



“Racism in Education 2023 – Where Are We Now??”

Date: Wednesday 7th June 2023 **Location:** Zoom **43 attendees**

EYST Cymru: Selima Bahadur (Chair), Twahida Akbar (Co-host), Grainne Connolly (Co- host and tech support)

Key Speakers/ Panellists:

Rocio Cifuentes MBE – The Children's Commissioner for Wales

Rena Ahmed – Welsh Government - ESJWL - Communities & Tackling Poverty – Communities (Anti – racist Wales Action Plan Implementation Manager)

Jami Abramson - Right to Education Project – EYST (Project Development Lead)

Amira Assami – Right to Education Project - EYST (Project Development Lead)

Introduction of Topic

SB: We have seen the recommendations time and time again over the years going into decades. We know WHAT needed to be done - increase the number of minority ethnic teachers, including senior leadership teams and Heads, record and monitor racist incidents, dealing with them efficiently etc. Another recommendation that we have always seen is changing the content for Black history, minority ethnic history within the curriculum and to quote one of the speakers who gave us a very memorable quote in the last forum “**Slavery is not Black history, that is White history and Black people do not own that history – it is not theirs!**”. This was in response to the finding that 70% of teachers said that they were teaching slavery for Black History Month. We know what needed changing because we have been saying the same things for decades, and now that we have come towards the end of the first educational year with an all-inclusive curriculum and nearly a year into the launch of the Anti-racist Wales Action Plan, we wanted to see with this discussion, what has actually changed over the past year or so in relation to those horrific incidents of racism within the schools.

In the run up to this forum I had a quick look to see whether any big pieces of work have been commissioned over the past year, asking the same things in relation to racism in education and the good news is I didn't find any. So, this has given me hope that we have stopped commissioning the same old reports and having to say the same thing and maybe we have started with the actions within the schools.

So what today's forum is about is to see if things are the same in schools? Have they got better? Or are they worse? We bring you our forum, ‘Racism in Education 2023 – Where are we now?’ We have an excellent line up of panel members who will be answering both our set questions and also any questions that you may have.

Introduction of Key Speakers

RC: Congratulations to the whole team on these successful forums, and I think the numbers today really show how valued these forums and these discussion spaces are. I'm particularly happy to be invited to speak on this topic in this forum of racism in education. It is an issue I was working very hard on previously, but also since coming into the role of Children's Commissioner for Wales- it is a



focus that I have maintained, and I plan to continue to work on. I am currently working on a project with my team which is focusing on the issue of racism and education, specifically within secondary schools. This really takes forward all the evidence that we know, and I'm sure everyone present at today's forum is well aware of what has been produced. Report after report has shown that children and young people from ethnic minority backgrounds are continuing to suffer very high and unacceptable levels of racism in their everyday life. Sadly, from what we hear, this is an experience which is almost normal for them and we cannot allow this to happen in 2023, particularly when we have such an ambitious programme that has been set out by the Welsh Government to achieve an anti-racist Wales by 2030. However, I do feel that we cannot wait this long. It needs to change much quicker than that. I'm heartened by some of the progress that we made recently in Wales, including the progress towards having a more diverse curriculum. The Anti-racist Wales Action Plan in itself is an achievement, and particularly the way that it was co-produced with such large participation from ethnic minority people. I also think we have a long, long way to go before that vision is really implemented, and particularly, there is a long way to go I feel in schools, and to really empower and support teachers; give them the capacity, the training, the confidence, the resources that they need to really manage racism effectively. At present, from what we're hearing, that isn't there

RA: My name is Rena Ahmed. I've worked and supported communities for the last 15 years, predominantly worked in the third sector and working with Black Asian minority ethnic communities. I've also worked for almost 7 years in EYST, and recently went on to work with the Welsh Government on the Anti-racist Wales Action Plan Team. I've been in post for about a month now, and I'm hoping to talk a bit more about the plan; what's been going on, and also to talk about my previous role, which I recently left, in supporting families and children, and mainly talking about those who experience racism in schools, and how I've been supporting them. It's lovely, seeing all these staff members and my lovely friends and colleagues, and it's great to be part of this forum.

JA: My name's Jami Abramson. I have worked in EYST for nearly 8 years. Currently I am working with my colleague Amira on the Right to Education Project, which is all about supporting young people and their families who are experiencing disputes with Schools but specifically with the school exclusions process. I'm really looking forward to hearing from all of the panellists as well as attendees and what can share to see if there's been much change in Wales with racism in education.

AA: My name is Amira Assami, and I work on the Rights to Education project with Jami. I joined EYST last December, so 6 months and few days now and it's been amazing working with EYST. Previously I worked in community engagement for several years. I volunteered in the community, and just before I started this role I was delivering anti racism and hate crime training across schools in North Wales which give me the understanding of the depth and the scale of the problem in our communities in the schools. This made me interested to then come and join EYST and the Right to Education project to work more in depth in relation to this problem and to try to contribute to the change. I lead on the casework side of the Right to education Project and Jami leads on the research side.

