

The Race and Ethnicity Hub

Reflecting on Race at The Open University

Dr Joan Simons, Sas Amoah, Dr Liz Marr, Prof Marcia Wilson:

Thank you very much, Joan. So, for those people who don't know me, my name is Sas. I'm a co-chair of the BME network here at the Open University. And I think in the beginning when me and Joan were thinking about what the key thing should be. We kind of very quickly concluded that it should be an event, which feels like there's questions around the race equality charter. And in my experience's kind of many members of the staff and the network had contacted me to say, well, they weren't aware we had secured the bronze awards. And they weren't quite sure kind of what the reasons were.

So, I think this gives us a really opportune moment as the title suggests kind of reflect on the past. But also consider the things that were going to change looking forward in advance of the next race equality charter application.

Thank you, Sas. Great. So, our next item is we've got a video from Liz Marr who is our progress chancellor for students.

[VIDEO PLAYBACK]

Good morning, everybody and welcome to this Open University Black History Month event. I'm incredibly impressed at the effort, which has gone into the planning for this whole month, as well as today. The level of commitment from staff and students has been amazing and just shows how much we can do when we really want to. A little while ago, I wrote a piece for snow bowl the associate lecturer newsletter reflecting on the incidents, which have given rise to the Black lives massive campaigns, and what that might mean for us as a University.

As the Open University, we pride ourselves on our mission of openness and inclusion. And it's tempting to think that racial harassment, discrimination, abuse just doesn't happen. Yet we know that in holding up a mirror to ourselves in our sadly failed attempt to achieve a race equality charter mark that this is very far from true. Many very brave colleagues both staff and students reported examples ranging from daily microaggressions to all out abuse.

This is shocking for us, and those of us involved. We knew we must do something about it. But I don't believe we reacted quite as quickly as we should. We can be full of good intentions, but it seems to have taken a judicial murder and a global pandemic, which disproportionately impacts some Black Asian and minority ethnic people to really make us sit up and think.

There are lots of things we need to do within our own University community. We need to be aware that we are not as attracted to Black and Asian students understand why that is, and how we need to change to address this. Currently, the proportion of students reporting ethnicity as Black is 3.8% and Asian is 3.6%. That is woefully low. We need to look closely at our awarding gaps on marginal tax rates for Black students are showing a gap of 13.9%.

And good marginal passes, which we use as a proxy for classification outcome. The gap is 31.1% for Black students and 16.6% for Asian students. In terms of progression to highly skilled employment or further study, the gap for Black students is 11%. So, we really need to scrutinize our curriculum and our support processes for students.

We have plans and stretching targets in our access participation and success strategy and in our access and participation plan. We need to look at our staff body and consider why it is so unrepresentative as the wider population we serve. Why people of color are not getting promoted or appointed to senior roles, and we really need to think about what we should do about that. So, I've been doing a lot of reading, a lot of watching and listening to try and understand what it is we need to do.

I know we can't put everything right overnight, but we do have to try. I have to be honest and admit it is not easy to find answers. But there are some things we can do as a community. Firstly, we have to listen, and we have to reflect. As a white person, I have to hear what is meant by white privilege and white fragility and understand and accept it.

And we all need to acknowledge that social, political, and economic structures and gender and perpetuate inequalities. And we need to face up to our own part in maintaining those. And we have to engage in open dialogue to establish ways to address them. Yes, it is hard and it's scary to expose ourselves being afraid of saying the wrong thing or saying it in the wrong way. But how much harder and scarier is it to go out in the street knowing that the odds of you being stopped and searched by police for being tased or being arrested are hugely higher for Black people and white people.

It's shocking that driving while being Black is increasingly being seen as a cause for suspicion. When I first discuss with colleagues the idea of doing something for Black History Month, my primary motivation was to bring all these issues out of the shadows and start a conversation. I am truly hopeful that we don't end here today. We need to work collaboratively

and collegiately to create an environment where trust can flourish, and we can start to make a difference.

Bernadine Evanesta, one of the few Black women professors in this country recently said that she was no longer prepared to join diversity panels, as we shouldn't be relying on people of color to solve the problems that white people created. So, at the start of our conversation, I would urge you all to do as I have done to listen, to reflect and to keep the conversation going until it results in actions and change. Thank you to everyone who's made this month and this day happen. And I hope that I will see you in some of the sessions later on today. And I hope that you have a really great day. Thank you.

[END PLAYBACK]

Great. Thanks, Liz for that. And Liz did ask me just to say apologies that she had mispronounced Bernadine's name, it's Bernadine Averista. OK, I'm going to hand over to you, Sas.

Thank you very much, Joan. And that was the really, really kind of powerful message that we got from Liz. OK, so before we start, I think it's good to just state that we know a lot of people do have a lot of mixed feelings about the idea of Black History Month in the first place. I think we can all agree that having a single month to celebrate Black History is deeply problematic for a number of reasons, not least because it implies that somehow Black history is somehow distinct from history in general which, of course, is ridiculous.

But nevertheless, I think until we start to adopt a more diverse and representative idea of history. We try to make the most of this month that we can in an ideal world, I think we'd all agree that it wouldn't be necessary. So, I think in light of everything that had happened over the summer myself and the BME networks home groups tried to have discussions about what would be a really good and interesting way to current events for Black History Month this year.

