



# Resilience in Adversity Seminar Series

Conversations with BAME communities

~ 15 July 2020 ~

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*Firstly, we would like to note that there are conversations going on about and there has been some controversy over the use of the acronym for describing those from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities - BAME as it is a very generalised term and does not allow for the vast array of issues that affect people from different diverse backgrounds.*

*DRI will continue to use BAME in the short-term for its communication purposes since it is widely recognised and utilised in communications by the UK government, institutions and community and development organisations. However, DRI will be holding regular conversations and looking to engage with people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities about how best we can continue to raise the issues facing these communities.*

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### Background

Diversity Resource International organised this first seminar on Resilience in Adversity to create a safe space for BAME communities in Sussex to come together and speak to senior representatives of the statutory sector and anchor institutions about their perspectives on racial inequalities and, specifically, the disproportionate impacts of Covid-19 on the local BAME community. The event was at capacity on the evening, with 100 people actively engaged including senior figures from local anchor institutions and the statutory sector and another 100 who were interested in joining but were limited to the number who could attend.

## Executive Summary

DRI's first seminar in the series Resilience in Adversity was 100% oversubscribed. To us, this speaks volumes, as does the quality and quantity of audience feedback during and after the event (see below). In July 2020 we are at a pivotal point in Sussex as in so many communities across the western world, triggered by the tragic killing of George Floyd in the USA and the relentless statistics showing that BAME communities in Britain have suffered more than any other ethnic group in the UK due to Covid-19.

The purpose of our event was to recognise this moment as an opportunity to point out the ongoing struggles of many to survive the challenges of daily life in Britain caused by our collective inadequacy as a society to break down barriers to cohesion. Those of us who arrived long ago are not only enraged by this continuing state of affairs, but also by the blinkered discussion of BAME communities (or any other of the awkward and inadequate labels attributed to us) in Britain, seeing our arrival as a problem rather than acknowledging our contributions to the social and economic fabric of our lives.

Our event brought together BAME leaders from the NHS, educational and support services to discuss the issues we face today to an audience of senior figures from the local statutory sector and anchor institutions.

Scott Durairaj of NHS South East's BAME Disparity Advisory Panel noted the racist construct of our society that means we are all inescapably racist and which, coupled with institutional and personal forms of racism, means that the problem is complex to untangle, requiring deep commitments to reform at every level.

Lola Banjoko, Executive MD at Brighton and Hove CCG and Sussex Co-Lead BAME Disparities Response Programme, concluded that seniority provides no protection from racism and that senior colleagues acting in racist ways need to be constantly challenged on their attitudes in order to avoid giving them permission to continue.

Grace Owen, DRI Associate Director, took a global leadership development perspective noting the historical and geopolitical background that has led us to today's problems of race. She advised that to prevent giving permission to others to continue to propound this legacy, it needs members of the BAME to see their leadership potential. Grace noted five different forms of leadership that are needed: Leading in society, Leading Others, Leading Functions, Leading Organisations and Leading Yourself.

Dr Yaa Asare, DRI Director and Senior Lecturer at Brighton University, noted the anomalies of teaching British values without first decolonising the school curriculum and of the many incongruencies of the taught values versus the real life experiences of many BAME people in everyday life. Teachers need to be trained in discussing the reality, confronting the problems for them to be successfully tackled.

Our young panel of Joshua and Aaron Clarke and Sejal Patel-Roberts saddened us with their perceptions of persistent long-standing problems of racism that continue from their parents' generation from the subtlety of language to microaggressions in the workplace to the inadequacy of school infrastructure in recognising and engaging with the issues faced by its BAME students.

DRI Director Mebrak Ghebreweldi in a few minutes captured 21 years of witnessing a lack of authentic commitment from the local organisations that should be helping to break down barriers to cohesion. She challenges: How strong is the commitment of today's leaders?

Kevin Richmond, CEO of Sussex Community Foundation (SCF), spoke of his own personal changing perceptions of the scale and nature of the issues faced by BAME people and of his intent to change SCF's attitude towards funding solutions.

Following the event there was great demand for further forums of this kind to bring together the local community to hear from those well placed to speak for the BAME community. DRI has undertaken to organise such events as well as presenting its five strategic goals to ensure we use this opportunity for lasting change.

