0:13

[Baroness Amos] Good afternoon, everyone, and welcome to this afternoon's Webinar on Turning Words into Action: Eliminating racism and racial inequality in higher education.

0:24

It's a huge topic, just for one hour. And I hope that our speakers this afternoon, Dr Jason Arday.

0:35

Hillary Gyebi-Ababio, and Professor David Richardson, will really help us to focus on some key areas of action.

0:45

They will each speak for about five minutes, and then we will go into a discussion and a Q&A.

0:52

Please use the chat function to post your questions and your comments.

0:58

We will try and answer as many of your questions as possible.

1:02

But given that we are time limited, we will use the feedback forms that you send in and ask for your comments. And then we will be publishing some kind of paper document that picks up on the ideas that have come through from today and asking you to send examples, as well, because it's so important that we're able to learn from each other.

1:26

Please remember to tweet, tag you UUK at UUK events. If you can, hashtag words into action.

1:38

And if you have any other links, please let us know.

1:42

So a few remarks from me.

1:46

The last few weeks, we've seen a lot of attention being given to the issues around racism, inequality, discrimination, as a word, partly as a result of the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis. I mean a terrible event that touched so many people and resulted in worldwide

protests.

2:09

There's also been the disproportionate impact of Covid 19 on Asian and black communities here in the UK, it's something that I think, we all found much, it's showing a spotlight on the pernicious and the basic nature of racism in our society.

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Despite all the commissions we've had, the reports, the recommendations.

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And despite the progress, which has been made, and there has been progress, I say that as someone who's worked on these issues for over 40 years, it's been painfully slow.

2:46

It's too easy to go backwards.

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There has been way too much complacency, including in our sector.

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Too often, we lose focus as demands are made for more and more evidence, More data, more expectation, the people will lay on the line, their experiences, so that it can be picked over by others.

3:15

There's also refusal to believe the day-to-day reality and the experiences of black and Asian people in the UK.

3:24

Last year, I was pleased to co-lead on behalf of UUK.

3:28

With Amatey Doku from the NUS, who was the vice president for higher education, a piece of work, looking at the Black, Asian, and minority, ethnic student attainment gap.

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And what we needed to do to address it. We had over 99 universities who commented, and we also had a series of sessions around the country to hear from students and university leaders,

and we identified five key areas for action.

4:02

You will not be surprised to know that the first was the need for strong leadership, a visible commitment from the leaders of universities who needed to walk the talk, not just engage in this by meaningless remarks and commitments. It was all about changing institutions.

4:25

Secondly, the need to change cultures, and to have conversations about race, to really understand that the lived experience of so many black and Asian people is one, which has significant elements of negativity in it, and the pervasive impact of racism on people's day-to-day lives.

4:48

Three, the importance of developing racially diverse and inclusive environments. Representation remains important.

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I talked earlier about getting the evidence and analyzing the data.

5:03

We need to go beyond the broad level of black and minority ethnic, but in doing so, we have to accept what the evidence tells us, rather than disbelieving it, and wanting to go on and on and find more and more information, that will actually help us to understand what's going on.

5:24

And finally, we need to understand what works, we need to learn from each other, and we need to have collective action when it's appropriate.

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So a year on, where are we, what's changed? You won't be surprised to hear that many of the same themes have been coming through the new UK's work, current work on Racial Harassment, and we'll hear a little bit more about that. So our focus this afternoon is on action.

5:52

Let's build on the recommendations that came out last year. I will introduce each of our speakers before they speak. And first, we have Jason Arday who is Assistant Professor of Sociology at the University of Durham and is also a visiting research fellow at Ohio State University, and a Research Associate at Nelson Mandela University. Jason, Over to you.

6:23

OK, first and foremost, good afternoon everyone, I hope you're all keeping well, in these very challenging times.

6:30

[Jason] Baroness Amos, thank you so much for your opening words. And I think they kind of set the premise for kind of, a lot of, I guess, what will be discussed today. And I think it's kind of really important. It's kind of, I guess, situate where we are at the moment.

6:43

So I kind of want to start with the thought, I think could be quite useful for us in terms of just framing where we are and where we're looking to go.

6:52

So all things, funny enough, I was listening to music this morning, which isn't necessarily strange in itself, but I was listening to Crowded House, and in particular Weather with you, which is one of the kind of more infamous tracks and there's really kind of interesting, kind of segment, before you get to the resounding chorus about you know, everywhere you go, you want to take the weather with you. And I thought it was really interesting kind of interfuse this with a kind of an opening kind of gambit in terms of where we are at the moment. So, my opening thoughts are really I think within higher education, the debilitating effects of racial discrimination and racial battle fatigue, they notably kind of accompany this, means that of the whereby members of staff may find sleep through sheer exhaustion, they are still awaiting the dream. And in my mind, this idea of a dream is really this kind of idea of what a kind of utopian inclusive academy could really look like. You're embracing all principles that we associate with terrorism.

