

# The struggle for justice in Higher Education

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Unpicking  
some  
concepts  
through a  
personal  
journey

Privileges  
Silences  
Appropriations  
Pushback  
Allyship

# Higher Education in the 1990s Sink or Swim for BME students

- Widening participation via Saturday sessions and Summer Schools
- Target students whose parents had not gone to university
- Student profile changed rapidly to become increasingly multicultural
- Students could feel at a loss, lack of provisions and support for them e.g. some were carers
- Supporting services such as writing workshops only a recent phenomenon
- So it was up to students to seek appropriate support

# From Student to Visiting Lecturer Senior Lecturer

- I myself was one of those students - mature, juggling PhD research with motherhood...
- Politically driven I was keen to have a role in the WP project
- Visiting lecturer in 4 Higher Institutions at the same time
- The only brown/black face at the time - and this is in Sociology and Criminology
- I didn't have much power or authority to change things but ...
- I introduced modules such as 'Gender, Ethnicity and Cultural Representations' and 'Crossing Boundaries'
- Introduced BME and indigenous writers and brought in speakers from ethnic minority backgrounds

## Back to those concepts...

- My **privileged** position as a lecturer needs me to act on my positionality.... Intersections of gender, race and class
- **Appropriation** of ideas, work....when BME people have to do the labour
- **Pushback** - when the work towards social justice is rejected → Retreat and **Silence** when we need to speak
- **Imposter Syndrome** - from a sense of not belonging to have the permission to speak
- We cannot be afraid of **white fragility** but embrace our awkwardness .... George Floyd <https://youtu.be/vl>
- We need to work together and form alliance with the Black community - and perhaps more power - **allyship** → So much more to do
- No more - **Silence**

## Setting up BME staff network at Westminster

- Despite high visibility of multicultural profile of students on websites, brochures it was a strong demand from students to set up a BME Staff network ... finally launched its first event in 2016!
- Since then the network has held and sponsored several internal and external events
- Pride taken in its collaborative relationship with the Students Union and other Staff networks
- Active through Teams postings and regular meetings and currently...
- Black History Month events

# **BME Network: A collective Statement Demands - 22 June 2020**

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The BME Network has collated our diverse, individual and collective voices. More than 130 colleagues have been consulted through MS Teams and emails to compile a list of actions that will help to address silences, unconscious biases, overt racisms and the absence of BME voices in strategic decision-making and thus help the University to realise its purported values of equality, diversity and inclusion in order to become an anti-racist university as a matter of urgency. We see our demands as going alongside those made by our students. We seek the University's clear commitment to action the following demands summarised under these headings: Inclusion and Visibility; BME Career Progression; Senior Management and Leadership; Reporting and Indicators; Time, Resources and Complaint Handling; and Training.

## **University of Westminster in 2020**

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- University of Westminster published Black Lives Matter commitment plan (1<sup>st</sup> July 2020)  
<https://www.westminster.ac.uk/current-students/news/university-of-westminster-publishes-black-lives-matter-commitment-plan>
- <https://www.westminster.ac.uk/current-students/news/black-history-month-2020-recognising-and-celebrating-black-history-at-westminster>
- Equality Diversity and Inclusion ... and Allyship - Berekhet

# Impact of such initiatives on student experience

- Still unknown ... work very much still in progress....
- Leading Routes - Broken Pipeline - Looking at Barriers to Black Ph.D students accessing Research Council Funding: [file:///E:/Evolving%20Multicultural%20Dialogues%20chapter/The%20Broken%20Pipeline%20Report%20-%20Sept%202019%20\(120919\).pdf](file:///E:/Evolving%20Multicultural%20Dialogues%20chapter/The%20Broken%20Pipeline%20Report%20-%20Sept%202019%20(120919).pdf)
- Funded studentships targeting BME applicants : <https://www.westminster.ac.uk/current-students/news/phd-studentship-for-bme-applicants-in-humanities>
- Decolonising the curriculum toolkit at Westminster: <http://cti.westminster.ac.uk/decolonising-the-curriculum/>
- Many obstacles to overcome... e.g. UK Research and Innovation <https://www.researchprofessionalnews.com/views-of-the-uk-2020-8-knowledge-is-power-an-open-letter-to-ukri/>

