





BASW
The professional association for social work and social workers











Anti-racism in Social Work

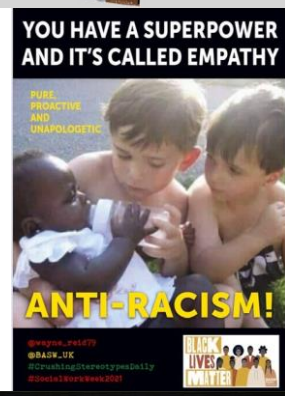
Collaborating effectively & challenging robustly

Wayne Reid

Professional Officer, Social Worker & Anti-Racism Visionary

BASW England

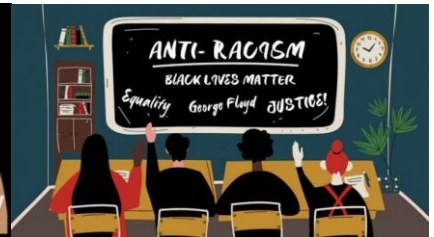
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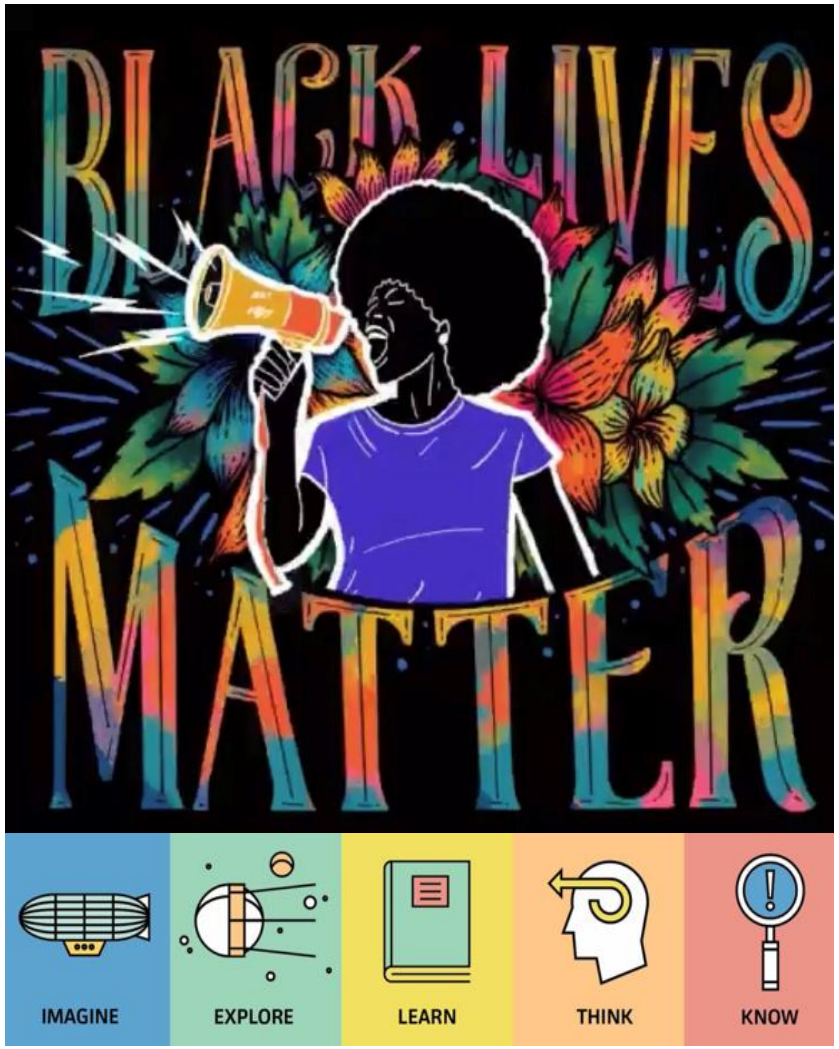




What to expect

- My Social Work background
- The British Association of Social Workers
- George Floyd's murder
- Black Lives Matter & why it's relevant to Social Work
- Barriers to anti-racism in Social Work & organisational responses
- Implementing anti-racism reforms in Social Work
- Questions?

*NO NEED TO TAKE NOTES



My Social Work background



- **Professional Officer, Social Worker & Anti-racism Visionary** *(BASW)*
- **Supervising Social Worker** *(private fostering Social Work)*
- **Young Person's Advisor** *(supporting care leavers)*
- **Duty & Assessment Officer** *(child protection)*
- **Adult Mental Health** *(community support / intervention)*
- **Youth Offending Service** *(court work and community intervention)*
- **Probation Services Officer** *(intensive supervision & surveillance)*
- **Placements Officer** *(private fostering administration)*

The British Association of Social Workers (BASW)

BASW
The professional association for social work and social workers

- BASW is the professional association for Social Workers in the UK (established in 1970).
- We are a member-led organisation which promotes Social Work, the interests of those working within the profession and people who use services.
- We have over 21,000 members and we have teams in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.
- We are the strong independent voice of Social Work and Social Workers.

