

Speeches, emails and essays from students.



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Amelia Besant

A poem of poems: Black lives matter

You declare you see me dimly
through a glass which will not shine,
though I stand before you boldly,
trim in rank and marking time.

I stand with you,
Against the odds,
Through the violence,
With a god.
Equality, and I will be free.

He couldn't breathe,
Deprived of dignity,
Together we grieve,
And fight this bigotry.
Slowly dying and loathed
Fell into depression but in pictures you smile and pose
The contradiction between
Control and free
Equality, and I will be free

Lurk late. We
Strike straight. We

I stand with you,
We bleed the same,
The fights not through,
Justice won't refrain.
Black Lives Matter,
Loud and clear,
For those in the back,
Who choose not to hear.
We real cool. We
We real cool.

Assembly Speech

I feel that we need to start with education. Black history is taught in schools, but it is very sanitised version that seems to focus only on the black communities ~~heroes~~ ^{heroes}. There is very little mention of the ugly reason that black people were brought over to Britain. We also need to have black history ~~incorporated~~ incorporated into main stream (or white) history. Currently we are only given Black History Month as a chance to explore the black communities past. I feel this is not enough.

Obviously in primary we make sure the lessons given are age appropriate, while still giving enough information. In Secondary schools however, more information ~~can~~ can be given and students can dig deeper into the slavery issue. For example The Slave Owners were paid 20 million to release their slaves from slavery - this was their compensation.

Note of that 20 mill went to the black slaves, it all went to the white slave owners/traders. As a country British tax payers (including B.M BAME) only finished paying that debt in 2015.

Education will be the key to changing the future.

Zareen Ferroz

How can we build an anti-racist community?

Can you imagine if human's transform into predators and prey? Everyone, I'm sorry to break it to you but this animalistic nature is sewed into some of them. Today Thursday 18th June is the 24th day of the tragic death of George Floyd. Then a whole year will pass. But we cannot forget. How can we forget, be passive, sit and sleep comfortably when there are ruthless, indifferent and racist people hunting down black lives? To my good willed listeners/ readers you and I both know very well that the community is not in safe hands. Therefore, racism needs to stop. Please! I implore you, before another precious life is, unjustly snatched away, let's build a community without racism.

Firstly, the statistics confirm the devastating damages that needs to be repaired: 59 % of African Americans get belittled and face racism every day. Despite how much their lives matter, despite their human rights to live, at least 88 black people get killed by police every year in America. Sadly as a result of the irrational, unjustifiable and disgusting racism, millions and millions of black people get disturbed and pressurized by hundreds of hurdles before they can even breath, much like George Floyd, before they can even get a chance. One of these hurdles include police violence against black men and black women. Honestly there can be no hope for a truly equitable and decent society if black people cannot jog down the street, go to a public park and live in the quiet of their homes without the fear that an officer of law may attack them with little justification. In fact, I am incredulous and extremely disappointed that even children of African Americans have to stress about receiving human rights, especially their right to live! The same goes for their black parents. Where is the bright future that their parents promised them? Do they really get a chance in life like how every child should?

Secondly, another issue is the continued economic inequality between black and white people. The covid-19 crisis has revealed that they are still two nations divided by race; Black people are underrepresented among low paid essential workers.

Now, think about the courageous, righteous and compassionate people like Martin Luther King Jr, Malcolm X and Nelson Mandela who fought painstakingly for their vulnerable, debilitated black brothers and sisters, although they had to face incessant bigotry, for their debilitated, vulnerable black brothers and sisters to receive the respect and human rights they should have received long before; Racism should never have existed in the first place. But what about George Floyd? George Floyd's life mattered. As infuriating as it is, racism still exists today.

However, I know you all want to change that, I know you all desire for an understanding, undisturbed and a reassuring community. But the community you want will only be built if we obstruct the filthy roots of racism through education. Perhaps our most phenomenal ability as human beings is that we can live our lives as humble, ethical and considerate human beings by education. Don't you agree? What if we help to educate ourselves as a community as well as our children, the future generation? I guarantee you that education would be a powerful refined catalyst for change to finally take place.

Damilola Alabi

Dear Racist Community,

As a black person myself I am very surprised about the recent events that have happened, but that is not what I am mainly surprised about. I am surprised that after the numerous protests, complaints and deaths of my brothers and sisters and even of people of your own, that you still carry on with your abusive comments and extreme unfairness. Many years ago, you brought us to your countries as slaves, those are many rights of freedom violated, a few years more then we started to come to your countries because slavery was abolished and we classed this as being 'safe' .

We came to your countries with peace, unarmed and looking for better living conditions, an education and jobs, you didn't let us, why, because of the way we looked. Just because we had a darker pigment in our skin, why were you and some of you still are so quick to judge, this is the question that is on my mind currently and the answer I do not want to know, is that answer to that question going to bring back the lives of the innocent or the freedom of the restricted, thought not.

