

Black History Month 2020

Joan Armatrading Award

Sue Watkins and Joan Armatrading:

*FASS: Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences**

[MUSIC PLAYING]

SUE WATKINS: I feel very honoured and privileged to be able to speak to at this important event today. As you can see, we're from the FASS of-- Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, otherwise known as FASS. FASS is one of the largest faculties at the Open University, with almost 50,000 students studying 37 different qualifications across 14 disciplines. The faculty is made up of three schools, arts and social-- sorry. Arts and humanities, psychology and counselling, and social sciences and global studies.

Our students consistently rate our teaching as excellent, and we have a very high overall completion rate. However, we are keen for all of our students to fulfil their potential and attain the best classification of degree. With that in mind, one of the key unit objectives from the FASS business plan for 2021 is to maximize student success and to transform lives through innovative approaches to lifelong learning in the arts, psychology, and social sciences, and the delivery of an outstanding student experience.

FASS is committed to reducing our degree awarding gap, and as part of this, we're looking for positive role modelling and celebration of achievement. These awards are part of a suite of initiatives FASS is undertaking to develop a sense of belonging and to raise the profile of our Black and Asian students.

So, we decided to create two awards initially to celebrate the outstanding achievements of both Black and Asian students who have made a significant academic achievement and for making a success of their own student experience. The awards are to be presented annually at the end of each academic year for at least three years with a view to extending this on a three-yearly basis.

So, we're thrilled that two of our most well-known alumni have agreed to put their names to the first two awards. So, on behalf of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, I'm pleased to announce the introduction of the Joan Armatrading Award for outstanding performance in an Arts & Social Sciences subject and the Sir Lenny Henry Award for outstanding achievement in an Arts & Social Sciences subject.

If anyone has any questions about these awards or about the process we got involved in, please do get in touch at FASS-AD teaching students. And here are a few words from Joan Armatrading herself.

JOAN ARMATRADING: Hello, everyone. My name is John Armatrading. What an honour it is to be speaking to you at the Open University's Black History Month event, and a privilege to be able to introduce one of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences awards for Black and Asian students. As a songwriter, musician, and a producer, I spend a lot of time writing songs, recording, and then touring, which you might think didn't leave much time for learning other things.

But the beauty of studying with the OU is that you can fit in your lessons whenever you have the time. And because you can access your module materials online, you can study from anywhere in the world. Our students are doing incredible things. They show people and themselves that they can do this. They are all amazing and an inspiration to others.

And so, it gives me great pleasure to officially launch the Joan Armatrading Award for outstanding performance in an Arts & Social Sciences subject. And I look forward to being able to name the first recipient of this award next year.

[MUSIC PLAYING]