I've had lots of discussions, and over time we kind of thought the best approach might have the theme week celebration. And that was very much inspired by Patrice Belton who you'll see later. So, thank you very much Patrice for the idea. And we thought having weekly themes had a lot of benefits to it, and I'm sure some of you have probably seen the themes, anyway. But I thought we'll just talk through them.

So, the first week between the fifth and the ninth was what we know. And the second week, the week where we now are what we do not know. So that's particularly relevant to this event in relation to the race equality charter. Next week, we're going to have what we need to know

between the 19th and the 23rd. And for the last week between the 26th and the 30th, we're going to do what to do next.

So, what will help all these things are fairly self-explanatory. I would hope in a sense that they were good work engaged in stuff and kind of taking them on a bit of a journey. I thought what was particularly useful about this structure actually was that it could accommodate any institution, regardless of where they were in relation to having these discussions. So, for me anyway, I think one of the key takeaways from the social justice protests that we had over the summer was the idea of racism moving beyond it.

I mean, moving beyond the idea of it being just explicit and overt acts of prejudice and realizing that actually there's a lot of nuance, and it can be a lot more insidious. So, for example, I tend to get to work quite early and most people who know me would know that. And there have been occasions when I've been on campus and I've been accosted by members of staff demanding to know who I am and what I'm doing on campus that they've just seen a rogue Black man in a hoodie in their offices.

And no longer that I've been at the security lodge and kind of in conversation because I forgot my pass, and I've had some of the officers just automatically assume I was some of the cleaning staff. And I've even had good friends of mine and colleagues who I love dearly and have implied that I don't talk like a Black person. And these are all relatively recent examples.

So, I think what's been quite encouraging actually about what we've received back the submissions we received back after we got a call to action out to the faculty and the units is particularly the content.

A lot of content scrutinizing what we think of as race, and lots of discussion about the systemic nature of racism. And questions that have been raised in some of the sessions so far tend to be quite varied. How do racial power dynamics inform decision-making whose voices are the ones being heard? How does race shape the way we think our assumptions, and also how does it feed into our snap judgments? How do ideas of race intersect with everything from the criminal justice system to employment to, of course, in our case education?

So, the network steering group, I hope and, in many ways, that these events can really help to start encouraging conversation. Many of these sessions will hopefully work as a means of prompt in start having these important discussions that I think we probably picked off for far too long. One of the most notably at the moment is the idea of kind of the acronym BAMA and is it fit for purpose anymore. OK, so I'm kind of realizing the complexities of these issues and they are going to be incredibly difficult conversations for some of us really uncomfortable.

But like I said, I think there's no reason that we shouldn't push forward and it's completely OK to start having these conversations. And so, we do have the calendar up-- can you scroll to the top right to the top, please? Thank you very much. OK, so before we talk about the events, we within the network put together a statement, which I think is really important. And it kind of just explains our thoughts and ideas behind kind of putting together this calendar for Black History Month. We thought we'd just share those with you.

So, the course structure and events of this Black History Month 2020 has been planned and organized by the Open University's BME staff and BME student network. Black History Month 2020 provides an opportune moment to foster new relationships, as well as develop existing relationships as we work towards the institutional and organizational ambitions of becoming a more racially and culturally inclusive University, while celebrating and promoting equality and diversity.

Black History Month, as well as being a celebratory program, also looks to expand upon the commitments made by both the Open University and the Students Association in light of the notable Black Lives Matter Movement. The movement highlighted to us as a University and association areas in which we must improve in order to contribute to the wider societal aims of toppling systems of oppression, eradicating hate, discrimination and inequality. And most importantly, to promote diversity and inclusion of Black and minority ethnic voices and developing our culture and practice in order to provide an environment which truly functions to create equity and experience no matter your background.

Inspired by the Student Associations Vice President of equality, diversity and inclusion, Patrice Belton. We have decided to approach Black History Month slightly differently this year. We as the BME staff and BAME student network believe that, although, it is important to celebrate Black History and raise awareness of the issues, which face the Black community within society. We believe we should also look forward and begin to explore what we can do, not only by acknowledging the past, but to pay a path for the future.

So with that, we present the four week program, which looks to take all members of the OU community on a journey to understanding Black culture and celebrating its successes through to raising awareness of the barriers that exist, as well as provide critical information and resources on how to challenge them moving forward. Most of the events in the program will aim to focus primarily on the experiences, challenges, and history of being from an Afro Caribbean background. However, we believe part of understanding what it means to be Black is exploring what it means to be white.

So be content that reflects this in addition to exploring colonialism, religion, and education, employment amongst other key things. That will also be sessions that discuss issues and

initiatives that fall under the wider BAME umbrella. So yeah, we would like to thank all the faculty that go back to us including a kind of MarComms and APP and EDI and all their teams for their support. And I'd like to thank Myles help me put that statement together.

And so I've been personally very, very, very impressed with the range of research happening within the OU. And I had no idea how much interesting work had been produced until we started getting the submissions to you. But that could you put the calendar back on again. I just want to go through some of the individual sessions, which I really enjoyed. So, I know many people have been in contact asking if these sessions are being recorded.