Questions to Panel members

Question for RC: What do you think are the priorities for schools to have, which would ensure that schools are safe and nurturing for children of Black Asian Minority Ethnic backgrounds and what work is your Office doing to contribute to these priorities?

RC: There has been a lot of progress, and I want to recognise that. I think there is a much higher level of awareness about the importance of speaking, about race, understanding racism, from



teachers to pupils. I think, from what I'm hearing, and since I've been in the role, I should mention that I've undertaken a large scale national survey of Children and Young People, which had over 8,000 responses and as part of those responses, the findings were that too many children and young people around, between 30% and 50%, depending on the protected characteristic, had actually experienced identity based bullying themselves and this included a high proportion, of that which was racist bullying. So, the experience is still far too normal, and even to the extent that children and young people are saying that they don't really bother to report it a lot of the time, or if they do report, they have shared negative experiences of being ignored, or sometimes even feeling that they have been punished themselves for either raising the issue, or for actual the incident. I think the reason for the focus of my project is that there is a huge need still whereby it needs to be much clearer with teachers and schools on what exactly they should do when and if they witness or are told about a racist incident. It is how the incident is managed and responded to that incident, which is what schools need more support with rather than how to record, or how to report the recording and the reporting side. It is part of it but not the whole issue. It is also about how children and young people are spoken to and how that ongoing relationship with the children, whether it's the victim or the perpetrator, is managed which is really important. I think that all of that really contributes to children and young people being able to feel safe. Children and young people spend most of their waking hours in school and in the educational environment. They must feel safe, and they have to feel they can turn to trusted adults in the case that they do experience any racism or bullying and this should be a top priority.

My office has been undertaking this project for the last 6 months, which had involved interviews with teachers, head teachers, but also stakeholders, such as Estyn and Welsh government. We also focus on group discussions with children and young people. I was quite hesitant to actually involve children and young people again, because as some may be aware that we've had so many different reports and research which have asked children and young people to tell us about their experience, and I was quite wary of not wanting to re-traumatize children and young people by asking them to continue to re-tell these very traumatic experiences. However, at the same time, actually hearing the voice of children and young people is also really important and a key priority. It is also their right to be heard and to have their voice heard. Phase one of this project is due to finish by the summer, so we will be publishing initial findings and recommendations on next steps in the summer, so look out for that from my office.

Question for AA: From what we have been told at EYST by our clients, some families feel emotionally deflated and demoralised as a result of schools not dealing with racist incidents in a satisfactory way. What difference do you think the R2E project will make to this and how?

AA: From the cases we received in this project, so far and the cases that EYST have dealt with previously, and the stories we hear from our communities, families, and young people quite often feel that the school failed them and failed to address racist bullying or a racist incident in an appropriate manner which really send out a message as Rocio mentioned, nothing will really change, and that makes families and people prefer not to report racism because of the lack of trust and faith that things will change. It also creates fear among young people and their families, that if they speak up and challenge things, they may be targeted or singled out by the school. What I've seen so far is that some parents tell their children to put their head down and to avoid trouble at any cost, and not to challenge the racist bullying or racist incident that they've been experiencing and being failed by the school and not to challenge and report things. This, can then make the young people, decide to take things into their own hands, and this results in the problem get bigger and out of their hands. I



would love to reassure families that change is happening right now, and everything is rosy, but it is not - it's a process, not an outcome. We are in it together, and I can say to families that they shouldn't feel discouraged from what they hear and how they've been failed by the school and this is what the Rights to Education project is about. We believe that the work we do is not just a tick box exercise like so many of the people say in our communities, and I understand why they say this – it's because they've been failed so many times. With this project, we are planting the seed for change, that our communities need but we can't do this in isolation. We are raising awareness, and we are building allies, especially with schools and our partners are great. We have the Children Commissioner Rocio with us, we have the Equality and Human Rights Commissioner, The Children's Legal Centre and we have an educational lawyer working with us on this project. All these things make a huge difference in the way we tackle the issue, and so far with the cases that we received within this project, we have really achieved positive outcomes for the young people involved. So yes, change is coming it's a process, and the more we come together to share our lived experiences and discuss these challenges and topics, the more pressure we can apply. When we come together, we can achieve a better outcome at a higher level.

SB: With the cases, if someone brought a case to you and the child who's at risk of being excluded, what kind of support can you, as the caseworker give for that child and that family?

AA: When the case is referred, I speak to the family and the other person, I try to understand the depth of the problem. Why they think that they are at high risk of being excluded? Pretty much often it is because they lashed out, and because they can't keep quiet about the racist bullying/racist incident that's been happening to them all the time, and they feel like the school is not doing anything to help or resolve the situation. Like you said about your daughter and the school, how it's become like banter, and it's not very cool to report these things, and it's better to take things into your own hands. I understand the depths of the problem. I have a meeting with the school, and they basically state that they don't feel that there is racism going on, it's just teenagers! However when we get to the bottom of the problem, that's where we can mitigate the risk of being permanently excluded by the school, and that's where we put the pressure that they actually need to report and record. This isn't the only thing that needs to be done, it's also the process of how they are dealing with the racist incidents, the reporting and recording is very important because it protects the pupil when anything happens. This is how we actually deal with the risk of being excluded or if they have already been permanently excluded, due to racist bullying or discrimination.

