



Reflections and insights (taken from the chat function) at the East Midlands 'Leading in Colour' session on 10 January 2022

In the session we:

- Touched on ways to reflect and explore what it means to be an inclusive leader
- Offered encouragement and challenge to participants to commit, respond and act to make a difference in your local context **Now**
- Provided some take away resources and tools to help participants become and stay inclusive, diverse and fair

We asked leaders to use this time, this space and this support to focus on the actions and risks they were prepared to take to create and sustain fairer workplaces and contribute to fairer communities in 2022.

The first part of the session focused on:

- What inclusive, diverse and fair mean and feel like, including terminology and definitions
- The importance of agency, belonging and contribution
- The legacy of mistrust

And the second part looked at:

- Microaggressions
- Aspects of multi-dimensional racism
- Courageous conversations
- Culture
- Resources to help
- Your commitments

Participants were powerfully present in our virtual room and here's a flavour of the reflections and insights shared in chat, together with the resources mentioned during the session.

Getting to a shared vocabulary and a shared understanding:

- *Recognising people's differences but ensuring people are given equal opportunities and insisting all people are included*
- *Connecting with others and understanding their perspectives and life experiences. Accepting that your truths are not necessarily others!*
- *For me, there is a mix of doing things because they are the right thing to do (ethically) and because they enable us to achieve better outcomes.*
- *Feeling that colleagues have a broad understanding of your cultural and religious beliefs*

- *Ensuring that people have a voice and can influence*
- *Affording dignity, respect and fair opportunity to all*
- *Actively engaging different perspectives, actively addressing barriers*
- *Equality, diversity, inclusion for me is about equality of opportunity for all by giving every individual the CHANCE to ACHIEVE, free from prejudice and discrimination*
- *Being open to challenge about your views*
- *Feeling confident to ensure that everyone has a voice and is listened to*
- *To get past all the cultural barriers and discrimination so that we value people for their contributions not their backgrounds*
- *Everyone to be treated fairly and with dignity and respect*
- *Creating environments and cultures that recognise and celebrate diversity and enable equal opportunity and for all to achieve their full potential*
- *Being comfortable with being uncomfortable*
- *Treat others as equals; accept any differences and ensure that others are fully included in what you are doing; balancing any differences proportionally*
- *Feeling valued and safe enough in my skin and workplace to speak up, and voice a different opinion*

Don't let terminology get in the way - Language is fluid and ever changing. It's ok to ask what term people prefer ...and recognise that this may change over time, what works for someone/some people may not work for all. No group, no community is homogeneous.

- *Global Majority - I love it and heard it 10 years ago during BALI training - empowering*
- *I only came across this term a couple of weeks ago, I like it and am trying to get it into my everyday "rolls of the tongue" lingo - this video is helpful to better understand the term*
- *Really like the 'spirit of oneness'*
- *Something uncomfortable for me personally about using acronyms to describe any individual or group. Whether that's BAME, LAC, CwD*
- *Each and every one is more than abbreviated initials*

Intersectionality: a way to always look through more than one lens and recognise identity is nuanced and defined in a myriad of constantly evolving ways:

- *I don't think racial trauma is always recognized - it can have a resounding and lifelong impact and further magnified alongside other intersecting issues/trauma*
- *We risk losing important people from our organisations*
- *It's a commissioning tool that is more than the protected characteristics*

Micro-aggressions: understanding micro-aggressions are never banter, always hurt and hurt cumulatively and constantly:

- *Hear that many times - 'you're not very Asian?'*

Pause for thought, time to share in break out rooms:

- *I wasn't aware that the BALI monthly seminars were open to White Allies until very recently and welcome that and that it should/could be better promoted*
- *Very powerful - the short time in some respects gave an urgency to the conversation*
- *There is so much we can learn from each other*

Multi-Dimensional Racism:

Courageous conversations: Who with? What about? What will change?

