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I belong, I feel safe, I feel brave: ASPIRE to create inclusive cultures for Black and Black (mixed) heritage students

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ASPIRE project lead

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Inclusive Learning Communities (ILC) project co-ordinator,

ASPIRE Ambassador

What are we going to cover?

- What is an inclusive (learning) culture?
- A case study: ASPIRE to create an inclusive culture for Black and Black (heritage) people
- Yolande's story
- Challenges of creating Brave space
- Community cultural wealth – a celebration
- Impact of Brave space (My chocolate Brunch)
- 3 Key take-aways

Inclusive Culture (Learning context)

"An inclusive learning community offers **safe spaces of learning** for all members of different backgrounds and cultures. All members (staff & students) are **cherished, valued and celebrated** for who they are i.e., their (expressed) authentic self. It is a community that offers **equality of opportunity** in recognising the different needs of the diverse members of its community. The rich cultural experiences and diverse identities of its members are embraced to form **collective community wealth**, that is valued by all. All members are supported and work together through their learning journeys in order to better prepared for an increasingly diverse and complex future work environment. Inclusivity is experienced in campus life, in the curriculum, in societies & communities of practice, fostering a **sense of belonging** for all members." (Ugiagbe-Green, 2021)

Manchester Metropolitan University

Office for Students/Research England funded 4-year research project

Dr. Iwi Ugiagbe-Green

Reader (Learning & Teaching) | Researcher: Employability, Race & Education |...

2w •

I am delighted to announce that I will be collaborating with my lovely colleague at Sheffield Hallam Dr Ifedapo Francis Awolowo PhD,PGD,MRes,MSc,BSc, FHEA, CPA, FAIA, CFE to deliver a collaborative programme I designed as par ...see more

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Science & Environment

Universities to combat race bias in research

By Pallab Ghosh
Science correspondent

24 November

ASPIRE PROJECT TEAM

ASPIRE Programme lead:

Dr Iwi Ugiagbe-Green
(Reader, Manchester Metropolitan University)

ASPIRE Programme Co- Lead

Dr Francis Awolowo
(Senior Lecturer and MSc Programme Leader, PhD supervisor)
Sheffield Hallam University

Evaluation lead: Dr Hannah Griffin-James Quantitative and Qualitative Researcher | Large Survey Specialist | Science Education Expert | Psychology Teacher | Data Analyst