7:51

So, in the first instance, I kind of want to challenge everyone, to kind of think about, what is that inclusive dream look like for the sector. So, we're working with the premise, that, you know, we're still trying to find this dream. What does it look like> What I propose 3 or 4 things that I think could be quite useful in terms of how we think about the sector, and what we may need to think about going forward. And I think that this is a really critical juncture where there is I believe a critical mass of scholars, activists, educators who are really engaging this in, I guess, an anti racist way and also a collective way that really kind of seeks to dismantle racism in all its insidious, and structural and systemic forms within the academy.

8:32

In terms of kind of some of the suggestions that I prefer, I think one of the things that's really important is really thinking about an institutional wide approach. So, thinking about what we can

do as institutions. So, most importantly, what you have, in many cases, a fantastic pockets of good practice within institutions, but actually where we need to move towards is a unit formed institutional approach ithat is effectively resourced. And that is it really, really integral thing. So in in terms of moving and shifting the narrative I think one of the big things, and thinking about how institutionally, we engage with this discourse. And again, coming back to that notion of collective endeavor, collective responsibility, that becomes really, really important because in situating that context, what we do know is that unfairly and very often BAME members of staff often burdened with the labor of race work in particularly black women.

9:27

And so it is a really important thing, in terms of recognizing the impact of this labor, is important that we all engage in that collective endeavor together.

9:36

In terms of thinking about how we think about these decision-making processes, is integral, absolutely integral, to ensure that we send to black students and staff when implementing solutions or potential interventions, there has to be that kind of intervention period where you gain the agency from fragments of staff experiencing these issues and really think about how we could collectively engage in that inclusive endeavor.

10:03

And in, and more importantly, that ensure that black members of staff, ethnic minority members of staff have the agency and the autonomy to engage in institutional designs, as opposed to kind of developing race equality interventions across institutions and that's really important.

10:21

I think, as I've mentioned earlier, I think resourcing these areas appropriately is really important.

10:26

And more importantly than resourcing these kind of interventions fiscally and from human resource point of view, they must be over sustained and strategic periods.

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So within kind of strategic divisions for universities, which can last anywhere between 5 to 10 years, what we need to see is the kind infiltration, and enjoyment really, of what that vision may look like, and more importantly, how universities seek to resource those interventions.

10:59

I think in light of the ever-changing contours of racism, I think one of the things that's really important is really thinking about how we reconceptualize ideas of why allyship and what this

looks like. The contours of racism are continuously changing, and as a result, we, as custodians of the academy, must remain vigilant and agile. And to do that, I do think we need to kind of reconceptualize, actually, what, does anti racist engagement, endeavor, corroboration, collegiality. What does that look like in this particular guise of racism

11:30

as we see it now, I think in these fractious times, I think it's really important that we think about the promise of university and what their central function is. Fundamentally, what their purposes university got a microcosm of society. And, in many respects, one of the greatest perfections of a multicultural, diverse, hybrid society, and I really think it's important that we attempt to think about all the ways in which we can collectively dismantle racism to ensure that universities are able to fulfill that function. And that promise.

12:02

I kind of want to draw, I want to draw this to a close by just kind of really thinking about something that I think it's really important in terms of rethinking about collective endeavor.

12:10

I was watching a documentary on Hillary Rodham Clinton. And while Hilary herself is a divisive character for many people, she said something in her 2016 campaign, which really stuck with me when I was watching this documentary, I thought, would be quite potent to share right now and I think it's really, really important. I think we all have a collective responsibility, in my humble opinion, to do all we can, to all the people we can, all the ways that we can I think now, more than ever

12:41

it's so important that we are collective in looking to dismantle racism in all its forms, and I think something really special is happening at the moment. And there's a clear appetite for that collective endeavor to really engage and really dismantle something that continues to oppress BAME individuals, and are really systemic, insidious and covert way. And, I think we all have to collectively come together and I think that collective action is really, really important in terms of the tone we set in terms of how we, as custodians to the Academy, leave it for the next generation.

13:13

Thank you so much for your time, much appreciated, and I'm really looking forward to engaging with all of you on this. fantastic. Thank you so much.

13:25

[Baroness Amos] Jason, thank you very much indeed. I'm sure we'll come back in the conversation to a lot of what you said. Our next speaker is Hillary Gyebi-Ababio who was

elected for a two-year term as Vice President of Higher Education at NUS. Hillary, you got 85% of the vote, I think you need to give some advice to some of our politicians about how to really engage with their electorate. Hillary was formally Undergraduate Education Officer at the University of Bristol Students Union, and has a huge amount of experience and expertise. Hillary, over to you.

