



**21<sup>ST</sup> JULY 2022**  
**LIVED EXPERIENCE**  
**IN ACADEMIA**  
**DAY PROGRAMME**

A day for reflective exploration of racism and discrimination in higher education from the perspectives of students.

**Time: 10am to 4.30pm**

**Location: Zoom**

**Register [HERE](#)**



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# PROGRAMME

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10 am – 10.10 am

Arrival & Welcome

10.10 am – 10.30 am

Introductory Words

10.30 am – 11.15 am

**‘Making the invisible visible’**  
by Mel Green

11.15 am – 12.00 pm

**Breaking barriers of impostor syndrome and  
racial microaggressions** by Janelle Rabe

12.00 pm – 12.45 pm

**BREAK / NETWORKING**

12.45 pm – 1.30 pm

**“I’ve never had a Black professor”**  
by Siobhan O’Neill

1.30 pm – 2.15 pm

**Embedding anti-racism & decolonising the  
curriculum** by Omar Mohamed

2.15 pm – 3.00 pm

**BREAK / NETWORKING**

3.00 pm – 3.45 pm

**Neurodivergent While Black: Pronged by the  
Academy** by Tré Ventour

3.45 pm – 4.30 pm

**In the Blindspot: Traversing White Academia as  
Muslim Interlopers** by Maisha Islam

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## TICKETS

Race Reflections members_____	FREE
Non-members_____	£20

What's included with your purchase:

- Access to all talks during the day
- Links to recordings available to watch for 2 weeks
- A 20% discount code to join any of our memberships

>[REGISTER HERE](#)<

## Feedback from our first Day on Lived Experience

"This was the best event I've attended in the year of Race Reflections training. While not wanting to diminish the challenges, obstacles and traumatic experiences that the speakers so eloquently spoke about, I left the event feeling hopeful about academia. Most days I wish I'd never come into academia when I think about the inequality, the direction HEIs are going in, but the conference was inspiring and hopeful. It has given me the impetus to hold a workshop with my colleague (who also attended this event and the Race Reflections training) for our Institute where we can raise the ideas, concepts and learnings we have encountered through the Race Reflections training and the conference and start to try to make changes locally and foster allyship."

"The speakers were fantastic and the conversations after the presentation were also nuanced, critical and relevant to changing HEI. I think I learnt something in each session, but the sessions on neurodiversity and the information/library studies were particularly useful because I am unfamiliar with these fields. The whole day gave me a lot to think about."

"The presentations were excellent, insightful, experience near and thought provoking. I also enjoyed the discussions evoked following the presentations. This was amazing and would love to attend more of these events with Race Reflections. I always get so much out of them. thank you!"

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**Mel Green**

10.30 am – 11.15 am

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**‘Making the invisible visible’: Exploring how Black, female, working class and disabled educators share the intersections of their identity online.**

Interest in teacher identity has progressed from a mere interest in how teachers work, learn and develop to how the role of emotions, passion, commitment and courage in teaching (see, for example, Beauchamp and Thomas, 2009) to how our pedagogical choices affect teachers’ identities and the identities of students (Freire, 1970, hooks, 1994). Yet Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) state that defining teacher identity is one of the main challenges in arriving at an understanding of the concept and how it influences teachers’ learning and their work. There is a suggestion consistently being made throughout existing literature that HE practitioners’ identities are unstable, fluid and situated, making it relevant to question how these identities affect pedagogy. The further suggestion that HE practitioners’ identities are unstated and undefinable reveals an importance in questioning how then individuals with other stated, somewhat definable and socially-perceived identities such as race/ethnicity, gender, class, disability and age, are projecting these personal identities into their professional ones.

Recent scholarship on the experiences of teacher identity and the effect of online teaching focuses primarily on the ‘sudden transition to online teaching’, ‘the post-pandemic university’, ‘rapid engagement with online education’ and ‘the new normal’ (Rapanta et al., 2021, Abaci et al., 2021, Naylor and Nyanjom, 2020, Gowdy, Aura and Salinas, 2021). However, the difficulties in ‘conceptualising higher education identities’ highlighted by Whitchurch (2013, p. 12) were present before the ‘pivot online’ and enforced national lockdowns. The emergence of online education, the increased pace of uptake due to Covid-19 and the disembodiment experienced by teachers in online spaces has led to a disruption in identity perception for many HE practitioners. As an HE practitioner who began teaching

online in 2018, my experience of transitioning online was gradual, with this form of teaching being permanent and unrelated to the global difficulties.

As Black, female, with poor mental health, who is relatively new to HE, and from a working-class background, my identity construction has many intersections. Where there is research into teacher identity and online practices within HE pre-pandemic, there is a shortage of literature regarding the experiences of those whose place in society and academia is not

normalised or made dominant, which is where the research in this paper finds its place. These considerations have led to the main research question of this study, ‘how do the intersections of HE practitioners’ identities affect their online pedagogical choices and teaching values?’

