations between different faith communities.’

Over 50% of participants said they would look to their community leader to take a principled stance against Islamophobia, racism and other forms of prejudice, to improve community cohesion, and increase the levels of education and housing. One participant suggested that a ‘key way to unite all faith communities was to help the Muslim community move out of isolation, provide stronger political leadership, and effectively tackle serious issues threatening the community such as drug misuse and domestic violence.’ 65% of participants thought that the most essential quality for a community leader to have was that he/she be a good public speaker, since clear communication was paramount.

Participants were asked if they knew of any measures taken by their council to build multi-faith and multi-ethnic bridges amongst communities. Participants included doctors and lawyers. 60% stated that that they offered their skills in the voluntary sector, only one individual knew of an interfaith dialogue group and an action group tackling crime, and improving health and education levels in their area. 40% stated they would engage in projects that pulled various communities together to tackle common issues, but felt this was impossible since Muslim dominated areas were severely under-funded.

Of the British Muslim personalities, only four individuals were named by participants. When asked to state an ‘influential’ British Muslims only two names were mentioned. Participants felt there is an urgent need for a positive Muslim ‘voice’ on Muslim achievements as well as issues affecting the Muslim community. 35% of the participants stated this ‘voice’ must come from Muslim organisations, whilst 10% felt this voice should come from one individual, 50% favoured a Muslim voice though the media.
Conclusion

Results from the Survey indicate that the change in the perception of the Muslim community has been greatly influenced by their negative representation by both the media and Government. Sweeping arrests and house raids of innocent Muslims under the counter-terrorism legislation, accompanied by high profile media reports continue to criminalise Muslims and represent them as ‘the enemy within’. As a consequence this has given rise to a culture of fear and insecurity within an already vulnerable community.

Cohesive measures will allow the people to resolve social issues efficiently and effectively, and increase public awareness of the commonalities shared between communities from different cultures and faiths. The current anti-terrorism laws are having a negative effect on the Muslim community and pose as an obstacle in bringing different communities together. The enforcement of the anti-terror laws must be urgently reformed, in order to ensure Muslims are not stigmatised and represented as a ‘suspect community’.

There is a clear need for community representatives to engage in community cohesion projects which effectively tackle social issues. Muslims feel the way they are perceived is negative, with a lack of strong leadership this perception may not change in the near future. It is imperative that adequate funding and resources are afforded to individuals and/or organisations who can work with their local council to improve community and social cohesion.

Adequate investments need to be made by the Government into Muslim dominated areas to ensure Muslims are afforded appropriate housing, education, healthcare and protection from discrimination in all areas of life. Muslims need to feel empowered, so that they feel their voice is heard and acted upon. The threat of terrorism and the constant vilifying of Muslims has tarnished their self-esteem, and undermined their belief that Britain really is tolerant of its Muslim population.

The Government must regain the trust and support of the Muslim community to better counter the perceived threat of terrorism, and in-turn build positive relations with the community whereby they can jointly challenge social issues.
Appendix 1

Home Affairs Committee Survey

Defining Islamophobia

Islamophobia must be separated from genuine criticism of Islam. Islamophobia can be characterised as the fear, hatred or hostility directed towards Islam and Muslims. Islamophobia affects all aspects of Muslim life and can be expressed in several ways, including:

- attacks, abuse and violence against Muslims
- attacks on mosques, Islamic centres and Muslim cemeteries
- discrimination in education, employment, housing, and delivery of goods and services
- lack of provisions and respect for Muslims in public institutions

Please answer the following questions YES or NO, or with a corresponding letter, unless indicated otherwise.

Islamophobia and related prejudices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Do you believe that you been subjected to Islamophobic or anti Muslim sentiment since September 11 2001?</td>
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<td>2. If yes, please specify in what areas you have suffered Islamophobia or racial discrimination: (write the letter opposite, select all those that apply).</td>
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<tr>
<td>a) Education</td>
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<td>b) Employment</td>
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<td>c) Verbal/physical abuse/attack</td>
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<td>d) Attack on home or Muslim buildings</td>
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<td>e) Housing/other state benefits</td>
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<td>f) Healthcare</td>
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<td>g) Police</td>
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<td>h) Local Government</td>
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<tr>
<td>i) Delivery of services</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>j) Other (please specify opposite)</td>
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3. Have you experienced any change in the way you have
been treated or perceived by your community or neighbourhood? (If yes, state whether the change has been positive or negative).

