



Ethnic Minorities  
& Youth Support  
Team Wales

Tîm Cymorth  
Lleiafrifoedd Ethnig  
& Ieuenctid Cymru

## All Wales BAME Engagement Programme Online Forum: Black Lives Matter 1<sup>st</sup> July 2020

**Panel of BLM Organisers from across Wales:** Andrew Ogun and Lauren Henry (Newport), Sabrina Tharkurdar and Luis Williamson (Cardiff), Hilary Brown (Vale of Glamorgan), Nasir Adam (Cardiff), Sean Suter (Neath Port Talbot), Riah Andrews (Llangollen), Cloe Cherney (Haverfordwest), Nimi Trevidi (Swansea), Sahar Al-Faifi (Cardiff)

**Attendees:** 71 people attended this forum, including people from all across Wales.

**Rocio opens the meeting:** EYST has been going for 15 years and antiracism is at heart of all we do. She wants to begin this forum with a request for people to please support the campaign for justice for Christopher Kapessa, who died one year ago today, pushed into a river by other children. #Justice for Christopher Kapessa and #BlackLivesMatter is at the heart of our work. Seeing all this grassroots work going on across Wales is very exciting. The purpose of today is to get people who have been those organisers together. It is a big challenge we are collectively trying to address. How can we harness this energy as organisations in different parts of Wales or in personal or professional roles? How can we take things forward? The idea today to hear your contributions. We have eight fantastic speakers here today who have been organising in their different localities. They are from different parts of Wales. Each will speak for five minutes and then we will have a discussion.

**Andrew Ogun, Newport:** Andrew Ogun is the main organiser of the Newport BLM march and he is 22 years old. His aim is to find way to harness current raw energy and consciousness and transform that into real positive change. Since the march, they are currently mobilising in Newport by finalising a statement, a declaration of intent to put forward to Welsh Government (WG) and public services – for instance demands regarding education and teaching of history. They want WG to engage to keep conversation going and put BAME citizens at forefront of change that needs to happen in Wales. Organisers in Newport have encountered a perception from some corners that BLM is not relevant in

Wales. They have made this point: BLM is not just about American issues and not just related to police brutality. It is about systemic issues. It is a collective effort. Right now, the main thing on the agenda of BLM activists in Newport is the statement that will be released this week to media and to general public. Andrew is working hard to connect with other leaders across Wales, because even though each region may have focussed issues, there must also be a national front. It has been so heartwarming to see support across Wales and see to Newport, Cardiff, and smaller places take action whether by marching or taking the knee. You can see a galvanisation. The pandemic coupled with this moment can be a chance to have justice for BAME citizens across globe. WG can take charge and we can make examples for the rest of the UK and the world.

- Website: <https://blm.wales/>
- Instagram: @blmnewport

**Lauren Henry, Newport** - She is the project coordinator of Urban Circle, an organisation which supports people like Andre to be heard and to have voice effectively work. She praises Andrew for having done a fantastic job which speaks volumes. He has created and facilitated for peers to have safe space to get stuff of chest. The march and subsequent event included the teaching of Black history, so it set a standard. The march was peaceful and did exactly what it was supposed to do.

- Website: <https://ucnewport.co.uk/>

**Nasir Adam, Cardiff** – He is here in two capacities, as a Black history creator at the National Museum of Wales and also as community activist in Cardiff. A main thing to concentrate on is belonging and identity. A motion is being debated in the Senedd today which proposes to mandate teach of Black and POC history in the New Curriculum. Nas truly believes as an activist that education is key to racism, Islamophobia and xenophobia. When he was taught black history in school, it was only the civil rights movements and slavery, which are important topics, he was not taught about black history in Wales. There is rich Black history in Wales. You see an absence of Black identity and Black collections in Wales. He is fighting to see Black people represented in civic spaces. The key is how we are training our teachers. It is about how that is implemented on grassroots and in school level. How do we get Black history in our schools? If we do not address this notion of amnesia of Black history in Wales, nothing will get resolved. And BLM is about tackling systemic racism head on. We see the amount of injustice and overrepresentation of BAME people in our justice system That question, “What is next?” That is it. We have been heard and now must keep up pressure to make sure everything systemic is changed. And I take responsibility for that as person who works in the national museum. It about making it possible for people in communities to create their history and representation. Not the other way around. And museums are starting to catch on to that.