#### DRI's Strategic Goals:

1. Create a **permanent stakeholder organisation** under DRI auspices to facilitate engagement between **ethnically diverse** individuals, groups and leaders with the wider community. Convene regular platform events (virtual/live); issue reports; create new mechanisms.
2. Ensure a strong channel for **young voices**
3. Collate and disseminate **case studies** to facilitate learning and support engagement
4. Seek to understand and address immediate impacts of racism, inequalities and disparities (**SURVIVE**)
5. Lobby for transformative recognition of the substantial contribution BAME members of East Sussex communities already make and their potential to go further with obstacles removed (**THRIVE**)

In addition, following on from our director's message, we issued a challenge to organisations wanting to partner with us to meet the following criteria:

- A **top down** commitment to
- make adequate **resources** available within your organisations to enable
- effective engagement** to develop
- outside-the-tick box** thinking, achieving
- measurable outcomes** leading to

- ❑ a long-term **process** to achieve
- ❑ a **sustainable reset** to the issues we identify.

## Participants

- **Atiya Gourlay**, (Event Chair) Equality, Participation and Partnerships Manager, Children's Services, ESCC
- **Grace Nichols**, Award-winning international poet
- **Scott Durairaj**, Co-Chair, NHS South East Covid-19 BAME Disparity Advisory Panel
- **Lola Banjoko**, Executive MD at Brighton & Hove CCG and Sussex Co-lead (BAME) Disparities Response Programme.
- **Grace Owen**, Global Leadership Development (Advisor, Trustee, Director, Facilitator, Spiritual Director, Reflective Practitioner, Mentor, Coach, Author, Speaker).
- **Dr Yaa Asare**, DRI Director, Senior Lecturer at Brighton University.
- **Joshua Clarke**, Graduate, Risk Assessment and Compliance at UBS
- **Aaron Clarke**, Business Development Manager, Vandu Language Services.
- **Sejal Patel-Roberts**, Gap Year Student.
- **Mebrak Ghebreweldi**, Director & Co-founder of DRI.
- **Kevin Richmond**, CEO, Sussex Community Foundation.
- **Mamta Patel**, Associate Director, DRI.
- **John Agard**, Award-winning international poet.

## Supporters

We are grateful for the support and collaboration of

- East Sussex County Council
- NHS
- Grace Nichols and John Agard and Grace Owen

## Speaker Key Points

### 1. Grace Nichols, Award-winning international poet

Grace read two poems written during the Covid-19 pandemic about loving two homes and the daily experiences of life in Lewes during the lockdown and the craving for the touch of loved ones.

- ❖ Petition Girl
- ❖ Harbour

### 2. Scott Durairaj, Co-Chair, NHS South East Covid-19 BAME Disparity Advisory Panel

- In a paper written in April 2020, Scott first drew attention to the fact that the NHS workers dying from Covid-19 seemed to look more like him than his managers. He also noticed a similar pattern among Covid-19 patients. This led to the creation of the advisory panel.
- Attempts to address health inequalities have been underway for 40 years, since the Black Report in 1980.
- Instead of talking about how to address it, we need to understand the fundamental drivers for health inequalities, specifically racism.

- Racism has three interrelated dimensions: **Structural, interpersonal and institutional**. Many national and regional programmes have failed because they have failed to recognise all three elements and the interplay between them.
- Given the structural nature of racism we need to accept we are all implicitly racist whether deliberately or not. Let us not waste time on re-doing research on this. Like being stuck in a traffic jam - you are contributing to it by being there.
- Awareness of institutional racism dates to 1967 - we see it in statistical evidence on e.g. stop & search, likelihood of getting jobs and health inequalities, school expulsions.
- Interpersonal racism is difficult to address due to issues of white fragility, consideration of workplace consequences etc. So, it often festers unexpressed.
- By examining all three dimensions of racism we can better understand how they combine to create socioeconomic disadvantage, cultural insensitivities and risk factors that lead to the health inequalities we are seeing.
- NHS South East is currently reviewing the health inequalities we are seeing together with the wider determinants to come back with a multi-institutional response to tackle all three dimensions in a strategy due to start from January.