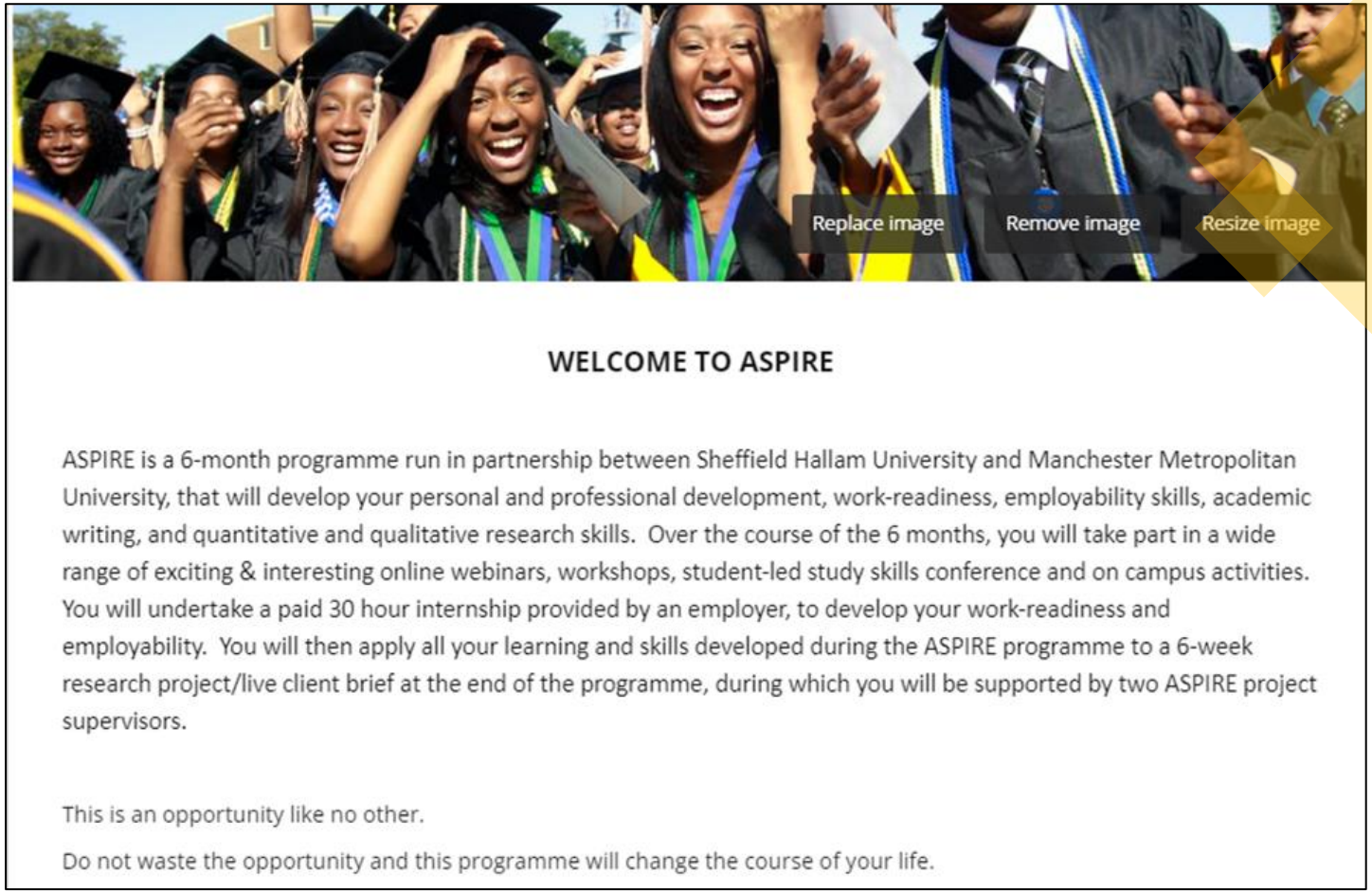
ASPIRE Patrons

Alison Lowe
Deputy Mayor – West Yorkshire (Policing & Crime)

Professor Charles Egbu
Vice Chancellor, Leeds Trinity University

ASPIRE values – I feel safe

- **A**lways respecting others
- **S**afe learning spaces
- **P**hysical and psychological health and well-being
- **I**nclusive community – celebrating and valuing difference
- **R**each your potential
- **E**veryone matters



Safety

Collective ownership in boundary setting
Periodic reminders and reference to our ASPIRE programme values
Embedded health and well-being support (talking therapies, yoga, mindfulness)
Personalised learning (NO mandatory ASSESSMENT) and coaching – micro credentials for completion of learning activities

ASPIRE is much more than a programme of 'Research Excellence' – although this is an important and integral part of the programme. ASPIRE seeks to develop life wide skills – academic, personal & professional skills – so that you can achieve your personal best. It is a programme that seeks to provide scholars from all walks of life (students, graduates, alumni, employed, unemployed, switching careers etc) opportunities that are usually difficult to access – these opportunities are designed for you – with your career goals and life wide aspirations in mind – we are a COMMUNITY

Contextual Factors

Mis-information (Black and Black heritage students are over-represented in HE)

Leading routes report– identified degree awarding gaps as contributing to pipeline issues with doctoral level study

Aspiration is not an issue – Rhetoric is 'deficit modelling' – but then get through the system and positioning is 'Black excellence' – normalise our value

Transition issues impact on everyone – gaps in knowledge and experience

Need enhanced development of academic skills, study skills

Interventions

Work with supervisors; critical whiteness, positionality, racialised experiences

Bridging the awarding gap divide – by using compassionate pedagogy to centre Black people in the teaching & learning experience