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The BASW mandate

- **Strong** – We build strength and unity through vision and purpose, increasing our membership, developing our services, and influencing across the nations of the UK, in Europe and globally.

- **Independent** – We maintain our independence from governments and employers in order to be able to act in the best interests of the profession and Social Work professionals.

- **Voice** – We ensure a strong and positive voice in the media, with governments and working with their agencies, in order to speak up for Social Work and Social Workers, for people who use services. We campaign and lobby in order to have the best possible influence on policy, legislation and practice.

- **Social work** – We promote ownership of Social Work values, ethics, knowledge, education and practice. We defend, develop and strengthen Social Work as a unique profession rooted in social justice and respect for human dignity and worth.

- **Social workers** – We provide professional advice, support for practice, training and development opportunities. We also represent and defend Social Workers individually and collectively.

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Professional Support Service













What we do for Social Work & Social Workers



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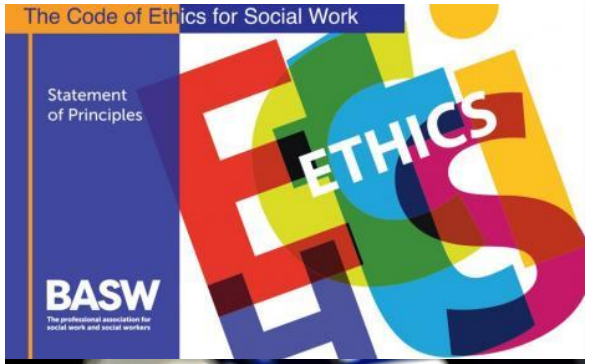






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- Code of Ethics for Social Work
- The Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF)
- Collaboration with employers, education providers, service-user groups and other stakeholders
- Specialist national groups (children & families; adults; mental health; criminal justice; students and NQSW's and professional development)
- An established network of BASW branches nationwide
- Events, conferences & webinars
- Policy & research activities
- Liaison with the regulator Social Work England







BASW quick weblinks

- Promo video
- Membership types are listed here
- BASW events webpage
- Join BASW online here

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- Parliamentary work with MP's and civil servants
- Training, CPD and career development
- Social Workers' Union (trade union advice and representation)
- National consultation responses, campaigns and lobbying activities
- Black & Ethnic Minority Professionals Symposium (BPS)
- Raising the profile of social work on various media platforms (TV, radio, print, online etc)
- Promote 'collective professional identity'





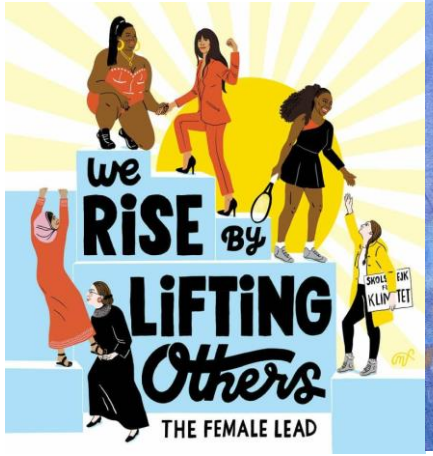




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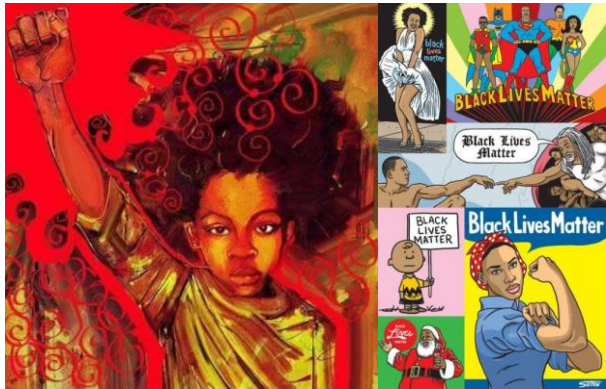