### 3. Lola Banjoko - Executive MD at Brighton & Hove CCG and Sussex Co-lead BAME Disparities Response Programme.

- Over the years Lola and colleagues have experienced many incidents of racism. You develop onion-like layers to cope.
- More recently, there has been clearer evidence that senior executives (Adam Doyle) have been willing to tackle overt racist behaviour (they do get it).
- Even at her senior level though, Lola noted that she has experienced that people dismiss her views about decisions she feels are not right. She has come to accept that she has a responsibility to have uncomfortable conversations with colleagues about their attitudes. Keeping quiet, on the other hand, makes this behaviour permissible.
- Anger was mounting in the BAME community as the daily Covid-19 statistics made the disproportionate effects increasingly clear. On top of this, George Floyd's tragic death pushed more people to realise that it is time to speak out, whether we see acts of conscious or unconscious racism. We need to ensure that people in leadership positions are made aware and are accountable for acting on these.
- The NHS has a diverse workforce, but it is not an inclusive organisation. If it were, you would see more BAME faces at senior level and reflected in recruitment processes. If it were, you would see different health and social care outcomes.
- We must have the honesty to say we have not got it right.
- Lola cited a quote she had read in a newspaper: 'as a nation we are collectively grateful to the millions of workers who toiled at a minimum wage and maximum risk to keep the islands afloat over the last three to four months'.
- This is not the time for corporate lines - tokenistic and tick box - behaviours. Unless we are honest, the problems will never be solved.
- Unless you have lived the BAME experience, you cannot know the answers, so we must find collaborative solutions.
- The problems start long before the workplace in educational settings when BAME people are implicitly made to feel there is something inferior about them.
- Q&A responses:

- NHS BAME Disparity response programme is seeking to address several factors, including workplace BAME talent management. There needs to be more access to effective mechanisms such as head-hunting, networking, and less deployment of the 'deficit model' of just sending BAME people on more courses.
- We are working with GPs, the voluntary sector and others to proactively encourage BAME people to take health checks in order to root out multiple long-term conditions, teach them how to self-manage their health.

#### 4. Grace Owen, Global Leadership Development (Advisor, Trustee, Director, Facilitator, Spiritual Director, Reflective Practitioner, Mentor, Coach, Author, Speaker).

- The response from individuals and organisations like DRI to the BLM resurgence have in themselves been healing for the BAME community.
- Four aspects to focus on: **Experience, context, imagination, activism**
- It is important to revisit our received teaching. When you look at the spatially accurate Peters World Map, it helps you to review and renew how we see ourselves and our home countries and continent.
- When you look at the map of the British Empire at its peak, you must wonder how was it possible for a small island to dominate 23% of the world's population and take over 24% of its geography?
- The British Empire was an institution with a vision, mission, strategies, goals, plans, infrastructure and resources. It was an ambitious global project to create power, wealth domination. It was organised and implemented for decades with dehumanisation and brutality and the dividing of others by class, gender and race. It intentionally constructed a world that gave white people advantages - economic, social, linguistic, political, technological and generational. That legacy lives on and continues to be embedded and maintained by today's leaders.
- Leadership does this but it can also be the force that dismantles and recreates structures and systems.
- We all have it within us to be leaders. Leadership happens in five domains: Leading in society, Leading Others, Leading Functions, Leading Organisations and Leading Yourself. It does not require a position, or a title, status or remuneration and you do not need permission.
- We each have a unique life experience that we can apply. Grace shared a photograph of the head teacher from her primary school, one of the first black head teachers in the UK. The school is now being renamed after her and other place names in Camden are also being reviewed - it is a good example of where a council can step up and make the change that we all desire. This will, of course, also send a message to future generations. A question for all of us is therefore: What was our early life experience and how has that informed our leadership style?
- James Baldwin quote: 'Not everything that is faced can be changed but nothing can be changed until it is faced.'
- So, another question for all of us is: How is Covid-19 and the Black Lives Matter context shaping our leadership - what will it drive us to do differently or carry on doing?
- Audre Lorde quote: 'Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation and that is an act of political warfare.'
- I am learning to put on my oxygen mask before helping others. I am a British Ghanaian, a sibling, a Christian woman, a wife, a mother and I have been socialised and conditioned to help others often at the expense of my own needs. Slowly I am

learning that my life matters. I am not disposable. My life is precious and priceless. Leading yourself is the first step in developing your resilience.

