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Can we please keep talking…? The importance of sustaining inclusive dialogue about race and ethnicity in teaching and learning

Towards the end of April 2016 I was invited to attend an event planned by the University of Essex's Student Union. It was organized in concert with a national, student-led campaign: 'Why is My Curriculum White?'. The initiative, which had originated at University College London and was sponsored by the National Union of Students [NUS], was one of several aimed at 'decolonising' UK Higher Education and its curriculum.[1]

The event was organized according to the World Café method, which involves attendees rotating round a room participating in themed small-group discussions, with key points being fed back to the whole group at the end.[2] It was well-attended, despite freezing weather and no heating to speak of, and both staff and students spoke eloquently about their concerns (e.g. lack of choice about what to study, academic freedom and the value of expertise, feeling marginalised, the difficulties involved in trying to please everyone, what change was actually possible in view of the often labyrinthine and glacier-slow operations of module validation processes in our HEIs). I spent most of my time listening but one conversation I had with a student jolted me in a way I can honestly say I had not expected. We were talking about studying History, my 'home' discipline, the student's degree subject, and one of those Arts and Humanities subjects the 'Why is My Curriculum White?' campaigners consider 'have the most work to do' (Hussain, 2015).

The student shared with me their experience of studying the subject at school and I asked them what topics they'd covered. They listed a catalogue that I was expecting, having had many similar discussions with A-Level students and first-year undergraduates over two decades teaching History at HE level: totalitarian regimes, slavery, American Civil Rights, and so on. What I wasn't expecting, however, was the student's response to my question, "So did you enjoy your school History course?" "Not really," they said. When I asked why, they elaborated: "Because I found it depressing." The student self-identified as black and minority ethnic [BAME] and it emerged, through our subsequent discussions, that it was the 'Black History' they'd studied formally at school which had disheartened them the most because they felt it presented an unrelenting catalogue of abuse. "Where were the positive stories? The achievements? The things I could feel proud of as a Black person? Where were people I could identify with?" they asked. The student went on to tell me that, disillusioned, they'd started attending some sessions run locally, within their own community, where youth workers shared with them stories and histories that ended up helping them (re)discover their passion for the past. These teachers, these stories had helped them to see that finding, sharing and celebrating a different kind of history was possible.

My first thought in response to the student's testimony was how surprised, even shocked, those who had delivered a revised national curriculum mandating Black History in schools in 2008 would be to hear of their efforts having such a negative impact (Lyndon, 2006).[3] Their goal had been to re-balance and re-invigorate the school history curriculum by restoring the 'lost' stories of black people into the history of Britain and its empire. According to this student, they had presented a history of victimhood which had thoroughly depressed and almost permanently disengaged them.[4] My second thought was to reflect uncomfortably on my own reaction: I had assumed that the student I'd been talking to would, because of their ethnic background, have identified with the school history curriculum they'd studied. My third thought was to begin to consider ways in which our teaching and learning in HE – whether in History or in other disciplines – could increasingly engage all students, including those from a BAME background? Using this encounter as a starting place, this reflection will seek to contextualize it by considering its place in the wider chronology of intellectual and scholarly critiques of educational practice from a race and ethnicity perspective, and along the way identify what I think are some positive ways forward, from the perspective of teaching, learning and curriculum development.

[1] Perhaps the most famous being the 'Rhodes Must Fall' movement at Oxford. https://rmfoxford.wordpress.com
[2] http://www.theworldcafe.com/key-concepts-resources/world-cafe-method/
[3] Sustained pressure had been received from leading teachers such as Dan Lyndon , who argued – from experience – that integrating relevant BAME topics into British History teaching in schools was perfectly possible as well as desirable. Black History was mandated in 2008 by the then Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA).
[4] Lyndon had warned against the dangers of 'tokenism or exaggeration' and the vital need to ensure Black history was made 'relevant to the vast majority of students' (2006).