Anti-racism in Social Work

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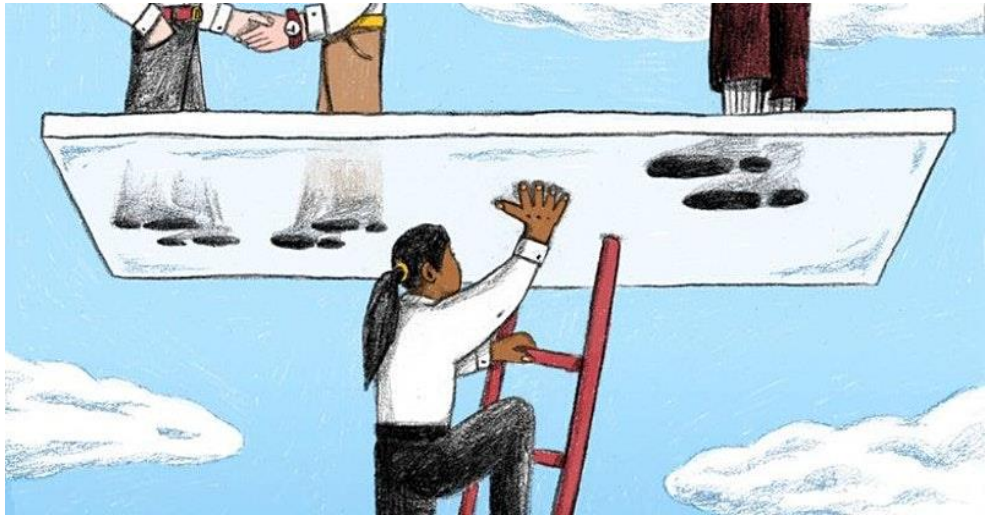


Don't talk, act.
Don't say, show.
Don't promise, prove.



My perspective on anti-racism in Social Work

- Personal and professional
- Very few black male Social Workers
- My opinions do not represent all Black and Ethnic Minority people's opinions. We are not a homogenous group.
- I refuse to be the tokenistic 'Black voice' of BASW. I'm one of many Black voices in Social Work.
- I'm not an expert in organisational development/leadership. However, I am an 'expert with lived experience' of personal and professional racism in life and in Social Work. These are purely my opinions.
- This presentation focuses on Black and Ethnic Minority Social Workers NOT service-users



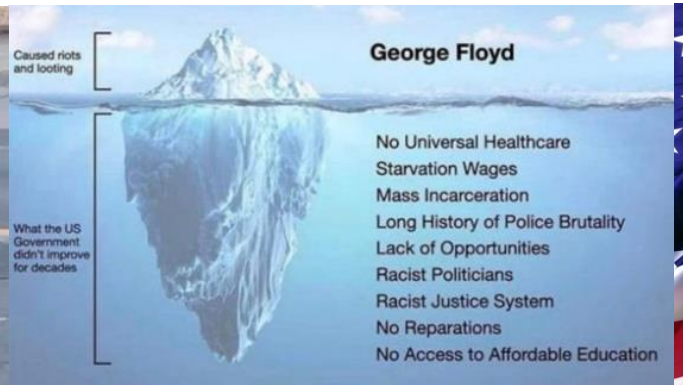


Why was George Floyd's murder such a catalyst?

George Floyd was murdered by a Police Officer and the world has seen the evidence. His murder was the latest in a long line of atrocities, brutalities and calamities endured by Black and other Ethnic Majority Communities. This has a long history. Longer than is sometimes convenient for honest acknowledgement. Some commentators refer to George's 'death', which is a dilution of what occurred – he was brutally murdered.

The context to George's murder is emotive and cumulative: the Amy Cooper 'race grenade'; endless examples of police brutality cases in the US (and UK); modern-day systems of oppression and the historic and ongoing suppression of the effects of slavery and colonialism in mainstream education. These factors can accumulate and create an acute sense of anger and rage. These emotions sometimes manifest into civil disorder and protests. However, anarchic extremists are known to infiltrate protests and covertly fuel acts of looting and violence, which are used to discredit legitimate protesters. This detracts from the *causal factors* that trigger protests. Interestingly, little is reported about the longstanding looting of Africa's natural resources…









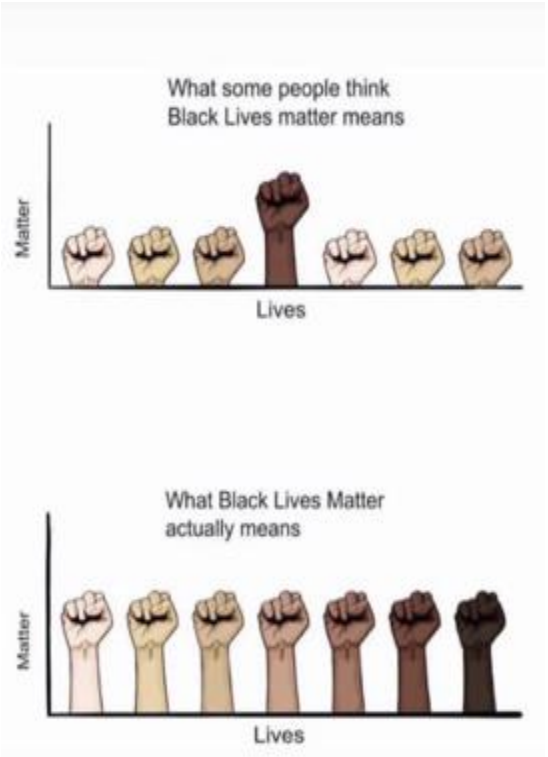
#blacklivesmatter

- Black Lives Matter (BLM) is a global movement demanding for Black lives to be valued equal to White lives. There is a long and enduring history of this not being the case.