- You need to find what energises you, defy categorisation, be bold with our vision and imagination and dream like our parents and grandparents. Listen to their stories, it can help to challenge your thinking.
- We need to decolonise our minds, create our own curriculum. We are not hearing much about this in mainstream society right now.
- Maya Angelou quote: 'Do the best you can until you know better'.
- We are the leaders who are the force needed for structural change and systemic reform. It begins with us.

#### 5. Dr Yaa Asare, DRI Director, Senior Lecturer at Brighton University.

- I want to challenge the British values agenda in schools and talk about the context we are all living in now.
- What does community engagement really mean? As black people, as people of colour, currently have a voice, a focus on racism initiated by the terrible footage of the death of George Floyd, which sparked the world's imagination and pushed many people of colour to speak about their own experiences and demand change. It is important to recognise our many white allies, particularly those young white people on protest marches, their number and fervour.
- I chose the field of education because I see it as a place that has the most potential to change people's minds in how they see the world and society. But we need to ask what is being taught?
- We need to be very critical of the current curriculum and the political agenda behind it. There have been many good statements about this lately. British imperialism needs to be taught to understand that it only became a world power because of slavery and colonialism. This is not taught but it needs to be.
- In 2014, Michael Gove mandated that specific British values must be promoted in schools. This was a response to the Trojan horse affair where allegations were made that Islamic extremists were trying to infiltrate the teaching delivered in schools in Birmingham. No evidence was found, interestingly, yet this alleged incident was used to shift the curriculum. The book sent by Mr Gove to every school 'This Island Race' is prime for critique. Teachers have said they feel they are being asked to teach patriotism as part of the British values agenda.
- Therefore, true engagement with other communities is vital. We need to understand the concept of others and of othering i.e. the idea that some sections of humanity appear so different to us that they seem not fully human, that they do not share a common humanity with us. Unfortunately, that 'us' can often be white Britishness.
- The values Mr Gove chose to be taught in British schools are democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect - those are all okay. but then we have tolerance. Personally, I do not want to be tolerated, I do not want my family to be tolerated. It is a word we need to challenge.
- I want to share this case study: A Muslim woman living on a council estate with three children all of school-age. Her experiences were grim and at times really distressing. She had been the victim of racial harassment in the form of verbal abuse to her and her children, her car was frequently vandalised, dog mess was thrown in her garden; there was an attempt to break in while the family was on holiday. But the police response when she contacted them was totally inadequate.



Contrary to the values being taught in school, she was experiencing inequality of the rule of law, she had lost her individual liberty - she had stopped wearing her hijab to avoid the abuse, she had no mutual respect (instead extreme Islamophobia) and nothing akin to tolerance, instead aggression. The idea of British values needs to be interrogated against the reality of life for many people.

- Instead I suggest schools need to discuss the social and political impact of prejudice and racism, the lived experience of the complex and multiple identities in Britain. It is not enough to teach about traditional cultures - we need to teach the legacy of racism and also opposition to racism rather than this fixed idea of Britishness, which in itself can be problematic if children's parents do not identify with it.
- My recommendation is that we must mainstream race equality teaching, not just confine it to Black History Month once a year. Teachers are often very frightened to go there, these are difficult issues to speak about, but with training, it is possible to do. It needs to be part of their professional development so that they can build their confidence. It is essential to train young people, particularly in majority white areas.