# Significance of Momentum

- Breakdown of European empires....Civil Rights Movement in the USA → Black Power, Black Freedom
- Why is my curriculum white campaign (end of 2014) was a response to lack of diversity in research course content gained momentum in 2015 → Decolonizing the curriculum worldwide
- Rhodes must fall movement began on 9 March 2015 in South Africa at University of Cape Town bringing down statues representing oppression in the UK and elsewhere
- Black Lives Matter, Covid-19 → exposing inequalities, criminalization of already marginalized groups
- Now over to Berekhet
- [file:///E:/Black%20History%20Month%20talk/UCU\\_Black\\_History\\_365%20Chart%20\(1\).pdf](file:///E:/Black%20History%20Month%20talk/UCU_Black_History_365%20Chart%20(1).pdf)



## SIGNIFICANT CHANGES IN PUBLIC MOOD



## RECEPTIVE INTERNAL CHANGES



PEOPLE & WELLBEING  
CENTRED VISION



INCREASED  
PARTICIPATION

## A VISION FOR ALL



## AN ANTI-RACIST UNIVERSITY, READY TO TAKE POSITIVE ACTION

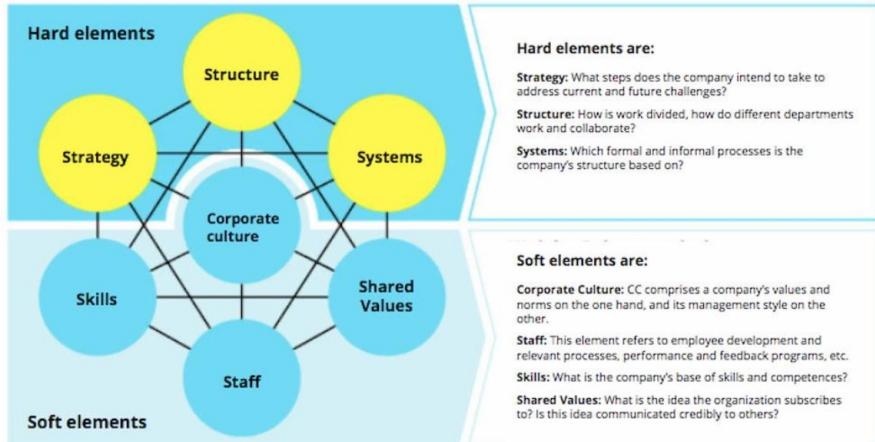


A handprint made of colorful stones (pebbles) is arranged on a wooden surface. The stones are of various sizes and colors, including shades of brown, purple, grey, and white. The handprint is oriented with the thumb on the left and fingers on the right.

1. EDI Commitments
2. Formal EDI Governance
3. EDI Resources
4. EDI Action Plan
5. Committed Leadership

## BUILDING ON MOMENTUM THROUGH SMALL BUT SIGNIFICANT WINS

### Hard vs. Soft Elements



# References

- [file:///E:/Evolving%20Multicultural%20Dialogues%20chapter/Chetty\\_BERA%20Research%20Intelligence%2014%20WEB-4.pdf](file:///E:/Evolving%20Multicultural%20Dialogues%20chapter/Chetty_BERA%20Research%20Intelligence%202014%20WEB-4.pdf)
- [file:///E:/Evolving%20Multicultural%20Dialogues%20chapter/The%20Broken%20Pipeline%20Report%20-%20Sept%202019%20\(120919\).pdf](file:///E:/Evolving%20Multicultural%20Dialogues%20chapter/The%20Broken%20Pipeline%20Report%20-%20Sept%202019%20(120919).pdf)
- <file:///E:/Black%20History%20Month%20talk/The%20Early%20History%20of%20the%20Black%20Lives%20Matter%20and%20the%20Imp.pdf>
- <https://mixedupinclassics.wordpress.com/2020/09/23/isos-black-academics-higher-education/>