14:14

[Hillary] Thank you so much. And so before I get into what I want to say, I want to caveat it by saying that on reflection and especially with what has really triggered and this conversation to research, and the way it has and in what I say I'm going to be referring a lot to Black students but I hope that through what I say, you can find universal aspects that span across any racial minority, and that experiences racism, so I wanted to get that out there. So, when we are looking at tackling racism, but actually, they have often been on the forefront of experiencing racism, and speaking out against, upholding the structures that allow racism to persist.

14:56

Over the years, this has met, this, has been met with many receptions from the sector and it's not uncommon for students to feel that you're sharing the lived experiences of racism, they have been misunderstood, gaslighting or simply not heard.

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If we are really going to see racism tackled and eliminated, this cannot be the case anymore.

15:17

We need to be listening to black students and holding their lived experiences as central, true, raw, and honest accounts of the realities of racism. Especially in how it manifested in the sector.

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These will reveal a whole range of things and it is incredibly important that we pay attention to the diversity of the experiences, the nuances that emerged within intersectional identities and how black students have been impacted, beyond what fits into neat boxes, or the sector's beloved acronyms like BAME.

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To really meaningfully engage with the student voice, being able to really know your students is vital.

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We leave as I said tried to let them have the freedom to tell us who they are, what they've experienced, what they need, and finally really importantly, how they perceive you in light of

their experiences.

16:12

That means first, as a set up, we must make room both physically in how our spaces are designed and emotionally, in how we enable black students to build trust and community and gain validation in their experiences.

16:27

We must also humble ourselves and be transparent when we are grappling with hearing things that will make us feel uncomfortable, guilty, shocked, and even ashamed.

16:37

I'm happy to speak more about the concepts later but I really want to take the chance to share some reflections on how we can proactively move forward and turn lived experiences into actionable and targeted solutions to tackling racism.

16:51

So, number one, prepare to be radical.

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We must realize and reflect on the fact that racism and its history is deeply embedded into our education system.

17:01

Therefore, it is crucial that we don't just seek to adjust and repair, but instead we look to uproot and dismantle in essence, decolonize.

17:11

Secondly, we must treat students as partners and this goes back to the collective action we've had just heard before.

17:17

It's important that looking at when we are looking for solutions to racism, the fundamental truth that we must hold is that we should not put black students or minority identities into a position where we are expecting them to come up with solutions to their own oppression.

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However, often you'll find that a lot of those identities have come together to fight for, and really meaningful and initiatives in starting the action needed to tackle racism.

17:46

It is your job to work with them to support them and fund them financially and help them emotionally to be able to deliver those initiatives, whilst giving them the freedom to work beyond your understanding of approaching this issue.

18:02

There are a few examples that I have to give, just finishing at Bristol, and feel free to google it, the BME Success Orogram and Black men and women to achieve great initiatives, that really put this into practice.

18:15

Number three, take responsibility and accountability.

18:19

This work, anti-racist work needs to be actively engaged in every part of our sector and in every part of our institutions, especially in senior levels of the sector.

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EDI teams shouldn't just be the people solely during the work on anti-racism but they should also be able to have the space to have to hold institutions to be accountable in tackling racism in every part of their institutions and the sector.

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Finally, this work, it needs to be living, breathing and sustainable so we can continue to confront racism in all its evolutions.

18:58

This means humbling yourselves to receiving criticisms, as I said before. But it also means instilling confidence in black staff, students and whistleblowers in knowing that when they do call out racism they are being protected and not the institution.

19:14

On top of that, as the National Union of Students rep, and listen to your union officers, especially for those for minority entities, and please, please, please do not shut them out and leave them out of the conversation because they disagree with your view, or well, because they've called you out on inaction, where they find it.

19:35

So to end this, the education sector has been and is hugely influential and will be key in leading

the way in tackling racism, both in the sector and in society.

19:47

We must realign the purpose of education at it's core and allow it to be a space where economics can be alleviated rather than being enforced and the student voice will be central to that. Thank you, and I can't wait to hear your questions later on.

20:03

Thank you.

20:10

[Baroness Amos] Hillary, thank you very much indeed. And that's the real challenge that you've given us there, to prepare to be radical. Our final speaker is David Richardson, who's the Vice Chancellor of the University of East Anglia. David has been at East Anglia since 1991 and he's held a variety of positions, including as Pro Vice Chancellor of Research and Deputy Vice Chancellor. David is also currently the Chair of the UUK Advisory Group on Tackling Racial Harassment in Higher Education. David, over to you.

20:44

[Professor Richardson] Thank you very much. And thank you very much Valerie, Jason and Hillary for the for the actions introductory comments they've made and to everyone joining us, as well. I'll be brief and make three key points. By introduction for me, we're at a particular moment: a couple of key questions. How can universities harness the momentum that's behind the Black Lives Matter movement as a real moment for a tangible, permanent action to address racial inequalities affecting students and staff?

21:16

And what are the medium and longer term steps universities can take to address structural racism?