4. Has your physical appearance, (such as observing hijab, beard or wearing traditional Muslim dress) made you a target for Islamophobia since September 11 2001?

5. Have you experienced Islamophobia when travelling on public transport since 11 September 2001?

6. Have you been subjected to Islamophobia at airports when travelling to and from the UK?

7. Have you had to change your appearance since September 11 2001? (e.g. remove hijab, beard etc.)

8. Have you had to change your lifestyle since September 11, 2001? (e.g. move home, change job, change school etc)

9. Have you seen a change of attitude towards Islam from members of your family, colleagues, or local authorities?

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<tr>
<th>Community and Leadership</th>
<th>Answer</th>
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| 10. Communities often look for leadership usually from one source or figure in their community. Who do you look to as a leader in your immediate community? | a) Imam/local mosque  
b) Church leader  
c) Rabbi/synagogue  
d) Councillor/council  
e) Local MP  
f) Racial body  
g) None  
h) Other (please specify opposite) |

11. How active is this leader in your community?

   a) very pro-active  
   b) fairly pro-active  
   c) not proactive enough

12. What issues does the leader deal with?

   a) Political  
   b) Social (inc, health and educational)  
   c) religious  
   d) All of the above  
   e) Other(Please specify opposite)  
   f) Don't Know |
13. What do you want from your community leaders? (Write the letter opposite, select all those that apply).

- a) Strong representation of your community and its views.
- b) Principled stance against anti racism, Islamophobia and other forms of prejudice
- c) Promoting equality and diversity within the community.
- d) Greater concentration on funding for regeneration and community programmes to improve community cohesion and standards of living
- e) All of the above
- f) Other (please specify opposite)
- g) Don’t know

14. Which one key quality do you think every community leader should have?

- a) A good sense of politics
- b) Sound religious awareness
- c) A good public speaker
- d) Other (please specify opposite)
- e) Don’t know

15. If asked, how would you contribute to community projects?

- a) Provide funding
- b) I would practically volunteer
- c) Raise public awareness of the project
- d) Other (please specify opposite)
- e) I would not contribute

16. Have you or do you work with the non-Muslim community on any community related projects? If yes, please specify what you do in the box opposite. (E.g. taking on community leadership roles or responsibility, engaging in faith dialogue, working with your local council or school or police on community projects, etc).

17. As a Muslim which one of the following is the most important to you? (state the letter opposite)

- a) Better representation in media
- b) Stronger representation in politics
- c) Better protection from police and Government legislation
- d) Better employment for Muslims
- e) Access to adequate healthcare
- f) Access to better education
- g) Access to better community facilities e.g. libraries
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Options</th>
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| 18. Do you think there should be one body to represent the views of all British Muslims? (Please state the letter of the statement you most agree with). | a) No-this is impossible, because there are many different views  
                   b) Yes- we need one body to represent the views of all British Muslims  
                   c) No, we need more then one body to represent the views of British Muslims and they should all work in active consultation with each other to do what is right for British Muslims  
                   d) Don’t know                              |
| 19. Which one of the following parties are you most likely to vote for in the next General elections? | a) Labour  
                   b) Conservative  
                   c) Liberal Democratic  
                   d) Green Party  
                   e) Other- (please specify opposite)  
                   f) Don’t know  
                   g) Not voting  
                   h) Prefer not to say                      |
| 20. Do you believe that there has been enough regeneration in your area? (E.g. Improving housing, education, access to healthcare and chances of employment, etc). |                                                                                     |
| 21. How important is regeneration to you?                               | a) Very- it will give us a better standing of living  
                   b) Reasonably- it will not make significant change  
                   c) Not at all- I live in a generated area where facilities and access to services are plentiful. |
| 22. Do you know of any measures taken by the council or other non-governmental body, to build bridges between different faith/race communities in your area? If yes please specify what these are). |                                                                                     |
| 23. If you are working, are you happy with your current job?             |                                                                                     |
| **Terrorism**                                                            |                                                                                     |
| 24. Why do you think Muslims are being associated with                   |                                                                                     |
24. Terrorism? (Write the corresponding letter in the opposite box, select all that apply).