So just to confirm, most of it not all are being recorded and they will find themselves out on the Open platform. And we're hoping in November to officially launched the race and ethnicity hub and hoping to add that to all the existing content that we've been commissioning in that interim. So anyway, I'll just talk about some of my few personal highlights of the sessions that we've covered to date. So, we can see on the first week there what do we know, we've got an event coproduced and curriculum questions around racial injustice.

So, in that session Steve, Lynne, Jenny and Parvati discuss the opportunities and challenges of incorporating issues of racial inequalities and injustices into the curriculum. But what really resonated to me, I think was some of the points that Jenny Douglas made, and you'll be hearing a bit about Jenny later. And she said COVID-19 and the global pandemic has really shone a light on racial inequalities. And what was interesting is Jenny said she was part of a project actually set up in 1982 when I was born to look at inequalities in health, particularly in relation to BAME people.

And she said so the light that COVID has shown on racial inequalities isn't anything new. And she was saying that actually when she looks at the reports from 40 years ago when she looks at the reports that we got now, unfortunately, it seems like there's very little change. Many of the same themes seem to be re-emerging that were identified in the past. So I think it was really interesting to stress actually the lack of progress that has been made. And that was a really interesting part of that event.

There was also another event on the first week called Black students and staff in STEM examining our data by Diane Butler and report them, and they had some fascinating data on the participation, engagement and attainment of black students on OU STEM programs. And what I really like to do refer to a piece of research done by Quan Nguyen, Bart Rienties and John Richardson called learning analytics to uncover inequality in behaviour engagement and academic attainment in the distance learning set in.

What was interesting is that research showed BME students were between 19% and 17% less likely to complete a pass or achieve an excellent grade compared to white students. So

even given the same academic performance, BME students were spent 4% to 12% more time studying than white students. But the containment gap remained persistent even after controlling for the same level of academic engagement. And that's something that I wasn't aware of.

Another session I really enjoyed is on the-- well, this week and the second week and was one called, why it might be important for white people to talk about whiteness by Rod Earle. So Rod put together like a really interesting presentation. And if you view that already, a few of you who were there are here, for their presentation critically examining what we understand as whiteness. And I think to quotes really stood out to me from that talk, and one was from Stuart Hall from 1980 on teaching race.

We have to uncover for ourselves in our own understanding, as well as for students we are teaching. The often-deep structural factors, which have a tendency to persistently, not only generate racial practices and structures, but reproduce themselves through time, which accounts that extraordinarily immovable character. And another one that I think we pinched from Twitter but was perfectly after this lecture. He said white privilege is not so much about enjoying unearned economic advantage as it is about the daily existential benefits of not having to deal with race.

It does not mean that your life hasn't been hard, just that the colour of your skin isn't one of the things making it hard. And I could go on, there was a really fantastic one

yesterday by Anthony Gunther looking at crime and this effect on young Black men and Muslims as well. But those are just some of the highlights that I thought I'd put up. So yeah, as you can see, we're only in the second week. We have plenty of events to go and we'll pop the link to the site, the host the calendar. So please take time out to attend.

But I think, for many of us on the BME networks group. This wasn't really just a month per se, but I highly suggested whether these events the start of a conversation that will continue in years to come and help shape the next application for the race equality charter. So, thank you very much for your time and I hope you enjoy the rest of this evening and the rest of the month.

That's great. Thank you, Sas. A very powerful message there, and really helpful to have a look at that amazing program that has been put together. We're celebrating Black History Month. And for those of you who don't know, although, I'm sure many of you are very well versed in this, but I suspect there's some people who-- this might be your first Black History Month event that you've been to. So very much welcome if it is.

So Black History Month is in America, and it was called the African American History Month. It started in 1926 date. And they chose February for their month. And the reason they did that was because it coincided with the birthday month, I should say of Abraham Lincoln and also of Frederick Douglass, who was a national leader of the abolition movement. So very fitting that two really powerful change agents determined what time of the year that America celebrates this.

So, in the UK, we celebrate this in October. Next slide, please. So, this is the statement from Catherine Ross. Now let me tell you a little bit about Catherine Ross. Catherine was born in Saint Kitts in Caribbean. She moved to the UK in 1958, and she spent a lot of her time working in education or youth services. And then wrote two books and then around, I think it was 2004 she did a-- sorry, she completed a master's in museum management in 2014. And then set up the first ever museum on Gold Museum and to celebrate Caribbean culture.

What she realized as she lives in UK and went from around different museums was there was none celebrating Caribbean culture, or the recognition of famous figures of contribution from Caribbean culture. So, she said that this was quite a deficit. And so instead, she actually has started with her daughter this museum. And this is a statement from Catherine. And she said, "This year's Black History Month is a time to shine a light on our shared Black history and to tell the whole story honestly and truthfully, to decolonized and reclaim history, and tell stories from the perspectives of all people, not just the rich white men in power."

