Black History Month 2022

Union Black

Contributors name:

Rehana Awan

Lurraine Jones

REHANA AWAN: I'd like to welcome you today to this first session on our Black History Month series of events. So this is week one. Very pleased to be joined today by Lurraine Jones, who's going to kick us off talking about Union Black. And Lurraine is Deputy Dean for Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion in the vice chancellor's office.

She's going to be talking to us about Union Black, which fits in really nicely with the week one theme of our actions, our changes. We will be recording the session. And Lurraine is going to go through her first bit of her session.

But if you could post any questions, please, into the chat box, that'd be really helpful. And I will come to the chat box when we get to the Q&A session about halfway through, about 30 minutes in. And then we will also enable mics at that stage. So people will also be able to put their hands up, and I can also come to you and invite you for questions, as well to ask Lurraine. So without much further ado, I'm going to hand over to Lurraine. Thank you, Lurraine.

LURRAINE JONES: Thank you so much, Rehana. And thank you, everyone for turning up. I'm not looking at the participants, so I don't know if I've got five or 5,000. I'm not really sure. But, yeah, I'm honoured to be here, to be kicking off Black History Month here at the OU. So I'm going to be talking, I don't have a presentation, I'm just going to be talking about Union Black. And talking about anti-racism as well at the university. And as Rehana said, perhaps you can add questions in the chat or put the mics on afterwards. We can have a conversation about it.

But I really thank you so much for turning up if you are at home or on campus today. And I'm sure that there will be some people who are actually listening to this not on a live session. OK, so first of all, my name is Lurraine Jones. I'm Deputy Dean for EDI here at the OU. I have been here just over a year. I can't believe that it's gone so quickly. And previously to that, I worked at the University of East London for 16 years. And my main research interests then and now is around race. The idea of race, what it means, what it is, and what it does.

I'm interested very much in anti-racism and anti-Blackness, Black British culture. So, really, that's my main research interest. And I've been doing EDI work for many, many years. But in particular, my research interest has been around race.

And first of all, I would really say that because I think lived experience is so important, in terms of the research that you do and often the research that you're interested in, and how you actually often come to EDI and the interest in EDIs is through lived experience. Anecdotally I understand that to be true.

I used to teach a module for years on race, culture, and difference at University of East London. Had many, many students at University of East London. As you can imagine, it's what we call a post-92 university, so it's a new university. And the cohort of students were all

very, very different to the OU. Lots and lots of Black and Brown students. And most of the students really were South Asian.

And the students tended to be British Asian and Black British, or definitely colonial from the African continent, often Nigeria and Ghana. That's my experience of, I'm a social scientist by the way and those are the majority of students on my course. And I used to teach on a degree called psychosocial studies. And those are the students who we had on our cohort.
But walking around campus, I mean, it's very, very different to the OU. Perhaps there are some of you here who are from the four nations. Very, very different experience to walking around the UEL campus to Milton Keynes, just in so many ways.

Just to give you a little bit of background on myself. I was born in England. I'm an East Ender. I was born in Hackney in East London. My mom is from Ireland, Southern Ireland in Dublin. And my dad is from the Caribbean. And they both came over in the same year as migrants, immigrants, however you want to describe them, to London. Met here that same year that they both came along. And the rest is history, you could say.

I've got an older sister. They were around the era of no Blacks, no dogs, no Irish. And I grew up in East London. It was a very, very working-class area. It's not now, I have to say. I thought that I could afford to live in Hackney anymore. It's really been gentrified.

But I grew up in a very working-class area. Lots of new immigrants, Jewish people, Asian people, we had Irish people next door. If I think back to the right, we had older Jewish neighbours. To the left we had friends down the road, Jews from Barbados.

Our school was predominantly white, white working class, but we had lots and lots of immigrant children as well. So very working class. Pretty diverse, actually, in our experience. But I suppose our experience really was working class more than, I suppose, race, really. And I'm not even sure at that age whether I really recognize it was working class. It was just, as we all know, you just grow up, and things are as they are.

