

# How has COVID-19 affected BAME university staff?

Graciano Soares

[g.soares@brighton.ac.uk](mailto:g.soares@brighton.ac.uk)

Chair of the Race and Faith Network

University of Brighton

Disclaimer: This presentation is based on my experience as staff, not an official position from the University of Brighton

# Positioning statements

- Staff wellbeing and skills impact on student success. COVID-19 has placed demands that have affected staff's **mental health** and tested their **online working and teaching skills**, making them more vulnerable to microaggression from students.
- Staff's ability to work with colleagues and students **of all races** contribute to positive outcomes. The impact of COVID-19 may worsen outcomes for BAME staff and students.
- BAME staff and students have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19 partly due to their **proximity to infected areas, difficulty in exercising social distancing and online teaching and working skills**.

# Outline

- The relevant data (key summary)
- COVID-19 and race headlines
- What are we doing about race?
- What are we doing about COVID-19?
- What else should we be doing?

# The data (key summary)

- BAME make up 12% of the UK public workforce. About the same percentage of BAME workers make up the private sector workforce (ONS, 2019).
- BAME make up 17% of the UK HE academic staff population and 12% of the non-academic staff population (HESA, Feb 2020)
- BAME make up 8.2% of the University of Brighton's academic staff population and 7.1% of the non-academic staff population (UOB, 2018/19)

# The data (HESA, Feb 2020)

## Academic managers:



Black	Mixed	Other	Asian	Not known	White
0	5	5	15	35	475



## Non-academic managers:



Other	Mixed	Black	Asian	Not known	White
50	165	185	410	450	10,510



# The data (HESA, Feb 2020)

## Elementary occupations:



Other	Mixed	Asian	Black	Not known	White
315	460	1,565	1,725	1,800	18,485



## Administrative and secretarial occupations:



Other	Mixed	Black	Not known	Asian	White
500	1,420	2,055	3,565	4,285	59,565



# COVID-19 and race (the key question, no definitive answer)

- Why are a disproportionate number of BAME community dying due to COVID-19 (Ahmed Versi, Muslim News on 5th June Covid-19 briefing - [Downing Street Coronavirus News Conference, 05/06/2020](#))
- Comorbidities (obesity and diabetes), deprivation, quality of housing.
  - “Those living in lower-quality housing find it more difficult to escape from a contagious virus like this” (Matt Hancock, Secretary of State for Health and Social Care)

# COVID-19 and race (NHS Confederation, 2020)

- COVID-19 has shone a spotlight on **health inequalities** that have existed for several decades (NHS Confederation, 2020)
- **Discrimination and racism also play a part** in factors driving health inequalities, as evidenced globally (NHS Confederation, 2020)

# COVID-19 and race

- ['If I am infected with COVID-19, is it because I am black?'](#) Dr Winston Morgan (Reader in Toxicology and Clinical Biochemistry at the University of East London)
  - [Dr Winston Morgan](#) demystifies the belief that Black people are more likely to suffer disproportionately from COVID-19 because of their genetic predisposition. Instead of race, he too claims the problem is in structural inequalities that exposes the BAME population to more health risks than their White counterparts.

# What are we doing about race?

- [Growing debate about decolonizing the curriculum](#) (Led by Dr Marlon Moncrieffe, Yaa Asare and Heba Youssef)
- **Race and Equality Allies training** plus the standard equality and diversity suite (unconscious bias, dignity at work, managing diversity)
- [One of 14 universities to hold the REC Bronze Mark](#)



University of Brighton

## DECOLONISING THE CURRICULUM

TEACHING AND  
LEARNING ABOUT  
RACE EQUALITY

ISSUE 1, JULY 2019

Marlon Moncrieffe, Yaa Asare, Robin Dunford and Heba Youssef

# What are we doing about race?

- **Time Together with the RFN** – a series of lunch time get together to reflect upon issues affecting staff during the lockdown. The one on 11th June was dedicated to the repercussions in the UK of recent racial tensions in America
- **Capturing and building intelligence through the RFN** to influence policy making



*(Photo from House of Parliament Library)*

# What are we doing about COVID-19?

- Intranet advice on wellbeing and remote working
- Published personal accounts of how staff themselves are coping with new ways of working
- Dedicated 24-hour telephone line to support staff who feel they would benefit from speaking to a counsellor
- High-level planning to facilitate return to work

# What else should we be doing?

- Assessing the impact of remote working from an **equality's perspective**
- We need to understand the **full implications** of home-working given our differing living environments
- **Learn to lead** – increased management accountability in the adoption of the AdvanceHE Charter– (AdvanceHE, 2020)
- Create opportunities for having **more open conversations** about race among all staff

# Bibliography

- ONS (2019) [Who works in the public sector?](#) Consulted 01/06/2020.
- HESA (2020) [Who works at HE?](#)
- HESA (2020) [Staff bulletin release 2018-19](#)
- NHS Confederation (2020) [Member Briefing](#)
- Public Health England (2020) [Disparities in the risk and outcomes of COVID-19.](#)
- AdvanceHE (2020) [From inertia to contagion towards immunity: keeping 'race' on the UK university agenda post-COVID-19](#)
- Dr Winston Morgan (May, 2020) [If I am infected with COVID-19, is it because I am black?](#)
- UOB (2019) **Staff Equalities monitoring data for the 2018/2019 academic year**