



EDUCATION 4 CHANGE

BULLETIN 1

2020

The E4C Team wants to take this opportunity to thank all leadership teams that have shared and distributed the bulletin within their schools. The E4C Team has been overwhelmed with the engagement and support of educators in Newham and beyond.

The purpose of the E4C Bulletin is to offer Newham school educators a vehicle to keep conversations going about anti-racism in a safe and focused way. Some schools have already elected E4C ambassadors to lead on these discussions. **Please share this bulletin with your staff team.**

Black Lives Matter or Education for Change?

A Personal Perspective

by Lorna Jackson, Headteacher, Maryland School

A humble beginning:

The term '*black lives matter*' is actually trademarked.

#BlackLivesMatter started in 2013 and is owned by 3 US women. It is justifiably a protest term emanating from a global movement to amplify injustice to people of colour. It has kick started a conversation that is long overdue and I believe the next step is to positively use this within the context in which we operate, to bring about change and equality. We can do this without constantly referring to Black Lives Matter.

How and why?

I will be proposing to the working group that we discontinue using the term and instead use the term 'Education for Change' or something similar at the start of this journey, which, I hope, will result in curriculum reform, the exposure of the hidden truths, clear and courageous communication from policy makers and, of course, continued understanding and harmony in our community (N.B. This is a personal perspective and the working group will decide on the direction and project name).

Where do we start?

It is so much easier to identify and combat overt racism but many people of colour have been dealing with the injustice of covert racism and unconscious bias - a subtle form of racism. Celebrating Black History Month and heroes is not enough to educate people about racism. I propose that 'Recognising unconscious bias' needs to be taught to all children in our schools as it is a well-hidden concept that is systemic in some institutions. *I have attached some personal experiences in my life in the addendum to demonstrate this point. As you read them, check against this statement - would this have happened if I had white skin?*

Why do we need to educate ourselves? Let's hear from the experts!

We are making history so we should learn from experts in order to make the right choices. *Akala* is a black British journalist and author; his book, *Natives*, is a must read as part of this journey of change. This brilliant speaker visited Essex School in Newham and the Local Authority should consider inviting him to a Joint Leadership conference. Don't miss his inspirational address to the Oxford Union on Youtube.

Runnymede Trust is a race equality think tank who challenge racism through research. The Local Authority could engage their services to assist with this momentous occasion of change.

EEF (Education Endowment Foundation) lead on research projects and the BLM/Education for Change agenda would be a worthy research project. Some Headteachers in Newham already engage with the EEF.

The NEU's work on B.M.E matters is also worth sharing as part of this journey: *Hannah Wilberforce*, great granddaughter of William Wilberforce, slave abolitionist, is a teacher whose services should be acquired to advise us on the legacy of the abolitionist and the issue of modern-day slavery. She told us today that she is intrigued and would be happy to assist us. She is a personal friend of Maryland DHT, Anastasia Boreham. Maryland school, interestingly enough, lies between Buxton Road and Gurney Road, (Gurney & Buxton were two abolitionists along with Wilberforce).

Subjects for discussion:

BAME or not to BAME?

There is a debate going on regarding the term BAME, which was introduced recently by the media (e.g. I have the video of BBC debate 24.6.20 - Victoria Derbyshire). The consensus from the black and Asian contributors is that, depending on how you use it, it is a convenient, lazy, catch-all phrase; it eradicates cultural differences and needs to be deconstructed. It lumps us all together when certain issues are particular to specific groups (hence not BAME LIVES MATTER, since the movement is focussed on the particular racism that is persistently levelled at Black people). B.M.E was accepted for many years and it was changed as the younger Asian generation wanted the A included for that ethnic group. **The label BAME has been used for 'minority ethnic' groups such as Roma (defined as a race of people by the EU) Jewish heritage, who are white, as well as Oriental groups. So BAME cannot be about skin colour.**

Is Black History Month a helpful concept? - a subject for discussion (at last)

Accurate history of all races should be part of education throughout the curriculum, not just celebration and commemoration one month of the year. Shouldn't we have outgrown this by now? Colonial history is not taught in full, hence the veneration of 'heroes', which are now the subject of removal from pinnacles. The community needs to be told clearly the story of why these statues, although memorialised for their positive contribution to England, often have a dark side, e.g. wealth from the purchase of humans or carried views that at that time were acceptable. The statues should be preserved in a communal place of education if necessary, to memorialise the discussion about change, if anything.

Why is George Floyd's murder important to us as educators?