Now back to the present, 2020, the year we all thought was going to be a good one, but everything went downhill from there and look where we are now. Living in an age where people are reviving racism. George Floyd, God bless his soul as heaven has gained another angel, had his breath restricted from by a racist american police man. There have been previous stories from America about white privilege, a white person can shoot a person of colour or another race and it would be classified as an accident, what nonsense but if a black person is walking around somewhere someone sees them as a threat they will call the police when nothing has been done to that person a policeman would arrive and kill the person of colour.

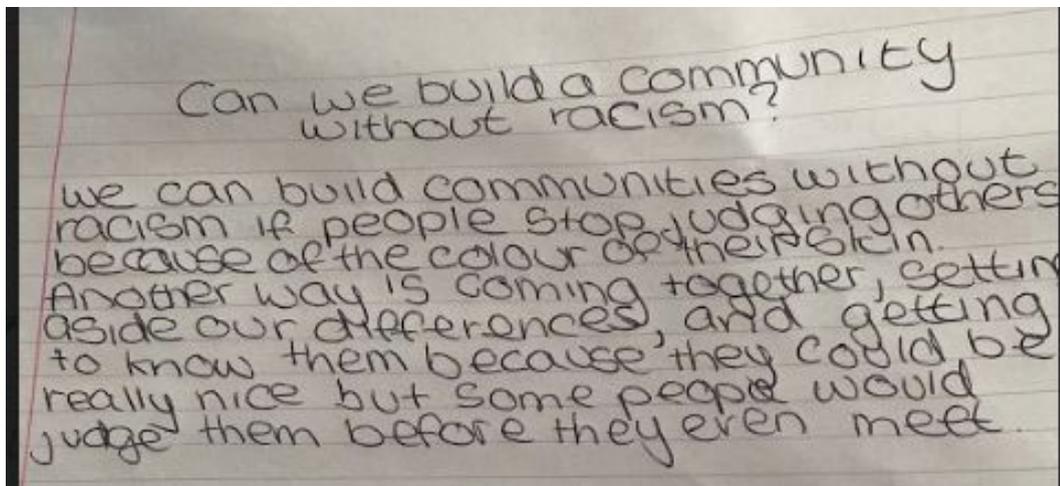
If this is what is happening now, what happens in the future, when I and my friends are adults, go out into 'the big world'. I once wanted to be a member of parliament or even the first black/black female prime minister but after the constant news reports of racial attacks and comments, I never thought about if I ever do get into such a post I don't want to be seen as a target. The past few events are now taking over our future, this is getting too out of hand.

World leaders need to do something about this, there is no point in locking someone up for being racist, homophobic or in any way discriminative for a short period of time then letting them out because they will have their freedom back and probably go back to their horrific ways. Did the slaves be slaves for a short time then been told 'you can go back now' , did the LGBTQ+ community feel confident walking the streets knowing that they were and still are being discriminated for who they are, did women get their rights straight away after continuously protesting about 'we want to be equal with men'. No. So why should a discriminative person have their freedom only so they can do the same again knowing that they will just go back to prison then come back.

It's things like this that we don't need to be fighting for. Now to anyone who has been racist and supporting these events, you are a disgrace to humanity, yes I said that, I had to say it, I am not going to watch this world that we all live in, not just you, slowly falling apart. If you were on the other end of the line, you would feel the anxiety, the vulnerability, the depression, the suicidal thoughts that people of other races, sexualities and genders, many more to mention go through. I want to know that my children and my children's children and so on are safe, and if this continues I know they won't be, so I want to fight with and for everyone and be the voice of the unheard. My family came to the UK for a safe life and an education but right now I don't even feel safe walking home.

Damilola Alabi

Isabella Bryant



Isadora Dos Anjos

We are in 2020, and we are still being asked, “how can we build a community without racism?”

With all due respect, I am tired of teaching white people that black people are humans too, that black people have families, feel pain, feel pride and that they bleed: we bleed just like you do. Racism should not be a ‘thing’ anymore. Racism should have ended a long time ago, together with slavery.

Black people have been through so much pain and anguish. They have been labelled things that they are not without ever being asked what they really are. No sir, I am not saying that black people are innocent angels, after all, they are humans, but they have been accused of stealing, killing and raping when the only ‘crime’ they have committed was to be born black.

But what about white people? They are the only victims in history, right? Well, let me remind you that it was white people who enslaved and tortured black people. You say equality should exist, but when you see a black man on the street, you fearfully hide your purse. I’m sorry if I sound impolite, but we have been polite for years while innocent black lives have been killed.

We just want to make it home safe, without being “accidentally” killed by the police or shot for “resisting”. Our voices need to be heard, we need justice and peace.

But now, dear white friend, I suggest you do your research about racism; go to protests, sign petitions, fight for our lives, support black businesses because simply posting ‘Black Lives Matter’ on social media won’t end police brutality. Black lives have always mattered and the UK isn’t innocent. George Floyd is not the first, but let’s fight so that he is the last. Be the change you want to see in the world.

Isadora Dos Anjos’ poem

Blessing or curse?