I didn't go to university getting a little bit older I didn't go to university but, again, working class environment. We moved from Hackney a bit further out, Leytonstone. And I went to school in Leytonstone, to a girls' school. Big comprehensive school, but no one spoke about university, just didn't. And, again, that was really a class thing. Again, very mixed, mainly white, but very mixed. Particularly Caribbean, I would say, rather than African students. They came a little bit later on.

I became a mature student. I had four children, still have. Although they're older, obviously. And I was getting divorced, and I've got a good friend, and she's American. And she went to Harvard, got first-class degree from there, et cetera, et cetera. We made friends at the gym. And it was her, actually, who said to me, I think you should go to university. And I really questioned, me? Me going to university?

And it wasn't really an intelligence thing. I had a good career before children, I went into banking. It was the university was not for me. But she sparked a seed. And so as I was getting divorced, I had this identity crisis.

And I wanted my children to be proud of me. All of those things that offer mature students, in my experience certainly at UEL, and I suspect for many of you at the OU students come to university a bit later with those experiences. They want to make their lives better. They want to make things better for their children, make something for themselves, all of those sorts of things.

So I went along. I did an access course at college, and then I went along. A tutor told me about psychosocial work at UEL, University of East London, and I went there. And during my second year, I became really, really interested in race, in terms of the theories of race, not actually race itself. Because I've grown up as an ethnic minority in the UK, so race was always pretty significant for me, particularly being mixed heritage at times, that kind of division. Where do I fit in?

And it wasn't so much about me fitting in, it's about others trying to place me, whether I was Black or white. And that came around 14 to 16-year-old period where I think fitting in for a teenager is primary, really, and still is. It hasn't changed, of course, with social media. And I began to understand the theories of race in my second year. And I just, I then, that was my research interest. That second year I began to understand race, theories of it, I began to understand why my students at comprehensive school, between 14 and 16, I began to understand why I had some backlash from the Black girls at school about me being lighter. I didn't understand it at the time, it's all about fitting in.

But about being lighter, having long hair, and good hair, I know Rehana and Sas have very much, they've just produced a brilliant film about good hair. And what I began to understand in my second year my undergraduate was that Black people learn to hate themselves, particularly Black girls and women. All of the icons of beauty have been white. That kind of Pamela Anderson, depending how old you are, that Marilyn Monroe type thing.

And, of course, now we have the Kim Kardashians, et cetera. But that's a kind of, should we, for want of a better word, a Black body, but it's someone who's not Black. And we have you know, I'm sure you're aware of the contemporary discourses of the Black body and cultural effects of white women trying to look Black, and all of those sorts of things. I could talk all day about these stuff.

So I give you those background information about myself to understand where I became really interested in Union Black. Because those lived experience are absolutely key for me to when I heard about this opportunity to be involved in an anti-racism course, I just I was so excited about it.

So in 2020, which we will remember forever, I'm sure, COVID, George Floyd. Those are the two big significant things for us, I would say. It had major, major effects on our lives in many ways. But certainly, for Black people around the world George Floyd was a sort of catalyst combined with COVID.

And for me, my personal opinion is that at COVID we were all afraid. Particularly that first round, we were all at home, we were all scared, we were told to stay in, and we were struggling with this whole virus in many ways. Virus of thought, not going out, we were afraid, we were hearing of people dying, we were really afraid.

And so when George Floyd’s murder came around, it was under these conditions where we're all at home, we're all scared, we were all looking at our phones. And it was a moment in time where we just went, wow. And this was the first time that this a murder of a Black man and there have been many, not only in the USA. It's the first time we'd actually seen this murder of a Black man in front of our eyes.

And it shocked many people. I have to say, it didn't shock Black people. Black people were well aware of these murders that happened globally, but it shocked people, particularly white communities. And this murder again, both Marcia, Professor Marcia Wilson, the Dean of EDI and myself, we've written about these happenings. And during that 2020 you know that we had George Floyd, we had the rise again of the Black Lives Matter movement which, of course, existed anyway. But there was a resurgence and then there was a resurgence as well of allyship.

And what happened for Santander Universities, who is a partner to the OU, along with the demand from their own it is a Black staff network alongside the Universities UK report entitled 'Tackling Racism in Higher Education'. And that report was quite a damning report on racism on campuses, and what universities were doing or rather not doing about it.