- The retort of ‘White’ or ‘all lives matter’ in response to BLM is not comparable or relevant. This is like asking: “What about colon cancer?” during a discussion about breast cancer or advising a bereaved mother that ‘all lives matter’ at her child’s funeral. “Save the whales” does not mean other sea life is unimportant.

- White lives have always mattered. So, to keep proclaiming ‘White lives matter’ adds excessive value to them, tilting us further towards white supremacy.

BLM has its critics, but it is unclear why a movement that promotes equality is demonised by some people who vehemently claim they are not ‘a’ racist and advocate for freedom of speech.



2020 chronology

Since George's Floyd's killing and the resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement, BASW has been at the forefront of anti-racist Social Work activism. We have championed anti-racism in Social Work on a scale unrivalled by any other organisation within the profession.

May 2020

- The Amy Cooper 'race grenade' goes viral on Twitter
- The George Floyd murder goes viral on Twitter

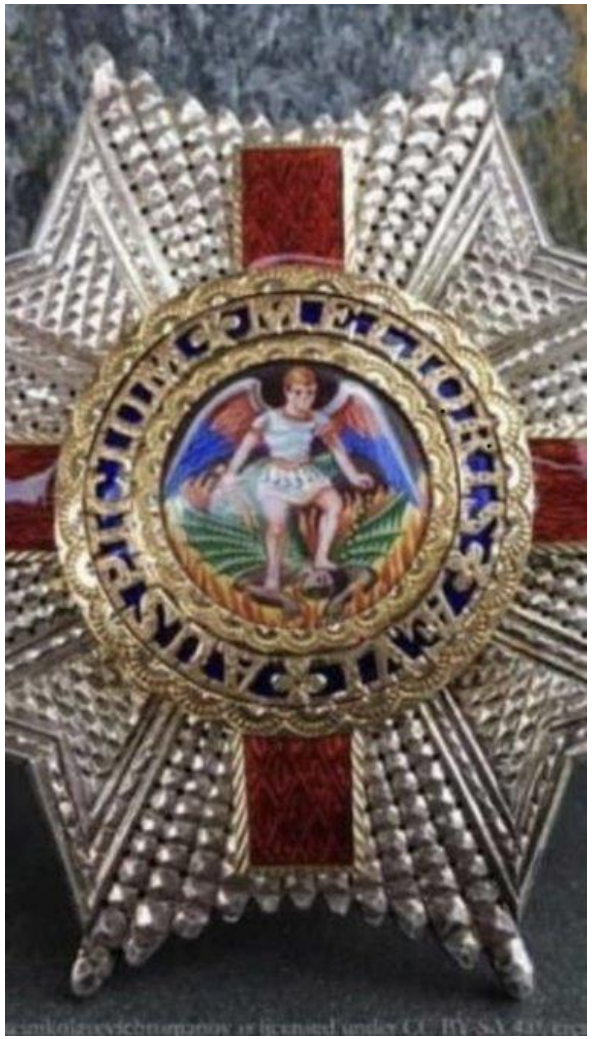
June 2020

- WR tweets: "It's very revealing to observe the indifference, silence and tokenism from some Social Work leaders, prominent Social Workers and Social Work organisations during these times of serious racial violations... I see you... We all see you…"
- WR anti-racism and #blacklivesmatter Twitter campaign commences
- BASW issues a statement condemning the racist murder of George Floyd
- BASW condemned all forms of racism on Twitter
- Global #Blacklivesmatter protests (including many peaceful #BLM protests in the UK)
- 'Counter-protests' by far-right groups and major clashes with Police
- BASW EDI Advisory Group issues a position statement
- Counter protests in the UK from far-right groups
- BASW supports campaign for black person's statue in Bristol



Chronology (continued)

- WR Community Care article: *'Black Lives Matter: Social Work must respond with action – not platitudes'*
- WR 'Revolution' poem
- The KCMG campaign and BASW open letter to the Queen
- How to promote an anti-racist culture in Social Work (online article)
- Podcast interviews with: David Niven; BASW NI; Jason Liosatos & Social Work Connect
- BASW Black & Ethnic Minority Professionals Symposium (BPS)
- BASW Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Advisory Group
- Black & Ethnic Minority Social Workers anthology - OUTLANDERS
- Anti-racism presentations, webinars & workshops
- View the BASW anti-racism in Social Work portfolio



Current position

The KCMG campaign is ongoing. We have received an acknowledgement from Buckingham Palace and our letter has been redirected to the Cabinet office. However, in a bizarre twist, the original tweet (which went viral) has now been deleted from Twitter. We have asked Twitter to explain this, but no response has been received. We know silence on racism is complicity with the oppressors. Silence can also be construed as blatant racism in some scenarios. It seems when our oppressors choose not to attack us, the wall of silence is their other favoured tactic. Open dialogue has remained a prominent source of conflict resolution for good reason – it works! It helps to positively undermine any covert or overt power imbalance.