Contextualizing 'Why is my curriculum white?'

The 'Why is my curriculum white?' campaign followed the publication by the NUS of a report into Black students' experiences of FE and HE (NUS, 2011). Students surveyed for *Race For Equality* to varying degrees reported feeling alienated and excluded inside classrooms "or being 'invisible' to lecturers". 42 percent of those surveyed "did not believe their curriculum reflected issues of diversity, equality and discrimination".

> 34 per cent stated they felt unable to bring their perspective as a Black student to lectures and tutor meetings. A running theme through both the survey and focus group data was a frustration that courses were designed and taught by non-Black teachers, and often did not take into account diverse backgrounds and views … Others felt their curriculum had a narrow focus, with some expressing their dismay at how their country of origin was portrayed, or their fear that the course did not cover material relevant to life outside the UK (NUS, 2011: 4, 5).

'Why is My Curriculum White?' was designed to raise awareness – amongst students and staff in UK HE – of these concerning survey results and what were understood to be continuing dissonances between strategic commitments to inclusion, diversity and internationalization enunciated by universities, and a persistent privileging within curricula of an occidentalist world view, represented by the products of white, western patriarchy, in other words, the ideas and published writings of 'old white men'.

The campaign has provoked a wide range of responses. For example, Oxford University has recently announced that engagement with non-British and non-European history will be compulsory for students reading its BA History degree (Davis, 2017; Sandeman, 2017). Conversely, 'Why is My Curriculum White?', its premise and its objectives have attracted strong criticism. For example, Joanna Williams, Senior Lecturer in Higher Education, University of Kent contends the campaign suggests

> that higher education today is less about engaging with a particular body of knowledge than it is about the promotion of certain values … According to this reasoning, all knowledge propounded by white males is reduced simply to a reflection of dominant power structures and is therefore tainted. It becomes morally better to study work that gives a voice to underrepresented groups. (Williams, 2014)

Williams argues there are problems with universities personalizing curricula in such ways – limiting students' horizons and curtailing academic freedoms – and by so doing restricting 'students to knowledge deemed appropriate to their cultural background' (2014), a move that, she argues, 're-racialises knowledge' and homogenises black students (Williams, 2017). Williams asserts instead that: 'The whole point of learning is to transcend the limitations of one's existing circumstances and cultural background through the expansion of knowledge.' (Williams, 2014).

The *Race for Equality* report did not advocate so extreme a compartmentalization. Whilst Recommendation 8 called for HEIs to 'embed race equality in their curricula', this was intended 'not only to demonstrate to Black students that their learning reflects their own experience, but to promote understanding among their White peers', and Recommendation 9 proposed an 'inclusive approach to teaching and learning, which actively welcomes the views of all students' (NUS, 2011: 60). The report does, however, challenge us, as educators, to accept that being open to learning and change is as much the responsibility of the teacher as it is the learner's. Considering that at least some of the disillusionment expressed by the NUS survey's respondents appeared to stem from from teachers not listening to or even 'seeing' the people who were in their classrooms, there does appear to be considerable room for improvement.

The prospect of some individuals and groups on both sides of this impassioned debate not listening and not talking to each other seems – in 2017 – quite a real one. In February 2014, Reni Eddo-Lodge published a blog post titled "Why I'm no longer talking to white people about race", in which she expressed her emotional exhaustion at the "emotional disconnect", "bewilderment", "defensiveness", "defiance" of white people "who refuse to accept the legitimacy of structural racism and its symptoms"; white people who have "never had to think about what it means, in power terms, to be white", those who "don't even recognise that the problem exists" or who think a conversation about race can be held "as equals" (Eddo-Lodge, 2014). Her logical conclusion in 2014 was to withdraw from debate. Three

years later she has published a book under the same title, which both reflects back on her 2014 stance and explores "issues from eradicated black history to the political purpose of white dominance, whitewashed feminism to the inextricable link between class and race" (Eddo-Lodge, 2017a) to endeavour to begin a new, wider-ranging debate. The book calls on readers to "see race" rather than engage in "colour-blindness" for

> Not seeing race does little to dismantle racist structures or improve the lives of people of colour. … We must see who benefits from their race, who is affected by negative stereotyping of theirs, and on whom power and privilege is bestowed – not just because of their race, but also their class and gender. Seeing race is essential to changing the system. (Eddo-Lodge, 2017b).