So Santander Universities came along to the OU and said, you know Santander Universities, for those of you who are not aware, it's a sort of philanthropic arm of Santander Bank. And they are responsible for scholarships, entrepreneurship, et cetera, et cetera, globally. They

are quite amazing. I didn't know anything about them myself, I have to say, before I came along to the OU or became involved with this project.

So I wasn't actually at the OU at that point, I was still at UEL. But I was contacted by the OU and asked if I was interested in creating this project, because Santander felt very strongly that with their demand from their Black staff network, along with the Union UK report, something needed to be done.

And so they offered, gifted the OU 500,000 to develop a course. And I was one of the academics that was reached out to. And we came together, a small group of Black academics came together, along with a few members of the OU. And actually not really Santander at that point, they weren't really involved. But we started to think about what we can do given that it's not just anti-racism, this is specifically anti-Blackness, which is a different thing to anti-racism.

Anti-Blackness, as well, is quite specific. As when hopefully you will do the course, or perhaps some of you have done the course already. So we got together and we said, how are we going to develop this anti-racism course? Which is what we were asked to do about anti-racism. And we said, definitely it needs to be Black academics involved as this, George Floyd was a Black specifically an anti-Black issue.

Black Lives Matter, of course, were, as I said, really came to the fore as well. And we decided after a few meetings what we are going to do, how are we going to do this. How are we going to educate people that the anti-Black experience, really, essentially, how are we going to do this.

So not rushing forward but just starting to talk about the course. We came together and we said, really, what we need to do, as this is specifically Black, and, of course, we've been asked as well. This has come up, and maybe this is a question in your mind, why aren't we doing? Why wasn't this course about South Asian experience, or whatever?

But I'm just explaining this was absolutely the focus was on George Floyd and around Blackness, and not persons of colour, if you use that expression. This was specifically around Blackness. And we felt that Black academics were, with the lived experience and the academic expertise, were the ones to bring this course together.

So we decided to talk about Blackness and Black Britishness. Specifically, really, mainly the Black British experience because, once again, I regard myself as a Black British writer and a Black feminist, but we really subsumed often by America about Americanisms.

And, again, when I was teaching my course at University of East London, you cannot speak about race, you cannot do research on race without looking at the States, really, because they're so far ahead of where we are in the UK in many ways. And, in my opinion, behind as well in many ways.

But much of the material, the well-known Black writing come from the States. But many of us who were born in the UK and regard ourselves as Black British also are really trying to carve out a space for Black Britishness in our writing, in our perspectives. And not be subsumed by the States about Black African American writers and work.

And so there is a really burgeoning body of work that's from Black British writers as well. So we felt that although that the George Floyd's murder was in the States, once again, it is not unique to the states. We've had many incidents here in the UK. And we've had a recent incident which I can't really comment on because there hasn't been too much said about it. But we know Chris Kaba only about three weeks ago appears to have been murdered by the police. But we don't know yet because there's not too much that's come out.

But it's another Black man who has died at the hands of the police. And that's been highly problematic Black British experience, but certainly Black communities has been highly problematic, particularly with the Met Police, which is the London-based police.

And I've done some work with the Met Police around racism and anti-racism. And I did a talk last week about racism, and somebody did ask me about Met the police. What do I think would change things? Yeah, that's a really big question. But I think that one needs to be proactive rather than keep reacting to other incidents. And, certainly, I think that if people understand the experience of Black communities and policing in this country, for new recruits that would certainly help and place it in context.

And this is what we wanted to do with this course. We wanted to dispel myths around Blackness, we wanted to explain and I'm a big fan for those of you who've heard me speak before, I don't think you can understand anti-racism until you understand what race is itself. You have to understand it's a 19th century social construction where we are divided into particular groups which in the 19th century was actually white at the top, yellow in the middle, and Black at the bottom.

And that's why I'm so interested in race, as to why does this still divide us? Now, why are we still divided by those categories largely when we share 99.9% of our genes. I find it very interesting, dismaying, and all of those things. But I really do feel that we need to deconstruct that each time, and acknowledge we are racialized. We don't have races; we are actually racialized into particular categories.

