Promoting Equity, Inclusion, and Sustainable Employment: Empowering Black Student Experiences in Higher Education

Dr Patrice Seuwou

University of Northampton (UNITED KINGDOM)

Faculty of Business and Law

21st February 2024

Social justice, Equality, Inclusion, Social mobility

background...

Dr Patrice Seuwou

- **Associate Professor in Learning and Teaching**
- Deputy Head of Department Business Systems & Operations
- Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy
- Co-Lead - Inclusion, Diversity and Special Education SIG, Centre for Education and Research
- **Director of the Centre for the Advancement of Racial Equality**
- External Examiner for Open University & Staffordshire university
- Reviewer UKRI
- QAA Assessor
- Contributing Writer to Times Higher Education| Author | EDI Trainer

Selected Publications:

- Seuwou, P (2023) Ten Actions Universities in the UK can take to improve the experiences of their Black students *Times Higher Education*. (https://www.timeshighereducation.com/campus/ten-actions-improve-experiences-black-students-within-uk-universities)
- Seuwou, P, Sarwar, D, Pilkington (2023) The Lived Experience of Black International Students at a Post-1992 University in England: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Academic Resilience, INTED 2023 conference
- Seuwou, P, Sarwar, D, Pilkington (2022) A Phenomenological Exploration of the Holistic Experiences of Students of African Descent at a Post-1992 University in England, ICERI2022 Proceedings ISBN: 978-84-09-45476-1
- Dzineku, C & Seuwou, P (2022), 'Action to improve diversity and inclusion for Black students and staff' *Times Higher Education*. <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/campus/action-improve-diversity-and-inclusion-black-students-and-staff>
- Seuwou, P, Dodzo, N., Osho, Y., Ajaefobi, W., Sarwar, D, Pilkington, A & Daye, M (2022), Exploring the Factors that Impact on BAME students Attainment at a Post-1992 University in England, Studies in Education journal (*under Peer review process*)
- Seuwou, P, Dodzo, N., Osho, Y., Ajaefobi, W., Sarwar, D, Pilkington, A & Daye, M (2022), Widening Participation in HE: Exploring the Factors that Impact on BAME students Attainment at a Post-1992 University in England, *Proceedings of EDULEARN22 Conference 4th-6th July 2022, Palma, Mallorca, Spain ISBN: 978-84-09-42484-9*
- Seuwou, P., Ajani, R. (2022) 'Experiences and Challenges of Africans Diaspora in Great Britain and their Role in the Future Development of Africa', African Development Perspectives: A Holistic Reflection, Austin Macauley Publishers

UON University of Northampton

Learning Outcomes

After completing this session, you will be able to:

1. Gain awareness of the challenges faced by Black students, understand the importance of equity and inclusion, and recognise the impact of intersectionality on their experiences.

2. Acquire practical strategies and resources to promote equity, inclusion, and sustainable employment for Black students, fostering their success and empowerment.

3. Develop actionable plans and commit to creating an inclusive environment, addressing intersectionality, and advocating for equity in higher education.

What is Equality of Opportunity?

What are your thoughts on Equality of opportunity?

A — "Well, it's about treating black and minority ethnic groups the same as you would anyone else, isn't it?"

B — "Equality of opportunity? Hmm, I'd say it's about making sure everyone gets treated fairly."

C — "I've always thought it's about treating people in exactly the same way, even if they have different capabilities and needs."

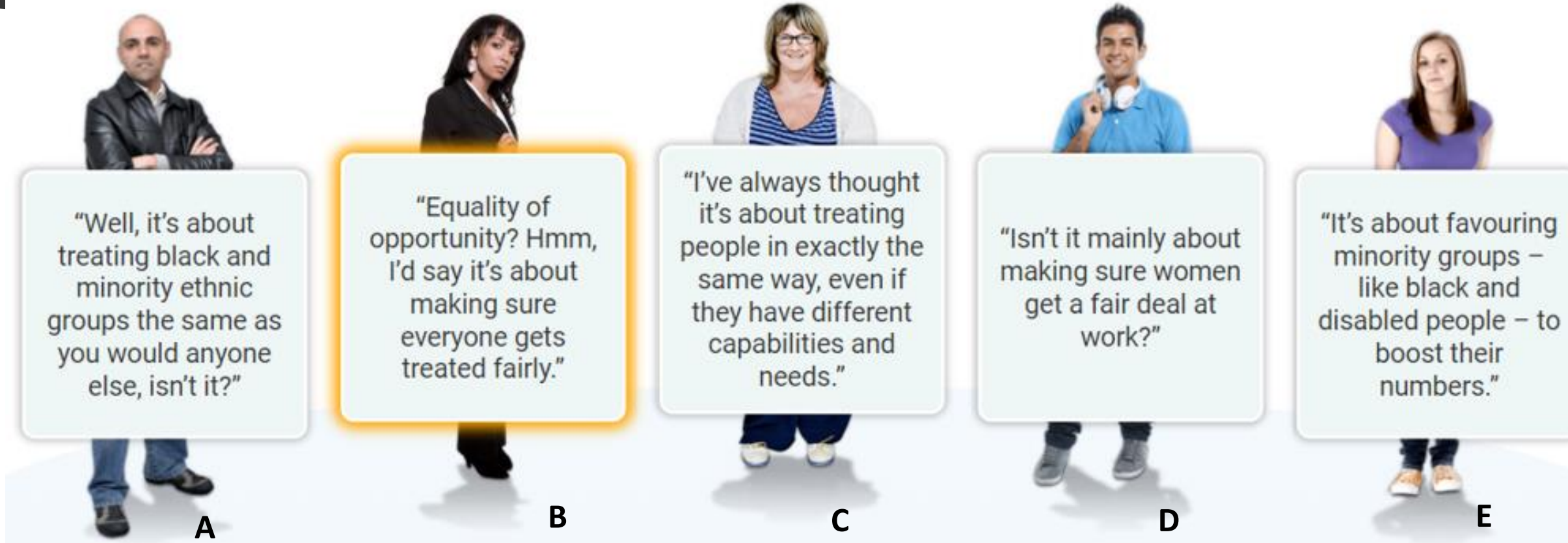**D** — "Isn't it mainly about making sure women get a fair deal at work?"