## 6. Young People Panel - Joshua Clarke, Aaron Clarke, Sejal Patel-Roberts

- **Joshua Clarke, Graduate, Risk Assessment and Compliance at UBS**
  - The need for post-education education.
  - Yaa argued for a more culturally appropriate curriculum in schools but what about those who have already left?
  - Having spent a year working in a large organisation what struck me was that there was no real recurring or consistent training on issues of race and equality.
  - Organisations/employers have an incredibly important role to play in educating their staff. There are several things they can do - it can start with everyone receiving this training as part of their induction. It goes a long way in describing the values and beliefs of the organisation. Repeating such training on a regular basis then reinforces these values: that there is no place for racism there.
  - You can ask professional trainers to come in and talk about their experiences. There are over 100 people in this seminar - how many can say they have been given consistent training in racial equality?
  - It would be a good thing if negative behaviours could be unlearned through training.
- **Aaron Clarke (Business Development Manager, Vandu Language Services)**
  - My brother and I are a quarter German, quarter English, half Eritrean.
  - I would like to talk about the new battlegrounds that I believe many of my generation will be talking about in the coming years.
  - Our culture needs to acknowledge and reflect the impacts of historical racism - how it affects people on both sides of that divide.
  - Our generation was almost brainwashed in the idea of how great life in Britain can be. It goes both ways. Migrants and refugees come here leaving difficult situations thinking it will be some sort of utopia - a siren song. We had a young Eritrean man living with us for a while who thought his life would rapidly improve when he got here, not that he would be starting on the bottom rung of a very tall ladder.
  - Another issue I wanted to draw attention to is the impact of the everyday language we use. A recent study found that commentators in top flight European matches are nearly seven times more likely to talk about the power of a player if he has darker skin and three and a half times more likely to reference his pace whereas

lighter-skinned players were then more likely to be praised about their intelligence or their hard work. This of course reinforces these time-old tropes about white intelligence and black athleticism. You know one is achieved the other is god given.

- So where do we draw the lines in our use of language? That is something I think our generation will discuss in detail.
- Debate is so scattered online right now. We need to find a way to have a unified cohesive voice so that these lines can be drawn by us rather than by someone else.

- **Sejal Patel-Roberts, Gap Year Student**

- I am in the process of writing to my former secondary school to ask them to do more to encourage anti-racism. I am working with other young people across the county who are both white and BAME.
- Firstly, I want to emphasise the passion and determination from all the people I have spoken to. I've been really impressed by their passion in taking actions ranging from white people educating themselves about their privilege and having difficult conversations with their families or the courage of some of my friends in talking about their experiences of racism in our society.
- What we all agree on is the need to change our curriculum so that it teaches BAME history accurately
- Other ideas include training teachers on recognising and managing microaggressions, volunteering with local refugee charities.
- There were many other such ideas but what worries me is that no-one is asking young people for their input. There is also no infrastructure in schools to enable students to either talk about racist incidents or to acknowledge and celebrate race. If my friends and I had not asked, none of these issues would have come out.
- My recommendation is that schools in East Sussex need to provide a platform for young people to speak out.

## 7. Mebrak Ghebreweldi, Director & Co-founder of DRI

- In 21 years of working with leaders in the public and private sector, what I have learned is that they are all trying to do a good job but there is a lot of inconsistency. Support of ethnic minorities and under-privileged communities is turned on and off like a light bulb.
- If there is a little bit of money and you can do this one project for £5k. I do not know if other organisations have better funding or resources. But we have experienced no real commitment and as a result the inequality gap gets wider instead of narrower.
- I have also seen no real personal commitment from leaders. Without that we are not going to move forward. So as a leader I would ask myself why did we do that in the past and how do we bring all communities together with and without resources?
- To get real engagement we need to work together with committed leaders.
- I think the black and Asian people living in Britain have always been part of the UK solution to the problem. I do not believe they have ever been part of the problem. You need to go back to the history of their coming to the UK, they have become part of what the UK is today, including the wealth.
- The Covid-19 pandemic has absolutely confirmed how black and ethnic minorities have been part of the solution to society's problem. We need to remember that and ensure that they are regarded as stakeholders in future. They should be on the decision-making structures of every organisation whether public sector or charity.

- We can get there together to bring about sustainable change, but every leader needs to ask themselves: what is my commitment to getting there?

#### 8. Kevin Richmond, CEO, Sussex Community Foundation

- SCF is a local charity covering the whole of Sussex. Our job is to raise money from local people and give it to local charities and community groups. What we love to do most of all is support grassroots organisations with great ideas and watch them grow like those we have heard from today.
- What really struck me from today is the idea of racism as a structural issue for society, affecting everything we do. Talking to a white friend of mine recently, we were recalling how at school when we learned about slavery, we were taught with an emphasis on how Britain ended the slave trade and how we were better than the USA because we ended it first. But what we have heard today is how Britain Empire is entirely built on the slave trade that we created, and society continues to reinforce that racism. It shows how pervasive it is.
- As a white person who wants to be an ally, I think we need to act with responsibility and humility and not just say the right things but do the right things. We at SCF are really committed to that. It is important for all charities and funders to remember that black and ethnic minorities are not separate, they are part of our community.
- We want to support you to achieve the change we want to see. We normally give small grants up to £5k but one thing coming across strongly here is the need for more sustainable funding which we will work very hard to achieve.
- In the meantime, we have the Sussex Crisis Fund which is giving very quick response grants to help with the Covid-19 crisis. We are particularly keen to see black and ethnic minority groups apply for this funding.
- Finally, racism is nothing new. It has been around a long while, but we do have an opportunity right now, when you see footballers wearing 'Black Lives Matter' shirts on TV every day.
- We have a responsibility to take that and to really try and address the fundamental issues and we can only do that by working together and leading together to bring about change.

