Harnessing our Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Communities Talent

London Local Government's Tackling Racial Inequality Programme

09/02/2022

TACKLING RACIAL INEQUALITY
Working Group

INTRODUCTION

As part of celebrating Race Equality week, on 9 February 2022, the Tackling Racial Inequality programme welcomed colleagues from across London's partnership landscape to Lambeth Assembly Hall to explore how we can better harness our Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities talent. The event was split into two parts:

- During the first part, respective learning and development sessions led by Rosemary Campbell-Stephens MBE and David Weaver were designed for our aspiring Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic talent – you can see reflections from this towards the end of the report.

- The second part was a panel discussion chaired by Althea Loderick (Chief Executive, Newham Council), and with Dr Habib Naqvi (Director, NHS Race and Health Observatory), Kim Wright (Chief Executive, Lewisham Council), Osama Rahman (Director of Analysis and Chief Scientific Adviser, Department for Education). We heard about a range of initiatives and ideas from panellists and the audience, particularly around themes of data, trauma and action – you can read about this below.

If you would like to learn more about the event or the Tackling Racial Inequality programme please contact Tom Pickup (tom.pickup@londoncouncils.gov.uk).

REFLECTIONS FROM OUR AUDIENCE

The panel and audience Q&A reflected the theme for race equality week - #actionnotjustwords

I was delighted with the calibre of the expert panel and excellent audience engagement. The meeting culminated with a collective 'call to action' by the chair which was well received with many of the audience staying to continue the debate and networking afterwards.

One thing that stood out for me was the call to think about the "causes of the causes" of lack of representation of Black Asian and Minority Ethnic staff in senior roles in public services. We need to think about how our systems have been set up over decades and centuries to give us exactly what we have now. It will take time to change these systems and we'll need to be both patient and persistent.

EVENT OPENING

Cllr Sonia Winifred, Lambeth Council's Cabinet Member for Equalities and Culture, opened the event by thanking colleagues for coming together to discuss, share and determine what more we can all do on race equality. Cllr Winifred highlighted the importance of harnessing, supporting, and developing the talent within our Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities. She provided some reflections on how much the London Tackling Racial Inequality Programme has achieved since it was set up nearly two years ago, but also acknowledged that collectively there is still more we need to do to make our organisations truly representative. While recognising there's still much more to do, Cllr Winifred also provided insight into Lambeth Council's work to address institutional racism including the need to support and develop talent in the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic workforce, training in all directorates and all staff having equalities objectives in their appraisals.

IT IS ABOUT EVERYONE FEELING PART OF THE WORKFORCE AND BEING ABLE TO THRIVE AND DEVELOP, NOT ABOUT ONE PERSON ACHIEVING THEIR GOALS.

PANEL SPEECHES - KEY POINTS

Kim Wright (Chief Executive, Lewisham Council and working group co-sponsor within the Tackling Racial Inequality programme)

Kim's introduction focused on the data captured in London local government and the importance in using this to identify where things are going well and where things need to be improved.

46.7% of the London local government workforce is from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds. While this exceeds the London population it only tells part of the story as there is a general underrepresentation from Asian communities and a glass ceiling for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic staff at £50-60K pay bands. Additionally no borough has a full understanding of their workforce as the sector averages 11.6% 'not knowns'. The programme is using data to drive activity around cultural competency, dignity at work, staff development and inclusive recruitment.

Dr Habib Naqvi (Director of NHS Race and Health Observatory)

Habib framed his introduction around the context of racial inequality, level of challenge we have and potential solutions to challenges. Activity in the NHS has focused on developing models that shift the dial around:

- Demonstrable leadership
- Accountability (internal and external)
- Data (to know where we are and where we need to get to)
- Resource
- Communications
- Celebrating success

Osama Rahman (Director of Analysis and Chief Scientific Adviser, Department for Education)

Osama reflected on the levels of ethnic diversity in the civil service - the London Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic civil servant picture is better than the UK as a whole however there are still issues around underrepresentation at senior levels. The civil service has been undertaking a journey to explore and rectify these issues - this started when Project Race was set up within the Ministry of Justice. Project Race started the conversation, got people talking about race equity and has since be replicated elsewhere. This has now transitioned into cross-civil service development programmes and initiatives - such as the 'BAME Network', The Power of Choice Programme, Beyond Boundaries.

TURNING DATA INTO ACTION

Althea Loderick set the scene, describing London as the most diverse city in Europe, and explaining that on the surface, London local government is representative of London's diverse population. However, drawing on the work the programme's 'Large Employers' workstream have been developing to understand the ethnicity pay gap across London local government, she also mentioned the varying levels of representation of different ethnic groups across pay bands. This led to an enlightening discussion about the use of data. Kim Wright commented on the use of data to provide transparency, demonstrating where things are going well and where we still need to improve. The ethnicity and pay data has provided insights into our workforce across London local government, which has helped us to understand the barriers to achieving real change. Dr Habib Naqvi and Osama Rahman also highlighted the use of data to tell the history and story of where we are now in our systems and organsations and as a vital tool to measure the change in our organisations.

THE ETHNICITY AND PAY DATA HAS PROVIDED INSIGHTS INTO OUR WORKFORCE ACROSS LONDON LOCAL GOVERNMENT, WHICH HAS HELPED US TO UNDERSTAND THE BARRIERS TO ACHIEVING REAL CHANGE.