- *Indeed, there has been a lot of tokenism – I live in hope that REAL changes are afoot*
- *Not easy at all. So many layers of the organisation are opened up by raising such matters*
- *It's certainly a lot easier to have these conversations since BLM prompted more discussions and work to improve practice. We've been given the backing from senior leaders. Our challenge is to maintain the momentum*
- *It's about seizing the moment and being brave to speak out*
- *There are lots of collaborative forums but it is not always easy to ask challenging questions*
- *When we are under pressure, as with Covid, the temptation is to slip into old habits, as they seem easier. Actually, isn't a time of pressure the best moment to try something new? Bringing in new talents and perspectives.*
- *It's what you then do with the information...and knowing where or who to take it to*
- *It's about how we create a space that is safe, how we respond. Whilst we may think we are doing this - it is not always the case or what is experienced*
- *Trust is very important*
- *Yes, it's not just about being brave, it's the psychological safety to be able to speak out*
- *I have experienced creating some new conversations and then needing to work out what happens next. Helping me reflect on keeping going.*
- *In a large council it is sometimes difficult to find the right space to ask questions - I feel energised to find - even make these spaces following this session today to ensure that I can be bolder in starting courageous conversations*

Psychological safety: a concept coined by Amy Edmondson – 'a climate where you're comfortable expressing and being yourself'

A workplace you trust and trusted. A place and space where you can answer 'yes' to 3 key questions:

Can I speak up?

Will I be punished or ridiculed for sharing my opinion?

Can I be honest about who I am and my perspective?

- *Leaders needs to communicate the importance of this in addressing and shaping culture – it's fluid and not a fixed state*
- *To be honest, depending on circumstances, it's not only 'not safe', it creates additional issues / challenges*
- *Model the behaviour we expect from others - lead from the front*

Resources mentioned during the session:

- *Here's the link to join the BALI network:*

<https://thestaffcollege.uk/bali-network-join-the-network/>

- *'BALI is an inspirational programme' - Alumni 2018 at today's session*

- Link to 'Leading in Colour: the fierce urgency of NOW: and a reminder of the resources it highlights:
<https://thestaffcollege.uk/leading-in-colour-the-fierce-urgency-of-now/download-leading-in-colour-the-fierce-urgency-of-now/>
 - It has five sets of resources (pages 36 – 55) to draw on to meet your learning needs:
 - Conversations to support leaders in this work
 - Assurances local leaders might wish to seek
 - Glossary of words and phrases in this space
 - A curated resource of key blogs, books, and podcasts for you to draw on, including earlier work by Meera, published by the Staff College, on 'Leadership Imbalance: Black and Asian Leaders missing in action' and 'Cultural Competence: promoting leadership and organisational change'
 - And an end note and thank you to encourage and challenge you to start right now!
- Link to the equity image of trying to look over the fence is here:
<https://interactioninstitute.org/illustrating-equality-vs-equity/>

and to a brief YouTube video on equity and equality here:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nCS7Rus4-Y>

- Link to the recent powerful youth justice statistics:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/understanding-racial-disparity>
- 'Between Fitness and Death: Disability and Slavery in The Caribbean,' Stefanie Hunt-Kennedy, University of Illinois Press, 2020
- 'Why you should not bring your authentic self to work' ,(Jodi-Ann Burey 2020, TEDxSeattle, a powerful video about how it feels to be invited where you're not welcome:

https://www.ted.com/talks/jodi_ann_burey_why_you_should_not_bring_your_authentic_self_to_work?utm_source=tedcomshare&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=tedsread

Quotes referenced:

- 'When you make us responsible for your fear you neutralise the legitimacy of our perpetual discomfort', Paula Royal 2021
- 'If you want the cooperation of humans around you, you must make them feel they are important and you do that by being genuine and humble,' Nelson Mandela
- 'I've learned that people will forget what you've said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel,' attributed to Maya Angelou

A brief flavour of your feedback and your personal, professional and regional commitment to Leading in Colour ...Now:

- Thank you very much Meera, Rose and staff college colleagues for presenting this powerful and thought provoking seminar - we can make changes in our region together!
- It's been a great session and genuinely thought-provoking, thanks so much
- Thank you - a great space for challenge and reflection
- Refreshingly on point session. Well done and thank you
- Best training I have done in years! Thank you

- *Really useful to come together to share ideas to help individuals and organisations to share ideas and to collectively move forward. Thank you*
- *Great session, really offered the opportunity to learn, reflect and think about the way forward*
- *It's good to get this BLAST of reality - energises action!*
- *Thanks everyone, challenging inspiring educational and demands that I do something!*
- *Really focused and appropriately challenging personally and professionally*
- *Great training - I agree it's now time for action to make change and make things better*

Please do make contact if we can help your work to create fairer workplaces and fairer communities at: hello@thestaffcollege.uk

Our thanks Rose and Meera
January 2022