#### 9. Mamta Patel, Director, DRI

- DRI is recalibrating its purpose in response to the opportunity we now have. Our new slogan is 'survive and thrive', which represents the balance we are looking to demonstrate between helping the most vulnerable to survive but also drawing attention to the contribution of BAME communities to the every-day fabric of our lives in Sussex and across the country.
- We want to create a permanent stakeholder forum to bring together voices from across the BAME to engage with the wider community so that we can work together.
- We will also provide a channel to enable our young people to be heard. I think we can expect great things from this generation.
- We will also continue to do what we always have: talk to people in our community and collect their stories so that we can tackle failure and celebrate successes together.
- The Covid-19 crisis has shown the important work the BAME communities does. We want to help them develop skills to go even further.
- We want to work with other organisations but only those who have an authentic commitment to making a difference. To us, this looks like:

- Top-down commitment
- Well-resourced staff
- To go beyond tokenism and tick box
- To meaningful engagement
- To achieve measurable outcomes
- Leading to a long-term process and a sustainable reset.

#### Final Q&A

- Grace Owen - where does leadership start? With leading yourself and sifting through the many voices you hear to find the authentic ones. Also learn to listen. Organisations need to create active and safe listening spaces. They need to look again at structures and systems, not enough to ask BAME people for their assistance. There must be a strategic intention behind the mask.
- Josh - if issues exist within your organisation then it is your responsibility to do something about it, to train and ensure everyone has a safe place to work.
- Aaron - a request to the older generation to keep on having these conversations with your kids. I learned a lot from discussions with my mum.

#### John Agard - Award-winning international poet

John reflected on the passion of the young people and affirmed the need to interrogate language and assumptions. He read two poems:

- The Ascent of John Edmonstone, a black slave who taught taxidermy to Charles Darwin.
- Talking to Plants, speaking to the solace many have found in gardening during lockdown.

### **Audience Feedback**

- *Powerful words (on Grace Nichols)*

#### **To Scott:**

- *Really useful insights. Interested to see where unpaid carers fit into the strategic plan, as the increase of Covid-19 risks for BAMEs will mean an increase in BAME carers.*
- *The way Scott spoke about structural, interpersonal, institutional racism is so helpful*
- *Not sure if allowed, but I would like to ask how to tackle structural/interpersonal racism that exists in all communities. Being from an BAME background myself I have noticed racism between black, Arab, Chinese, Asian. How can we come together and counteract division as obviously together we are stronger?*
- *Stressful jobs with low income have resulted in many health issues.*
- *Do not forget refugees and asylum seekers please!*
- *Educational priority areas of the 70s did make a difference as did 'Sure Start' and the 'Early Years Curriculum'. The tragedy is political change often destroys proactive, positive working.*

#### **From Scott:**

- *Refugees, asylum seekers, migrant workers all included and considered using structural, institutional and interpersonal racism. if one of us is not equal then none of us are equal*
- *BAME safeguarding to prevent further morbidity or mortality (suffering and death) from Covid-19 ensuring services have been improved and marketing and engagement / communications is tailored and there is a role for our interpreters to help network accurate advice that missed so many BAME people.*
- *Scott: WHITE ALLY - those who stand by your side or in front of you, always conscious to their part in the structure of racism, they deliver action to diminish racism. WHITE SAVIOUR those that use social media and publicise publicly that they are not racist,*

*tweet pictures with black staff whilst presiding over organisations with 100% white leadership and terrible staff experience for BAME people. Their purpose is to look good and look anti-racist but not to deliver anything.*