And with those categories, we then invest in those categories and say we are white, Black, Asian, whatever. And so this course, it looks into race. I have the full course, one of the early videos and discussions is me talking about this social construction of race and the social construction of Blackness. And Adam who's a geneticist, he's talking about the biological definition of race.

And so we have this discussion about why do people invest in Blackness, in whiteness, et cetera. So when we were designing it we said, what do we want people to know? We really had to squash it down into some people say for the full course and I say the full course, and I'll explain why I'm saying the full course. Some people took six hours, some people took eight hours, some people took 10 hours.

And people have... I felt like a mini celeb when I started at the OU because I came onto campus and a few people just said, oh, you're Lurraine. And I was like, and it's because they'd already done Union Black, which is fantastic. I felt like giving out a few signatures there, a few autographs.

And then when I was speaking to them about it, they said how much they really enjoyed and engaged with the course because they were clicking on the links as well. It was quite difficult to really squash in all we wanted people to know. And, of course, to be honest, could have been much, much longer. But you have the restrictions of OpenLearn, you have the restrictions of people's engagement in the first place.

But we wanted to make it as interesting as we could by having videos. I'm speaking here, Mercy is speaking, Dave, you hear Jason. We were the main academics. And then we've got little clips of videos, we've got explanations. And we had word count. Shantini kept us down to our word count. And it was really quite difficult. But firm believers that you can't train, this isn't a training exercise. It's an education exercise.

We wanted to dispel some myths around Blackness. We wanted to explore what whiteness was and is. We wanted to explore allyship, what that means, how you can be anti-racist. And I think what most people have got from doing this course, certainly, is the understanding where we say it's not our saying, but we do really foreground that it is not enough to be non-racist. You have to be anti-racist.

So what that means is to say, well, I'm not racist. I'm not racist. Usually, the line is I've got Black friends, a Black partner, or whatever, and not being flippant, as in, I'm not racist. But you're certainly, as educators, as people involved in the university, most people are involved in equality, equity, inclusion.

But I think perhaps at OU was well, in my experience, my short experience here, amazing people that I'm working with. The EDR team is fantastic. But also, the people that I've come into contact with. The OU, the mission is incredible. But perhaps I would say that the OU perhaps relies a little bit on it being the OU. We are the Open University, we are open. And I think we're not racism, we're not racist. The anti-saying I'm anti-racist implies action rather than just relying on I'm not racist. And this is what the course, a lot of people have got from the course. They understand the difference between being not racist and anti-racism. And people have understood, people have said to me they've understood so much about Black communities, the myths, they didn't understand where things came from, people have explored and explained to me, and I've also seen through the feedback.

It's a space where people have allowed themselves to be, they felt safe in being vulnerable. Because you can put your ideas or thoughts online, and people have been very supportive and said, yes, I didn't understand that either or that's amazing, and all of those things. It's been a really fantastic experience for many people. Honestly, the feedback genuinely I know there may be some negative feedback, but I have to say overwhelmingly this course has been really, really well received.

I've got a however, because the course takes people around six hours, I think six hours is the minimum the course hasn't been taken up as much as well as we had hoped. It's a free course. It's free to staff, any staff member, whether you work in security, whether you work with your associate lecturer, or anywhere. It's free for admin, anyone. And free to staff members and students.

But disappointingly the course was not taken up very well. And so we had some meetings around that with Santander, because I think it's a great initiative for them. And time came up as an issue.

My personal thoughts around it is that I think if you prioritize the things that you want to prioritize, that matter to you. We've all binge watched Netflix or whatever your thing is, we've all binge watched that. Six hours, 10 hours out of however long you wish to take the course is not very long at all.

And I even have last week she's such a fan of the course. And she said she ate it, watching it, eating her breakfast, and did it in bitesize. But, in fact, I think they're half sometimes. When over her breakfast time, she really enjoyed it. She was clicking onto the links. And she said it's actually changed her perspective and how she views things.

And it's not just about senior leadership, it's about all of us getting involved. And whilst we'd like to think morally and ethically you should do this course, we don't want to make it mandatory, we don't want to force people into doing this course. But we'd really like people to do the course because it's so interesting, because we have a responsibility working at the university to educate ourselves. And that's not just about being an academic.
So the last week I got the numbers. We've had two cohorts of the course. So that's two cohorts of people who've registered, and at the OU. Given that we have 10 and 1/2 thousand staff members. We had up to last week because there's a new cohort now which I'll just quickly tell you about after this we had only 870 people, that's include staff and students registering.

