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From today it's 'blacks'

NEWSPAPERS face a permanent dilemma in referring to racial groups which are not white. Over the years there have been all manner of compromises such as "natives" or "indigines" or "non-Europeans" or "non-whites". Just a few years ago, in response to sincere requests from Aboriginal organisations, this newspaper changed its "style" so that a capital "A" was always used in Aborigine and

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Aboriginal. The problem is generally manageable in textual references: we can always write, for example, Aborigine. It is very often unmanageable in writing headlines which invariably cannot accommodate multi-syllabic words such as "Aborigine" or "Papua New Guinean" or even "New Guinean". "Natives" is inaccurate and leads to justifiable complaint. "Abos" once sufficed; it is now an insult. The South Africans have turned "coloreds" into an offensive term. What to do?

What we propose to do is to use in future "black" and "blacks" as necessary. We believe it will not offend black people; indeed, many of them have asked us for the change because it accurately reflects their pride in their ethnic origin. Many distinguished American newspapers made the change several years ago in response to demands by Negro organisations. British newspapers are slowly meeting the same dilemma in reporting the black minority problems of England. So in future, as it is warranted and without apology, we will write "black". Many black readers have asked us to make the change; we are confident they will understand our motives. Others, who are not black, may misunderstand. It is our hope they will take comfort from this explanation.