What Eddo-Lodge has to say follows in a long tradition: from US writers such as Carter C. Woodson and W. E. B. Du Bois, publishing in the first half of the twentieth century,[5] to the Critical Race Theory [CRT] which emerged from Law in the 1970s and subsequently influenced a range of other disciplines including History and Education. CRT rejects the idea that western societies can claim to be neutral, objective, colour-blind or equal when they are institutionally organised to privilege a particular racial group: whites (Ladson-Billings and Tate IV, 2013: 164). Gillborn defines this "White supremacy" as "a regime of assumptions and practices that constantly privilege the interests of White people but are so deeply rooted that they appear *normal* to most people in the culture." (2010: 5) Ladson-Billings and Tate IV argue there are essential paradigmatical problems with multiculturalism – or "diversity" initiatives – in contemporary education because these follows the tradition of liberalism in "allowing a proliferation of difference" and maintaining that "all difference is both analogous and equivalent" (Ladson-Billings and Tate IV, 2013: 169). CRT argues that such an assumption is both inaccurate and complicit in the maintenance of Western white superiority.

Taking up such positions (in either educational or political contexts) has provoked criticism and defensiveness – as such theorists expected that it would – and this has been held up by some as further evidence of the entrenched dominance of white, western modes of thought and curriculum organisation. Gillborn, for instance, acknowledges the "concerted attacks from both left and right" and sets out to counter them:

> CRT does not imagine that all White people are uniformly racist and privileged. However, CRT *does* view all White-identified people as implicated in relations of racial domination: White people do not all behave in identical ways and they do not all draw similar benefits – by they *d*o all benefit to some degree, whether they like it or not. (2010: 5)

Critics of CRT nevertheless insist that identity-based politics or identity-based pedagogies are divisive. In the US context following the election of President Trump in 2016, Humanities professor Mark Lilla criticised a "generation of liberals and progressives narcissistically unaware of conditions outside their self-defined groups, and indifferent to the task of reaching out to Americans in every walk of life." (Lilla, 2016).

To sting educationalists out of complacency or lack of awareness of the ways in which structures and institutional ways of doing things can perpetuate disadvantage and injustice is one thing. However, exposing what is wrong in a given system or situation is, by implication at least, not a sufficient end place. CRT comes ultimately from a philosophical tradition committed to working actively on behalf of social justice and Jenny Ozga argues strongly that scholarly activity and research within the context of education 'can make a contribution to the goals' of social justice and equity (2013: 176). In particular, she argues that work within an educational context offers more than simply bringing whites to a consciousness of their own inherent privilege; it can equip them to be part of the solution to the problem. This extension of CRT's goal is necessary for, if we cease working at the point where whites, bastions of white privilege feel challenged, guilty and ashamed, are we going to achieve the kind of positive

[5] C. C. Woodson (1933) *The Miseducation of the Negro*. Washington, DC: Association Press; and W. E. B. Du Bois. (1989 [1903]) *The Souls of Black Folks.* New York: Penguin Books. Woodson highlighted in the 1930s the role of education institutions in fostering a "process which inspires and stimulates the oppressor … and … depresses and crushes … the spark of genius" in black students, making them feel their "race does not amount to much and never will measure up to the standards of other people's" (cited in Ladson-Billings and Tate IV, 2013: 163).

change envisioned? As Ozga argues, "engaged subjectivity" (scholarship driven by how we think things ought to be) is one thing, but it is problematic if we, as scholars, "seize on explanations … whose function may be to allocate blame, rather than increase understanding". (2013: 173-174) I would argue we can see this happening on both sides of this impassioned debate. So what can be done?