BASW England will continue to educate, equip and empower Social Workers of colour and allies. As an organisation, we realise that we are not immune to the perils of white supremacy and 'whiteness'. However, BASW has shown a willingness to address and tackle these issues internally and within the profession more broadly. We will consider all anti-racist proposals from partnership organisations and specialist collaborators that will potentially benefit Social Work.

Examples of my activism on anti-racism in Social Work

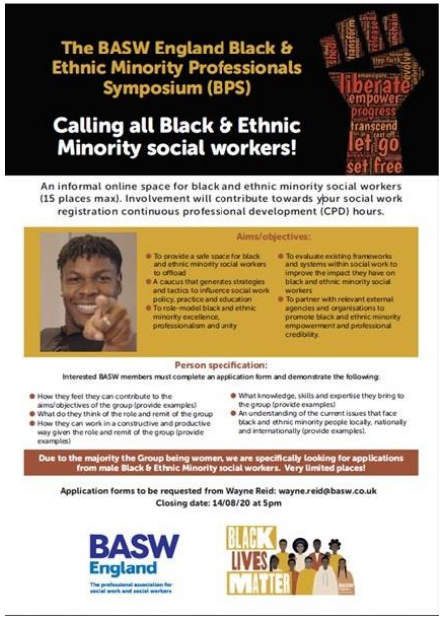
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Anthology project



Allyship talk show



The BASW England Black & Ethnic Minority Professionals Symposium (BPS)



Published articles and review of Black Lives Rising



Several articles & blogs published by major Social Work outlets



An event with Gurnam Singh & Kish Bhatti-Sinclair



Various online events, interviews, podcasts & webinars

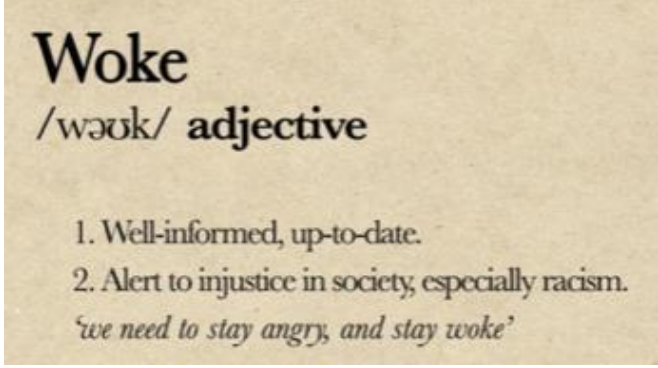
The Wake-up Show

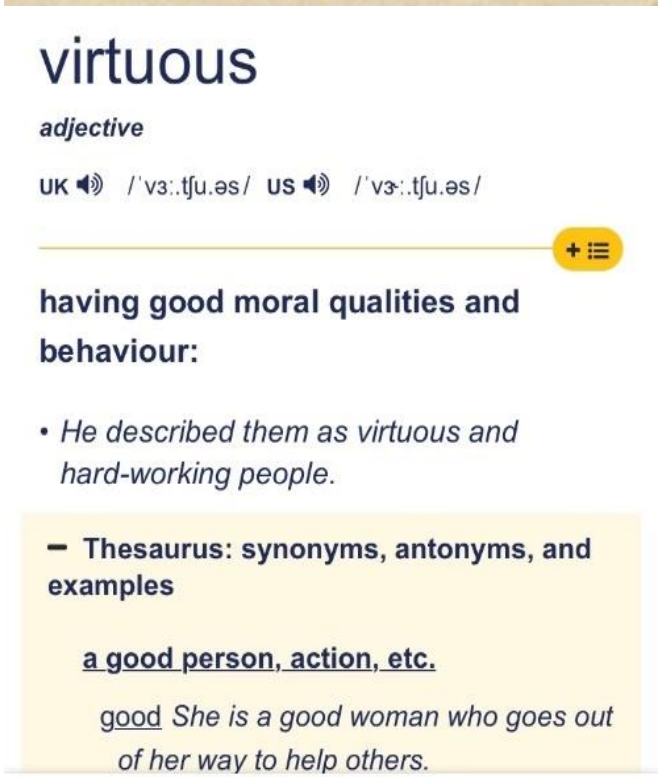
There is a big difference between being anti-racist and not wanting to be seen as ‘a’ racist. People are sometimes more scared of being *labelled* as racist, than they are of actually *being* racist.