This is a great question to start a conversation on institutionalised racism. For speed, google the story of Dale Semper, a successful black British bank manager who, because he owned a 'nice car', was accused by the police of possession of firearms, fraud, money laundering, sham marriage, drug dealing, human trafficking and terrorism, all of which were totally untrue. This is the experience of many black men whose stories were never given press attention... until now. We need to have the skills to answer uncomfortable questions our learners may ask about his death, e.g. *Why is the world so angry about it? What does Black Lives Matter mean? Do racist practices go on in education in this day and age?*

Other E4C discussion points: How are the following things dealt with in our Authority?

- Racism against foreigners (xenophobia).
- Recognition and celebration of the contribution people of colour make to the local authority.
- The fight for the Windrush generation, the hostile environment, the atrocities suffered by those who are our family members (Windrush Day was 22nd June).
- Recognition and support for those of us who have been told "go back to your country" in our roles, yet working on the frontline to keep the wheels of the country turning.
- Leadership positions and representation on decision making boards etc.
- SEND / behaviour and racism and the work of the PRU and how these profiles sit within the education landscape.

Some examples of unconscious bias experienced by Lorna Jackson, Headteacher, Maryland School: What are your thoughts on the responses to the incidents?

1. My interview for my Deputy Headship back in 1985 involved the supplementary question from the panel:

Interviewer: *'How would you support a failing black teacher?'*

LJ: *The same way I would support a failing white one.*

(I checked with the other candidates and they were NOT asked this supplementary question.)

2. Attending a school leaders residential conference outside London - delegates met in the bar on arrival. Approached by white HT who tapped me on the arm several times:

HT: *Excuse me! There aren't any towels in my room!*

LJ: *Well, there are in mine!* (huge pause whilst penny dropped)

3. Receiving an award from Newham Council for long service council workers at the Dockside building:

Official: *And where do you work, Mrs. Jackson?*

LJ: *Maryland School*

Official: *Are you the cook there?*

LJ: *No, I am actually the Head teacher.*

(will leave the rest to your imagination... although there is nothing wrong with being a cook)

4. Visit to my office from the, then, new head of a company we (and other Newham schools) held an SLA with, entered my office, proffered his hand to my white DHT:

Visitor: *Pleasure to meet you Mrs. Jackson*

Lorraine, my DHT: *I am sure she is pleased to meet you too* (pointing in my direction)

This was a well-rehearsed double act that we performed on quite a few occasions!

Eventually I stuck my photo and title on the office doors.

5. Meeting contractors in my school car park - I had booked them via Newham Tech services:

LJ.: Hello gents. May I help you?

Gent: *No thanks, love. We are here to meet the Head teacher.*

LJ: That would be me... and I don't allow chewing gum on the premises.

(will leave the rest to your imagination)

6. A few intrigued HT colleagues have contacted me to find out more about the incident with police -the term 'gobsmacked' was the most common response but the incident is not unusual (look up the Cherry Grose incident). It is a bit lengthy but worth it:

Middle of the night, no lights, I am asleep. Knocking on my bedroom door upstairs in my house. I jump out of my sleep as door opens. Standing in the dark were two uniformed officers from local police station who had entered my house using my son's house keys!

My son, who had borrowed my car, had been stopped and searched on his way to buy chips. He had no ID so was taken to the station, his house keys (and my car keys) taken from him and the officers decided to check his address by entering my home with the keys to find 'proof' he lived there (checking upstairs bedrooms including my sleeping daughter's room), commenting about black youngsters being naughty and did I know he had my car? Despite my protests the officers looked around the living room until they found a photo of my son (the proof), then quickly exited when I took their badge numbers and was about to take their photos. My complaint to the Met Police ended with a reprimand and 'training' for the two officers and a written apology.

And I could go on... and so could many others in my community, but thankfully we are now in a position where 'Education 4 Change' will and must begin to eradicate unconscious bias, not just the overt racism that we see in the media.

Some similar experiences by Lando Du Plooy, Headteacher, Dersingham School, and Ofsted inspector

Lando left Apartheid in his native South Africa to come to the UK yet still experiences overt as well as covert racism in this country:

I've had similar experiences (to Lorna's) when I've arrived as Lead Inspector. I was directed by the School Business Manager to the school kitchen ... including been stopped and searched at Stratford when I taught at a local school there and then having my front door smashed in by the police whilst I was being held at the station.

Some uncomfortable human stories will be told during this time of change. Newham has the capacity to lead the way in bringing about and showcasing incredible change in education.