

The Guardian

Town and country 'You feel you have to speak slowly and smile a lot'

Wilfred Emmanuel Jones, farmer (right)

I've had this farm about seven years, and when I arrived I was the only black person here — for most of my neighbours I was the first black person they had ever seen. Where I come from, even if you're from the next village you're treated with suspicion.

What I would say is if you're a black person thinking of moving to the countryside, if you're offended by people calling you coloured, don't even bother putting on your green wellies. I now have a

sausage company called The Black Farmer, because that's what my neighbours used to call me. My parents moved to Britain 50 years ago, and if 50 years on, black people feel they cannot go to certain parts of this green and pleasant land that is a great pity.

Amina Taylor, editor of *Pride* magazine

I went to Wales with a boyfriend and I felt like a celebrity. My boyfriend's family have a cottage there and it's a lovely place, bless 'em, but I couldn't live there; it's like a

goldfish bowl. I wouldn't say there's an apartheid exactly, but there's a demarcation line that stops at the River Severn. I felt that every move I made was being watched. I went into the local shop and I had three people come to help me find a can of plum tomatoes.

There was a genuine fascination, just stopping short of poking me. Dreads are another thing — I was asked if I was actually related to Bob Marley. You feel like you have to speak very slowly and punctuate every action with a smile, as if to say 'I come in peace'.



Vanessa Walters, novelist

The closest I ever lived to the countryside was North Finchley. But my mum studied geography and she loved going into the country on field trips. But I think it's fair to say that most ethnic minorities are fairly wary of the countryside. You heard that Wales was like a Ku Klux Klan stronghold and that Scotland was quite hostile, so you didn't want to go wandering round these places in the 1980s and 1990s. Whenever I've been there people have been very friendly