Who are my students? Student-centred teaching and learning and active listening

Understanding who is in our classrooms and listening to what they have to say seriously and with engaged attention is a sound place to start. These two approaches are, to my mind, bedrocks of good teaching, not simply of an inclusive variety. Most of us have a general awareness of increased diversity in our classrooms – not just in terms of race and ethnicity but also gender, age, caring responsibilities, disability, educational background, to name but a few. But it can help us to focus on who exactly we might be preparing courses of study for to work (for example) with colleagues in student engagement teams and others who ask 'who are our students?' as part of their professional role and can help us set our teaching within its institutional context. Furthermore, if we can imagine and then 'see' students in our classes not as representatives of particular groups but as individuals, then we are less likely to assume they will respond to the ideas we discuss with them in predetermined, expected ways and more likely to take the time and space to really find out who they are individually and listen to what they have to say. Moreover, we are more likely to design courses of study and individual classes that will be interesting and engaging to our students if we have thought about their needs rather than our own during the designing process. This might very well mean we have to reduce the amount of material we try and present in sessions. But, as my next point will underline, this may be no bad thing.

A good amount of what is written and spoken about such student-centred learning and teaching draws on the work of clinical psychologist Carl Rogers, who developed a model of 'client-centred therapy' in the mid-twentieth-century which contended that the relationship between therapist and client was more important for achieving change in the client than the expertise of the therapist alone. If the latter could show genuineness, empathy and acceptance in the therapeutic relationship, then change was highly likely to occur in the client (Rogers, 1961: 33-4). Rogers later applied his ideas to education, advising teachers to "create a climate in which there is freedom to learn" (Rogers, 1983: 157). Aspy and Roebuck number amongst many educationalists who have developed work based on Rogers' ideas. They concluded:

> Students learn more and behave better when they receive high levels of understanding, caring and genuineness, than when they are given low levels of them. It pays to treat students as sensitive and aware human beings (1983: 199).

This, it seems to me, gets towards the very heart of what some of the NUS survey respondents were saying was lacking from their experience of teaching and learning.

Story-telling and subjectivity

One of the key ways in which proponents of CRT have proposed to act positively is by gathering and disseminating the stories of those who do not fit in and are disadvantaged by the prevailing systems of power. Such an approach has been widely adopted by critical theorists more generally and, least in part derives from Jürgen Habermas's concept of 'communicative action' (the idea that all having the right to enter into discourse and to be heard) (Pajnik, 2006: 390).[6] Story-telling as a learning theory and method of engaging students and personalising learning has gained significant traction in recent years, in both schools and HE.[7] From an historian's perspective, privileging individual subjectivities – what Richard Delgado describes as "truths only exist[ing] for this person in this predicament at this time in history" (cited in Ladson-Billings and Tate IV, 2013: 166)[8] is a challenging idea. Firstly, this is because it assumes that humans are all able to know themselves and naturally make sense of their own personal

[6] "Story-telling is an important strategy for the uncovering of injustice and systemic mistakes whose victims are marginalized groups, for example, migrants – in situations where exclusion cannot be explained through universal argumentation." (Pajnik, 2006: 395).
[7] For example, J. Moon (2010) *Using Story in Higher Education and Professional Development*. Abingdon, Routledge.
[8] R. Delgado (1991) 'Brewer's Plea: Critical Thoughts on Common Cause', *Vanderbilt Law Review* 44: 11.

experiences. Secondly, it perhaps suggests that such truths are unreachable or unknowable by others, either living contemporaneously or later, via historical study or analysis.