E — "It's about favouring minority groups – like black and disabled people – to boost their numbers."

Five different people, five very different views. So which response do you think was closet to what it's really all about?
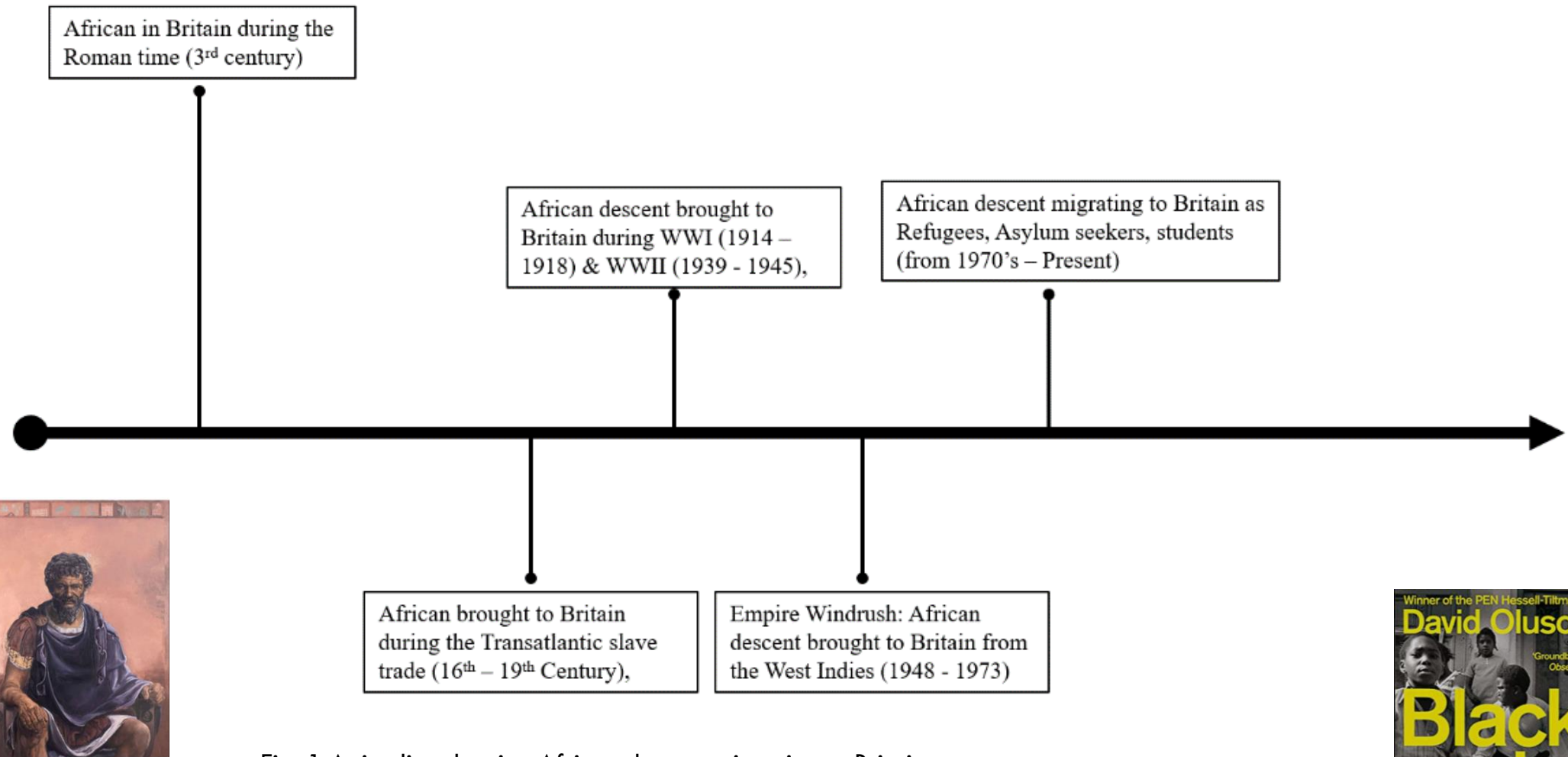
University of Northampton

What is Equality of Opportunity?

A "Well, it's about treating black and minority ethnic groups the same as you would anyone else, isn't it?"

B "Equality of opportunity? Hmm, I'd say it's about making sure everyone gets treated fairly."

C "I've always thought it's about treating people in exactly the same way, even if they have different capabilities and needs."

D "Isn't it mainly about making sure women get a fair deal at work?"

E "It's about favouring minority groups – like black and disabled people – to boost their numbers."

Basically, equality of opportunity is about creating a level playing field on which everyone is treated fairly, purely on the basis of their relevant abilities and needs.