We had 398 students who did the course. And there was only 92 who completed it. We had 472 staff and we had 96 who completed it, which to me is really extremely disappointing. It's so disappointing. But that's life, it's disappointing. And it's such a shame that more people are not engaged in the course because, really, what you're really doing is not prioritizing different people's lived experience. This is a fabulous course. And to not engage in something that can make such a difference to students and staff, Black students, and Black staff, to try to understand lived experiences.

And when you look at the degree awarding gaps that occur at the OU, as they are everywhere, but particularly and, of course, it's intersectional because, of course, we have to grow awarding gaps for other groups of students, students with declared disabilities, et

cetera. But in this talk of Black History Month, I'm focusing on Black students. But, of course, they're intersectional because there's gender and disabilities, et cetera, et cetera. So what we did, it's been disappointing in higher education, full stop. We had a sort of, a couple of crisis meetings with Santander, and why this course isn't being taken up as well as we'd hoped. Time came up as an issue, which really, yeah, I'm sure that you can probably tell by my face what I think about that in terms of time.

But, anyway, we developed a one-hour course as an introduction to the full course. And the course as a one hour is a standalone. You can just do the one-hour course. Hopefully, people will do the one-hour course. It's a kind of, I wouldn't call it a taster, but a primer. It has some little flavours of the full six hour to eight-hours course.

But it has some stuff in there around starting discussions about race, racism. It has stuff about leadership. It's based on empathy as well, understanding what empathy means and how that can help you professionally and personally.

So we did that as a primer. And I hope that perhaps you start on the primer, which is slightly different to the full course, but also that you do both. And if you've done the full course, that you also do the primer because there's some stuff in there. It was me who created the one-hour course. There's just me, so you'll probably be sick of looking at my face on the course. But we've curated some of the stuff from the full hour course to give you a taster of what's in the full course. But also, there's some stuff in the one-hour course that can also help and contribute to your learning.

So as part of Black History Month, I'm here to promote the course. I'm happy to answer questions about the course. I hope that I've given you just a very brief background to me and a background to the course. So I really encourage you to do it. I'd encourage you to tell your friends, your colleagues.

When I say friends, they can't be outside of higher education. But hopefully you've got friends in your workplace. And encourage everyone to do it, whether your students to do it. You know let's have a discussion. I did put the link in the course in the chat, and the very first link that's in the chat. So I don't know if you want to click on that and see if you can, and register.
But I could speak about this for so long. But meet me on the course, hopefully. Thank you for coming along to hear me talk about it. I hope I've given you a little flavour and incited your interest to do it, because I'm genuinely honoured to be part of it.

I'm very proud to be part of this course. I stand by it. And, as I say, nearly everyone that I've come into contact with. Well not everyone, to be honest, I've come in contact with has enjoyed it, has learnt a lot about it. And my last point is, really, soon we are going to be doing the sustainability course. I don't know enough about sustainability. I don't know enough about it. So I'm going to do the course with, I don't know whether it's going to be mandatory or not. But I don't know enough about it, so I'm going to educate myself.

I have a duty to my role, to students even though I don't have direct contact to my colleagues to understand more about that. And this is what, it's very different to sustainability, but we have a duty to educate ourselves. So this is an education, it's not training, and it's exciting. So please do it. Thank you very much.

REHANA AWAN: That was fabulous. Thank you so much, Lurraine, for sharing your lived experience and your personal life story and life history. Which I think was just really fascinating to understand, and actually drew parallels, I'm sure, with not just me but with other people. I remember spending lots of time as a child in Leytonstone as I had cousins who lived there.

And I think it was really also your parallels with our own students, about being a mature learner yourself. And I think having that understanding is really important when working at the OU. I mean, I've got a couple of questions, but I am going to open it up to the audience.

There was a lot of love for people saying who have done the course in the chat. I have done the course. I mean, it's six hours. It's not a lot. And I did it in bite-sized chunks because that's how I could fit it in.