**To Lola**

- *I recognise the 'invisibility' at senior level that you described. Takes a lot of courage to 'not permit', to speak out.*
- *It is difficult to speak out at interview when you know you did not get a role because your face did not fit.*
- *We would like to know when the NHS will start to make those changes: When will they have strategies to have transparent development progress for the lifetime of BAME nurses and housekeeping staff?*
- *How can we scrutinise to ensure NHS change is implemented, not just more lip-service to the BAME community?*
- *Very moving and powerful.*
- *I think Lola's comment about just putting BAME staff on training courses to help them progress (a deficit model) is food for thought in relation to how we think about our learning and development strategies.*

**To Lola and Scott:**

- *What can we do locally to make sure that pillar 2 test and trace collects and shares ethnicity data with our public health teams? I was at ESHWB yesterday and was alarmed that this data is not shared.*
- *How to get your voice heard by the decision-makers?*

**To Grace Owen:**

- *I love the personal challenge in your presentation.*
- *So inspiring.*
- *Thank you, Grace. Shame race equality in schools has not been working for some time in Brighton. I think we have made a strong stance on changing the curriculum.*
- *My experience at primary school has been that with a predominantly white school population, it was not seen to be a priority to teach from a multicultural perspective. How to change this mindset that prolongs ignorance from generation to generation?*
- *Having worked in a school, I tried to fight for more learning about black history and was met with resistance and avoidance from SLT.*
- *Exactly our experience. I was shocked to find out that my daughter was being taught about Captain Cook - and not in the context of colonisation. As a NZ Maori, it was very distressing but difficult to know if what I said about it made any difference. The teacher's response was 'this is the curriculum... we just teach it'.*
- *Is multicultural education more important if somewhere predominantly white? Less opportunity to get to know the person rather than the stereotype.*

**To Yaa:**

- *Thanks, Yaa for another thoughtful and thought-provoking presentation. I am grateful for the work you have been doing with us on our schools' guidance and improving our social work practice. Always more to do but seeing a difference in the work we are auditing with BAME children and families.*
- *Multicultural education must include building an understanding of the long multi-ethnic history of migration to these islands...dating back at least 9000 years - for anyone who's not aware, search for 'Cheddar Man', 'York Bangle Lady' and 'Beachy Head Woman'. In addition to 'Doggerland', which explains how Britain became an island 3000 years after Cheddar Man's arrival.*

- *I agree with the safe listening spaces Grace. I have had to 'safeguard' a meeting with BAME colleagues to give them space. Because my line manager wanted me to address all colleagues. Which I know our BAME colleagues would never feel safe speaking in. Thank you for validating my decision.*

**To Joshua, Aaron, Sejal:**

- *Joshua, you made critically important points about the need for ongoing training and that there is no excuse for racism now.*
- *Very eloquently put, Aaron.*
- *These young people are very clued-up and inspirational.*
- *So fantastic to hear these voices.*
- *Sejal, great comments and we can work with our Youth Cabinet to talk to schools about how we can best develop these platforms.*
- *The raw honesty of young voices!*

**To Mebrak:**

- *You are so right, BAME have always been the solution to the UK, ever since the Windrush generation.*
- *The book 'Bloody Foreigners' is a brilliant read if you want to understand the history behind what Mebrak has said. This country has always relied on the resourcefulness, brilliance and cultural innovation of immigrants for its success.*
- *Relearning our white history is essential if we are to dismantle supremacy and racism.*

**To Kevin:**

- *Great to hear Kevin Richmond of Sussex Community Foundation say we are not 'other' to our community - we are the community.*

**To John Agard:**

- *We love you John.*

**To DRI and all participants:**

- *Local authorities like the NHS have Snowy White peaks - even in the so called more progressive areas like social services, education and housing. It is essential that Inclusive leadership and diversity literacy are core person specifications at leadership level with core KPIs attached. Otherwise the pyramid effect and glass ceilings will continue at the highest strategic decision-making level. Money and resources follow power. People like Atiya and Kevin doing great work need their counterparts higher up the hierarchy.*
- *Thank you DRI for organising this event. I think your strategic goals are spot on. I have listened and I have learnt and would love to continue to work with you to tackle those three strands of structural, interpersonal and institutional racism.*
- *It has been an event with a lot of food for my personal and professional reflection. I want to continue learning and to become a true ally.*
- *From Sussex Police, 'we are committed to engagement and working together.'*
- *From Kevin Richmond: 'An inspiring and challenging discussion, and I will do my best to make sure it does make a difference.'*
- *This evening has provided thoughtful insight that I hope leads to meaningful change.*
- *Thank you SO much, everyone, for a superb seminar. I have stayed half an hour longer than I was planning, could not tear myself away! So much of what's been said has resonated deeply and every presentation has been profoundly thought-provoking, greatly inspired my thinking as I work with teacher colleagues across Brighton on ways to ensure the curriculum represents the history and rich cultural diversity of our nation in*