- Website: <https://museum.wales/>
- Transcript on Senedd Motion RE New Curriculum: <https://record.assembly.wales/Plenary/6380#A58988>

**Sabrina Tharkurdar and Luis Williamson, Cardiff** – Are representing BLM Cardiff and were involved in organising protests there. Luis noted that BLM Cardiff is generally his first brush with real activism though participated in minor roles before. This is a culmination of events and now its time for change. BLM Cardiff started as a grassroots movement and wants to remain so. The first protest in Cardiff was on 31<sup>st</sup> May and the second one on 4<sup>th</sup> June. They are working with other people in Wales and are in conversations on a statement and possibly a manifesto – in conversations to have a way to cover the entire demographic and have a united front. Last weekend they had an event to support the Justice for Shukri campaign. Also, for those who don't know, today is the one-year anniversary of Christopher Kapessa's death. Please share a post honouring his memory today. Going forward, they want to increase debate around the Free Siyanda Mngaza campaign and have been supporting Siyanda's family and the monitoring group, publishing her story, and encouraging people to sign petitions. Likewise, if anyone does want to, Siyanda's mom has asked for people to support her with birthday messages. BLM Cardiff do plan on holding more demonstrations in future but are looking on educating and showing people the history of why these movements are needed. Their actions will be something outside of a typical protest. For instance, using social media. "Our movement is for people by people. Our movement is led by young people so should use those platforms frequented by young people." BLM Cardiff is on Facebook and Instagram, platforms they want to grow. They do hope to engage in education and work with schools. Also to educate via podcast and share stories like that of Siyanda and Christopher Kapessa as many people in Wales do not many know about them.

- Email: [blmcardiff@gmail.com](mailto:blmcardiff@gmail.com)
- Instagram [blm\\_cardiff](https://www.instagram.com/blm_cardiff)
- BLM Cardiff Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/blacklivesmattercardiff/>
- Free Siyanda: <http://freesiyanda.com/>
- Justice for Christopher Kapessa: <https://www.facebook.com/JusticeForChristopherKapessa/><https://www.facebook.com/JusticeForChristopherKapessa/>
- Justice 4 Shukri Abdi: <https://www.change.org/p/manchester-police-justice-for-shukri-abdi>

**Hilary Brown, Barry** – She is so happy to see so many young people out there mobilising. Her twelve-year-old granddaughter already considers herself a seasoned activist and people like Luis and Sabrina speak to her granddaughter in her language. She has been happy seeing people bring their children to protests. Activism is a safe space for young people and children should be involved. Recently, there was a big memorial event for Christopher Kapessa in Barry and many people were there. Hilary was incensed that Barry council initially refused to light up the city hall in recognition of Black Lives Matter; they have since had to buckle to pressure to light up the building. Hilary notes, "We had to tolerate tokenism for a long time. That is no longer allowed. When we are employed, we are employed as one person, so for instance you [Nas] at the museum, creating all that change would be on your shoulders. No more." We want a curriculum of change for the young. And it's not Black history; It's shared history, and its world history. People have been talking

about this for a long time. And now this time - that tragic George Floyd death – because of today’s technology, we saw that almost as it was happening. There has never been such a global moment. “We cannot let this moment not turn into a movement.” Thanks to EYST for recognising it was necessary to bring all these young people together. Hilary would like to see the Wales campaigns (such as Christopher Kapessa and Siyanda) shown at forefront of movement in Wales. Hilary has been involved in the fight for justice for Christopher Kapessa and his family, a young Black boy pushed into a river. The Crown Prosecution Service agreed the act of the White child who pushed him was criminal, but decided it is not in the public interest to prosecute. Christopher’s family has appealed and awaits a decision. The failure of police to recognise young people as victims of crime and then to criminalise them – that is systemic racism in the police. But it’s not just about police. It’s also about the crown prosecution system and all parts of the criminal and civil justice system. It’s not just about crime, but also about family courts – for instance so many Black parents who have had children placed into foster care or adoption into White families. Thank you for creating this space for lots of young to come together and ensure that everybody knows everybody now, so keep connecting.