University of Northampton

A timeline showing African descent migration to Britain

*Inspired from the work of historian* **David Olusoga (2017)**

African in Britain during the Roman time (3rd century)

African descent brought to Britain during WWI (1914 – 1918) & WWII (1939 - 1945),

African descent migrating to Britain as Refugees, Asylum seekers, students (from 1970's – Present)

African brought to Britain during the Transatlantic slave trade (16th – 19th Century),

Empire Windrush: African descent brought to Britain from the West Indies (1948 - 1973)

AD 193, **Lucius Septimius Severus**

Fig. 1 A timeline showing African descent migration to Britain (Seuwou & Ajani, 2022)

University of Northampton
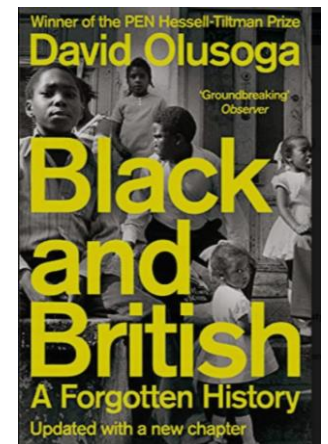
- Higher education (HE) has the potential to improve the lives of the disadvantaged by enhancing social mobility (Vignoles and Murray, 2016).

- Key reformers: Wilhelm von Humboldt (1810); Cardinal John Henry Newman (1852)

- The 1963 Lord Robbins Report
- The 1997 Lord Dearing Report
- The 2021 Sewell Report: Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities

- Substantial inequalities still persist throughout the student lifecycle
  - 679,970 international students (UK Parliament)
  - A single cohort of international students contributes over £30 billion net.

INCLUSION

BELONGING

EQUITY

DIVERSITY
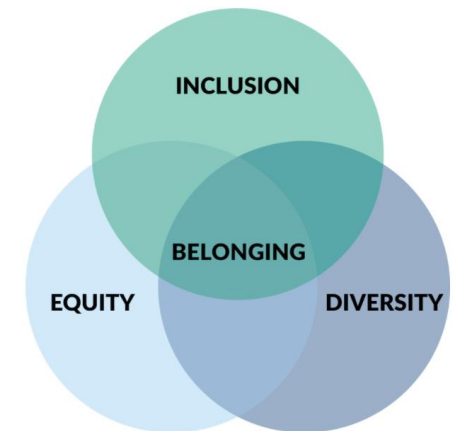
According to the 2021 Census, the total population of England and Wales was 59.6 million, and 81.7% of the population was white.
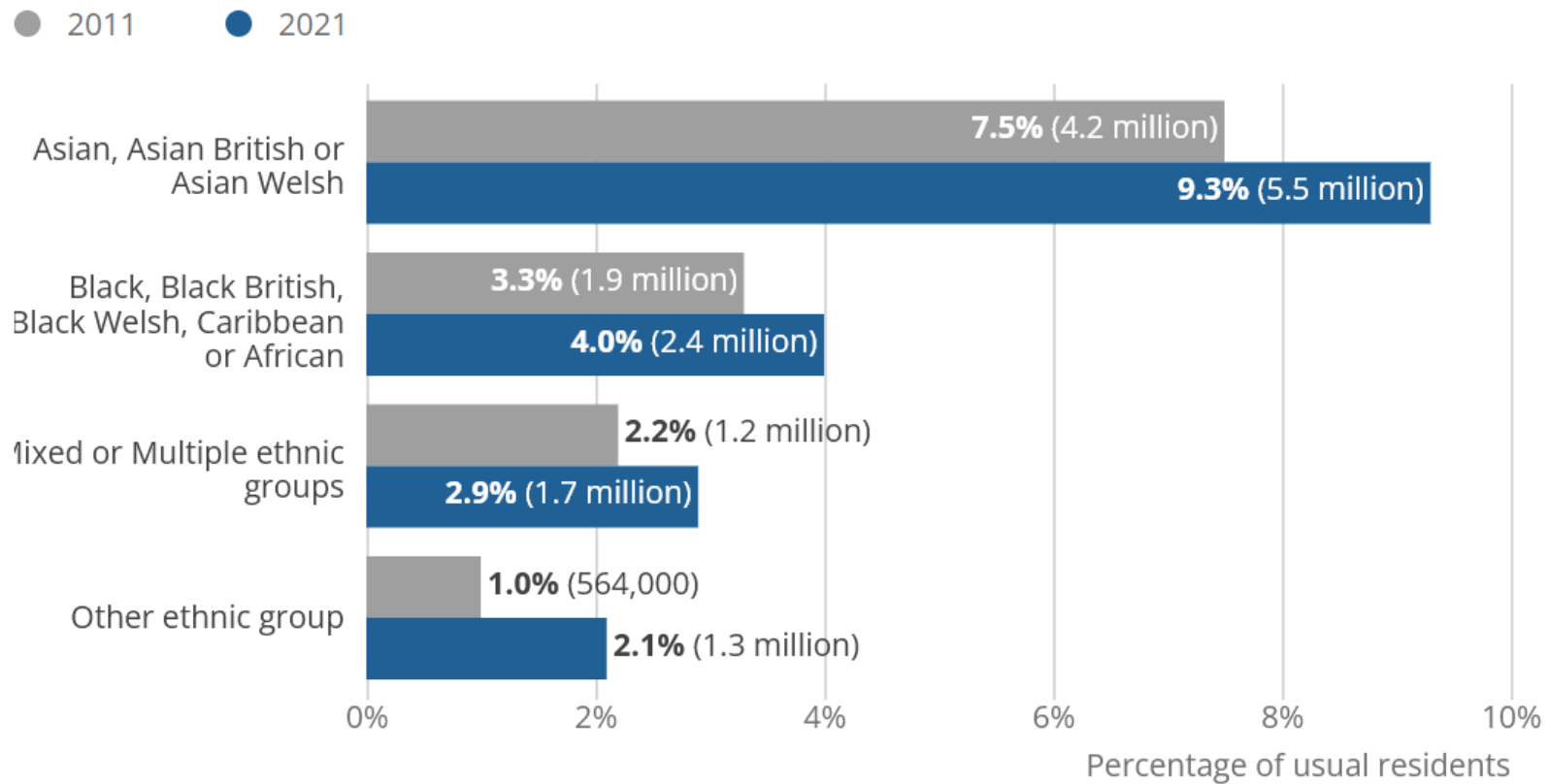
Fig 2. Source: Office for National Statistics – Census 2021
Ethnic group distribution (high-level categories), 2011 and 2021, England and Wales

Understanding Black Student Experiences in Higher Education

Challenges Faced by Black Students in HE

- Racism and discrimination

- Financial difficulties

- Deficit model

- Cultural adjustment

- Different education systems and assessment standards for international students

- Accommodation living black

- Academic misconduct offences

- Access to university services

- Mental health issues

Video → **Yale Study Shows Pre-School Teachers Single Out Black Boys The Most!** (1:36 mins)

Key Observations

- Black students find it difficult to relate to the large proportion of course content and references used on some programmes.