SB: Is there a session limit or a time limit to how much support you can give?

AA: No, not at all. Even after we receive a positive outcome. I like to make sure that the family is supported until they feel that they can carry on by themselves. The whole point is not to advocate on their behalf but to empower them, for them to know their rights, and for them to know how they can deal with issues if they arise again.

Question for RA: Before working at Welsh Government, you were supporting families with children who were experiencing racism at school, can you explain some of the cases that you had to deal with and some best practise from schools when dealing with the incidents?

RA: A lot of the support I provided was for families, and then children. Some of the racist incidents I dealt with were as young as about 7 years of age, where they were being bullied in school because of the colour of their skin. The teachers weren't taking it seriously because they thought it was a joke, and they couldn't understand it. Some of the things teachers were saying were 'You know young



children; they don't know what they're saying'. So, it was just playground fun or banter. The mum felt upset about it, and the child couldn't understand what was going on. Mum didn't want her child to be exposed to it and for her child to continue to attend the same school. We went into the school and spoke to the teacher who had limited awareness or understanding around racism, and a lack of training to deal with the issue which led us taking it to the headteacher who was more understanding and they did take it on board. We had meetings with the parent, the school, and tried to get them to understand the negative impact it was having on both the child and mum. The school undertook further learning and education and training for the teachers. They also had whole school assemblies around racism, which was a really good and positive outcome for this incident. Luckily, the child who experienced the racism had ongoing support, and the teachers checked in on them to see if the same incident was occurring, and thankfully it hasn't.

There was another incident where a child of about 10 years was being bullied which started off with a small friendship issue but started to get racist. The parent went to the school to speak to the teachers, who reassured the parent not to worry and that it was being dealt with, but the racism continued. The child had a traumatic experience where she stopped eating or felt she didn't want to go to school anymore. Her school friend did not want to be friends with her anymore, so she felt left out and isolated and didn't know how to cope with it. The mum, as a last resort, approached EYST on the Families project that I was delivering. I took all the details from Mum, and then we went to the school and spoke to the teachers, who claimed that they spoke to the other pupils who were involved and that there was nothing going on. However, when we spoke to the child involved, she went through step-by-step and told us of all the details of the different incidents that occurred, from a time span of 3 to 6 months. Again, we took it forward and to the head teacher this time, and then thankfully, she was able to show us an action plan that she put in place to better support the child thankfully. The child had to have counselling due to the trauma and needed mental health support because of this experience. Sadly, I think there's a lot more children and families that are going through this, but aren't reporting it, or the parents aren't strong enough to stand up for their rights, or even actually realising when there's something wrong. Other times they are not sure how they can take it forward. Luckily this parent and her child came to us! We have a youth drop in centre at EYST and because this young person accesses our youth drop, whenever the bullying was happening or any racism was taking place in school, she would tell us. We had built the trust and confidence with her for her to disclose that information to us. So again, as Amira mentioned, it's important about reporting and recording of these incidents by schools.

Follow up question for RA: in your role at WG how will you ensure that the best practise is carried out by all schools?

RA: My new role within the Welsh Government is working on the Anti-racist Wales Action Plan, and so that everyone is aware, the plan is to eradicate or to make Wales an anti- racist nation by 2030. Today is one year since the launch of the plan, which was launched on the seventh of June, in 2022, and at the moment we are going through annual report updates of all the different areas; policy areas and getting the key achievements, challenges, goals and actions that are being met or haven't been met yet. So that's being collated and will be published soon. In terms of best practice, a lot of the schools, now, are part of this plan. A lot of schools are working, or the policy areas are changing and one of the key areas is about reporting and recording, there is a lack of information on that. In the Welsh government there's a race disparity and evidence unit where they collate all data that's been reported in schools, and they update and publish this data. The data includes what's been done, or hasn't been done, and then, within our anti racist Wales action plan, we've got the external



accountability group which involves people with community representatives lived experience and those experts. They question what's worked and what hasn't, and challenge those who haven't been able to meet those goals and actions. There's the internal challenge and support group within Welsh government where they take things forward with the relevant policy areas such as education and monitor them and take them forward. The aim is to get better positive outcome from those goals.

Question for JA: The R2E Project is needed in Wales, we can have no doubts about this but how will you ensure that every school in Wales and families affected are aware of this amazing project that has been launched?