*The group held a moment of silence in honour of the memory of Christopher Kapessa.*

**Riah Andrews, Llangollen** – Is here representing Llangollen and is a teacher in Llangollen. When it was posted that there would be a peaceful vigil in Llangollen, she was disgusted and shocked by opposition from people of Llangollen. It took her a couple of days to sit back and say, “As a teacher in that town and one of only BAME teachers in school, they are happy for me to deliver education to their students, but not as a Black woman.” Riah also faced extreme opposition when she posted a kneel for George Floyd. She was questioned why they should do something that is related to America. Its small town in which people are not open or willing to see anything around them. Because it is a predominantly white town, they don’t want to see any BAME people represented. As teacher, she is somewhat lucky to be able to be in education. On 8<sup>th</sup> July, officials are publishing the new draft of the curriculum and we are hoping BAME representation will be in there. Riah is lucky to have a supportive department and to have a few colleague teachers pushing to require BAME representation in the curriculum. It’s horrible the way PSE is taught. “I’m from Luton, growing up there, and then going to schools in a smaller town, it has become obvious that if there isn’t an education there, that’s where racism is born from. From my point of view, it’s really about education and pushing that as mandatory.” It’s not acceptable to have kids asking, “Why does your hair look like that?” The younger people need to understand we don’t all look the same. Ironically, half her family are Welsh from Swansea. “It’s mental for me to think that I am the only person in school to push this forward. And it was awful with Llangollen protest to think people would see me as the angry black woman. I’m grateful that this has become such a big moment; I’m grateful not to have to be the only one pushing it.” With the new curriculum coming in, it is important that representation of racial diversity comes in every subject and not just PSE or RE.

**Sean Suter, Neath Port Talbot** – Sean from NPT is 18 and has just finished his A levels. The lack of diversity in the curriculum is eye opening. He is about to do a degree in English Literature and hasn't read a single Black author in 7 years of school. And he has only learned about German or British history. As a young person, he thinks that target young people is the way forward and the main way to do that is education. Diversity in education decreases alienation. People feel they aren't involved. As a young leader, one of best ways to spread that is through social media. It takes 30 seconds for a quote or single educational piece to reach 1,000s of people. Every little helps. Hopefully WG can transform the way education is taught. He has been to school in Brecon and other rural areas. They are worst for lack of diversity in education as sheltered communities. He organised an event with a few hundred people showing up in NPT.

**Cloe Cherney, Haverfordwest** – She is from a predominantly rural area goes to university in Brighton. Racism is a massive problem, especially in smaller areas of Wales. We can't let it fester. The first Haverfordwest rally had 200 attendees. There was a lot of backlash. Cloe is new to this and wants to see more change happening. It's very important that younger generations come together on this, because in older ones, racism was very embedded in those areas. In their take the knee events, they have also been doing a moment of silence for Christopher Kapessa, whom a lot of people around her area didn't know about. That's in Wales and people didn't know. It's shocking. "They don't know its not just an American issue." From take the knee success, they have had the Thomas Picton statue removed. She was taught about him in school as a hero when he was known as the butcher of Trinidad. In the community, hearing experiences of people in their town has been powerful. Especially for people coming back from university, its very frustrating that nothing is being done.

**Nimi Trevidi, Swansea** – Feels honoured to be within all these young people. "I've been fighting racism all my life. As I do more and more of these meetings, it's great to get to know you all very well. I relate to all that people have been talking about." The absolute superb BLM movement has exploded all over world. It wasn't long ago we saw growth of the far right, the EDL and Tommy Robinson. She has been involved in campaigns about stopping the far right and home office hostile environment. Nimi is from Swansea and so represents the Swansea community. She was involved in starting an asylum seeker support group back in the day. You can see it coming through in young people talking today – how different it feels from previous campaigns. Not just in terms of global scales. Very much multicultural. Very mixed. But lots of older people and black and white. Even though speakers in forum have been shocked by the response from white communities, a lot of white communities have come together in this movement. Like Hilary said, we must turn this moment into a movement. And must have demands. She is interested in Andrew's discussion about the statement/manifesto. Stand Up to Racism does have demands, including decolonising education and having teachers have a lead in that. Also demanding

end to stop and search in police force. Those are concrete demands that must be taken forward. Tomorrow in Swansea, the council is debating a motion in support of Black Lives Matter and also one to get rid of statues and signs that have names associated with slavery. It is her understanding that the sign on Picton Arcade has been removed already. That is a concrete change that is coming. Following this event there is a rally in Swansea talk about that. Tomorrow SUTR has a rally with a host of speakers. And on Friday there is another SUTR national meeting with Dianne Abbott and Jesse Jackson.

**Sahar Al-Faifi, Cardiff** – Wants to emphasise the importance of transferring the nature of BLM from the virtual to the real world. Young People are great at utilising social media to raise awareness about BLM, but we need to organise people and money on the ground at grassroots level to make sure tangible and systemic change happens. Her fear is in few months' time no one will remember BLM and all will remain status quo. There are several political motions at the moment. Welsh Labour and Plaid Cymru are putting motions to make teaching of Black history mandatory. We also need to empower our young people to have conversations and politicians and lobby politicians. What we saw in America is happening relatively here and in other places in world. We need to talk about Islamophobia in an institutional sense, rather than reduce it to mere verbal or physical abuse.