It is problematic to assume the first position for many reasons. As Frantz Fanon famously contended, how can you know who you are or be able to construct a positive sense of identity from the past when that past has been ruptured or totally supplanted by the operations of dominant socio-cultural forces like cultural colonialism? When "I meet a Russian or a German", Fanon wrote in the 1950s, "I can hardly forget that he has a language of his own, a country, and that perhaps he is a lawyer or an engineer there … When it comes to the case of the Negro [*sic*], nothing of the kind. He has no culture, no civilization, no 'long historical past.'", or rather not a past that form a guide to action "in the present moment". (2008: 175). Equally, an individual's capacity to make sense of their contemporaneous existence (or learning experience in a classroom) can be impacted by access to education, time available to reflect and think, and class or status. Fanon recognised all too acutely that his approach to grappling with racial inequalities, and his own "quest for disalienation" as "a doctor of medicine born in Guadeloupe" could only "be understood by recognizing motivations basically different from those of the Negro laborer building the port facilities in Abidjan" (2008: 174).

One of the conceptual challenges many of my Open University [OU] students face studying empires in the past and attempting to recover evidence of the experiences and perspectives of those living at the time is to resist making the assumption that all historical actors sought to critique, categorize or intellectualize their experiences – either instinctively or consciously – in ways analogous to those students are required to employ by the discipline they study and the learning outcomes set by their module. Some did so: my students read the eloquent autobiographies of Olaudah Equiano and others.[9] But even such atypical figures did not necessary relate their experience to the frames of reference (western, secularised, etc.) the students themselves may take for granted. The agency of spiritual authority and the activities of the divine cause particular puzzlement, for instance. Neither is it straightforward to recover the motivation or inner lives of those who clearly had enormous – and frequently dangerous levels of power – the white masters, mistresses, overseers, and so on, as my students discover when they read the diaries of Thomas Thistlewood as part of their studies.[10] These documents are punctuated with records of the most appalling cruelty meted out to black slaves on the island of Jamaica; they are also remarkably unforthcoming about Thistlewood's motivations for and feelings about such behaviour. This the students find it hard to process. One of the best responses I've had to-date, however, came from a student who, like many studying with the OU, came from a non-typical educational background and had not studied formally for many years. The student drew on their own very personal experience of visiting a former slave plantation when visiting the Caribbean on holiday. They had been struck by how totally isolated it was and this led to a valuable discussion in class about how such isolation might have contributed to the way empire was experienced through a dehumanizing mixture of violence and vulnerability in that particular environment. There remain huge areas of the past, aspects of the lived experiences of men and women, of which we are ignorant despite the painstaking work of many researchers, a situation which should lend caution and humility to the historian's work and a willingness to pay heed to our students' subjective responses – as well strengthen our determination to try to strengthen our evidence base.

Threshold concepts and troublesome knowledge

From a pedagogical perspective, it is worth connecting what I have described here with the theory of 'threshold concepts'. Simply put, threshold concepts exist in all disciplines and represent "a transformed way of understanding, or interpreting, or viewing something without which the learner cannot progress" (Meyer and Land, 2006: 6). If you have ever taught, you will recognise the frustration involved when students simply do not 'get' what you are trying to teach them and the euphoria that can result when they do. This is because the teacher usually already has an understanding of the important portals that lie on the way towards gaining expertise in a particular subject area. Getting over these so-called thresholds is not easy, however, and this is a reality we need to be prepared to share with students

[9] O. Equiano (2003) *The Interesting Narrative and other writings*. Penguin Classics. Revd edn.
[10] See T. Burnard (2004) *Mastery, Tyranny, and Desire: Thomas Thistlewood and the Anglo-Jamaican World*. University North Carolina Press; D. Hall (1999) *In Miserable Slavery: Thomas Thistlewood in Jamaica, 1750-86.* University of West Indies Press.

explicitly, especially when we know a subject area contains a number of such threshold points. Perkins characterised the sort of knowledge being dealt with here 'troublesome' (2006), especially when it is counter-intuitive, alien or even incoherent. However, if a student is able to take on board the difficult new way of looking at things, to have their existing assumptions 'troubled', then the impact on their learning can be transformative. This theoretical area does not suggest that learning is all going to be easy or uplifting and affirmative. In order to progress, some learning is going to be difficult, testing and 'troublesome'.