And I am going to start off with a question because I think it's an interesting one. Really, really poignant statement you made that it's not training. And I just wondered if you could expand on that a little bit because often when I talk about EDI, I talk about EDI not being training. And I think it's a really interesting point. I just wondered if you could expand on that. And then I'll go to the chat afterwards.

LURRAINE JONES: Yes. So this is my personal opinion. I've done lots of anti-racism workshops, et cetera, but I don't feel that you can train people to care, you just can't. You can hope that people can care, and you can educate people. And in my personal opinion, when I was younger, like all of us, you're in an ideal world and you say and when I started off, I probably called it training.

In fact, before I went into to become an academic, I always call myself a reluctant academic. I was, sort of, dragged into academia. It's not something I wanted to do because I hated my masters, actually. But I wanted to become a diversity trainer. And I'd done some work in my masters in the Met Police. And they had a diversity training school. And that was me. I was going to sit up, and I was going to be a diversity trainer.

And as the years have gone by, I've become much more realistic because you can't train people about diversity, you can't train people to care. And the one-hour primer, there's a section in there where I've said morally, I would like to think you could do this course, morally or ethically.

But I can't train people to have morals and ethics at the same as mine. All I can do is educate. You can train people to do the GDPR and press this button or that button, all you can do is educate and hope. So that's the difference that I would make.

REHANA AWAN: Thank you. Thank you for sharing that. I think that's really, a really important point because it is about changing people's attitudes, values, isn't it? And upbringing, all those, kind of, the way that we brought up has a massive impact on who we are. And it's changing and unpacking some of that.

Question from Molly in the chat box, which I think is really interesting because she said that, obviously, you've done a one-hour primer now. But what actually about doing something that's giving you the opportunity to explore some of those subjects within the Union Black course in more detail that you felt were more squashed in? So is there any opportunities being presented to expand the course or to add-ons for the course?

LURRAINE JONES: Yeah, thank you, Molly who's in my EDI team, giving me extra work. I'll get you back. Yeah, I'd actually love to because I do think it needs expansion. I mean, I really do think I find that the whole subject of race is so interesting. I think possibly, going forward at the OU, we could have some lunchtime discussions, really, about these things. About allyship and about just dispelling the myths, et cetera.

So I think, briefly, I also saw a question that somebody said, is there any bandwidth to expand this beyond HE as well. And that has come up as well about the centre. And they are very well versed in coming back around this. There are plans to, but we have to see. It's been disappointing in HE, let's just put it like that. It's been disappointing in HE where we are public sector organizations and we have an obligation, a legal obligation under the Equality Act 2010, to make things let's just say to make things better for people.

And why has this course not been taken up as well as it should have done? I'm not sure there's the appetite, quite frankly. I think that sometimes time is an issue as well. But sometimes people don't engage because of time or because it doesn't affect them.

So, yeah, Molly, those topics are really interesting. Love to expand on them. And perhaps we can have some but perhaps along with Sas and Rehana we can sort out some little workshops and discussions.
Because we used to do that at UEL, which is really interesting, particularly as well when the George Floyd and I have to say trauma, a lot of students felt quite traumatized by it. And we had some discussions and seminars where people just came in and said how they were feeling. We had some really good discussions. So, yes, let's sort something out.

REHANA AWAN: And the network, did you run a small kind of one with the first cohort of Union Black, we did run a small reading group, if you like, associated with a discussion group. And I think if we could run that on a bigger scale, then that would be fabulous. And it's certainly something I'm looking at building into the area that I'm supporting at the moment.

LURRAINE JONES: One of the things as well and I'll be quite frank about this. And I'm sure people who don't know me who haven't met me before will see that I am very open. I'm really open about my life, and et cetera. But I think certainly some white colleagues in my experience and anecdotally and as I said, I did a talk last week, I'm not sure that white colleagues are always sure about what to say or how they should say it. And they want to learn but they're afraid to ask, and all of those sorts of things.

So at University of East London, there were some white allyship groups that were set up where white colleagues felt they had a safe space not to say the wrong thing in front of other people. And that can really limit yourself to learning as well, I think so, yeah.