**Recap of speaker themes and transition to discussion from Rocio Cifuentes** – Main themes referenced from speakers include the importance of education and representation in education; importance of young people in this movement; frustration that this must be time of genuine change and we can't stop pressing; we need to move from talking about black history to shared history; recognise the power of movement and how many support it but there is opposition and how we manage that moving forward.

*Following are key discussion points.*

### **Congratulations and praise for young people in their activism**

- A few seasoned activists spoke of the need to need to nurture and teach them. There will be frustrations, but we need to support them to keep it going strong.
- Chat comment: "It was a privilege to have been at the BLM march in Newport - seeing the way it was so inclusive - not just people of all backgrounds and abilities but keeping the authorities involved as partners and the community social distancing - it was so effective that it only warranted 20 seconds on BBC Wales! This has created an inspiring platform for the future."
- Chat comment: We need to action change for a brighter future for young people. Been really encouraging to see the support for young people in this conversation as well.

- Chat comment: I fear there is a brain drain in Wales as many aspiring young people who are getting better opportunities outside of the principality.

## **Education**

- Proposed curriculum for Wales: <https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales>
- Chat comment: Many teachers are likely to be uncomfortable about teaching Black history.
- Chat comment: We must enable teachers to start from where they are and foster the trust to take them along with us.
- Chat comment: Education is needed at FE and HE level too and as part of teacher training.
- Chat comment: Young people from BAME background are not confident to speak up about their roots because it is not the norm in schools or not much talked about.
- Chat comment: There are so many assumptions about difference to be challenged. Pushing this forward often results in cries of there's a 'chip on your shoulder' mentality.
- Chat comment: I have had massive racism here in Mid wales from teachers in school
- One person in the chat recounted her son's experience of racist bullying in school and laments knowing current pupils who are experiencing same 30 years on.
- Chat comment: Schools do not care at all about race equality BECAUSE it highlights their shortfalls.
- Chat comment: My thoughts are that elements of Black History and 'multi-cultural' education can be embedded in the existing curriculum by telling the WHOLE story not just the bits that emphasise UK/European 'success'.

## **Representation in Media**

- There has been much discussion today about representation in education, but we can do to address representation in media and what can we do about it on larger scale?

- Young people must go into media. A lack of diversity in media contributes to lack of representation. “We are missing out by not being there.”
- Engage media organisations. Lobby them by speaking to them and sending emails, especially now.
- At the national museum, they are talking about decolonising the whole museum. “Young people: you are very powerful. And museum is looking to hear your voices. Take ownership of creating spaces in museums.”
- Chat comment: ITV Wales always looking for BAME young people to undergo media training so they can have right skills and confidence to respond
- One young person present will be on TV news night reflecting on the curriculum, why its so important and what schools could do more of to tackle inequities of present.

### **Representation in Elected Political Seats and Public Boards**

- We shouldn’t keep focus solely in media. There is a huge underrepresentation of Black people in every strata of society. We should encourage young people to get themselves elected and get involved in shadowing and mentoring schemes.
- EYST Wales and WEN Wales have mentoring programmes, called “Routes to Public Life.” The applications for EYST’s 3<sup>rd</sup> round will be opening shortly. Email [emily@eyst.org.uk](mailto:emily@eyst.org.uk)
- Counsellor Dhanesha Patel, a Cabinet member in Bridgend Council, is inspired by today’s conversation. Much of the time, in local govt, one spends a lot of energy reacting and BLM has been proactive movement. “We need to be more proactive in local got about highlight positives rather than just reacting to negatives.” Because of lockdown, the council didn’t promote BLM as much as they could.
- Chat note: In terms of representation at board level, your CVC (community voluntary council) should be able to assist you to identify opportunities and may well offer training in being a board member / trustee. Especially if you are in Cardiff / Swansea/ Wrexham there are specific project officers to support you.
- Gower College is currently looking for Governors <https://www.scvs.org.uk/gowercoll-governors-jun20> and National Botanic Garden of Wales is currently looking for Trustees

- Gwent Police are looking for new members for the Independent Advisory Group. Great opportunity to have a voice and shape decisions.  
<https://www.gwent.police.uk/en/about-us/partnerships/independent-advisory-group-iag/>

### **Institutional racism and change implementation tactics**

- Issues people face here in the UK are entrenched institutional racism. It is a bit of a double-edged sword. We are encouraging people to get involved in politics and media and push way forward, but institutional racism makes it hard to get your foot in door and change the status quo. These movements are excellent but its not just about settling. There is something invisible and intangible out there that needs to be dealt with. Just looking at statistics of underrepresentation of BAME people in various strata shows inequality in our society. One forum participant works at a school that caters for majority BAME population with 700 pupils but there are maximum 5 BAME teachers out of 160. Most of the White teachers will know little about deprived or BAME background. There are a few issues about how we effectively deal with reforms of educational system and implementation of those reforms and also how to keep plugging away institutional racism.