So, a fairly powerful statement there from Catherine. So, in UK Black History Month celebration for the first time in 1987. If you remember I said earlier, it's been going on in America since 1926, so we were very late coming to this. But there is some controversy about the notion of Black History Month having a month rather than other times of the year. And those who believe in Black History Month was limited to educational institutions questions, whether it was appropriate to combine the celebration of Black History Month one month as opposed to integration of Black history into the mainstream education the rest of the year.

I think I have heard from both Sas and Liz Marr this morning that really, we need to expand this. Today is an example of reflecting on race, for example, reflecting on the race equality charter. But it should be a pivotal moment when people who haven't engaged in this before actually think right, what am I going to do differently? And there's that famous saying, "Be the change you want to see." So, we can as a collective be the change we want to see. But we have to get together and do this together.

So, I asked four faculties if they could send me a couple of names that they would like mentioned as a celebration of famous people for our Black History Month event. And from the faculty business and law, I got the name of Leonard Woodley. And let me see my notes here.

I do have his date of birth, but I'll punch in a second. So, he was called to the bar in 1963 and experienced discrimination on the grounds of race during his early years of practice. He became Queen's Council in 1988 and was a recorder between '89 and 2000.

His lasting legacy is the Leonard Woodley Scholarship at Inner temple, given to Black or Asian pupils to promote greater diversity at the bar. And it's sad to think that somebody is imminent and successful as Leonard Woodley actually experienced discrimination. So, a famous woman. We have Dame Linda Dobbs was called to the bar in 1981 and became Queen's Council in 1998. In 2004, she became the first Black High Court judge.

And during her career she did a lot of work to promote equality and diversity in the profession. Linda was included in the published list of Britain's 10 most powerful Black women and 100 Great Black Britons in 2008. Some hugely successful. OK, many of you may have come across Andrea Levy. So, Andrea was born in 1956, but very sadly died last year. And she explored topics related to British Jamaicans, and how they negotiate racial, cultural and national identities. Next slide, please.

And after she passed away on 14th of February 2019, the bookseller wrote. "Andrea Levy will be remembered as a novelist who broke out of the confines assigned to her by prejudice to become a both a forerunner of Black British excellence and a great novelist by any standards." So, I've just pulled up a few of the front covers of some of her very famous books. And my favourite of all her books that I've read so far is Small Island. And if you've never read any of her books, I would really recommend it to you.

And what this is about it's England 1948, and it's focused on a lodging house in London. And this lady who runs the lodging house takes in some Jamaican letters, which the neighbours objects her. And the largest are Gilbert and Horton's and they get the perspective of them moving from the Caribbean to the shock of London gray, dreary, cold, and of course, the prejudice of the discrimination and the rage racism that they face. So, it's a fascinating read, and I would highly recommend this.

Another of her famous books is Long Song and Fruit of the Lemon and Every Light In the House Burnin. So, another famous character and a person of note, I should say, was Mary Seacole who lived between 1805 and 1881. And Mary was a British Jamaican nurse, healer and businesswoman who set up British Hotel behind the lines during the Crimean War. She described this as a mess table and comfortable quarters for sick and convalescent officers. And provided succour for wounded servicemen on the battlefield and nursed many of them back to health.

Mary was a contemporary of Florence Nightingale, but didn't get the same recognition despite her contribution. She was posthumously awarded the Jamaica Order of Merit in 1991. In 2004, she was voted the greatest Black Briton. So, a couple of suggestions from STEM. Thank you for them. So, it goes Evelyn Boyd Granville on May 1st, 1924. And Evelyn was the second African-American woman to receive a Ph.D. in mathematics from an American University. She earned it in 1949 from Yale University. She performed pioneering work in the field of computing. She's has been a fierce advocate for STEM education.

And even after she retired, she travelled across the state speaking about the importance of maths in learning. David Harold Blackwell 1919-2010. Was an American statistician and mathematician who made significant contributions to game theory, probability theory, information theory, and Bayesian statistics. He was the first African American inducted into the National Academy of Sciences. The first Black tenured faculty member at UC Berkeley, and the seventh African-American to receive a Ph.D. in mathematics. So hugely successful.

And finally, onto FASS, so we've got a couple of suggestions. So, we've got Mariame Kaba is a US-based organizer, educator and curator. And Mariame work focuses on ending violence, dismantling the prison industrial complex, transformative justice and supporting youth leadership developments. She is the founder and director of the Project NIA, the grassroots organization with a vision to end youth incarceration. And you can see that working obviously with youth that FASS's work is going to be incredibly impactful on their lives as they go forward into adulthood.

So, Professor Stuart Hall sadly passed away in 2014. And we have a picture of him here in front of what looks like a very effective screen, D103. And unfortunately, I couldn't see what the title of D103 so maybe somebody will tell me what this was. So, Stuart worked at OU as a Professor of Sociology and Head of Sociology for 18 years. He was a Jamaican born British Marxist sociologist, cultural theorist and political activist. Along with Richard Hoggart and Raymond Williams, he was one of the founding figures of the school of thought that is now known as British Cultural Studies or The Birmingham School of Cultural Studies. And he has been described as one of the country's leading cultural theorists by the observer.