- Students sighted examples of what they considered as intentional and unintentional 'microaggressions' prior to coming to university and during their time at the university.

- A noticeable lack of Black staff representation in most departments

- Academic support services not diverse in staff, however, very helpful to those who see them.

- Links between family responsibilities, socio-economic background and effects of commuting on attainment

Access and participation plans

• Access and participation plans set out how higher education providers will improve equality of opportunity for students from disadvantaged backgrounds to access, succeed in, and progress from higher education.

Privilege

Wherever there is a group that doesn't benefit from a system, privilege exists and has systemic consequences

To truly understand Allyship, we must first understand

Quiz

How might you benefit from privilege?

- We are going to read out some statements (35), and you will be asked to score your answers.

- Please grab a pen and some paper.

University of
Northampton

Groupwork (10 mins)

- What is your understanding of the following terminologies:
  - Anti-Racist Vs Non-Racist
  - Microaggression
  - Microassault
  - Microinsult
  - Microinvalidation

- As academics, what is one thing you can do or say to yourself to boost your confidence when you feel apprehensive?

Jot down your findings and be ready to present them to the rest of the class

Racial microaggressions (micro assault, microinsult, microinvalidation)

Micro assault

- *"Racial Slurs*

- *Avoidant behaviour:*

- *Displaying positive representations of white supremacy or colonialism or negative representations of people of colour*

Microinsult

- *"Your English is really good" (to someone who is Black or Asian British, Nigerian, American or to people perceived as speaking English as an additional language).*

- *"You are a credit to your people" (as if they are an exception to the rule)*

- *"You are intimidating/aggressive" (to black people)*

- *"You're very exotic" (intended compliment but experienced as racially biased)*

Microinvalidation

- *"I'm sure they didn't mean anything by that"*

- *"You're being oversensitive"*

- *"Your colour doesn't matter to me, everyone's human"*

- *"All lives matter"*

- *"You're imagining it"*

- *"Anyone can succeed if they work hard enough"*

- *"I have Black friends; I can't be racist"*

- *"You should try to fit in more"*

University of Northampton

Quotes from students (1)

*"I live in London with my family, and then **I commute when I have class**. I cannot afford to rent by myself in this town. I can save on my rent. London is about [...] from here, so it is not too far. I really appreciate spending time with my family and taking care of my younger sister. My mum is a single mum you know. [...] It can be sometimes challenging to be on time due to train delay. Sometimes the lecturer will not let us in the class when we are late. I sometimes have to leave early to catch my train back to London [...]"* ~ *Black Caribbean female - Lia*

*Aggressive Stigma; **the black angry girl**: I don't think I come across threatening, I don't think I ever show that kind of attitude, but obviously a lot of stigmas around black people is that they are aggressive and we will lash out. So, I got excluded for three days. It was internal exclusion but I had to be chaperoned around all day and the other student wasn't black but she was actually the person who would 'bullying me' so I was the victim! Black Caribbean female- Fanta*

Quotes from students (2)

*In all the lectures I have attended during my master, all **case studies my teachers have used are always related to UK or US**, we come in here, spending a lot of money for our education, we only study white people stuff you know […] some of us want to go back and many of the things we have learned here sometimes do not have any direct relevance to the situation in Africa. I know the lecturers work very hard, but it would be great if they could go that extra mile and come up with scenario that we as African can also relate to. -Male African – Nigeria -* Augustin

*I may be wrong but there is this way that I feel that maybe when you are trying to put forward any idea, unless you are assertive and you […] this concern know that, to know what you are saying, there's always this tendency of trying to **maybe side-line you as probably maybe, 'This person is from Nigeria, this person is not really from this country'.** Or, 'This person, the **first language is not English',** so they may not really want to take on your idea, even when you know what you are saying, unless you are ready to assert yourself and say no. Even though English is not my first language, I know what I'm saying; I'm intelligent, yes, so I can think critically and I can express myself. ~ Black African Female, doctoral student* Debbie

From Macpherson to Sewell

- The **Macpherson report** (murder of Stephen Lawrence in 1999) acknowledged institutional racism and initiated top down change which in the absence of a bottom up movement proved short-lived.

- **David Lammy review** (Criminal Justice Systems, 2017)

- The **Sewell report** questioned the prevalence of institutional racism and delegitimised the demand for change emanating from the Black Lives Matter movement (March 2021, Dr Tony Sewell)

- What is remarkable over the period as a whole is the **lack of urgency in promoting race equality**

Some stats on Black related issues in Britain

- 24,000 Professors in the UK
- 160 are Black
- 50 are Black Women

- **Life expectancy** is lowest for Black men at birth and age 65.
- 7.1% **Unemployment rate** (Black) Vs 3.1% (White)
- Black men face a much higher chance of being **incarcerated** and are overly represented among prisoners
- At the end of September 2021, **15 per cent** of those remanded in custody were Black.
- 24.3% of Black households are **single-parent families.**
- Despite making up only 13% of London's total population, black Londoners account for **45% of London's knife murder victims, 61% of knife murder perpetrators and 53% of knife crime perpetrators.**
- Education – **GEM Award Gap**
- Hair industry

Met has 'nowhere to hide' after damning Casey report, say campaigners

20 March 2023

📷 Louise Casey arriving at Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre for the press briefing of her review on 20 March. Photograph: WPA/Getty Images

- Dame Louise Casey's 300-page report found institutional misogyny, racism and homophobia persists within Britain's biggest police force.