REHANA: I've got one more question as well, which I think is really interesting. So this is from Jason. Jason's asking. Jason, did you want to pop your mic on if it's enabled? I don't think they are enabled yet so I'll just ask the question to save the time. So do you believe we will see an actual OU module or qualification on Black History social cultural studies in the future?

LURRAINE JONES: I really hope so. I really hope so. You know, but thanks for your question, Jason. I think it's difficult because there are few Black academics anywhere in the UK. I think there's the updated statistic for Black female professors, of which we have one from last year, Professor Mercy Wilson. There's only 41 Black female professors in the UK.
I mean, she's quite unbelievable. So there are very few Black academics around. And it would take someone who is Black to write it. And I think it's really important because this work, of course, the Union Black will help colleagues to understand the lived experiences of their students and staff.
But also understand that the urgent decolonisation of the curriculum, it's urgent for people to understand and see themselves in the materials, in the discussions, writing from that perspective. So this course helps everyone, but I think we're actually quite a long way away from it, Jason. If the truth be told.

I think it's really needed not just for Black students, but I've always said it's really important for white students and white staff to see Black academics to see Black senior leaders, whether you're at school, whether you're anywhere. It's important for white people, white communities, and Black communities just as important to see Black role models in positions of leadership, academia, et cetera, et cetera.

So I think we're quite aware, Jason but perhaps you can start writing one. I'm not sure if you... I can't see you, and I'm not really sure if you're position or an AL but, you know, yeah. And it takes ages, doesn't it? To write something at the OU, which I was quite shocked about as well.

REHANA AWAN: So it does it, does. Our wheels turn slowly, that's for sure. And we have come to the end, but there is, really, another really good question if you've got a bit more time to stay on and to have that, if that's all right. This is from Temitayo. My apologies if I pronounced that incorrectly.

But Temitayo is…thank you for your talk and work on Union Black. It's now two years after the murder of George Floyd. Race equality seems to have become deprioritized again in society.

I think part of the reluctant to take the course is part of that deprioritizing. What do you think we can do to keep race equality concerns particularly anti-Blackness on the agenda?

LURRAINE JONES: Yeah, if you speak to any Black academic, they would say the same thing. And I mentioned it earlier about the Met. It's always reactive. It's not something that the rate, if that's Temitayo who's again, in my EDI team, thank you for giving me more work. But if that is Temi, she has just been recruited to become greater quality charter project lead.

Race does go off the agenda. And this is the difficulty around diversity and inclusion. Whenever you speak about diversity, you must always use the word inclusion as well because you can have a diverse set of students or staff, but does that mean inclusion? So race has to be kept on the agenda because it always drops off. I think that the difficulty is it became part of the equality and diversity. And the difficulty for many, many people is that I think they feel that inclusion is this zero-sum pie that if somebody gets one bit, something is taken away from someone else, which isn't the case.

But there aren't enough, it often needs Black and Brown people to push the race agenda. But it absolutely, absolutely needs allyship from white colleagues. It just does. I mean, the Black Lives Matter movement we saw with George Floyd, it needs white allyship to push it forward because there just aren't the numbers. They just aren't the numbers of Black academics to do the work. And it shouldn't be as it is for every minoritized group.

I mean, I'm a straight woman, but I'm an ally to other colleagues who are experiencing oppression in terms of their sexual orientation, et cetera. But the burden shouldn't be just on them to do the work. You should EDI, as we say in EDI team, particularly Pauline Collins always says EDI is everyone's responsibility. So it absolutely needs drivers from the white colleagues just to help us do the work. To not take the lead on it, but to absolutely help Black and Brown colleagues to take this forward.

REHANA AWAN: Brilliant. Lurraine, thank you so much for a really informative and a thoughtful session. If you haven't done Union Black, I think the message is you absolutely must and need to for your own professional development, but also for your own personal development. And to help us make the change at the OU that is needed. Thank you, Lurraine, for kicking off Black History Month for us. Fantastic session.

LURRAINE JONES: And thank you to so many people for coming along, and for your questions and engagement. And, please, please, please, spread the word, do the course. And, please, please spread the word because I genuinely mean, not just because I'm involved in it, it's genuinely a great course. And you won't regret joining.

REHANA AWAN: Brilliant. Thank you.

LURRAINE JONES: Thank you. Take care, everyone.