

Summary

Since coming into post, in July, I've been trying to get more informed on the ethnicity award gap. i.e the gap in achievement between White students and Black / brown students. Moreover, the consensus with terms like BME, BAME, and even people of colour – all of which have proved to be problematic terms depending on to whom you are speaking.

Opinions on the attainment gap – or the award gap, as I prefer, differ from institution to institution and what works at one university may not necessarily work at another. The gap between Black and ethnic minority students and White British students at Northampton is currently at 17%, whereas the Black British gap is at 25.1%.

So, it is of my opinion, as a Union, it would do better to make steps to reduce the Black British gap rather than the broad spectrum of (B)lack, (A)sian and (M)inority (E)thnic – when at Northampton the impetus of Black British students, has brought with it an award gap of over 25%.

On Wednesday, November 27 I attended a conference in London on racial harassment titled, *Westminster Higher Education Forum Keynote Seminar: Priorities for Tackling Racial Harassment & Improving the BAME Experience in HE.*

Here, we talked about the attainment gap, representation in management / the classroom, racism on university campuses, anti-racist teaching and decolonising HE, amongst other things. Whilst the concept of the conference was admirable, it was preaching to the converted. The people who this impacts most were not in attendance, students. Access to this conference would stop most students from attending due to the triple digit entry fee.

Furthermore, the chosen venue was a nod to Britain's colonial era. The irony of talking about anti-racist teaching and decolonisation in such a place didn't pass without comment, in conjunction to the fact it was two hours before a non-White speaker was introduced to the stage.

Currently, I'm in talks with the university's newly formed BAME Network on combatting the award gap, and I am looking at decolonial thinking and the curriculum and how we can deconstruct structures that were built by people for people, who were White, rich, straight and male.

However, that aside, I'm also continuing with my Black History events and will be working with our LGBT Officer on curating a month of events for LGBT History Month, especially bits that cater for LGBT people of African descent, including those from Latin America and the Caribbean.

These conversations have started, in addition to February doubling up as Black History Month USA, where I will be curating a small events schedule too.

Whilst I don't believe in weeks and months of commemoration, when these national days do occur, we need to capitalise on them – pushing boundaries and having the difficult conversations, including race equality and social justice, where art and academia can run parallel with activism.

Key Talking Points

1. Black British Attainment Gap
2. Decolonising the Curriculum
3. BHM US / LGBT History (February)
4. Terminology: BAME, BME, POC

Manifesto Pledges

1. **Introduce a support group where students can talk (without judgement) about being of colour and British in the 21st century – Complete.**
2. **Liaise with local organisations to deliver events. Such organisations can include: NREC, NBHA, Changemaker Hub and Lemon Pop Workshops – Complete.**
3. **Introduce a monthly bookclub, reading BME authors while discussing BME topics based on what's being read – Started.**
4. **Introduce a monthly film night where films will be watched and discussed, in collaboration with Northampton Filmhouse. It's about seeing yourself reflected – Complete (Doing our own film nights without the Filmhouse).**
5. **Take students on trips to events. e.g. a panel with Nikesh Shukla, or The Black Verse – a poetry night in London made by Black poets to promote Black poets (Incomplete)**