21:23

So three key points to make. First of all, key point one, there is a problem, accepting there is a problem. My starting point as Vice Chancellor of UEA is to acknowledge that institutional racism exists. It's uncomfortable, but it's true and there are systematic issues in our universities. The first step to solving the problem is to recognize it. This problem is evident in numerous ways.

21:47

Just to give you an example, I was part of the original Universities UK Taskforce that produced the changing the culture guidance in 2016 on tackling violence against women, harassment and hate crimes.

21:59

This was action-based guidance. It was designed to help institutional leaders turn words into measurable actions and bring about cultural change.

22:09

Now in some areas, yes it's been successful UUK's own research evaluation, the changing the culture two years on,

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showed that been some success, but also, unfortunately showed not the same level of priority being afforded to tackle some forms of harassment, such as sexual harassment has not been afforded to racial harassment to date.

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Then we have the EHRC report, university challenged. We had other reports, the British Medical Association report on racial harassment experienced by trainee medics, for example. They all highlight the challenges that we have to tackle urgently and tackle them now.

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And now on top of those reports, I have my own firsthand experiences, that students from UEA have shared with me personally in various fora. And these have been emotional, deeply upsetting experiences for our BAME students. They have been hard experiences for me to hear. So I pledge to my students I will take action to lead change from the very top, and it has to come from the very top of the organization. And it's quite right right now that our BAME students and staff want action, not words.

23:18

So moving to point two therefore, we do not need to collect any more evidence, repeatedly asking BAME students and staff to tell their stories, to capture their experiences before instigating action and my view now only serves to re traumatize, we shouldn't need to do that anymore. It delays it may prevent finding, and implementing solutions. These experiences how we've already heard the why, they're widely shared and known, they're understood. We have a problem so let's take action now.

23:48

So, Universities UK asked me to chair this Racial Harassment Advisory Group that first convened 2019, we've met several times since. With drawing expertise from all across the sector and outside the sector, and that includes the BAME student group chaired by the NUS and BAME staff groups. It will be problem focused, it will be action orientated advice that we we

will produce supported by case studies.

24:14

To a degree will build on success that we had when taking this approach with the original Changing the Culture Guidance, and more recently around mental health and well-being through the hashtag step change guidance. It is now in its third and final iteration, we hope to have, we we will have the advice out in the early autumn.

24:34

I'm actually in this discussion that we're about to have now will feed into action orientated advice I'm really looking forward to. Third point to make, though, is that it's important to recognize that efforts to address racial harassment, the group that I'm leading are in isolation, not enough.

24:53

There are numerous ways that we must bring together to address racism and racial inequalities. So, again, as leaders as vice chancellors and universities, we need to focus on a range of concrete activities across our university. They include addressing ethnicity pay gaps. They include increasing representation, tackling degree awarding, caps, embracing decolonization. Again, as we've heard from my colleagues who spoke earlier, perhaps Vice Chancellors such as myself, white vice chancellors, taking ally ship training. We're doing allyship training for all of my senior executive team across the summer.

25:28

I'd be happy to explore a number of the areas in which UEA's approach, and our way of tackling these issues in a few moments when we get into the discussion.

25:37

I want to finish by saying that, in a university, institutional racism is not just the problem of those suffering from the injustices that result from it. For me, it's a problem for the whole university community, and so it's the whole university, that really has to own that challenge together. Yes, led by the vice chancellor but the students of the staff coming into partnership as one community, I prefer the one community approach to the holistic institutional approach. It's about that community working together. Some university leaders have argued that we need patience and it takes time to change culture.

26:14

I believe, and I think rightly so, that people are run out of patience.

26:18

Now, we have recently shown how quickly we can change the entire delivery model of nigh on

150 universities in the face of Covid 19 and just the space of a few days, a few weeks really, so we can change quickly. So for me, my challenge will be to see similar fast, progress into inaction to words on all forms of racism, including racial harassment and discrimination and our institutions. Many universities are about to lay out the new post Covid 19, 5-year plans, this should be at the heart of it. Thank you very much.

26:59

[Baroness Amos] David, Thank you very much, indeed. We're now going to get into the par of our sessions, where we try to address the numerous questions which are already coming in. Now, I have hoped to be able to see all the participants on my screen.

27:20

Is everyone up on the screen now?

27:23

Yeah, OK.

27:27

Great.

27:29

So, a couple of questions from me if I may, which, link in to some of what you all said by way of introduction, and I'll move to the questions that are coming in on the chat. So the first is a thread, which I think was there for all of you, which is in relation to the need for a particular kind of leadership in higher education institutions. And David, you commented on this Jason, and Hillary both alluded to it. How can we get to a point where I university leaders actually have the range of tools required, in terms of their leadership?

28:17

Then the second question, so that you can address both together and this is in relation to this issue of the whole university approach, the collective approach that Jason touched on.

28:34

The one community approach.