So, I'm going to leave you finish this session with a quote from Professor Stuart Hall, which I think we should really have a look at society and social science at foundation course. Thank you, Naomi. I knew somebody would respond. So, it's society and social science, a foundation course was the one of the three freedoms. So, multiculturalism rests on inclusiveness. And we're going to hear more about inclusiveness in general session, and hopefully at other times during the day because Patrice talked to our students about inclusiveness within the focus groups.

But without an impossible imposition of monoculture and a fantasy about the suppression of differences. I think this is a really powerful and quite compound—

almost like a compound statement. So, the notion that we are looking for a monoculture, even it's not an impossible imposition is what first of all says. And it would be a fantasy of ours if we're to suppress circumstances.

So, we need to acknowledge difference, celebrate difference, appreciate difference, and use the differences to actually be our strengths, rather than this notion of trying to make us all the same. We're not all the same. We never will be. And rather than striving for that, which Professor Hall was saying is a fantasy. We need to actually appreciate our differences. So thank you very much. I'm going to end the session now. OK, I'm just going to have a quick check to see if there's any questions in the chat room because we are just lining up nice stage time lies to go to our next session.

That's lovely. Thank you. And I'd like to also say thank you so much for the invitation to contribute to the conference today. It's a real privilege to be able to join you. And as I said this last week, I'm really looking forward to joining you on the 1st of December as a new staff member, dean of the DTI. OK, so for the next 40 minutes or so, I'd like to talk about the race equality journey at the UEL. And a little bit about the process, but also focus on the lessons that we learned along the way.

So, the whole process started back in December 2016, and I remember it well. It was at the staff Christmas party and the vice chancellor pulled me to one side and asked me if I would be willing to lead on the race equality child to, and I asked him what does that actually involve what is it. And he said, oh, it's a charter mark that we're applying for. I signed up to it. And all you'll have to do is just chair a few meetings. And so, I said, yeah, absolutely. I can chair a few meetings. That that's not a problem.

For those of you who have been involved in the race equality charter mark, you know that it's not just a matter of chairing a few meetings. You are looking at transforming the institution, the culture of the institution. So, it's much, much bigger than that. So, what we did early in 2017 was put a call out across the University for staff and students to join our REC self-assessment team. And when we held our first meeting, this is something I referred to last Thursday when I spoke at the learning and teaching day.

And unfortunately, everyone but one person in that meeting was a person of color. As I looked around the room, we had just Black and brown colleagues and some students join us to be part of the race equality self-assessment team. There was one white colleague and she was our charters manager, and so she had to be there, but she wanted to be there anyway. She would have been there anyway. One of the questions that I was asking, that I was

constantly asked my colleagues was, is this a tick box exercise? Why now? Why are you looking to change the institution?

Do we have senior management behind this? Why would senior management want to engage in this? Because it means giving up some power if you are talking about really changing the institution because our senior management was white. And we were talking about a complete change in having representation of Black and brown colleagues at every single level. So, the question was why would senior management want to give up some of their power? And also, some colleagues were asking, why do we need the REC?

And so, one of the things that I showed them and, unfortunately, I can't show you that link. But please in your own time, take a look at that area if you haven't seen it. Well, the colour of power. The colour of power shows images of who actually holds the power in our society. So it will show you images of vice chancellors, politicians, heads of organizations. And although, the website is a few years out of date, the images remain the same. Because we had a largely Black and brown self-assessment team, one of the things that I said to colleagues was, you need to go and get a friend, bring a friend to our next meeting. But that friend must be white, OK?

Go and get some white people to join in in this work. And I went and handpicked some people as well. And one of the things that I heard from colleagues and my white colleagues when I talked to them about this work was, well, I'm not sure if I have the skills to do this. I'm really scared of making mistakes and saying the wrong thing. So is there something I can do kind of at the sidelines and it was like, no, you have to join in and work towards this with other people who want to make a change at the University.

So, we formed our main REC team and we had 27 members staff and students as part of our REC team, our main REC team. And within that REC team, we had three subgroups. So we had a group that responsible for data. So analyzing the data from the surveys, but also organizing the focus groups and analyzing the themes that came out of the focus group. We had a comms group. And the responsibility of the comms group was to really communicate with the University community about the data and about the events that we were having. And just put out posters and engage in social media so that everyone was aware of what we were doing.

And then we had a consultation stroke event group. Throughout the process, we hosted many events and I'll talk about those in the moment. We hosted many events. And that subgroup had responsibility for organizing those events with our main events team within the University. But we also made sure that we constantly engaged in consultation with staff and students. And so that group was responsible for that area as well. And you can see the tweet on the left from me. We actually became from friends.

We formed a really close-knit bond and we spoke about the importance of this work on a regular basis, and we celebrated small achievements along the way. And so, we worked, eat out together, we would drink, we would have lunch together, and we found some really close knit bonds between the people that were part of the race assessment-- sorry, the self-assessment team. So, it took about 2 and 1/2 years for us to work towards getting our wreck.

And we facilitated 19 events, including the inside the Ivory Tower book launch, talked to Jenny Douglas as part of that she graced us with her presence back in 2017. And that was the most successful event that we hosted. We had over 200 people attend that book launch. And our vice chancellor at the time Professor Nora Colton was so moved by what she read in that book. That she bought a copy for each of the Board of Governors and urged them to read it.