JA: The Rights to Education project exists now which is specialist support and a 3- year project so we have a lot of time to work with as we're not against the clock as such. In terms of spreading the word as Amira mentioned, she's developing relationships with the schools, and also EYST has historic links with some schools which is helpful for us, particularly to overcome that 'us and them', as if we're going in to tell them what's wrong or how to do that job which is not the case. We are there to support the families and as an additional support for the school too. Firstly we are trying to work with as many partners as possible, so just to make sure that we're not working in isolation as Amira mentioned, particularly if we're not an expert in something. Quite a lot of young people facing school exclusions may additional learning needs as well so it's about tapping into people who will have that expertise and working with them as well. We have been reaching out to lots of people. We're also doing information sessions across Wales. We really need to make sure we are reaching different areas of Wales and meeting people in person as well because a lot of information that goes out to the public is very much on a poster, on social media, on an email and we need personal connection as well so those are some of the things that we're doing and some of the things that we have planned. Most importantly for me is word of mouth because it doesn't matter how much we put it out there, if people don't hear about the service from someone they trust, it's very unlikely that they're going to access the service, particularly if there's been a historic problem in Wales like projects coming and going, or projects not helping people, so we are trying to build trust with people that we know which is going to be a big challenge. One part of the project is having volunteers on board, which are going to be helping us to reach out to people in communities across. We are trying lots of different ways but we're very realistic about the challenges that we are facing because we've worked in the sector for such a long time.

Question for RC: When at EYST you saw that people from minority ethnic backgrounds are fed up of saying the same things and no action being carried out as a result. Now, as Children's Commissioner, you have had the chance to see from a different perspective, can you share what happens when recommendations in reports and such are put forward to Welsh Gov, the public bodies, etc and why it seems like no action is being carried out?

RC: It's not just ethnic minorities people who are fed up with the lack of action, it is all people from all backgrounds facing a variety of challenges; children are young people with disabilities, children and young people facing homelessness, children and young people who are looked after. There are so many different sets, groups of children with specific issues and challenges I work with and I'm trying to support and unfortunately, it's a very similar situation for all of them, in that there are so many different organisations working to put really good research together, to make recommendations. However not enough action is happening quickly enough, certainly, even when there is commitment from government to do something as we could see with the Anti-racist Wales Action Plan, even then the implementation is frustratingly slow, so in a way that's reassuring, it's not just ethnic minorities that are suffering this, but in another way, it's more worrying because this



does seem to be a systemic issue. I know that the new future generations Commissioner is also focused on implementation. I can see we have a representative here from the Future Generations' Office. I'm sure you will echo this, that implementation now is everything, and that's that is the gap that many commissioners are identifying. I think it's for all of us who are to challenge people who are public servants, people who are paid from the public purse, including myself, including different political representatives, to really make sure that progress is quicker, and delivers and meets the needs especially of the most vulnerable people who live in Wales. None of us should be shy in calling out anyone, really, who is particularly paid from the public purse, who is not working hard enough or moving quickly enough or delivering effectively enough.

The systems are very complex, I think sometimes unnecessarily so. Some of that is to ensure safety and good governance and transparency of decision making but I also want to say that I'm not part of the government and this is a common misconception. My office is independent from government, but I work much more closely with government now and I am here to challenge and scrutinize government. Unfortunately, we have a lot of bureaucracy. We have a lot of overlapping, complex, and sometimes not very coherent systems, and in a small country like Wales you would think that things would be simpler, easier and faster, but unfortunately, that is not always the case. There are things that work much more effectively in Wales because of our size, and because of different ways of working and because we have closer access to governments decision-making, but there are pros and cons to that smallness and closeness as well. I don't have a really easy answer. Unfortunately, apart from it's a systemic, it's a really ingrained problem and I think it's one that I'm trying to challenge, and I would encourage all of you as well to raise your voice.

An attendee comments: Tackling racism head-on seems not to be working or there's something's just not right. Either people are turning a blind eye to it, or something doesn't feel right. Is there a plan B?

RC: I think the long-term solution to that is to get more people from diverse backgrounds in into positions of power and I'm really glad to see former colleagues from EYST working for Welsh government for example, so that is the long- and medium-term solution. That is the only thing that is actually going to make people realise the extent of the issue and to be motivated to make that change, because until people experience an issue themselves, unfortunately, most of the time they're blind to it. We can even see that with the cost-of-living crisis, in that poverty has existed for generations and it has been the same families, the same communities, experiencing poverty for decades at the very least. It's only now that the cost-of-living crisis is hitting maybe the middle classes and they're feeling it in their pockets, that it is now a national issue that everybody is talking about. This example shows that lived experience is what makes a difference and an experience that makes it a government priority; when that experience is actually hitting those people who are making those decisions at the highest level. I would just encourage you to stand for positions of power, even to become a school governor. Try and work towards having these positions where you can be part of the solution and you can make decisions to make the world a better place.

The above attendee adds: Sorry. Can I just say one more time - Racism, it's still there, it's just a different name to it. It's either they call it 'an isolated incident'. One issue took us nearly a year until we threatened by home office until they made a move. It's just not good enough. It just doesn't seem to be working.

RC: Yeah, this is a long way to go.



SB: I always say we must keep making the noise that we're making because nobody is going to make it on behalf of us, and if we stop saying the same things and doing the same things, even if it's making little differences for other people in relation to the racism, their experience is still a difference. So, we have to keep going in whatever capacity we can really.

An attendee comments: I work for the Open University in Wales. I really want to add to Rocio's comment. There needs to be an ongoing process. I mean, it's fantastic, the awareness here is on schools, and the younger people but that momentum needs to be carried on. Those good practice examples need to be carried on with our young people when they go to university. As Rocio said, you know, applying for positions, of more senior levels. In the open university we hope that we are open and accessible, but we hold our hands up, that there is a huge amount more we could be doing so my question is, what else can we do? What can we do as a higher education institute to ensure that the messages that have been reinforced at younger levels are kept going, because, as we know, an 18, 19-year-olds are still very influential as young people. So, what more, can we do?