A gray hoodie will not protect me,
from the rain nor the hate

I wonder if our colour is blessing
or curse

I wonder why our blood is worthless,
is it because it's darker?

I fear for my safety - the darkest child
on our street in the empire of blocks .

My mum watches me as I come home,

as I make my way in life and

I wonder if like her

I'll have to teach my kids to fear for their lives

Fear the ones who should protect

And explain that anyone could mistake them
for anything but good.

by Isadora dos Anjos, based on "Hoodie" by January Gill O'Neill

Nancy Barker

William Shakespeare. Martin Luther. Queen Victoria. Three distinct historical figures, spanning three eras and three subjects, but with one glaring commonality: their whiteness.

Evidently, this proves the one-sided narrative of the history as it is taught and therein as it is rewritten. The alienation that black and minority ethnic students feel, then, is justified in this context; imagine searching in your textbooks for any trace of your rich history to find it completely erased.

But is “fixing” racism as simple a task as adding a couple clauses to the curriculum? There is a deeper root to the structural racism at the heart of British society that education might draw attention to but ultimately cannot address. In a socio-economic system diseased by racism, education is only a palliative, validating identities that will continue to be shunned outside the classroom. If we want the role of education to exceed this, it is not history we need but sociology and economics. It is in these fields that one can thoroughly explore and confront the foundation of racist Britain — namely, the economic and cultural subjugation of black and minority groups.

It is true that ignorance breeds hatred, and education is essential to dispel this. Dr. Scott of Cambridge University’s sociology department reports that schools in urban areas of the country with greater rates of black history and literature education produce less ignorant alumni than those in rural areas where subaltern struggles are omitted from the syllabus. We can extrapolate from this research that if we broaden the education system to encompass all modes and forms of humanity, our students, too, will be broadened. Otherwise, black children through the generations, despite identifying nationally with Britain, will find themselves marginalised as they hear about Jack and Jill, Hansel and Gretel, picturing youths like themselves, only to then see white faces in the picturebooks.

Not only would it benefit these kids to find relatable figures to imagine and aspire to, but also subverting traditional forms and assumptions is fundamental to the critical thinking skills that all educational centres should promote in their students. Let’s displace Jack and Jill from the hill and throw off the bread trail of Hansel and Gretel! New ideas will always be challenging to some, but their ultimate reward and the importance of diversity outweigh this challenge.

Of course, education has its limits; it will always be an adjunct to the fundamental systemic problems that afflict black and minority populations. However, as one element within a wider movement towards radical social change, as the BLM protests indicate there is an appetite for, changing the way we teach could prove an essential tool in eradicating racism.

Anonymous student

We become comfortable around familiar things. We see no cause to question or to probe. We then are in danger of falling into laziness in thought, action and ideology.

This is how racism can become ingrained and normalized within our society. Statues, histories, curricula: heroes and heroines, images and aesthetics, truths and lies. These are the areas of our culture that we see and consume so regularly that they become frozen archetypes which we assume are beyond questioning. We trust authorities and those with power in society to be fair and honest when presenting such examples of who and what we should remember and venerate.

So who are these people with the power, authority and means to make these choices? The expression 'history is written by the victors' has been attributed to Winston Churchill. The 'victors' supposedly have earned the right to influence others of their hegemony; their histories, their heroes and their kinsmen. As opposed to the vanquished, having lost control and thus rewarded with the lack of the opportunity to wield power, as if they never existed. Because control is about power. But power changes hands.

It could be considered that, historically, racists have been the victors, in a position to influence what is important and what should be prioritized. Hence, they have excluded and erased the full accounts on which their choices and hierarchies are based. And, if nothing else, racism is a hierarchy of privilege depending on ethnicity or skin colour, which directly relates to the value put on the lives and humanity of all peoples of colour.

For instance, Winston Churchill deserves commendation and respect for his leadership against fascism in the second world war. However, his idea of a good election slogan in 1955 was "Keep England White". The true historical erasure here is that Black and Brown people of the former British Empire were part of the military force fighting in World War II. Should they now be excluded from 'White Britain' ? And, should Churchill be called out for this ?

An unexamined history of Churchill's career serves only an incomplete account of his legacy. In addition to erasing the truth of the lives of people of colour in Churchill's story, and by extension Black British history, a racist narrative is established by default. And further this perpetuates a pattern of exclusion that maintains a racist agenda. Ultimately, racism prevents justice and thus derails the genuine meaning of peace.

However, beyond academia and schools at present, there is evidence for an appetite for education and identifying the insidious nature of racism within the system of society. To illustrate this, books on race and inequality are topping the best-seller lists for the first time, many are completely sold-out. Reni Eddo-Lodge has become the first Black British author to top the UK bestseller list. This way, hopefully, Black British, and the candid history of Britain's colonial past, is being found outside of the conventional authorities. This should largely aid in declining the power of racist ideology. However, this relies on the acceptance of these truths and the consequent corrective changes to the institutional frameworks of politics, education and attitude for present and future generations.