An individual (or organisation) that is anti-racist is much more likely to recognise why they themselves are *potentially* racist; understand how they have been *socialised* to be inherently racist and identify the *benefits* they receive from the existing racist structures. Those embracing macho ‘anti-woke’ and ‘politically incorrect’ descriptors as laudable (even a ‘badge of honour’), seem unable (or unwilling) to view introspection, self-reflection or self-awareness as supreme personal qualities. ‘White psychosis’ (as described by Kehinde Andrews) is expressed in strange ways.

It’s a damning indictment on society, when to be described as 'woke', or to be a 'do-gooder' or in any way ‘virtuous’ is considered derisory. This defies my sense of logic and is ‘selective outrage’ to me. Personally, I think it’s an important quality to want to “do good” for my fellow human beings and strengthen our societal interdependence.

I challenge ‘anti-woke’ people to actually define the word ‘woke’. Many of their responses are laced with absurdities. Some will cite the Commonwealth as a victory on race relations. ‘Common’ ‘wealth’ for who? Possibly a Freudian slip in retrospect… “Ignorance, allied with power, is the most ferocious enemy [social] justice can have.” (James Baldwin)



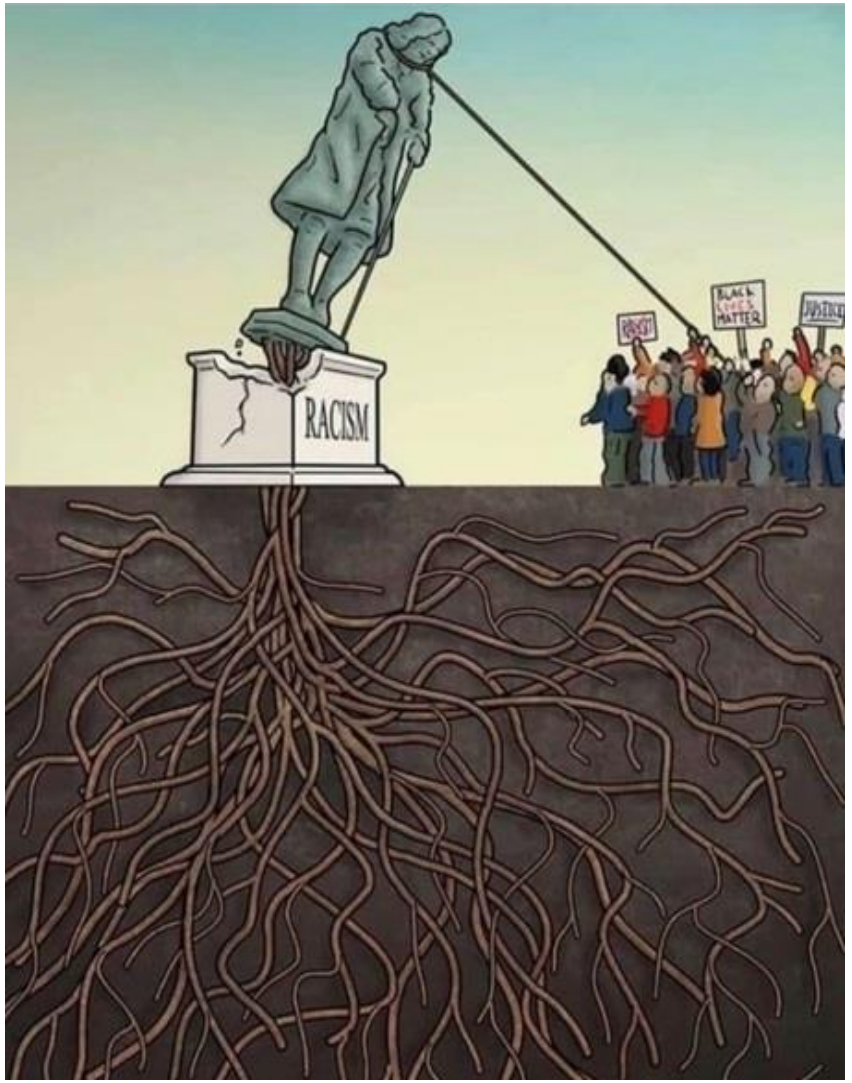


What is anti-racism?

‘Anti-racism’ is a belief that all races and ethnic groups are equal and deserving of the same opportunities. But the most important part of anti-racism is the next step, which is to do something about the existing inequality.