### **Rural Wales**

- Several chat comments referenced a prevalence of racism in rural and mid Wales both in general and in schools in particular.
- Some had also experienced backlash in relation to BLM and Take the Knee protests organised in rural and mid Wales.
- Even if changes are made nationally, rural Wales sees its self as separate- as it's isolated- so we need to make sure training and education is done on the ground level too- and that the rules and changes are implemented and that racism is challenged effectively.

### **Mental Health**

- This movement has taken its toll on individuals who are directly affected, and it is important to protect our mental health and that there is support for that.
- Chat question: What do speakers think mental health services can do to help people address their trauma of racism and enable people to get the help they need? The

emotional pain of racism is a great driving force for change, but people also need to feel safe discuss their own trauma?

- Mental Health in schools relating to curriculum: Emotional support essential when teaching anti-racism and roots of racism. If a minority in a school being taught about these issues of racism and anti-racism and colonial history; it can focus attention on the individual.
- If we teach about British empire and ugly side of it, which we must, there needs to be more emotional support for pupils. One family member of holocaust survivors remembers her pain when family taught about the Holocaust in school.

### **Concrete demands & manifestos**

- There is broad agreement that concrete demands must emerge to keep the momentum going and turn energy to change. There is much excitement to see the manifesto that Andrew mentioned in his speech.
- RAW has also just released a manifesto with 52 recommendations for change.: <https://racealliance.wales/manifesto-launch/>
- It's a good thing to have a plethora of arms and voices presenting demands for change. "Our strength is in our diversity."

### **EYST closed by requesting participants to evaluate the forum with comments in chat:**

- Really useful discussions and excellent reflections by speakers and attendees
- Great session, inspiring guest speakers!
- So sorry I couldn't make the first hour. Even just coming to this last 30 minutes this seems like an excellent meeting with loads of good ideas.
- very useful for collating and sharing ideas for a more concrete vision of change and reform
- Thank you Esyt.. Amazing and inspiring discussion.. Please keep it up
- Useful platform to understand what's going on in Wales
- This is my first forum of this kind. I have found it very inspiring and encouraging, as anti-racism can often feel like banging your head against a brick wall
- We want more platforms like this.. Diolch yn fawr

- Great forum, excellent speeches and work by young people. This is where plans and actions are developed and taken forward. Thank you all
- This forum has been excellent! Well done to everyone involved in this, especially the young people who are so passionate and proactive. Right now seems the chance and change that we as older Black people have been fighting for over years and years. Now is our time!
- This meeting was very useful. It brings together people with a commitment to effect change.
- Thank you EYST for creating a safe platform for these discussion to take place, sharing and allowing people to move the cause forward.
- Would be brilliant if you could provide contact information of speakers, or the organisations to all participants so you can keep upto date with ongoing work
- Thanks EYST for organising this. All contributions have been great and it is about carrying on this movement and fight for real changes.
- Would it be possible to pull together a list of the people involved in this conversation, their contact details and any organisations/ movements they are involved with. Also links to the things discussed?
- So proud of all the young people here 🎓💪 keep going
- Really inspiring and great speakers, so brilliant to see so many people here, thanks so much for organising and facilitating this sharing of thoughts
- Great contributions from all the speakers and thanks for organising EYST. I think changes to the school curriculum is essential.
- Just wanted to say this is really inspiring!
- Great forum and loved how most of the speakers are young people! Well done everyone. Let's keep it moving!
- Great meeting-
- Can EYST facilitate more of these forums to allow further discussion of ideas and strategy to tackle inequalities 2. Allow participants to receive speakers/organisation contact information
- Thank you everybody for listening
- Thank you. Brilliant!
- Thank you for a great forum
- Well done Rocio and everyone
- Thank you EYST for today

- Another fantastic forum, very insightful
- thank you!
- Thank you!
- thank you so much EYST!
- Thank you everyone
- Thank you!
- Thank you!
- thanks so much