- The report was commissioned by the Met in the wake of the kidnap, rape and murder of Sarah Everard by the serving police officer Wayne Couzens.

- Andrea Simon, director of the End Violence Against Women Coalition, said: "This damning report leaves the Met nowhere to hide when it comes to the depth of its problems with institutional misogyny, racism and homophobia.

- "There is however a long history of such revelations about the Met – including on undercover policing stretching back to the 1980s and beyond, to the findings of the Macpherson report, and numerous police inspectorate reports since – we demand that today's report finally initiates a tangible shift in the operation of policing in the UK. If not now, then when and at what cost?"

University of Northampton

Black People Representation in the Media

Allyship

The Allyship Journey

The status or role of a person who advocates and actively works for the inclusion of a marginalised or politicised group in all areas of society, not as a member of that group but in solidarity with its struggle and point of view and under its leadership

Promoting Equity and Inclusion in Higher Education

Groupwork (7 mins)

1. Discuss your cultural similarities and differences

2. What is your understanding of intersectionality?

3. How to identify and understand the underlying hidden messages that increase tension across cultures?

Jot down your findings and be ready to present them to the rest of the class

The 9 Protected Characteristics

Clip 1

Video →

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: Open your Mind (5:59 mins)

University of Northampton

Promoting Equity and Inclusion in Higher Education

- Equity and inclusion are fundamental pillars of a thriving higher education environment.
- Creating a supportive and inclusive campus culture benefits all students, faculty, and staff.
- Let's explore key strategies for promoting equity and inclusion in higher education.

Intersectionality
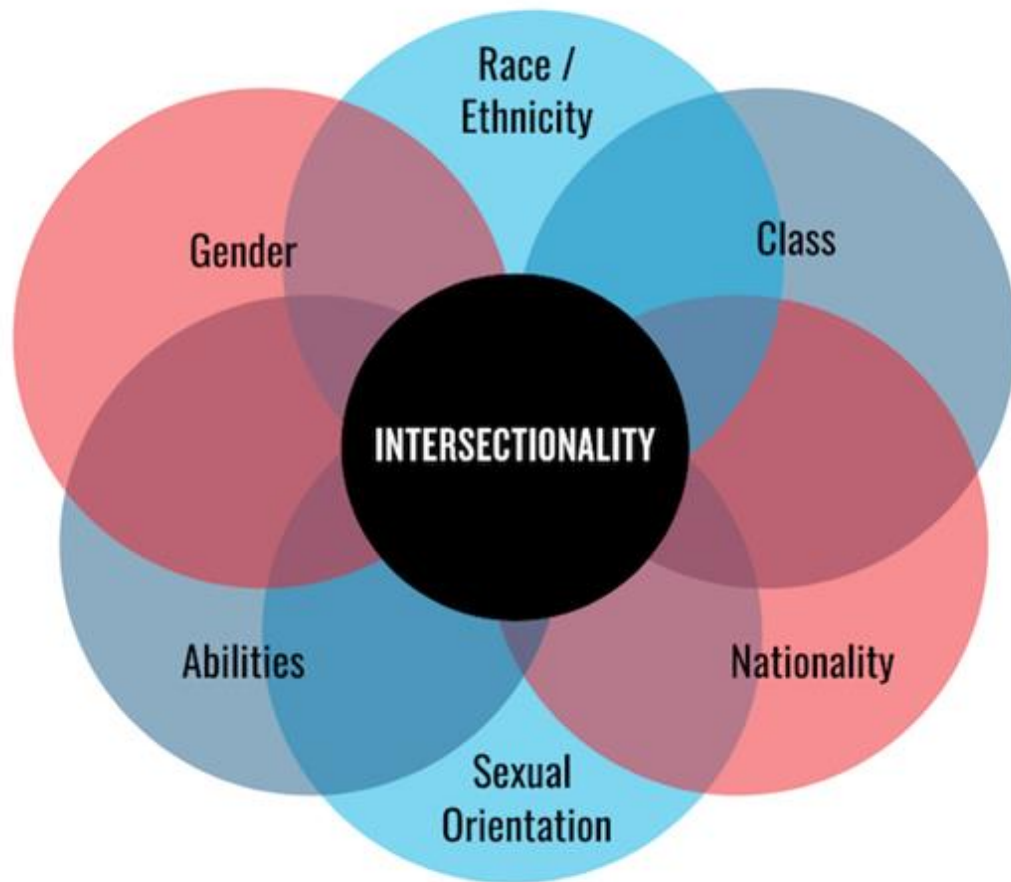
Image: First Book

Intentionality is a cultural theoretical movement within academia which has gained much momentum over the last few decades.

Intersectionality is concerned with the ways in which multiple facets of our identity interrelate, and shape one another – especially in relation to narratives of oppression.