28:36

How do we make sure that that happens? What are the things we need to do to move us towards that? Who'd like to go first, Hillary, you nodding vigorously. [Hillary] I tend to be, and yes, so those are very, very good question.

28:53

I think what, what is really at the heart of this for me is people and I think for so long, the sort of traditional approach of leadership where you have the few at the top and the majority at the bottom, and I think we need to really move towards a model specifically in tackling racism when we view our university community as partners rather than, you know, the strategic and sort of like and the deliberate and coming from a student perspective, I've seen this really, really well done in bringing students in as partners in terms of tackling racism through ways that are unconventional to universities.

29:35

So, and I touched on it a bit earlier, but when you actually give students the agency, the space and make it their own, that's when you will see that they will feel really empowered to take over that, those sorts of projects and actually be really, really assertive with the solutions and the input that they're giving to the university, and really breaking down those barriers and seeing leadership that is humble and ready to listen is really what's going to be able to sort of change the dynamic of leadership that we have today, that has stopped us from progressing and tackling of racism for so long, and the second, if you could quickly remind you of the second question.

30:19

[Baroness Amos] The collective action, that sense of community approach, and how, how do we deliver that?

30:26

[Hillary] Yes. And, and as you asking that question actually, what came to my mind was decolonization actually, and I think what we really need to understand is that tackling racism doesn't work when you do in pockets. You can't just like tackle racism in one window of the university, leave another wing of the university to tackle it later, it has to be a whole scale, transformative action to really eradicate racism from my society and for my education sector, and say if we're really going to do it, like I said before, from senior management to students, to union officers and everybody in between. Everybody needs to be involved in the tackling of racism work rather than silo-ing it off to EDI teams to lead, deliver and report on the progress of tackling racism and for institutions and more widely the sector.

31:14

[Baroness Amos] Hillary, thank you. David, I'm going to turn to you next and the question that we've had from our audience, which talks about and it picks up on the decolonization point, that you raise how can respond to colleagues who get defensive about change and terms like decolonization.

31:37

[Professor Richardson] Thank you. Well, there's a few things.

31:41

I think it partly also relates to the to the previous question, as well, really one of the things I think all of our colleagues need to see, to absolutely see is that the Vice Chancellor, the leadership of the university is leading and actually putting time into bringing about change.

32:04

And ensuring that, actually decolonization is one of a collective of measures that people are actually getting excited about mobilizing so that actually more of your colleagues around the university see that there is a sort of change culture happening. And that there are some areas to which they might feel a bit defensive, but actually they're not being picked on and not been that they're not, no one's pointing the finger saying this is unacceptable, what's going on here? What we're trying to identify, are all sorts of areas across University, where we need to do better, where we need to bring about change. And if you frame decolonization as part of a series of Collective Actions, you have, I think a better chance of getting people on board and delivering it. There's all sorts of actions that will be taken that are uncomfortable, for some some, such as decolonization, there will be other activities that are uncomfortable for others. Everybody's going to be pushed out of their comfort zone at some point, I think it was, was it Jason or Hillary's talk about, you know radically we do need to accept that this is not going to be a comfortable journey for people.

33:12

Of course, when people do get uncomfortable, you have to have conversations with them. You have to make time to have those conversations and usually, it's its leaders that might be Heads of Schools and Heads of Divisions, sometimes the Vice Chancellor that has to have those conversations and say, I'm sorry, but I, you know, I am going to take you on this on this journey with me, but I did want to just pick up the point about partnership, because that's strength is that one community. We all need to have this together and within my one community of 23,000 people you know, 16,000 of that community are our students and I think that's Hillary shows you that our students are our most creative, innovative entrepreneurial stages, they've got so many ideas.

33:59

So, when we were tackling sexual harassment with the number OK company, I worked in full partnership with our students. We did some really exciting things that I couldn't have conceived myself that came out of that energy and the great thinking in that is only possible when you work in partnership with students. So, there is lots that we must do, that we want to think about doing not just as, leaders, as, leadership teams in, isolation as well.

34:28

[Baroness Amos] But David, I am going to press you just a little bit on this, because we all know that the word radical is not going to go down well with a lot of people, we know that there are a lot of our colleagues who do not understand the term decolonization and react very badly to it.

34:45

We know that there are a lot of our academic colleagues who say that, you know, this is about autonomy and the right to teach. What they want to teach in the way that they want to teach it. So given that there are, and we have to accept that we have a lot of colleagues feel that way, how do we really bring them to the table?

35:12

[Professor Richardson] I mean, that's where you do it top-down. Sometimes you know they can't all be bottom up. We all as universities should be embarking on curricular reviews where we're asking the questions of are our curriculums sufficiently representative, sufficiently inclusive.

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And as part of that work, that question of decolonization is part of that work.