SB: It could be practices such as letting your students/ learners and staff know that if they face discrimination, racism, or anything of this nature, they should report it, and they won't have any comeback on them. Make it very easy for people to be able to report and give them the anonymous option as well. Also look at having an anti-racism plan yourselves, which a lot of organisations are doing all over Wales. They are coming to us at EYST to ask us to cast a glance over it as we had quite a lot of input with Welsh governments anti-racism action plan. I know we've also delivered training sessions to your establishment, so make sure you keep going with the training sessions. It's not just a one-off. Keep yourself and staff updated. I would recommend to have this kind of approach.

RA: Go back to that anti-racist action plan and check on what you can do as an organisation. Speak to other colleagues on the similar level to yours. Like Rocio said, recruit more people from diverse communities, have a representation of the minority ethnic learners you have, because I think there was a report out by Professor Charlotte Williams in 2021, the proportion of teachers, or those in education to learners is very, very small. I think it was like about the learners were about 12% in Wales compared to only about 1.3% of those who are in education or teaching. We need to change that. I think that is one of the goals in the action plan is to increase the recruitment of more people from diverse communities.

SB: It's one of the actions that Welsh Government have set themselves as part of the action plan and their target is quite ambitious.

AA: What Rena just said about diversifying the workforce and how important it is, but also to comment on the attendees question: education is the plan here, you need to educate your workforce. You need to have open spaces for your learners to express their feelings, to come together and to discuss the challenging discussions around the topic of racism and how can we tackle it, and how we can improve things for everyone?

SB: The Children's Commissioner's office offer a service where they will support families whose children are experiencing racist incidents.

Link for feedback form is shared

Link to the Anti-racist Wales Action Plan is shared

Link to the Rights to Education project is shared



An attendee comments in the chat: Lots of children have shared their experience of reduced motivation to go to school because of a non-response of schools towards racism. What can we do to remote motivate them?

AA: My daughter, who is 8 and never experienced racism before. Only 2 days ago I was told by the school that she is experiencing racist bullying and was called 'brown girl'. Her friend didn't want to touch her hand because her hand is brown. This was heartbreaking to deal with when it comes to your own children as much as when you deal with other cases. I feel like they're all my children if that makes sense. If my daughter was ever asked, if she wants to go to school, she would opt to attend school on Saturdays and Sundays - she really wouldn't mind but something inside of her changed after that incident on Monday, and every morning she now wakes up with a bad stomach and not feeling motivated to go to school whatsoever. However, I'm really proud that she was brave enough to report what happened to her. She explained how she felt, and how she wants things to go forward, and I think that's the way forward is when you empower your children to express their feelings. Things will change, and they will feel motivated to challenge whatever. What is happening around them, and even though it's heartbreaking, and my child did have nightmares, and I didn't sleep for two days. There's something that is positive in the fact that she is feeling very empowered, and she knows that it's her right not to be called names, it's her right to feel safe in school, and she expressed that very well. The teacher is taking the matter very seriously, and there's some really good schools. The lack of motivation comes from the lack of trust that anything will happen, and the lack of confidence built by the parents with their children. Speak with your children, empower them to actually challenge things when they happen, this is the only way you can motivate them to attend school and challenge things.

RA: I know from the work I did with families and young people, when there were cases on racism and reporting, I found that when a child does have the confidence to report, they want to be in the loop. They want to know what's going what's going to happen? If there's anything being done about it, I found that by speaking to the parent and the parent keeping the child updated about what was going to happen. We don't know what is going on in the child's mind, we might assume we do, but it always worked out better when we kept the child updated. There's a lot of unanswered questions, a lot of fear, they fear the unknown. So, I found that by keeping them updated, they had that confidence to go to school and feel that something is going to be done about it. So having that at the back of the mind, I think, made a difference to people's attendance, and for them to continue to have that confidence to report if anything else does happen.

SB: It's so important to build the child's confidence. What crosses my mind is that some parents don't have those skills but sometimes it's the parents who are lacking the confidence, and it almost rubs off onto the children. This is what I've seen in some families. It's just such a sad situation.