Kimberlé Crenshaw
American Civil Rights Advocate
Professor, UCLA School of Law and Columbia Law School

Critical Race Theory (CRT)

Aspiring for Justice

University of Northampton
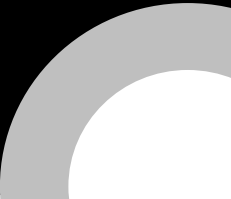
Strategies for Promoting Equity and Inclusion

1. Inclusive Policies and Practices

2. Culturally Responsive Teaching

3. Supportive Campus Services

4. Campus-wide Awareness and Training
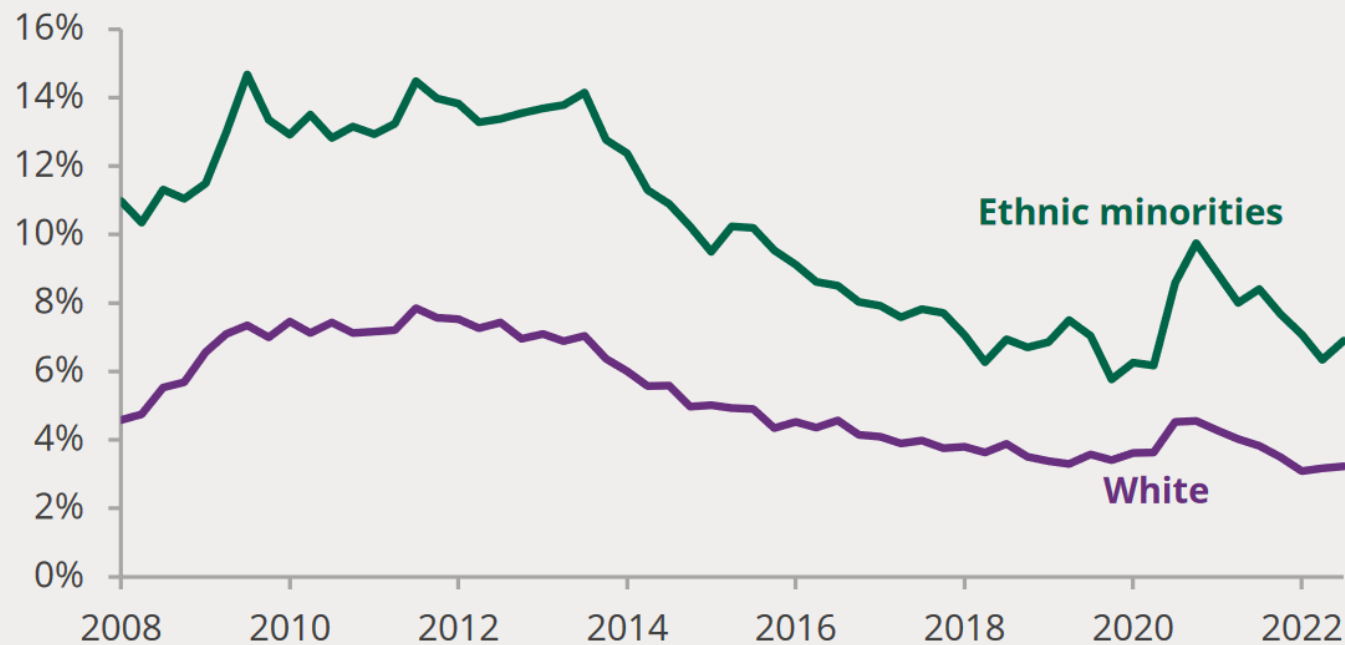
5. Collaboration and Partnerships

Empowering Black Students for Sustainable Employment

Job Applicants With 'Black Names' Still Less Likely to Get Interviews

Employers aren't treating identical resumes equally, new research finds.

Unemployment rate by ethnic background: UK, 2008-2022
People aged 16+, not seasonally adjusted

Ethnic minorities

White

According to Diversity UK, **the employment rate for ethnic minorities is only 62.8% compared with an employment rate for White workers of 75.6%** – a gap of over 12 percentage points.

Source: ONS, UK labour market, August 2022

Employability strategies for Black students

1. Change your Mindset and build your confidence
2. Research: do your homework
3. Events & Job fairs
4. Networking
5. Volunteering
6. Internships and work experience
7. Career advisory
8. Professional associations & Professional certifications
9. Extracurricular activities
10. Working on your brand assets (CV, LinkedIn)