Teachers designing or delivering a course of study regularly come across thresholds of their own. We have already come across some in this reflection: students disengaged by material in which they 'should' be interested, students experiencing 'despair' (typically produced when they have little sense of achievement or of being tested) (Elton, 1996). Once we have reached a level of easy familiarity with material, ideas and key concepts, it can be hard to empathize with students who are struggling to grasp them first-time round, especially if the topics concerned do interact with deeply personal areas such as identity or arrest the emotions. It is vital for us as teachers to make the time to listen to our students' misunderstandings, difficulties and uncertainties as early in our courses as possible. This is not so we can simply gauge what they know and do not know, but so that we can understand "the terms that shape a student's knowledge" (Land *et al*., 2006: 200) and use this information to help us make quick adaptations to delivery (for instance, "this topic really needs to have more face-to-face time spent on it so I'm going to change my lesson plan") or more lasting changes to curriculum content. It can be a 'threshold concept' to understand that decisions about what needs to be taught, which topics are what Land *et al* term the "jewels in the curriculum" (2006: 198), need to be made *with* students not simply imposed on them. It can also be deeply challenging for us as teachers to consider that our own suppositions, unconscious biases, and so on may be leading us to make lazy assumptions about our students: for example, to assume there will be a 'natural' affinity with or interest in the slave experience amongst BAME students "could … be a problematic imposition and assumption of identity – when students are being constructed in narrow ways that place overemphasis on particular aspects of their backgrounds."

> Although it is important to enable students the critical space to make the connections between their sense of self and the subject being studied, it is unhelpful when this is done through an imposed lens of the student (i.e. who the teacher thinks the student is). Thus, drawing on students' experience requires highly sensitive pedagogical approaches that enable the students to develop their relationship to the subject knowledge but in dialogue with co-participants, including the teacher and their peers'. (Burke and Crozier, 2012: 8)

The strange, even alien nature of the past should act as a warning to us as educators against such misrecognition, and remind us of the difficult and troublesome character of the partial knowledge we have and seek to enhance.

The unknown or unknowable aspects of the past make it difficult, as historians, to contend that what we find through our researches and dissemination of ideas is *the* truth – whole and authentic – rather than fragments of it. Our writings are not simplistic chroniclings of *what* happened; rather they are re-presentations and re-interpretations of aspects of past life and experience re-structured and voiced by us in our languages and cultural contexts – at least in part – to carry messages of meaning, prompts to thought and action for the generation amongst which we live and write. Adherence to a rigid, positivist paradigm has long been critiqued within the historical discipline itself by proponents of postmodern or critical theory approaches.[11] This means one is likely only to find such an entirely unreconstructed approach amongst a minority of practitioners. But the idea that history is relative, culturally contingent and communicates through signifiers, in turn leaves the discipline open to the accusation that it may itself represent versions of the past capable of perpetuating historic injustices and inequalities. The contention that historical injustices and their physical and ideological remnants can enact damage and reproduce disadvantage in the present has been the mainstay of recent campaigns such as 'Rhodes Must Fall', which maintains that colonialism is not simply an historical phenomenon, but is also a living

[11] For instance, see the work of Patrick Joyce, James Vernon and others. J. Vernon (1994) "Who's Afraid of the 'Linguistic Turn'? The Politics of Social History and Its Discontents" *Social History*. Vol. 19, No. 1 (January), 81-97.

reality. Thus the questioning of educational institutions continuing to display statues of figures such as imperialist Cecil Rhodes or slave-trader Edward Colston, once celebrated but now morally derided.[12] It is a sign that no statement – visual, linguistic or pedagogic – may now be assumed to be morally or representationally neutral.