Celebrating our achievements, understanding where development is needed – providing safe, spaces of reflection and collective understanding of how to effectively navigate selection processes

Development of technical skills - personal & professional development, academic writing, research skills

Webinar delivered by skills team (online – themed to strengths based work readiness mapping)
Student led conference with themes

Mechanisms

One to one coaching

Co-creation of learning e.g. student led conference

Talk about race forums

Journal clubs

Showcasing the work of ASPIRE scholars in a showcase event

Community building through networks & partnerships

Workshops, webinars

Coffee mornings, networking events, business simulation game

Building confidence & resilience – but also educating others of what being marginalised in certain spaces looks like

Quantitative data research analysis sessions with Q Step centre

Positioning to help you with the transition to doctoral level (L8) writing –

Focus on what it is that you need

All artefacts collected, work readiness/skills audit, simulations, data workshops, external events to be recorded in an e-portfolio - with a reflection of the development of students' personal and professional skills

Outcomes

Digital stories of achievement and lived experience – celebratory, inspiring

Effective articulation of your work readiness – better understanding of how to navigate systems and structures

Understand your self-efficacy and positioning – plan for your career, know how to get there, better navigation of selection processes

Development of human, employment, social, and human capital

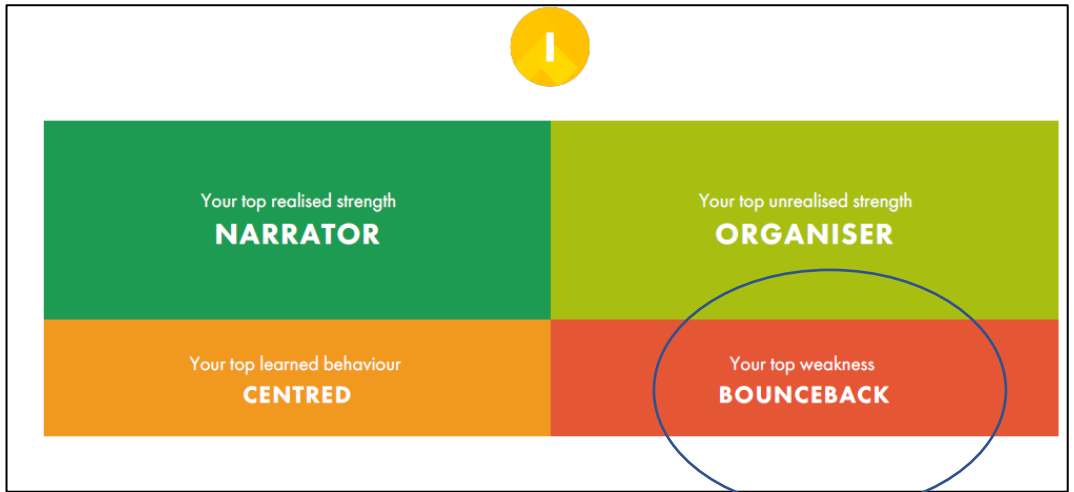
Raise awareness of Black heritage students' experiences and achievements through the sector e.g. conferences, showcase event

Tangible e-portfolio – artefacts for the digital story, network building – connections, peers. Knowledge of opportunities,. Evidence to support applications – career & study. Certifications (Q Step), RISE points

E-portfolio – artefacts (evidence of your work), reflections (research), validation – certifications

- ***Human*** *(External validation of technical competence – e.g. Q Step accreditation, RISE points (MMU)*
- ***Social*** *(contacts, networks, mentors, role models –Alumni, Employers, Business contacts, Professional bodies, academics*
- ***Employment*** *(ASPIRE 30 (internships), live client briefs, simulations*
- ***Cultural*** *(Networking events, Journal club, cookery club, talk about race forums)*
- ***Economic*** *(demystify opportunities – loans, scholarships, bursaries –Student Finance England)*
- ***Identity*** *(articulation of values, skills, interests, purpose, strengths)*

Ugiagbe-Green & Southall (2019)