Promoting Equity and Inclusion in Higher Education

Community Cultural Wealth
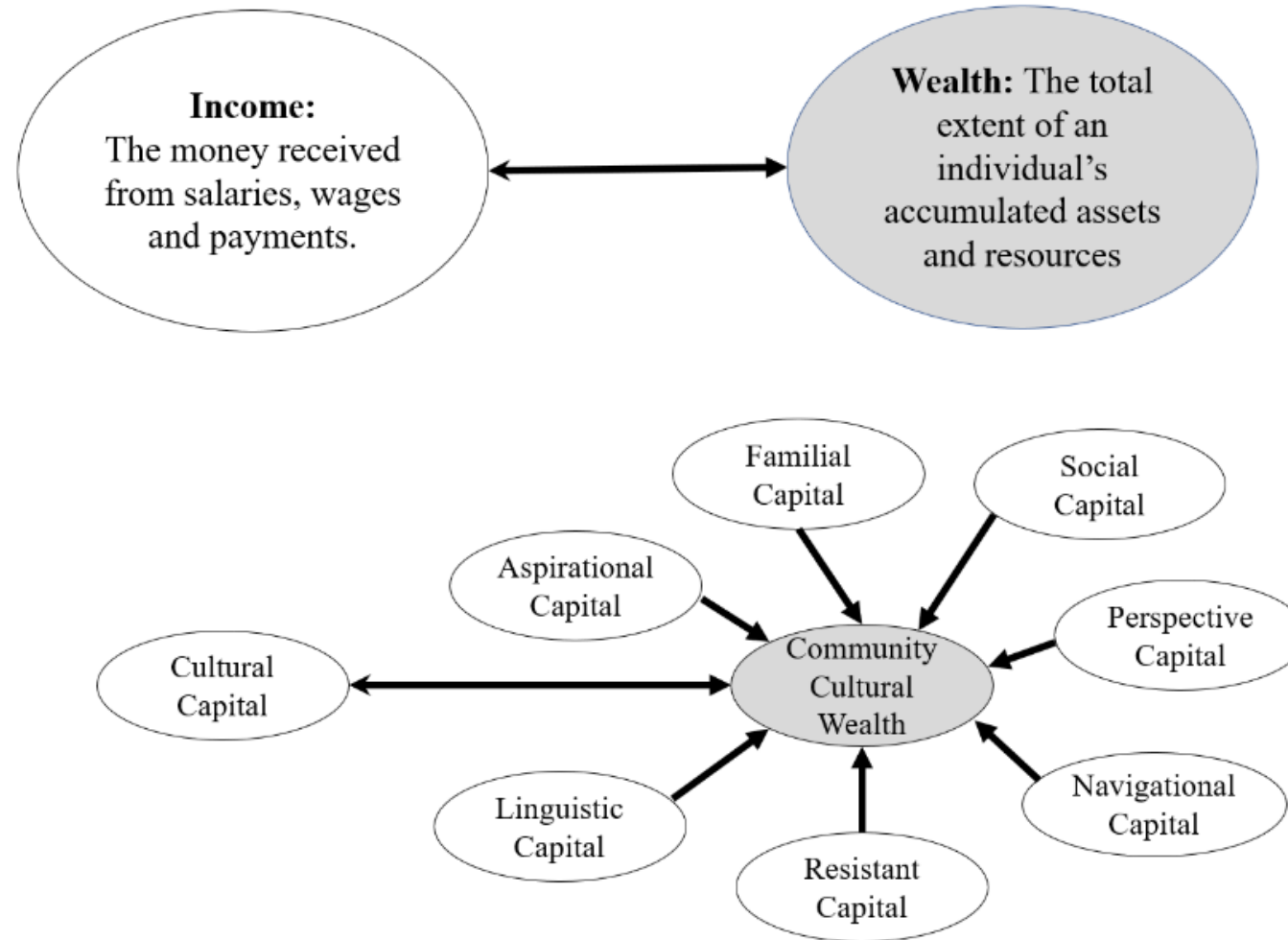
A model of community cultural wealth. Adapted from: Yosso, (2005)

Success Stories

Professor Charles Egbu

Vice-Chancellor of Leeds Trinity University - Nigeria

BBC NEWS

Cambridge University's Jason Arday becomes youngest black professor

1 day ago

Now aged 37, Jason Arday is about to become the youngest black person ever appointed to a professorship at the University of Cambridge