So, we hosted the inside the Ivory Tower book launch. There were lots of school events and also team presentations. I said a moment ago, it's important that we consult with staff as well as students throughout the process. And so, we hosted REC workshops whereby we were able to just continually update colleagues on the progress that we were making. We hosted the REC workshops and shared the data that we found. We had three workshops on the action plan.

The action plan was crucial, and we needed to make sure that we heard the voices from every single corner of the institution. So, we hosted three different workshops for staff and students, and also, we held a student EDI conference. This was the Student Union really getting involved in this process. And they hosted a conference that was incredibly well attended. So, across the events, we engaged approximately 700 students and staff, and also we had a very good response to our student and staff survey. So, it was over 1,200 responses.

And as you can see at the very bottom there, the self-assessment team and its various subgroups met over 30 times within that two-year period. So, one of the things that we found important and it is still important is having a dialogue creating an open and appropriate space for colleagues to have conversations about race and racism within the institution. This is absolutely crucial because we have colleagues who have never really engaged in these conversations before. And my thoughts are it is really important that we ensure we meet people where they are at this moment in time.

People at different points in the journey and we have to meet them where they are. So we have to listen to what they are saying to understand so that middle section men listen to understand is absolutely crucial. So, moving on to the events. These were the kinds of events

that we hosted over the two-year period. You can see in the top left-hand corner, we hosted a BME early career research conference and that was the third one. And Dr. Bernadine established this conference to feed the pipeline from undergrad to post grad to lecturer, professor and so on and so forth.

And that was hugely successful. It was a sold-out conference, and perhaps the OU you can think about hosting a conference like this next year. So far, all four conferences have been held in London, and Dr. Bernadine would like to host the conference outside of London. So that's a consideration for the Open University for next year. We were fortunate. We had Baroness Shami Chakrabarti join us and she talked about her book it was new at that point, of women. And so that was an evening with baroness Shami Chakrabarti we hosted. Professor Kevin Hylton one of our conferences.

And in the middle there, you can see an Afua Hirsch. She joined us for an evening and a discussion around racism in journalism, but also in higher education. You can see BAME staff network, I apologize for using that acronym. But that's what it's called at this moment in time, bottom right hand corner. And also, one of the events was just simply having a conversation about what we can do to change the institution. And we invited colleagues and students to just put their ideas down on post-it notes, and we collected the post-it notes, and we included a lot of that information in our action plan.

I know you probably can't see the small writing and that's OK. What I want to show you is this is the response from one of the staff surveys that we did during the consultation process. And what you will see is in the blue shaded area, you have the responses from ethnic minority staff from Black and brown staff. And in the pink shaded area, you have the responses from non-ethnic minority staff. And for me, this really illustrates that Black and brown staff experience higher education of a University very, very different to white staff.

And I'm hoping that you get to see this particular slide in a little more detail. It doesn't have all of the items, but you will see that there are certain areas that are more important to Black and brown staff compared to white counterparts. So, the diversity of UEL impacts on my sense of belonging. The diversity of UEL impacts on my desire to stay. Also, you will see that Black and brown staff have experienced racial discrimination on campus and also in the local area compared to what staff. OK. Sorry, moving on.

So, one of the things that I had to ask. When I spoke to senior management about the work that we're doing was we have to be serious about doing this work and we have to be serious about creating change at UEL. Because what I'm sharing with you is a lot of information about the way staff experience the University. And so, this information came out of our focus group.

Black staff saying, I would not recommend UEL go to a Black academic friend who is trying to gain promotion as there isn't any within.

And although, I'm saying this is what we found at UEL. I don't think this is unique to UEL. These are issues that we see across the sector. At UEL, there are sound bites and not real appreciation of its diverse student population. A racial ethnic mix of different grades of staff and attainment of students makes me realize that there is a level of institutional racism at UEL as in many other organizations. These are difficult questions and action around power and voice and who is heard and who can act. And this next one, the fourth one down is something that I have seen on more than one occasion, unfortunately.

I have reported an incident in the past and suffered further abuse from my manager when I reported it. Unfortunately, we all too often. We hear that when you do report these incidents. It makes you the problem because people don't know how to address the issues of microaggression of racist comments. And so, it makes you the problem for actually reporting it and wanting to take it further or wanting it addressed.

My immediate line manager has more than once made racist comments about the student body suggesting that if they are not white and middle class, they are not as well equipped the University as those who are. Unfortunately, when we hear comments like this is problematic because it feeds into one of the big problems that we have in higher education, and that is in relation to the degree award gap. And we have that degree award gap across the sector.

And if we have managers who feel that students who are not white and who are not middle class are not well equipped for University. Then they are essentially saying that, you know what? We are looking at this from a deficit perspective. These individuals are not well enough equipped to actually be here. And then also white staff at UEL can see this. I am white and suspect I'm treated better than some of my colleagues because of this as there is plenty of racism in the UK.

As a white person, I can see that my colleagues of colour are not necessarily treated the same as me. All profs are white, all management is white in our school.