Momena Ali (Founder of EYST and attendee): One of the reasons we started this was because of the the vision I had for EYST was, I experienced these things myself, going through schooling in Swansea, facing racism myself, and one of the things that really made a difference in my life and continued the motivation for me is having a teacher who supported me, who believed in me, and having that mentor role. In EYST, what we started doing is providing mentors, because what I recognise is that a lot of families, really needed this. Amira, you know when you were mentioning about your daughter, your daughter is able to do this because you empowered her a lot of our families from the black and minority ethnic communities, they not empowered themselves. How would they empower their own children? So there needs to be that additional support there, whether schools provide that, or whether we, as supporting organisations, provide support for families to empower them so that they



can empower their children, and this is why our mentoring program worked effectively. You know, I'm sad to say that it'll go. 20 years ago, we were talking about these issues, and we were dealing with these issues, and we still are going on with these same issues. What I would like to say in that journey I know myself - Some of the cases that I dealt with, and some of the young people that I mentored that we made a difference in those lives. It's a slow process in terms of organisational change, culture change, but we know through our journey and EYST we have impacted individuals with those cases and motivated them to get back into education and to hopefully change the system for the future generations. So, nothing is ever wasted, no effort is ever wasted, even though it's slow. It's still, impacting. Motivation is an important thing to instil back into those children who experience these things. Unfortunately, schools are not always able to do that. We do need this kind of mentoring support and where possible, go into those schools, and empower teachers to do that, give them the confidence to be able to say to a young person, what you're going through is wrong, and it shouldn't be this way and you have every right to voice your feelings and your opinions. Just those sentences can be life changing for a young person. Like Rocio mentioned earlier that children are with the teachers more than they are with their parents in their awakening times, so it should come from teachers as well not just the parents. Teachers have a right to stand up to what's wrong and racism is wrong.

AA: I'm just going to add quickly, it was her teacher as well who empowered her to speak so yes, the teacher is very important. The teacher validated her emotions, and that should happen all the time. So it is teachers as well, who play a massive role in bringing that motivation, by validating the emotions of the child.

Attendee: Yes, even looking at your case with your daughter Amira, even though she's being empowered by the teacher, empowered by you, she's still suffering the impact of it; not being able to sleep, having stomach pain etc. These are all signs of trauma and emotional harm that's come to her as a result. Can you imagine those young children who are experiencing racism? They can't even speak to their parents about it because the parents are telling them to keep quiet. Don't make a fuss, just go to school, and that's it and sadly the school is ignoring them. Can you imagine the trauma those young people are going through? I just feel we have to do so much more work to provision these things happening to young children.

An attendee comments: Our experience of supporting children and young people is that very often there is a culture of victim blaming, or it is victim who misses out and must make adaptations, e.g. Starting late and finishing early. So, they miss school time rather than the perpetrators, having to adjust their school day.

An attendee comments: My son has experienced racism in high school before, I did not bother reporting it because I was told by a friend that no action would be taken. It's heartbreaking really that summarises what we're talking about.

An attendee comments: I'm currently involved in a research project on racism in further education, some learners have recommended conducting regular anonymize surveys among learners.

An attendee comments: Sadly we have to remember that this racism still needs challenging in higher education.

An attendee asks: I wanted to hear panellist views regarding more insidious or less explicit forms of racism. Things like people being left out of activities, but also when the curriculum only includes



examples of white families or histories and stories, young people shouldn't have to carry the burden of reporting. What can schools do to identify and resolve these less explicit forms of racism?

JA: We did research with Race Alliance, Wales, previously, which was all about looking at young people's experiences of racism like a cumulative sense through the education system so not just a one off, but the long-term impacts and within that, it was a bit strange because it was almost like as they moved through the education system, the racism adapted almost, and became a bit more insidious as you went along, a bit more indirect, a little more microaggressions, a bit more systemic. Then I think by the time you leave school, or you go to university, or try to get a job, it's almost like it's so undercover that it's hard to even shine a light on it and be like this is racism! I think a massive challenge for us all and anyone working in schools is that if you can't recognise a racist incident in terms of a word being shouted out to a child or someone's comments in on someone's skin colour, how are you going to get to the extent of kind of digging into those nuance and indirect forms of racism when you know we live in a society when that goes unchallenged a lot. So that's my kind of thoughts on that. I don't have a solution.

SB: I don't know what the solution would be. I think the last question just highlights, how much actual work needs to be done. We see this in EYST in all the different areas, not just education, day in, day out. We just must do as much as we can in whatever capacity we can. This is what I keep saying to people, so just keep at it. Don't keep quiet about anything. Basically, if you see something wrong, then it's down to you to call it out, and just to give you a quick example before we move on to the next question, one of the team here experienced something which wasn't a formal complaint but we had to go back to the organisation because we were on a call like we are today and what happens a lot when you've got a name that is not mainstream British sounding, or easy to say, people will go around the room, and you always get left to last. It's not nice, and you're gutted when it happens every single time. One of my team was actually ignored. We then discussed this with the organisation and they didn't even realise it happened! We have to call these things out and bring it to people's attention.

AA: Its education again, maybe educating schools because I would want to believe that not every form of racism is very clear to them. They might not see things as racism but if you explain to them that this is racist, and this is a pure form of racism, they might then change things and view things in a different way. So educating them, raising awareness, engaging with schools, again and again until they get the fact that it's racism and it's pure form of racism and not hidden. We should speak about it in a very open way, for us to tackle the problem.