Professor David Mba

Vice-Chancellor of Birmingham City University

University of Northampton

Five Key Strategies for Empowering Black Students in higher education

1. Culturally Responsive Teaching

2. Mentorship and Support Programs

3. Access to Resources and Opportunities

4. Representation and Inclusive Curriculum

5. Campus Climate and Supportive Spaces

Ten actions to improve the experiences of Black students within UK universities

1. Dealing with classroom and accommodation segregation

2. Increase the number of Black staff members and role models on campus

3. Decolonise your curriculum

4. Create a system for reporting discriminatory and racist behaviour

5. Work towards achieving a Race Equality Charter award

6. Provide funding for race-related research

7. Develop a support scheme for international students

8. Promote difficult conversations at all levels

9. Implement reciprocal mentoring schemes

10. Celebrate diversity

**THE** Times Higher Education

University of Northampton

Ten actions lecturers can take to boost black students' belonging

1. Educate yourselves on race-related issues, history and culture

2. Make an effort to pronounce black students' names

3. Engage in difficult conversations with black students about life experiences and belonging

4. Dispute the idea that black students are a monolithic group

5. Promote inter-racial dialogue in student groups

6. Provide informal settings where black students can exchange ideas

7. Do not view black students as having a deficit

8. Identify and develop each student's gifts and potential, regardless of race or background

9. Consider anonymous marking

10. Ensure your curricula are inclusive and represent black experiences positively

THE Times Higher Education

University of Northampton

The Journey to Allyship: Where to Begin
CARE Antiracism bookcases and book club

University of Northampton
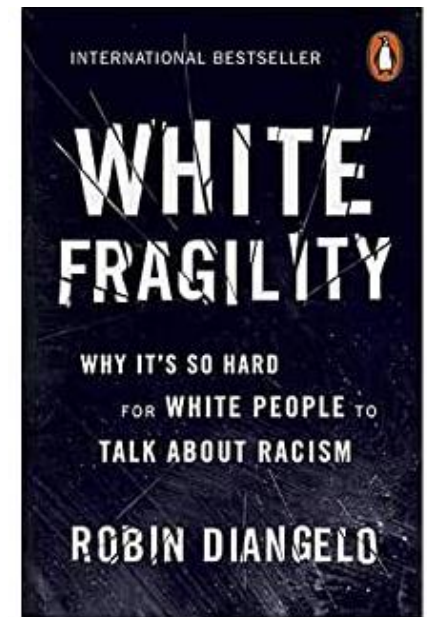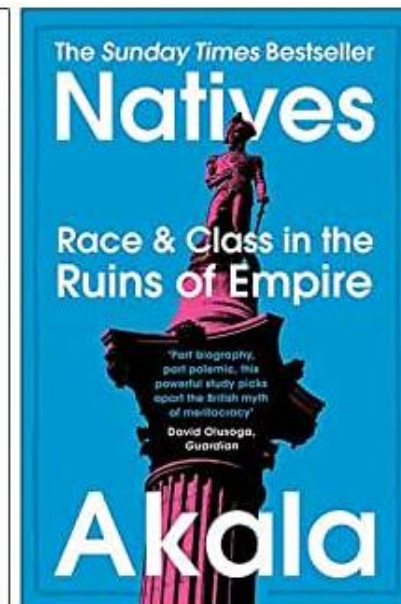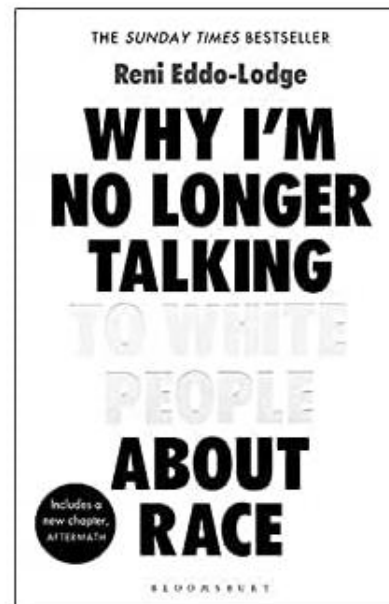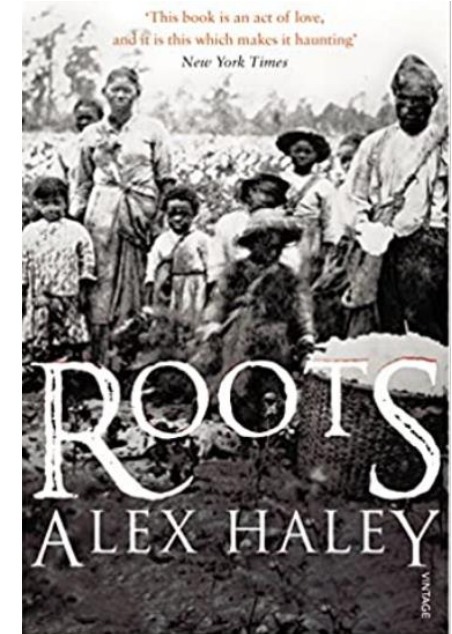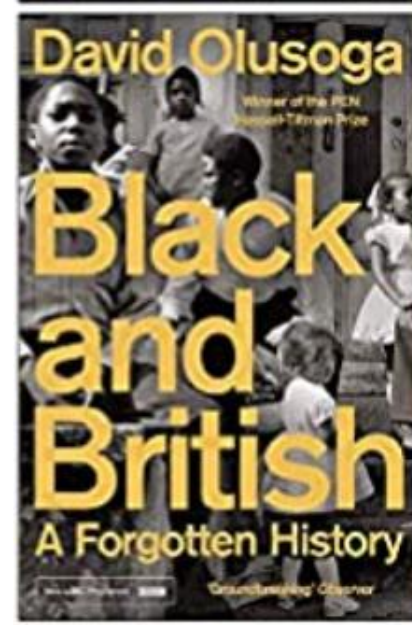
Union Black: Britain's Black Cultures and Steps to Anti-racism

- Santander Universities UK has partnered with The
- Open University and
- FutureLearn

Creating an Action Plan

1. Discuss and identify specific actions you can take to promote equity and inclusion for Black students in your respective roles or departments.

2. Write down action steps on your worksheet, including clear goals, strategies, and timelines.

3. Think about both short-term and long-term actions and the resources or support you may need to implement your plans.

Jot down your findings and be ready to present them to the rest of the class

University of Northampton

Bibliography

HM Government. (2017) *Building Our Industrial Strategy*. Green paper, www.gov.uk. Schwartz, S. 2004. "Fair Admissions

Kift, S., and K. Nelson. (2005) 'Beyond curriculum reform: Embedding the transition experience', paper presented at the *Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia (HERDSA) conference*, at http://conference.herdsa.org.au/2005/pdf/refereed/paper_294.pdf [accessed 08 Mar 2019].

Miller, M. (2016) *The Ethnicity Attainment Gap: Literature Review*, Widening Participation research & Evaluation Unit, The University of Sheffield.

Olusoga, D., 2016. *Black and British: A forgotten history*. Pan Macmillan.

Palmer, M., O'Kane, P. and Owens, M. (2009) 'Betwixt spaces: student accounts of turning point experiences in the first-year transition'. *Studies in Higher Education*. 34(1), 37-54.

Pilkington, A., (2020) Promoting Race Equality and Supporting Ethnic Diversity in the Academy: The UK experience over two decades, Strategies for Supporting Inclusion and Diversity in the Academy: Higher Education, Aspiration and Inequality. Crimmins, G. (ed.). Australia: Palgrave Macmillan Ltd., p. 29-48 19 p.

Robbins, L. (1963), *Higher Education: Report of a Committee*, Cmnd 2154, HMSO, London.

Stuart, M., Lido, C. and Morgan, J. (2009) 'The Impact of Social Identity and Cultural Capital on Different Ethnic Student Groups at University'. ESRC End of Award Report, RES-000-22-2485. Swindon: ESRC.

Sarwar, D. (2020) Critical Race Theory Impact on Black Minority Ethnic Students within Higher Education, Transnational Press London.

Sewell, T., Aderin-Pocock, M., Chughtai, A., Fraser, K., Khalid, N., Moyo, D., Muroki, M., Oliver, M., Shah, S., Olulode, K.,Cluff, B. (2021) Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities: The Report, Available at https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/974507/20210331_-_CRED_Report_-_FINAL_-_Web_Accessible.pdf, Access 07 May 2021.

The Social Mobility Commission, (2017). *State of the Nation 2017: Social Mobility in Great Britain. London: The Social Mobility Commission*, Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/662744/State_of_the_Nation_2017_-_Social_Mobility_in_Great_Britain.pdf (Accessed on: 07 March 2019)

Vignoles, A., and N. Murray. (2016) *Widening Participation in Higher Education*. Education Sciences 6 (2): 13. doi:10.3390/educsci6020013

Thank you for listening

WE ARE NORTHAMPTON.AC.UK

Dr Patrice Seuwou SFHEA
Associate Professor in Learning and Teaching
patrice.seuwou@Northampton.ac.uk