35:38

And it's absolutely right that every party of universities should be asking that question, doing these sort of curricular reviews. You are right, there will be areas of our universities where some of that work will be progressed faster, with more energy than other areas

35:56

and we can identify those areas, learn from the approaches they're taking, and then try to help those other areas, which are feeling uncomfortable with those approaches to take those approaches. But I have to say, my experiences at the moment, I was visiting one of when I was doing a school visit to a school within UEA recently, where I was talking to the staff and the students and they were very excited about the work that they were doing around decolonization and the sort of the things that they're doing in the way that they're working in partnership with students to take that forward is now being embraced by our other schools. So, you know, you do just have to change that top-down. There will be resistance, but you have to be firm with this resistance.

36:45

I've lost volume.

36:54

Ah.

37:01

The volume.

37:11

[Hillary] Hopefully, Valerie will be back soon.

37:19

Valery.

37:22

Ah!

37:24

You must be there, OK.

37:28

I'd be happy to. [Baroness Amos] Jason,

37:33

[Jason] Yeah.

37:35

[Baroness Amos] So, let me pick another question.

37:36

How can we, how can we initiate conversations about race so that we can best identify at least struggles experienced by students and staff? [Jason] I think thank you for the question, Baroness Amos. I think one of the ways in which we can kind of engage in these conversations is really to learn to get comfortable with the uncomfortable, I think

37:58

too often for a lot of BAME members of staff, one of the things that we are having to think about is how to preserve aspects of fragility, you know, particularly white, fragility kind of thinking about you know, how they know there's a lot of thought given to how these conversations are had.

38:18

Yes. There are some really constructive

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Tacit ways actually I think one of the things that's really important is that those lived experiences are visceral experiences and in the retelling, one, it is traumatic to engage, but two, what we need are there any sympathetic ears, is trying to understand what that experience is like and in doing so there needs to be questioning of how privileges or why privilege specifically may be complicit in sustaining those experiences. But again, it goes back to my message of collectivity, I think there is something really special happening in the sector at the moment and I do think people engaging, listening and engaging in a brand-new allyship that really represent something new,

39:07

Something more collective and something that really allows racism as a discourse to no longer occupy you know, reside in the margins rather than the center. And I think the fact that, you know, we're talking about it in this way, we're getting to front and centre BAME individuals experiences in the academy. Students and staff, and implications of this on mental health, physical wellbeing, and mental well-being, both mental and physical wellbeing I think this is really important and that shows progression, at least I've been doing this work for five years and has definitely been a sea change to the type of discussions we're having an the stakeholders which are engaging.

39:51

[Baroness Amos] So Jason, let me push you a little bit on one aspect of what you say. What does really good white allies should look like?

40:01

[Jason] That's a good question. And again, as I mentioned, it's difficult because I guess the contours of racism are ever changing, so we do have to be kind of mentally and literally physically agile to that.

40:14

What I would say about allyship needs to extend beyond the seasonal approach. So if racism is a full season thing what we can't have is a one season engagement, then maybe take three seasons or two seasons off. I think what we need is that kind of covering engagement so to speak, if you and I think that engagement really looks like challenging privilege where possible.

40:39

It looks actually really also means calling out racial microaggressions or acts of visceral or subtle acts of racism, pulling those acts out with members of staff where that has happened.

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It also means engaging with actually thinking about how you may give up aspects of your privilege to mobilize BAME individuals' who don't abide by space and are often marginalized from particular spaces within the academy and that challenging of privilege is really, really important, because I think there are a lot of theorizations about what allyship could look like but I think the praxis element is really important, so the theory and practice are two things that has to be a symbiosis between the two and I think previously that didn't really exist, but I think that we are progressively moving towards that, and that is quite encouraging them in the sector over all.

41:44

[Baroness Amos] Jason, thank you. Hillary, let me turn to you a couple of questions have come in, in relation to students. I think that some of which you have already begun to address, but let me put them to you: what more can students do, to lead change outside of petitions and writing letters. I think the students do a lot of that already, but that's one aspect of it. And how can my black and ethnic minority students and staff stay mentally strong, in the face of institutional racism?

42:18

[Hillary] Those are two really, really good questions.

42:22

Let me address the second first.

42:24

I think, so to any black and ethnic minority students, and staff listening today I think what's really important is that, and the sort of illusion to be able to be strong through adversity all the time and if I'm being completely honest with you, and racism, is, racism is, is, in all of its form, a violent act, and you have a right to be hurt, you have a right to be impacted by it and you have a right to be able to show that in process that, in whatever way you need. And I think, you know, within institutions, it's important that you accept your right to be able to, you know, get the mental health support that you need. You deserve your right to be validated in your experiences and finally, you deserve your right to actually call out, wrong for wrong. And racism is wrong, point blank, period, and so never be afraid to be vocal and, and always reach out to people if you can't do that yourself.

43:23

And whether it's your union officers if you're a student or staff with, with the agency or the ability to do it for you, if your staff member don't ever let it be something that you suffer in silence or alone.