Using intersectionality conceptualised by Black feminist theorists such as Crenshaw (1989) as a framework, the aim of the research is to observe and examine “difference within groups” as Khadka, Davis McElligatt and Dorwick (2019) argue that forms of oppression face outside the academy by academic Others – minorities, women, the working class, the disabled amongst populations – are both mirrored in and often exacerbated by the academy. To this end, the research being presented explores observed differences in HE online practitioners within marginalised groups and what effects these differences have on the teaching choices they make.

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**Janelle Rabe**

11.15 am – 12.00 pm

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**Breaking barriers of impostor syndrome and racial microaggressions**

Janelle's presentation will involve her anecdotal experiences of impostor syndrome as a graduate student in British universities. She positions her experiences on the intersections of her race (Filipino), gender (woman), immigration status (Tier 4 international student), and having a non-traditional background (mature student with industry rather than an academic background). Impostor syndrome involves feelings of self-doubt and personal incompetence that make people doubt their skills and accomplishments.

Impostor syndrome may also negatively affect an individual's mental and emotional health leading to anxiety and depression. International students of colour may be more vulnerable to impostor syndrome due to persistent difficulties navigating the British education system and having English as a second language to keep up and succeed with Western peers. Racial microaggressions aggravate feelings of impostor syndrome. Much needs to be done to understand and address more subtle and everyday forms of racism that international students of colour experience. Janelle will draw on academic articles and grey literature addressing institutionalised whiteness and racial microaggressions in British Higher Education.

Overall, institutional actions such as education initiatives to address racial microaggression and decolonising the curriculum are critical in responding to inherent inequalities in students' educational experiences. Janelle will share ways to deal with impostor syndrome at the individual level. She will also recommend concrete actions universities may take to support international students of colour individually and systematically.

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**Siobhan O'Neill**

12.45 pm – 1.30 pm

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**“I’ve never had a Black professor”: (The Lack of) Representation, Student Expectations and Diversity**

Diversity and (the lack of) representation is one of the most prominent themes that I draw out of my research with racially minoritised Politics students in British Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). In this panel, I will talk about this and explore some of the importance and complexities of representation and diversity. This is based on one of the chapters of my PhD project titled ‘The dynamics of race, racism and whiteness in politics: How do racially minoritised students experience and navigate the whiteness of Politics disciplines in British HE?’ The chapter – and the PhD more broadly - is based on the narratives of thirty racially minoritised students which I collected using interviews and diary-based data collection methods.

I present the ways in which my research participants pointed to the (lack of) representation amongst their teaching staff and the significance of this in shaping their experiences. I explore how their call for more racially minoritised teaching staff (who ‘look like them’) can be thought of as transformative given that it challenges and refuses to take for granted the whiteness that underpins their education. As well as this, I consider what the limitations of this representational politics might be. I focus particular attention on the students’ expectation for racially minoritised staff to teach the topics and subjects they perceive to be ‘Black and Brown’ or race-related subjects and the complexities of such an expectation.

Following this, I consider the importance of ideological diversity in relation to – and perhaps as opposed to - demographic representation. Through this discussion I argue that (the lack of) representation amongst teaching staff in particular is important - it is a significant part of students’ experiences within the academy and their call for more (and better) representation is a transformative one – however it is a politics that comes with caveats that we must give consideration to when thinking about diversifying and decolonising the academy.

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**Omar Mohamed**

1.30 pm – 2.15 pm

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**Embedding anti-racism and decolonising the social work curriculum: a social work student's perspective of collaborative disruptive activism**

This presentation will be from the perspective and lived experience of an Asian British undergraduate social work student's journey with working with his department to decolonise the curriculum and embed anti-racism within the curriculum.

This started with a student society-led campaign to 'Decolonise the Curriculum' which then led to working with the University's department to respond to racially minoritised student's needs. This response takes an intersectional approach to understand the impact of racism on the mental health and experiences of students navigating the course. Decolonial and anti-racism work is being undertaken collaboratively with a racially diverse working group of students and academics to address the impact of inequality, colonialism, and racism within academia.

The group has taken a collaborative approach to looking at how we critically decolonise the curriculum, embed Indigenous and diverse sources of knowledge, and ensure anti-racism is integral to the development of the next generation of graduates, to inform an ongoing curriculum review and departmental action plan.

This presentation will explore the process of how a student society-led campaign transformed into a collaborative working group with students and academics with an aim to decolonise the curriculum and to embed anti-racism within the curriculum, and will explore what has worked and what has not worked in the process of collaborative work and the changes that can and need to be made in institutions.

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**Maisha Islam**

**3.00 pm – 3.45 pm**

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**In the Blindspot: Traversing White Academia as Muslim Interlopers**

The ivory tower of academia and its problematic nature has rightly been called out by many marginalised individuals occupying the space, most notably by Black women who experience the complexities of racialised and gendered encounters which occupy their day-to-day lived experiences (Gabriel and Tate, 2017).

In using these experiences as inspiration, the work I share here will give voice to my own, and that of many other Muslim students and staff, experiences in UK HE. This talk will explore both the subtleties and multiplicities of disadvantages of Muslim students and staff who are often at risk of Islamophobia, racism, classism and sexism, yet do not thoughtfully receive the attention – both in academic literature or higher education policy – they deserve.