And then also, Omar Khan's tweet, and Omar Khan was the director of the Runnymede Trust up until, I think it was last year. And he highlights the importance of representation and the issues around that in higher education in the UK.

So, there are roughly 2,000 Black female students that every Black female professor. And there are around 50 white male students for every white male professor. You're 40 times more likely to see a professor who looks like you if you're white and male than if you're black

and female. And we know the importance of role models. We know the importance of representation. And I truly believe in this popular saying of, you can't be what you can't see. It is so important for students and for staff who are starting out who want to progress to see people who look like them in senior positions in higher education.

So, with regard to our survey, we had six themes emerged. And you can see on the left-hand side University culture and organization, so a sense of belonging and having discussions on race bullying and harassment. Once again, right the way across the sector, these are not just unique to UEL. Teaching and learning. So, the curriculum what are we actually teaching our students degree award gaps and the progression of students were key as well under the umbrella.

Employability. So graduate level outcomes, staff career progression and recruitment and selections. So, including the transparency of that process. And so, we decided to organize our action plan around these six themes. I know that some of you have our race equality charter mark submission. And you will see that we've organized the action plan is quite a comprehensive action plan instead of 30 pages long. But each of the actions that we decided to include relate to one of the six themes.

And so, it was really important as I said earlier that we consulted widely on what those actions should be. So we organized three workshops and we invited staff and students, we invited senior managers, as well to be part of the workshop to talk about-- let's flesh out these actions, what do we actually need to do to change the culture and generate a more equal UEL? And those three workshops were really well attended, and we also had an email account. So, if people couldn't make the workshops, they were more than welcome to email some ideas or meet with me or any of the set members and talk about what these actions should be.

As I said, we wanted to make sure that we reached as many people as we possibly could. So, 2 and 1/2 years in the making. We had many challenges along the way. Let me give you one example. For those of you who know anything about the University of East London, it's an institution that over the years has been in a constant state of change. We started the race equality charter mark with one vice chancellor. And I referred to Professor Nora Colton a moment ago. She wasn't the vice chancellor at that point, it was Professor John Jogin. So, we started with Professor John Jogin as our vice chancellor.

And then halfway through Nora Colton was our acting vice chancellor. And then by the time we finished the race equality charter mark. By the time we actually got the award, we had a third vice chancellor. So, we were in a constant state of change at senior management level, and you know what it's like when you get a new vice chancellor. My background is in sport, so

I always like a new vice chancellor to having a new football manager. The bottom line is you get a new vice chancellor, you get a new strategy and you get a complete new senior management team.

So, when a football manager gets sick, he or she goes and they bring in their own team. So it's all systems change again. But the positive thing about this is that all three vice chancellors were fully supportive of the work that we were doing. So that was one of the challenges that we had at senior management level. Interestingly, there were many challenges along the way when we were interacting with colleagues and trying to get colleagues on board with some of the work that we were doing. And I'm not going to go-- there were lots of issues that came up.

But one of the things that I constantly heard from so many different people was, we need more data. How do we know that this data is correct? How do we know that these gaps exist in this area? We need more data. And in actual fact, we don't need more data, we have more data than we could possibly use. What we need is action. We need to make sure that we use the data, that we have qualitative and we have quantitative data. We need to ensure that we use that data and form actions that will work, and we implement them.

And another challenge from staff was around the way they were looking at in particular the degree award gap. And this came up last week Thursday. One of our colleagues here at the OU talked about the way we look at racism in regard to the degree award gap, and people not wanting to look at this from a non-deficit perspective. So, all too often when I talk about gaps in degree awards, I am hearing things like the students-- our first-generation University students, or they come from working class backgrounds. So that is why there are gaps.

It's got nothing else to do with anything. That is why there are gaps in degree awards. And part of the reason why we change the terminology from attainment to degree awards is so that the University takes responsibility for these gaps. When we talk about attainment, we are saying this is the level that we are awarding all, that we are marking the student at. When we talk about University degree award gaps, the University has to own the problem rather than saying it's a deficit issue. Therefore, it is with the student, so therefore there is nothing we can do about it. We have to take responsibility for what is going on and for these inequalities that exist within the institution.

So, one of the key areas that I have been working on is making sure that there is leadership buying and there is accountability. Accountability is key. You can have the greatest of action plans. But if you don't hold people accountable for implementing the various actions, then you are not going to get anywhere because this work is difficult. And it can be very, very messy at times and the conversations can be very uncomfortable and very difficult.

And so, I have regular meetings with the senior leadership team, and we focus on race. So, we've got two groups that have come out of a race equality charter mark. We have our wreck implementation group, and that is largely the senior leaders who have taken on a various part of the action plan. So, our pro-vice chancellor for education and experience is responsible for the area of learning and teaching, and I obviously work with him on those areas.

The PVC for innovation and impact, which is PVC from research is responsible to equity in career progression. And that's crucial because it's things like sabbaticals and making sure that junior members of staff Black and brown members of staff experience equality in that process. When you are applying for sabbaticals and get the help that you need when you are applying from research grants and so on and so forth.