43:36

And so that's that's, you know, my my bit for the second question. And in terms of the first question, which if I remember it's about how students can get involved beyond letters and petitions. And I think I think that's an interesting question because the only reason that like you may see students write a lot of letters and petitions is because often they will feel like they have been shut out the spaces where they do want to talk. And I think it's important that, you know, and it's not coping mechanism, petitions that students are doing, they should have the agency that if they so feel that's their appropriate issues but univeristies should be making the spaces.

44:13

And actually, that's the wrong language. Universities should be enabling black students to take ownership of spaces to be able to speak about their lived experiences, confront the racism, that they are experiencing and be able to act in a way that they feel free and safe from any repercussions or any backlash that could happen to them from expressing those experiences.

44:36

And, I mean, black students and students in general are really, really smart cookies if you didn't know already. And I think the way that they do things is powerful, so powerful and until you take the time to understand, you know, movements will change rather than reactions to sort of call you out or attack you, you'll never really going to understand why they do what they do and how important it is to them. And I think it's important that we engage with that on a really, really meaningful level.

45:05

[Baroness Amos] Hillary, thank you. Thank you very much. David, I want to come back to you if I may, to pick up on a couple of further questions that have been raised that I know that I'm rushing through these questions but I want us to address as many of them as possible. One is, how can we get senior managers on our side? One question, and the other, how can we push back when people say racism should be addressed in a wider equality framework? Does this approach do enough to address racism?

45:45

[Professor Richardson] OK, maybe I'll take the second one, because by my honest answer to the second one, I'll take both. I'll start with the second one. I think racism needs to be approached as a separate piece of work. There are many equality measures and issues around equality and inclusion that all universities should be looking at, but my experience, having been a member of the changing the culture group from 2015 to 2016 was that having, which, which was addressing all forms of harassment and hate crimes in addition, sexual harassment.

46:27

We looked and looked back at that piece of work, and how it's progressed and talked to students of stuff at UEA. What's been clear to me, is that we have to call out a separate piece of work on tackling racism, and tackling racial harassment. And that's why we've actually got the Universities UK group I'm chairing so that for me, is the evidence that I took on board, which is why I think we require a separate piece of work. So at UEA, my University I have an advisory group that has helped me actually put in place a number of projects that will tackle the challenges that were raised by the party in Human Rights Commission Report universities challenge. We've been through that report, and I have my EHRC advisory group, which, by the way, is drawn from all parts of the university. It's a community problem, I've got a whole cross-section of colleagues on that group.

47:25

So, so, it does need to be called out separately, and it needs separate action. And, in some ways, that relates back, to, how do we make leadership accountable.

47:35

Because clearly, if one puts in place a group led by the Vice Chancellor, then self-evidently, the Vice Chancellor is holding him or herself up to be accountable for the success of the project that ones put in place and not group. Who's my boss is the body is the governing body of the university and the governing body comprises student representatives, student, full members of council who can hold them to account for the governing body. It has stopped representatives, and, of course, it has independent members as well. So, ultimately, I need to be identifying and reporting regularly to the governing body on the progress that we're making, tackling issues of racism and racial harassment, and that's what I will do, that's what I am doing and that's a similar approach to the approach I took when it came to the vice chancellors, mental health and well-being Task Force that I put in place a couple of years now, reporting on progress to the governing body. That's who we're accountable to.

48:34

But the governing body has to understand their role in holding us accountable, and actually their role is actually bound in the registrations by which we have registration to the OFS. So, you know, there is a framework, a governance framework by which they should be holding us to account and our progress that we're making in these areas.

48:56

[Baroness Amos] Thank you very much.

48:58

We've had a couple of questions and I'm going to, if the panelists don't mind, exercise chair's privilege to touch on a couple of questions have come up. One is around league tables and all the disincentive to greater diversity. They are only a disincentive because the league tables

don't actually measure inclusion and diversity universities are making in terms of tackling discrimination and inequality.

49:31

So, what we need to be doing is actually getting ensuring that these tables include a measure or a group of measures which look at issues around race, the attainment gap, a whole range of issues that we have talked about this afternoon.

49:55

As David just said, measurement of accountability is absolutely crucial. And the pushback in my view, against including these measures, including tables, is partly because it will mean that some universities that are now at the top of that table will be much, much further down. So there are incentives, but that's because we know we, we have a lip service commitment but we're not measuring, we don't have accountability in relation to it. There's another question about shifting the conversation from being seen as political.

50:34

And I presume that that means that it's perceived as being political. This conversation is about universities which are meant to be enablers and educators.

50:46

Actually doing what they say on the tin, which is about promoting excellence, it's about inclusivity,

50:59

it's about finding ways of rewarding innovation and creativity, and what we're doing is leaving out huge waves of our community because of the way that we operate in my view, this is not a political issue. It's very much a conversation, which is about inclusion and about the way that our institutions function.