Attendee: When you deal with cases with racism as well, there are those cases that are born from ignorance. People often make comments out of ignorance, and they might be labelled as racist, but if you give people the opportunity to understand that this is actually racist, because I know you're ignorant of what you said, it's racism to me. So, having those conversations like you said, is important. I find a lot of the time, especially with young children in primary education. I've been in education from the primary sector to post education as well, and what I notice is when children are very young, especially at the early foundation phase they play with each other, they don't notice colour of skin or anything like that until a certain point comes where they're being taught that this person is this colour, or the skin is different. I remember one of my first jobs was a bilingual support worker, and I worked in a school predominantly white, and there was a Bengali girl in the reception class, and I was supporting her and one of her friends who was white was also on the same table, and I would work with them both. One day, the young girl held my hand, and she said, 'Oh Miss, it's not your fault your brown.' I was completely blown away by that comment, a 5 year old is saying this



to me?! I gently replied that colour is no one's fault, colour is beautiful, whether it's brown or white - we're all beautiful! I then spoke to the teacher about this, and she said, 'Oh, you know her family are known for their far-right views'. She must have gone home and commented that my teachers amazing or my teachers, this and she must have described, or they must have seen me and then they made a negative comment. Obviously this child was disturbed by it. She had been exposed to somebody from a different ethnic background. It was normalized for her, and she couldn't see what the problem was until somebody told her this was a problem. We have to tackle it from even from the basics. I think from that level, from the communities to their education - It must be everywhere. This anti-racism campaign must be everywhere. This action plan is not just for Welsh government policies. We have social media a very powerful tool, change images, and put positive reinforcements about race and ethnicity out there. Much of the time it is ignorance sadly.

An Attendee comments: I was going to say it can probably be ignorance, but also at times it's not ignorance, it's come from home or children have heard it before, sometimes it's what people really believe so it's not always ignorance. There is hard core racism in there. Sometimes even the we talk to the school, we say when we report a racist incident, it take us about 2 weeks for the school to respond to us by then they claim that it is an isolated incident as it happened 2 weeks ago and they just put it to the aside as nothing has happened because it is in the past, so we should not really discuss it, it is frustrating and annoying as well.

Patience Bentu, an attendee comments: Just to share a few reflections. From this these discussions, and the first one is what came through very strongly for me, or what is coming through very strongly in these discussions is the fact that we're backing the discussions with our lived experiences and that is so important so that is the evidence of everything that we're talking about now. It is the evidence of everything that we've been talking about for so many years. The other one is, schools do have a responsibility. The Government does have a responsibility. Then, again, every stakeholder has a responsibility in this, and we're all stakeholders, and for me, I'm thinking in terms of our own role in propagating anti-racism in schools for our children because these are children we're talking about here. In my role as the diversity, inclusion and anti-racism partner with the future Generations Commissioner's office, one of the ways that we advise, not just public bodies and government organisations, but other organisations, such as stakeholders like us of, you know, doing this is the recommended 5 ways of working, and I really want us stakeholders in this meeting to look into that thinking long term how together we're going to stop anti racism in Wales, thinking long term, thinking around integration, involvement, prevention. Most importantly, that for me, is collaboration. I've attended so many of these meetings, and there's so many stakeholders missing. Why are we doing things as individual organisations? When are we going to come together as one massive race stakeholder body to tackle these different issues that are coming out in anti-racism, and I don't want to name names, but, for instance, there's certain organisations that I really would have loved to see here today that I think are really key to these discussions and I think this is where the gap is for us as stakeholders. It's doing things disjointedly. We need to get together. We need to collaborate. We need to partner. Unless that happens, I think we're just going to go on and on for the next 50 years doing things as independent organisations. And nothing moves forward so but you know, just to congratulate EYST. This is a wonderful session, and I do really want to see more people attending the going forward. If there's anything that we can do as Future Generations Commissioner's office to promote this event, going forwards, please do let us know and thank you very much.



SB: Thank you, Patience. It was lovely hearing what you had to say. Every time we host one of these forums, when sending out the emails and comms, we do specifically ask for people to forward the information and we do get registrants from across the board and across Wales. But there's always room for improvement, so thank you again for the comments.

An attendee asks: What are the steps we need to make effective, permanent changes in one schools and two parents, children and community. What is the plan? Sometimes the message gets lost after the talk that we go put our phones down, and that's it, you know, and I just wanted to clear understand of what is it that you expect from organisations because I work with Mend. And I want to be there with you to do this as well. It'd be lovely if someone could summarise it after. Thank you.

An attendee comments: I know that colourism is prevalent in ethnic minorities, especially from my experience in the older generation. Unfortunately, that plays a part in younger generation and school kids. Kids thinking right to skin equals beautiful and darkest skin equals less beautiful. What is your experience of this? And how are you dealing with the issue question to anyone?

SB: This one makes me want to scream loud. I've seen it growing up as part of the South Asian community, and it still goes on sadly. I just think, if we have those views within ourselves we need to sort that out firstly.

The attendee comments: I just see that prevalent in the communities I am in and I know it does play a part in kids going to school. I like to think is less so in the younger generation, but it's like the individual feeling that 'oh, I'm darker, so I may not be that pretty'. They think it's a joke. It's not really serious, and it gets me angry like you and I just think we need to change our communities, why should other people outside of communities be like that? I just wanted to see if that's prevalent in schools as well.