Whether we find things to applaud or condemn in our contemporary societies' representation and utilisation of the past, the difficulties we have recovering extensive parts of it and making critical 'sense' of what we can recover, should, I think, make us particularly wary of judging it according to our own mores, especially when this process draws us to apportion blame. Our best chance of achieving changes, and of transforming reality both for our students and for ourselves as teachers, is to combine critique and action and to involve our students in partnership with us.

Students as partners

University strategies pay much attention to the 'student voice', 'experience', 'engagement', placing students at the heart – increasingly – of both education and research activity. But, as Dunne points out:

> There is a subtle, but extremely important, difference between an institution that 'listens' to students and responds accordingly, and an institution that gives students the opportunity to explore areas that they believe to be significant, to recommend solutions and bring about the required changes. The concept of 'listening to the student voice' – implicitly if not deliberately – supports the perspective of student as 'consumer', whereas 'students as change agents' explicitly supports a view of the student as 'active collaborator' and 'co-producer', with the potential for transformation (Dunne and Zandstra, 2011: 4)

If promises are made to students that their voices will be listened to, that they will receive a personalized learning experience in which they can enjoy real choice and participate in transforming their educational journey and yet opportunities for active participation are either not forthcoming at all or severely curtailed, then it is perhaps not surprising when students feel short-changed? Student survey evidence suggests that BAME students are keen to be actively involved. For instance, *Race for Equality* cited

> HSBC Student Survey 2010 data, which found that nearly half of Black (African and Caribbean) and Asian respondents (49 per cent and 47 per cent, respectively), and an overwhelming 80 per cent of Mixed race respondents, stating a desire to be involved in shaping the content, curriculum, or design of their course.' (NUS, 2011: 22)

The merits of active learning by students, in order for them to construct knowledge dynamically, deeply and enduringly (rather than passively, shallowly and fleetingly) has become an almost universally accepted tenet of modern pedagogy. Students as partners and/or producers is a rapidly developing area, with considerable divergence between, for example, Mike Neary's radical 'producer' model and others.[13] It does pose challenges when, as individuals or departments, we wish to introduce elements of partnership or problem-based learning to enhance student engagement but do not find an equivalent 'buy in' from our institutions. But this is perhaps one of those times when we should be leading pedagogy from our disciplines rather than waiting for institutions to prescribe a general approach?

The student I had talked with during the 'Why is my curriculum white?' meeting had described a difficult journey which had involved initial interest, disillusionment, alienation, despair, passive withdrawal, active searching, drawing strength from being listened to, realizing connections and rediscovery of interest and renewed engagement. Although educational transformation in this case took place in a community setting characterized by high levels of shared identity, there seems to me no reason why, through the integration of more active listening into our classrooms and active inclusion of students as partners/producers of learning, teaching and assessment, we cannot develop a refreshed curriculum that will engage all of us in new and transformative ways. It is important to stress that, whilst some of the

[12] D. Olusoga (2017) "Bristol: the city that lauds the slave trader", *The Guardian* 27 April.
[13] See, for example, https://nearymike.wordpress.com/; E. Dunne and D. Owen (2013) *The Student Engagement Handbook. Practice in Higher Education*. Emerald Publishing; M. Healey, A. Flint and K. Harrington (2014) *Engagement through partnership: students as partners in earning and teaching in higher education.* York: Higher Education Academy.

2011 *Race for Equality* report's recommendations were couched explicitly in the language of race and ethnicity, others were deliberately inclusive of all students recognizing the need – not for differences to be ignored – but rather all to be seen and invited to interact. Those who felt well-supported, fairly assessed, and who believed they were studying an inclusive curriculum in which their perspectives were valued were more likely to describe their institutions positively (selecting adjectives such as 'supportive', 'respectful', 'tolerant' and 'friendly'). Such respondents closely linked their academic environment to their self-esteem and achievements (NUS, 2011: 27), which is something we should be hoping for for all our students and working with them to attain.

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