ASPIRE Community building – I belong

Social, identity and cultural capital

- Yosso (2005) Community cultural wealth
- Strengths, capabilities, values – diversity framed as a positive and value adding
- Racial inclusion and centralised part of identity and community building
- Development of networks, personalised support, coaching

Activities with scholars (& employers)

- Centre (racial) identity of scholars
- Talk about race forums
- Chat Black podcasts
- Relatable role models – mentors, coaches, academics, workshop facilitators
- Inclusive employment workshops – acknowledgement of systemic racism – bounce-forward
- Life coaching, talking therapies, health & well-being

Yolande’s story

Brave space in creating inclusive cultures

Arao and Clemens (2006), “own your intentions and your impact”

- What are your intentions?
- Differing levels of ‘psychological safety’
- Be comfortable in having uncomfortable conversations
- Make yourself vulnerable (acknowledge positionality in relation to minoritisation)
- Adopt a growth mindset – unlearn behaviours, learn new ones
- Racially minoritised are experts of their own experience
- Surface your bias and be prepared to challenge yours & others values/beliefs
- Normalise conditions of controlled conflict
- Feedback to feedforward – determine your impact

Academic supervisors

- **Ubuntu workshop** (I am because we are)
- **Anti-racist training** (vulnerable, growth mindset, challenge bias)
- **Life-coaching**
- Pre & post surveys on **positionality/critical whiteness** – underpinned by Anne Lee (relationship development) and Robert Gatfield's (supervisory management style) – **racial inclusion**

- **Creating BRAVE conditions was hard –** needs constant reinforcement, forums & spaces to share informal experiences, creative connections with the scholars (e.g. cookery club)

“Black experience is not a monolith”

- Black heritage / mixed heritage
- Cultural competence – Black British experience is very different from Black international experience
- Intersectionality, colourism
- Diaspora (displacement, trauma, inter-generational wealth)
- Capitalism is racialised e.g. diaspora, socio-economic class
- Frame diversity as value adding – not something that gets in the way
- Authentically value and celebrate diversity – recognise difference

ASPIRE Digital Story – Celebration of Community cultural wealth (stop at 4min.24 – video is 7mins 11)

Brave spaces

- Be values/purpose led and intentional
- Safety is paramount – boundary setting by consensus
- Empower your Black staff – they are experts of their own experience
- Consider representation, role models, mentors
- Share lived and learned experience and perspectives
- Centre identity –frame diversity as a positive contribution to the community
- Create opportunities for talking about race, exchanging views, perspectives
- Creative connections – food is community
- Create well-being spaces for all

IMPACT

(We are looking for internship opportunities for ASPIRE30 - please contact me!)

My Chocolate Brunch

Social capital is King, and connection is his Queen; Networking is a rhythm, a dance, a step here, a step there, I come alive, shared stories and shared pains, shared dreams, and shared gains.
In this space, our culture is currency, vernacular is hailed, gestures are respected, Swahili, Igbo and Shona flow with ease ; afrobeat is a ring tone, and we serve plantain as a snack... no wait! Or is it, plantin!

Sisterhood and laughter embrace me like a warm hug on a cold night; I look around and see smiles, gaps between teeth, braids and weaves ,wigs and heels. Ideas intellectually spoken, purely and verbally. Our accents are our assets, our qualifications are our crowns, our businesses are our hustle.

Diversity not just is in our shapes but in our thoughts. Our souls have no colour, we yearn wistfully for a better future, a colourless race, where our hues are like a rainbow, a place where we stand proud, our existence and our purposes are divine.

These are my people, they share my Black future, we are our offspring's foundation. We are the shoulders they will stand on; our dreams are their future. These are my Chocolate ladies, welcome to my safe space.

3 key take-aways in using brave space to create inclusive culture

- Be authentic, vulnerable and intentional in your creation of safe space
- Accept that mistakes will be made, there will be discomfort and conflict
- Ubuntu - Centre racial inclusion and celebrate it for all!

- (Oh and PLEASE provide an internship for our fantastic ASPIRE programme!!!)

Thank You!