a) That is the way the media and politicians represent Muslims
b) Because of the threat from Al-Qaida
c) Because many arrested under counter terrorism legislation have been Muslim
d) Because Muslims are terrorists
e) Other (please specify opposite)
f) Don’t know

25. In the event of a terrorist attack, what do you think would be the reaction towards Muslims?

a) Muslims will not be affected at all
b) Increased Islamophobia and hostility towards Muslims and segregation of the Muslims community
c) It depends how Muslims will be represented
d) Other (please specify opposite)
e) Don’t know

26. How do you think the Muslim community can avoid a backlash? (Write the letter opposite, select all those that apply).

a) Build stronger relationships with non-Muslims communities,
b) Stronger representation of Muslims in senior positions in the police, media and politics
c) Increased understanding of Islam and Muslims
d) Muslims standing up against the terrorist attacks and condemning them
e) It will be impossible to avoid a backlash

27. Muslims have been criticised for not condemning some acts of terror carried out by ‘Al-Qaida’, even though some Muslims have argued they have done little else since September 11 2001, do you think Muslims in Britain are doing enough to condemn the acts? (Please select one of the following)

a) Yes- more then enough
b) Yes they are doing all they can reasonable be expected to do
c) No – they are not doing enough
d) No- they have done nothing
e) Muslims should only have to condemn these acts to the same degree as other faith communities.
f) Muslims should not have to condemn these terrorist attacks
28. On a scale of 1-5 how serious do you believe the terrorist threat facing Britain to be? (1=Low, 5 = extremely high)

29. It has been widely assumed that a group called ‘Al-Qaida’ was behind the attacks of September 11 2001, what is your view of Al-Qaida?

| a) A Muslim group terrorising humanity   |
| b) A non-Muslim group terrorising humanity |
| c) A Muslim group with good motives but bad methods |
| d) A non-Muslim group with good motives but bad methods |
| e) A network of people with their own personal agendas |
| f) Al-Qaida is a term used to fabricate the terrorist threat. |
| g) Other (please specify) |
| h) Don’t know |

30. What do you believe the motive of Al Qaida to be?

| a) To suppress freedom and democracy. |
| b) To highlight the injustices suffered by Muslims |
| c) To conquer the world |
| d) No such thing as Al-Qaida/Have no motive |
| e) Other (please specify) |
| f) Don’t know |

31. Why do you think that figures like Abu Humza and Al-Muhajiroun are given greater media representation?

| a) Because they genuinely represent all British Muslims |
| b) They make entertaining news |
| c) The media are adamant in representing Muslims as extreme and radical |
| d) Other (please specify) |
| e) Don’t know |

32. Have you been affected by the powers under the anti-terrorism legislation? If yes, please provide further information in the box opposite.

### Media and Representation

33. How satisfied are you with the representation of Muslims in national and local government, in business and public sectors, and in the media, particularly at senior level?

| a) Very satisfied- there is a strong representation of Muslims in the above fields |
34. After September 11 2001, some people have decided to learn more about Islam, have you been questioned to explain certain issues on Islam by friends, colleagues or community members?

35. Muslims need representation in all areas. How important are the following to you? (Please put the following options in order of importance with the most importance first and the least important last).

| a) A British Muslim mainstream media source |
| b) Senior Muslim professionals (including politicians, policeman, judges) |
| c) More Muslim faith schools for increased learning of Islam |
| d) Better employment opportunities, thus hope for the future |
| e) Increased standard of living in highly Muslim populated areas |

36. Which of the following British Media sources are in your opinion highly Islamophobic? (Write the letter opposite, select all those that apply).

| a) The Telegraph |
| b) The Guardian/The Observer |
| c) The Times |
| d) The Evening Standard/The Metro |
| e) The Scotsman |
| f) The Sun |
| g) Daily express |
| h) Daily Mail |
| i) BBC |
| j) ITN |
| k) Channel4 |
| l) Channel 5 |
| m) Sky News |
| n) Other (specify opposite) |

**Muslim achievements**

37. Can you name a famous British Muslim personality? (If yes, please state the name of the personality opposite)
38. Who do you believe to be the most influential British Muslim? (specify opposite)

Other Information
Please insert any other relevant information here:

Please submit all responses to FAIR by Friday 10th September 2004 to:

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Thank you for taking the time to complete this Survey!