The conversation about data and its importance in identifying challenges and measuring change within our organisations led to a discussion around the need to act. Habib raised a point around not collecting data for the sake of it and ensuring we use the data we collect to inform action. Building on this point, Osama provided some useful examples of where action has been taken within the Civil Service. This has led to the development of programmes such as Project Race, which was established to get people talking about race but has since developed into a programme focused on delivering a key set of actions. The panellist discussion led to some interesting insights from audience members. One colleague mentioned an intensive eight-month work programme called the 'Safe Space Clinic' within Waltham Forest Council, which got senior management in a room with staff to listen and talk to them about their experiences of racial inequality. From these conversations, they were able to identify barriers to achieving race equality, using the programme as a tool to address these barriers. 'What's race got to do with it' training was rolled out across the council as a result, to enable a culture of talking within the organisation.

PROVIDING SUPPORT AND ADDRESSING TRAUMA

Another key theme coming out of both the panellist discussion and questions from the audience was the challenges around racial trauma and the need to address the psychological aspect of racial inequality to develop and improve our organisations. There was discussion around self-limiting beliefs among Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority staff members, and the need to address this. The discussion provided useful insights for the London local government Tackling Racial Inequality Programme, highlighting that achieving race equality within our organisations is about more than ensuring Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic staff have the skills and competencies to succeed, it is also about challenging self-limiting beliefs and a history of racial trauma. Furthermore, senior leaders need to be aware of the feelings and experiences of these colleagues.

ACHIEVING RACE EQUALITY WITHIN OUR ORGANISATIONS IS ABOUT MORE THAN ENSURING BLACK, ASIAN AND MINORITY ETHNIC STAFF HAVE THE SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES TO SUCCEED, IT IS ALSO ABOUT CHALLENGING SELF-LIMITING BELIEFS AND A HISTORY OF RACIAL TRAUMA.

The panellists closed the conversation with Kim Wright discussing how leadership should flourish at all levels of an organisation. She argued that we need to weave the powerful stories that have been shared back into the programme to achieve the difference we want to see in our organisations. Althea mentioned that this is by no means the end of the discussion, these conversations will be continued within the programme and beyond.

The below links reference the evidence-base regarding the progression of racial equality in the workplace mentioned by our speakers:

- https://www.nelft.nhs.uk/download.cfm?doc=docm93jijm4n4371.pdf&ver=7193
- https://www.maryseacoletrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Race-Equality-in-the-Workplace-for-publication-Feb-19.pdf
- https://www.ted.com/talks/david_r_williams_how_racism_makes_us_sick?language=en

# Learning and Development Sessions

ROSEMARY CAMPBELL-STEPHENS MBE

Rosemary's session firmly situated Black, Asian and 'Ethnic Minority' communities as people of the Global Majority within London and across the globe. She argued that in order to harness Global Majority communities collective talent then their continued minoritisation was no longer an option in cities such as London where 73% of school, college and higher education students were from Global Majority communities. Participants were encouraged to see their cultural identity, lived experience and history as a legitimate part of their professional identity, providing them with potential additionally in one of the most diverse cities on planet earth. One participant commented that we need to highlight and improve awareness about the Global Majority concept and mindset in order to build the confidence of systemically marginalised communities.

The second part of Rosemary's session focussed on the underlying philosophies in which systems were embedded and how structural racism was baked in, making those systems not only increasingly irrelevant and redundant but culturally destructive to one of London's greatest assets: its diversity. DEI strategies focussed only on diversifying who was sitting around the table, without addressing what was done, how and why at that table was both performative and demotivating. Inclusion has to be about changing the space, as well as who is in it.

Rosemary is an international leadership consultant, speaker and author. Her book, Educational Leadership and the Global Majority: Decolonising Narratives published by Palgrave Macmillan is available https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-030-88282-2
You can email her at rosemarycampbellstephens@gmail.com.
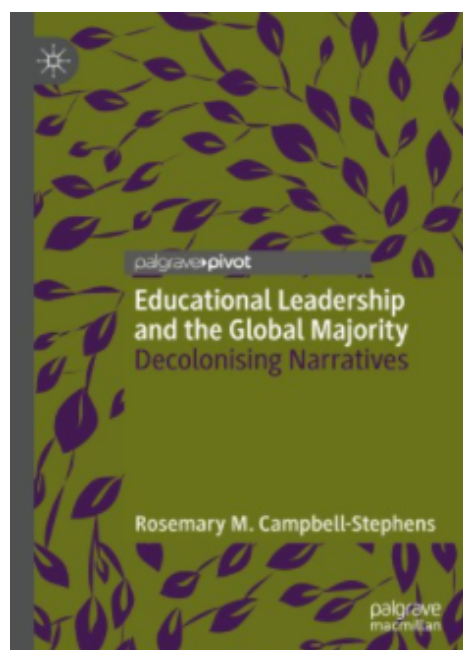
DAVID WEAVER

David's session addressed statistics and personal accounts of racial injustice and microaggressions, which resonated with participants. Participants noted that often they rationalise their lack of career progression and do not recognise the discrimination, which affects leadership and confidence. Often standing up to these injustices perpetuates microaggressions as leadership teams do not champion anti-racist agendas nor embed them in the organisations. Action and policy ought to be influenced and reviewed by those who have lived experience - devolving, co-designing and sense checking. Accountability must be enforced at all levels with more education surrounding identifying types of racism. Phrases such as 'hard to reach and 'hard to hear' were completely dispelled. A programme called SAGE from Suffolk council was cited as best practice, the programme is independent of the council which makes accountability simpler.

The session then touched on positive action, learning and development strategies for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic colleagues and techniques for fostering wellbeing. This included discussions around self-limiting beliefs and six key pillars for embedding change:

1. Corporate leadership - EDI
2. Directorate leadership
3. Recruitment & selection
4. Learning and development strategies
5. Strategic HR
6. Resources.