SB: I wouldn't be able to answer that one from a school's perspective. I know we've had internal discussions, even as a team saying those exact things and saying we need to challenge that as well.

JA: I don't think teachers, and particularly white people- I can speak as a white person, I don't think it's even on their level in terms of racism, I've spotted that from evidence that we've done through research with young people that's come through the bullying between ethnic minority young people for instance, a South Asian young calling a black student the N word and going completely unchallenged by the teacher because they don't know how to even explore that, because they may think that racism is on just white on ethnic minority so I think it's really important what you for is done. It would be really interesting to see how that would come into the anti-racist work that Welsh government do as well, because I don't know if it's explored in that much detail.

Question for JA: Can you talk a little bit about the long-term impacts that racism has on CYP and how it affects them in FE and later life?

JA: I think everything that people have said today just demonstrates the long-term impact. The way that you guys are dealing with your children. All the things that are happening in school now, going all the way through to higher education and later in life, in terms of like conversations, I have had in EYST. All I can say is that it really does stay with young people no matter how small it is, as Momena mentioned that trauma and emotional distress, and even from other young people from any background, seeing that happen in education and if it's not challenged are thinking – am I a bystander in this behaviour? Can I trust adults if they are not challenging this behaviour, so I think it has a huge impact on long term on young people. In terms the usual things like reinforcing the



immigrant narrative of I shouldn't trust an institution or an adult or someone in power, I have to be on my best behaviour or work twice as hard to be treated equally to my white peers. I think that's reinforced through education which young people can take all the way through their lives, and the main one really would be kind of identity-based trauma, and a disillusion moving through life. We've spoken to young people who are particularly anxious entering new spaces and meeting new people, because they always think, how am I going to be judged on? How I look like, what I wear etc, will I be judged in a new space? All these things which I think is huge, moving through? How are you supposed to take advantage of opportunities, progress if you always have that anxiety in you. So yes I think it's huge for long term, and I think again, schools need to be looking at it more like this is a long term issue that will affect young people, it's not a one-off thing that I need to deal with in the classroom and tick a box and report it, and 'its okay, your friends now, everyone play together'. No, this is long term, this can really have a big impact and I think, yeah, that really needs to be highlighted moving forward as well.

SB: Thank you. I think the impact it has on young people, sometimes we don't realise it. From my personal point of view, going through racist incidents when I was younger, growing up in the 80's and it just it had an impact on me throughout my life and, to be honest, it's only when I started working at EYST, I realized how much code switching I had to do, whether that's Anglicizing your name, or whether it is those little things that you do, or the microaggressions you feel as a person, and when I came into EYST and saw how inclusive it is I haven't had to fit in because I already fit. EYST just accepts people for who they are. It's just so beautiful. It really did make me think when I started at EYST a couple of years ago. My whole life I've had to fit in without even realizing it. So sometimes we don't realize that long-term impact and effect of those childhood incidents is huge.

An attendee comments: The only thing I know, people don't report the issues due to repercussions with school or police etc. So, it's just many people who I talk to quite talk to mentions some incidents, they said, oh, no, just leave that, they are in fear of repercussion.

AA: I wanted to just quickly mention, the fact that racism as a life changing experience, the problem we have is that it is not being classed as adversarial to the experiences as massive as it is, they don't see racism as part of the adverse childhood experiences agenda and this is really, really, really wrong, because it is a life changing process and you can be triggered at any point in your life whether you're young or even in adult life. The trigger would make you bring back that trauma, become aggressive, and if that's not tackled in terms of the mental health and if it's not seen as an adversity, I don't think much change will happen, so let's start by acknowledging racism as a life-changing experience is part of traumatic childhood experiences.

TA: Can I just thank everyone who has shared everything that you have this morning, it has made me feel really emotional, because, growing up, I've experienced, lots of different types of racism; direct and indirect but it's great that we have all come together, and we have to continue to make noise like Selima said so a huge thank you to everyone.

An attendee comments: We are examples of how it impacts on us long term, our passion, energy to fight against this. This is often because we have consistently experienced racism since we were kids.

SB: Yes, absolutely and this is what we're here to change.

Momena Ali: Yeah, I just want to reiterate what I said earlier. Every effort, for example even water, if it continues to drop on a stone, it makes a dent so we must continue to make our efforts and no matter how long it takes, we will have to continue even though it's disheartening at times.



**Ethnic Minorities
& Youth Support
Team Wales**

Tîm Cymorth
Lleiafrifoedd Ethnig
& Ieuenctid Cymru

Sometimes you knock on the doors constantly, and they don't open, and things don't change. For myself 20 years later, I am talking about the same issues, but I know that I'm still not going to give up, because in raising your voice, you're making a difference. So, this forum is making a difference by talking about our experiences. All of us who have shared our lived experiences we're making a difference because we are sharing that knowledge and that feeling and that emotion, so that in itself has made a difference to us. We must carry on and continue the work and one day we'll get there.

SB: Absolutely. You've been making the noise. It's all those lives that you've made a difference to all along so thank you for all the efforts that you put in, and for starting this organisation Momena, which we all love so much as well.

This discussion could have gone on for hours but we have come to the end. Thank you!