Anti-racism is the active dismantling of systems, privileges, and everyday practices that reinforce and normalize the contemporary dimensions of white dominance. This, of course, also involves a critical understanding of the history of ‘whiteness’.”

Ibram X. Kendi, *How to Be an Antiracist*



How is ‘anti-racism’ relevant to Social Work?

- Social Work England’s professional standards state all Social Worker’s must:

  1.5 Recognise differences across diverse communities and challenge the impact of disadvantage and discrimination on people and their families and communities

  1.6 Promote social justice, helping to confront and resolve issues of inequality and inclusion

  5.1 Not abuse, neglect, discriminate, exploit or harm anyone, or condone this by others

  6.1 Report allegations of harm and challenge and report exploitation and any dangerous, abusive or discriminatory behaviour or practice

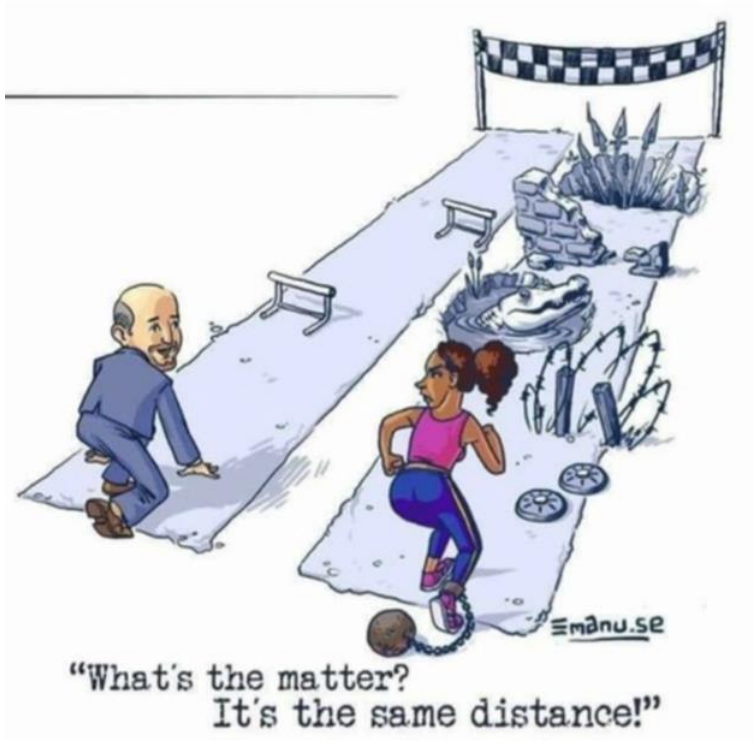
- BASW’s Code of Ethics
- The bedrock of social justice: anti-oppressive, anti-discriminatory and anti-racist practice values and ethics
- BASW’s position statements condemning George Floyd’s murder and promoting anti-racism in Social Work
- Confronting the White Elephant: White Privilege in Social Services
- ‘Cultural competence’
- Decolonising Social Work education and policy

How much of a priority is anti-racism in Social Work? Really?!

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Anti-racism in Social Work must be fully considered and dismantled through collaboration with Black and Ethnic Minority Social Workers in roles as ‘experts with (personal and professional) lived experience’.

This is the only way that Black and Ethnic Minority Social Workers’ basic needs can be properly met and their wide-ranging expertise fully utilised. Of course, this approach can only improve the experiences of Black and Ethnic Minority service-users too. It really is just a question of how much of a priority is anti-racism in Social Work?





Anti-racism… so what? Blah, blah. Yawn…

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If the news of police officers taking ‘selfies’ beside the bodies of 2 murdered black sisters; the recent far-right violent protests in London or the racist comments by Suffolk councillors do not outrage you or alert you to the fact that racism is thriving in this country right now – then you really must consider whether you have sleepwalked into being an opponent of anti-racism.

At the very least, we must be self-aware and honest (with ourselves and others) when our boredom threshold is reached. Boredom can be subliminal and counterproductive to anti-racism at every level. Everyday micro-aggressions (including ‘banter’ in the workplace) can fuel violent racist incidents.



Workplace racism (pigmentocracy vs meritocracy)

The covert, entrenched and everyday racism in the workplace sometimes indicates the lack of quality cultural diversity and multicultural education and training available (to all staff). Surprisingly, it is rarely acknowledged in Social Work that race is simply a socially constructed idea with no scientific validity - invented and refined principally to oppress POC. This has modern and everyday ramifications in the working environment.