The director of HR responsible for bullying and harassment, and also the transparency within staff recruitment so that whole selection and recruitment process. The PVC for careers and enterprise, responsible for graduate outcomes student employability and closing the gap. Because at the moment, a lot of what we're seeing is making sure that the students have graduate level jobs. But that is a 10% gap between white students and Black and brown students with regards to student employability.

And my role as dean of the office for Institutional Equity, I have a special focus on organizational culture but really, I work with the senior management in all of these areas. And the dean of all six schools are responsible for implementing the EDI plans at a local level, and also, they are held accountable by making sure that the actions are part of their performance and development review on an annual basis.

So, as I said a moment ago, there are two groups that came out of race equality charter mark. We've got the senior management group that's responsible for the various areas of the action plan. And the second group is really to continue the conversations across the institution on race and racism. So that group is called the Equity Collective, and that's open to all staff and students who want to participate in these conversations. And it's the forum and we meet every two weeks and we continue the anti-racism conversations.

And also, there are actions that come out of the Equity Collective. We have different themes that we talk about so more recently, we were talking about the acronym BAME. We talk about academic misconduct. That feeds into the degree of world gaps because when we look at the students who experience the allegations of academic misconduct. I don't know what it's like at the OU, but at UEL and indeed across many of those London universities. The majority of the students compared to white students are Black and brown students.

We also spent a lot of time talking about racial bias in assessment and marking. And we believe that once again, contributes to the gaps that we see integrate awards. And some of the other projects that have come out of our action plan, you can see in the boxes there, so we have a reading group. And the poster that you see on the right-hand side of your screen is just shows you the kind of books that we have been reading in our reading group.

And they are books that generally our students-- we've got a lot of students in the reading group. Our students are reading all sorts of colour for the first time when they attend our reading group. So, you know, the Audre Lorde's, the Roxane Gay, James Baldwin. We also have body quality and athletic therapy so the beat group. Once again, that's very, very similar but the readings that they focus on are largely cultural studies in sport readings. So once again, underrepresented authors focused in that group.

We have a project whereby we are focusing on decolonizing in the library resources. We have some projects that have come out of the wreck because of some research that a couple of our librarians undertook and found that the majority of the resources, so the reading lists were white men. And so, there was a push for us to highlight that across all six schools. But also, the challenges there for colleagues to look beyond authors who are white who were male.

And then we also formed our anti-racist affinity group across the institution. So, we have that group for staff and for students, that's a group for white staff and who are racialized as white for all who get white privilege, white benefits if you like. That is a group for white staff to talk about whiteness within the institution and to focus on what they can do to be allies if you like. And so, questions that they post, how confident are you in addressing racism?

If a student came to you and gave you an example of something that happened in class, what would you do? And they support each other to figure out what they would do to address that issue. Also, with the white anti-racist affinity group, we give students the opportunity to be accountable. So, they can link him with the group, and they can hold that group accountable for change. So, one year on, I think we've accomplished a lot at the institution. There's a lot to be proud of. But there's an awful lot more work to be done.

So, over a five-year period, our degree gap has hovered between 19.4% through to 25.4%. Last year, it was 20%. Now when we looked at our degree award data, we found that we have a gap of 14%. So, within the space of a year, this energy that we have used to focus on this is a really important issue within our institution has resulted in a decrease by 6%. And our degree of world gap at UEL has never been so low. I mean, there's still a lot of work to be done. 14% is still not OK. It's not OK. But we're heading in the right direction. So that's great.

As I said before, we have the equity collective so we're having open conversations about dismantling institutional racism. And those conversations are happening with not just staff of colour or Black and brown staff but are happening with white staff as well. And I think more and more white staff are getting involved, especially, given the events of the summer and the horrific murder of George Floyd. Lots of white staff recognize that they need to join in this process. They need to be part of the process because this cannot not rest on the shoulders of those individuals who are the most marginalized.

Last year one of my colleagues Lorraine Jones established the Black Academy. I said earlier, representation and role models were absolutely key all of our students. And I'm not just talking about Black and brown students, I'm talking about all of our students need to see Black and brown individuals in the academy. And Lorraine always talks about this by way of making the invisible visible. So, what we have done over the course of the year is come together and host events, whereby all of us are in front of our students. So last November, we held an event whereby we had 20 Black members of staff sat in the lecture theatre, just at the front all of us at the same time.

And students were amazed because some of those students in some of those departments there are no Black staff. And they did not realize that the University actually had so many Black staff.

So, we all came together and saw the Black Academy as something that is ongoing for all of our students, so that they can see that there is representation. As I said a moment ago, there's still a lot of work to be done around academic misconduct, the progression of students, employability, and retention. It's all there and it needs constant attention because when we look at the data with regards to these various areas, it is always Black students. Black and brown students that are at the bottom of the pile and it's an issue of equality of experience.

So, I will leave you with a final thought from Nikki Giovanni. "As long as higher education remains all white, the message we send is in our actions, not in our words. As long as higher education considers itself higher with all the privileges, but none of the attendant responsibilities then hypocrisy is the lesson our students learn. We in the universities and colleges must close the gap between what we say and what we do."

Now that's a quote from 1994, so what? 26 years ago. And it still hones true today and it's a quote from her essay, a theory of patience and that is in her book *Racism 101*. Thank you so much for listening.