51:35

A lot of senior leaders, I mean, the question here says, a lot of senior leaders are avoiding making statements because they are political, I don't think that's why a lot of senior leaders are making statements, and they are concerned about making this something they will not be able to deliver on. There is a lot of learning to be done here, and that across the institution picking up on that they raised earlier in relation to the quality of leadership.

52:10

No vice chancellor can say that they are perfect. There's a huge amount of learning that we each need to do in relation to different aspects of our leadership. This for a number of vice

chancellors is important but it's also a huge gap in that leadership journey and we need to understand that, accept that and move on in terms of framing and the whole range of other initiatives that could help them be supported. But it would be very wrong as our starting point to say that this is a political conversation. It's a human conversation and that's where our starting point, should be.

52:58

There's a question please.

53:02

To Hillary and Jason.

53:07

How can we support students virtually with Covid in regards to racism? And there are couple of questions, which I want to come back to each of the panelists on before we finish up, Jason, Hillary do you want to pick up on that one.

53:26

[Hillary] Yeah, I can quickly, and I think one really easy way of supporting students and virtually is that like it's not always like you have to be proactive with talking and tackling racism, talking about and tackling racism and everything that you do on racism can't continue to just be reactionary. And if you see things online, if you, if you hear about students talking about their experiences do not wait. Do not wait to approach them, to support them, be proactive, go to them, and help them show you intentionality from the get go.

54:02

And, and, and, virtually, as well, I think it's also important about not censoring black students experiences especially on always on sort of getting them to, to talk about their trauma or actually, forcing them to deal with their trauma in a time that they have not chosen for themselves. And say, you also have to give them opportunities to also just experienced things that they want to experience. And I was saying this last week, that like, interacting with students isn't hard, you just have to interact with, whether it's coaching, or a book club, or watching a Netflix on, like that it's very important that you find those very human ways of interacting with them, because after all, they are people, they are human. Jason, do you want to add onto that in any way?

54:46

[Jason] I was just going to say, one of the most important things, as well as recognizing that for a lot of black students at this time, they will be engaging with Covid in a completely different way. Because many of those Black students, they may have relatives that are on the front line in terms of NHS. We know that 70% of NHS workers comprise frontline staff, which obviously are

at risk of getting Covid. I think it's really important that we also recognize that they experience at University as it currently stands is quite a marginalized discriminatory one.

55:20

So, it's really important that in terms of recognizing that deficit, it also recognizes a deficit that will occur as well as a result of those individuals not being at university. Then currently residing in a space where actually having to, in some cases, they didn't have the capital in terms of access to several different thing that universities may bring with that subscription that students kind of almost pay for.

55:48

So I do think it's important that we think about how we support black and ethnic minority students in this time, particularly from an online resource, from an emotional resource and we think about some of the aspects around what's actually happening in the world at the moment, and, as Hillary said, the traumatic or residual effect of those experiences. Because there is a lethargy among the community to have dealt with these problems over such a period of time. I think that's where that collective endeavor is, really important.

56:22

[Baroness Amos] Jason, thank you. We've only got about three minutes left, and I want as it were a one word answer from each of you, a quick fire answer, what is the change you would most like to see. David, start.

56:38

[Professor Richardson] We need to see a better reporting system, so we fully understand what our starting point for the journey that we need to take. That's what we managed to put in place with tackling sexual harassment. People have got to come clean, and we've got to help people to report their problems, and then we can tackle them properly.

56:53

[Baroness Amos] that's a long, long one word. Hillary,

56:56

[Hillary] Students partners that are paid, rewarded and recognized for their work [Baroness Amos] Thank you. Jason,

57:05

[Jason] More fiscal and human resource towards tackling racial inequality.

57:11

[Baroness Amos] Huge, thank you to all of you, you've been an absolutely brilliant panel. You've touched on a range of issues, the importance of the quality of leadership the need to be radical, universities as enablers and educators, the need for collective action. Strong white allyship, decolonization as central, celebrating leadership and achievement, stop asking for more evidence, and change the culture, and be clear about our values and a whole range of other things. Can I thank our participants, a huge thank you again, to our speakers. Please fill in your evaluation forms. We will be keeping your comments and the answers to your questions because we do want to put out a document, which really focuses on the action that

58:05

we can take, and particularly focuses on how we can support each other through collective action and understanding what really works. There's a dynamism around this topic now there's momentum, let's really, really build on it and finally see some significant and long, lasting change in our sector. Thank you all very much, indeed. A huge thank you to UUK for organizing this. Accountability is key and one year on from the Closing the Gap Report, this is part of that monitoring and accountability.

58:50

Let's not wait a year to do the next one. There is a huge amount of information out there. There's a huge amount of pain as well. And what we want to do is to move beyond that and to have a sector, which really recognizes the talent, skill, and the opportunity. Thank you all very much, indeed, for listening.

59:16

[Professor Richardson] Thank you.