*a more honest and balanced way.*

- *This has been a brilliant seminar.*
- *♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥*
- *Excellent event DRI, well thought out, timely, insightful speakers and brilliant chairpersonship Atiya, Essential listening for all. When is your next event DRI, more please!!! Encore!!*
- *I was meant to leave the chat at 18:45 and here I am till the end, very, very interesting, such professionals and educated speakers.*
- *it has been an interesting and thought-provoking event*
- *So much useful content and work to do. Looking forward to some meaningful joint work to achieve change - please keep in touch.*
- *Could this event be held throughout the South (and beyond) outside of Sussex? There is a real need to take this beyond our area. BAMEs would especially welcome the chance to speak.*
- *thank you DRI for amazing work, wish you were in North Central London!*
- *Well done DRI for organising this and thanks to all the speakers. Citizens Advice remain committed to helping people from BAME communities during Covid-19 and beyond.*
- *Wealden and Rother District Council are committed in working and engaging together. This has been a brilliant seminar and thank you to DRI for inviting me*
- *I have indeed learned a lot today, so thank you.*
- *Lewes District Council is committed to ongoing engagement too!*

## Conclusions

July 2020 is a pivotal moment for the Ethnically Diverse communities (BAME) of Sussex as it is in many other parts of the western world. The cruel timing of the increasingly evident disproportionate impacts of Covid-19 on our community together with the spill over of global fury at the killing of George Floyd, a citizen in the USA, causing a resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement has woken strong emotions in both white and non-white communities. That DRI's first seminar in the series Resilience in Adversity was 100% oversubscribed testifies to this.

Speakers at our event raised awareness of the complex structural, institutional, interpersonal dynamics at play, giving rise to continued inequalities in society and in the workplace. They noted that even where people of colour have risen to senior positions, this does not immunise them from experiencing racism. Leadership needs to start from valuing ourselves enough to say we are worth more and need to be recognised for our worth. Recognition of these complex issues is now being applied in NHS initiatives such as the BAME Disparity Response Programme.

Educationalists and young people at our event reminded us that the roots of inequality begin young and are difficult to shake and that the need for education persists throughout people's lives. British values need to be questioned both in theory and practice. Our schools, institutions and private sector organisations are still not providing adequate platforms for the views of their BAME students, employees and other stakeholders to be heard.

We have become inured to many racial biases in the language used around us, for example in sports commentary, but we need to continue to interrogate this. If we allow it to continue it debases us today and undermines future generations.

That so many white and non-white people came together for a two hour virtual event on a balmy summer evening during the pandemic demonstrates the genuine desire for collaboration and a desperation to end the inequalities, start a new chapter in our story. DRI intends to run with this torch to not only provide support to those struggling to survive in Britain today but also to empower all members of our community to thrive, showcasing those who already are contributing significantly to the social, economic, political and cultural fabric of our lives.

Even as the event wound up, offers were coming in from key bodies throughout Sussex to work with us to achieve this vision. We thank them from these pledges and will be in touch to ask them to authentically support us to get there.

We also thank our resident poets Grace Nichols and John Agard for helping us to feel what is so hard to say in words.

### **Get involved:**

DRI will be continuing to have more upcoming seminars to discuss these issues in due course and would love to hear from you who have already attended to provide feedback so we can make improvements to the content discussed, how these are conducted.

## **More about Diversity Resource International**

DRI is a non-profit-making Social Enterprise Company. It is limited by guarantee corporate status and was incorporated in December 2004 in Hastings East Sussex.

DRI is now based in Lewes and continues to support ethnically diverse and migrant communities in Sussex by teaching them the skills and knowledge they need to survive and thrive in Britain.

You can read more at our [website](#).