Through collective research and personal experience, this talk will not only detail common micro and macro-level disadvantages but provide practical recommendations to delegates seeking to enhance belonging and engagement with/for their Muslim students and staff.

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**Tré Ventour**

**3.45 pm – 4.30 pm**

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### **Neurodivergent While Black: Pronged by the Academy**

Dyspraxia, otherwise known as developmental coordination disorder (DCD), is a neurological development condition that impacts coordination. Having consciously carried it since childhood, my experience of dyspraxia while Black accompanied me into higher education when I did my BA and MA degrees. In the first year of my undergrad, I was also ‘peer-diagnosed’ with autism by other autistic students as self-diagnosis has become an increasingly widespread phenomenon (Cohen, 2017; Shekar, 2020; L, 2021; Enright, 2021), while racism and misogyny in healthcare for example continue to act as barriers to diagnosis. Since, I have identified as neurodivergent, which has not always been safe with ableism from all sides – including being from other Black and Brown people.

What bell hooks called ‘imperialist white supremacist heteropatriarchy’, also applies to navigating neurotypical white academia. Whilst we know HE to be a racist structure, discourses to “neuroableism” (Feliz, 2020; Sanctuary Publishers, 2020) are not so widespread. As a neurodivergent person racialised outside of whiteness, for me this is an interesting yet violent paradox. Particularly as an undergrad, neuroableism was not only common in my student group, but also featured in my encounters with academic staff. In my experience, there seethed a poisonous human concoction, an atmosphere and culture of violence where students that think, be, and communicate ‘different’ are made into problems. This ethos infected my experience so much I skipped many lectures.

In this paper, via autoethnography, I will plot my experiences to navigating neurotypical white academia, both from a student perspective ... but later on when I became a sabbatical officer at my student union and then academic / support staff at the university.

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## About our speakers

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**Maisha Islam:** Maisha Islam is the Strategic Plan Project Officer at the University of Winchester, whilst also studying for a professional doctorate in Education. Maisha's main research interests lie in the area of Black, Asian and minority ethnic student experience, and Muslim student sense of belonging/student voice in Higher Education, where she presents, writes and has published on these topics. Maisha is heavily invested in the area of race and religious equality in Higher Education. For example, Maisha has investigated 'Asian' student experience in relation to degree-awarding gaps and has sat on a Universities UK staff panel which developed guidance for universities tackling racial harassment and Islamophobia on campus. Additionally, Maisha sits on the Office for Students' Student Panel and is the co-Chair of the Research England/Office for Students BAME PGR funding panel.

**Siobhan O'Neill:** I'm a PhD researcher in the Politics (and, in part, Sociology) departments at the University of Manchester. In my PhD project I focus on race, racism and whiteness in politics disciplines in HE. My broader researchs include: race and racism; critical race theory, (de)coloniality, Black Feminism and critical mixed-race studies. I'm also interested in policing and abolitionism, I engage with these outside of academia as part of the No Police In Schools Campaign and the Northern Police Monitoring Project.

**Omar Mohamed** is a final year undergraduate social work student at the University of Birmingham. Omar identifies as Asian British with a complex ethnic and racial history rooting from East Africa and India, however having lived in England all his life. Omar has been passionately advocating through collective activism around building and embedding anti-racism and indigenous knowledge in his University curriculum. This has involved working with his department including staff members and other students, as well as liaising and learning from other Universities in their mission to decolonise a University's curriculum. Omar has also co-authored two book chapters on embedding anti-racism in University curriculums.

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## About our speakers

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**Tré Ventour-Griffiths:** is an artist-academic and an advocate for multidisciplinary approaches to education and research. With interests in the Black histories of Britain that decentre city-centric narratives, lots of his thinking also threads through various disciplines in the arts, humanities, and social sciences. Tré is also a poet having read nationally and internationally, with much of his recent work revolving around autism and dyspraxia while Black. His research interests include but are not limited to Black West Indians in provincial Britain and the whiteness of period dramas. In his day job, he is an Associate Lecturer in Criminology at a university, while, however, also conducting sessions as a freelance educator on neuro(dis)abilities, race, and Black history often delivering to public / private bodies and community groups. Presently, Tré will be soon starting a PhD program working on a local history project documenting the stories of Northamptonshire's Windrush Generation.

**Janelle Rabe** is a graduate student from the Philippines. She finished her MSc in Public Policy and Management at Birkbeck, the University of London as a Chevening scholar in 2019. She is currently a PhD researcher of Sociology and Social Policy at Durham University, funded by the UKRI-ESRC NINE DTP studentship.

**Mel Green** is a Doctoral Researcher in Education and an Associate Lecturer at the Open University teaching modules in education studies, childhood studies and child development. Her research explores the intersections of Higher Education practitioners' identities and how these affect online pedagogical choices. As a former primary school teacher teaching for over 13 years, she has taught children and young people in state schools, pupil referral units and a psychiatric unit. She is the mother of two boys aged five and two, the eldest of whom is autistic. She acts as advocate not only for her son but also for other autistic children in her employment as a Trustee at the largest primary and secondary autistic provision in London.