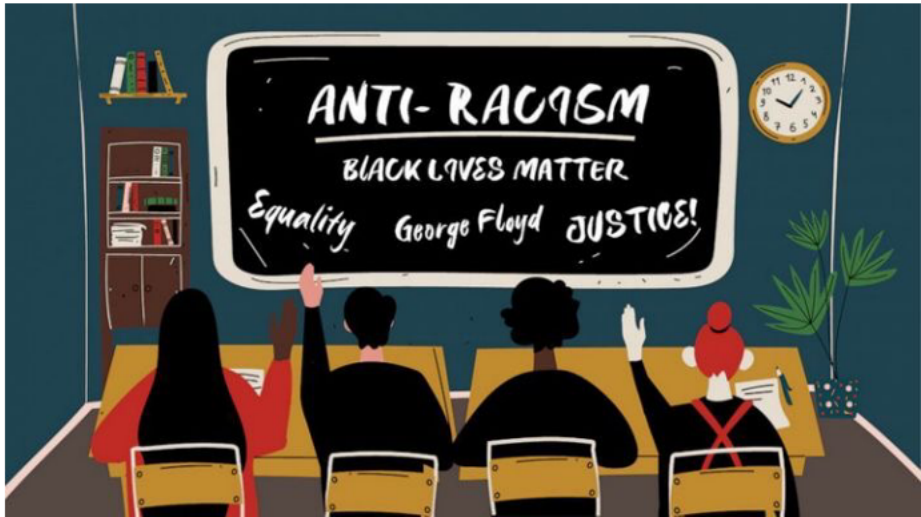
Black and Ethnic Minority practitioners have reported to the British Association of Social Workers (BASW) that Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) has clearly been prioritised/withheld on occasions for their white colleagues. Others explained they were made/ordered to visit service-users with suspected COVID-19 (with no PPE and no guidance/support), whilst white managers stayed at the office with 'their' supply of PPE and engaged in racist banter.

These perverse experiences can be impossible for victims of 'naked and slippery' everyday racism to articulate to others or reconcile internally themselves. Furthermore, these incidents are normalised and subsumed in many workplace cultures, with limited opportunities to 'professionally offload'.



Anti-Black racism from people WITHOUT colour involves…*

- X An inability to listen to Black people's problems and respond with empathy
- X An inability to take direction from Black people
- X An inability to give Black people credit
- X An inability to celebrate Black accomplishments
- X Assuming Black people are less capable/educated/intelligent
- X Conflating anti-Black racism with issues faced by people WITHOUT colour
- X Confusion when Black people are successful
- X Deliberately being condescending and/or patronising towards Black people
- X Deliberately perpetuating stereotypes about Black people
- X Downplaying and/or glossing over racism in the workplace and society
- X Knowingly appropriating Black culture
- X Knowingly enforcing anti-Black dating preferences
- X Looking for opportunities to 'tone police' and discredit Black people
- X Silence when Black people experience racism
- X Taking no action when faced with clear evidence of racism
- X Treating Black children like adults (adultification)
- X Unnecessarily trying to compete with Black people



* Not an exhaustive list

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#CrushingStereotypesDaily
#SocialWorkWeek2021

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White Supremacy	White Indifference	White Awareness	White Allyship
			
• Accepts, and in some cases promotes, theories designed to justify white dominance and racial hierarchy typically associated with 'scientific racism'. • Fear/loathing/exoticisation of the non-white other which may be overt or covert. • Characterised by the 'white gaze'. • Belief that we live in a meritocracy. • Uncritical/favourable view of empire and colonialism - the white man's burden. • Subscribes to scientific racism. • *Black underachievement is seen to be due to their dysfunctionality/pathology. • Whiteness and its proxies' function as badges of honour • White privilege is rationalised as the natural order. • Onus on black People to accept their place.	• Passionate defender of western universalism, academic freedom and the right to offend. • Belief in meritocracy but also recognises that some (deserving) disadvantaged people need help. • Characterised by a refusal to take a serious look at racism and views anti-racist initiatives as ideological endeavours linked to culture wars and political correctness. • Self-concept is based on being rational and moral, which results in avoidance of responsibility for discriminatory behaviour! • Willing to 'tolerate'/'fetishize'/'pity the 'non-white' other. • Happy to make tokenistic gestures, but total refusal to accept one's own complicity in the (re)production of racism. • Whiteness is denied, so it functions as an absent/invisible/mythical norm leaving white privilege intact. • Onus on Black People to build up their 'resilience'.	• Belief that racism is real and that it is a product of 'prejudice plus power' • Characterised by a desire to critically reflect. • Functions like a mental illness that only white people have (Katz) hence focus on 'discovering' unconscious bias and cognitive distortions. • Desire to engage with 'black issues and people, but only in limited spaces (committees, training events) • This may be as a result of feeling guilty of historic racism and/or a desire to make some amends. • White privilege is recognised and becomes a source of shame and embarrassment. • Most activity however restricted to self-development and deployment of politically correct language. • Onus on white people to overcome unconscious bias.	• Racism is a complex interaction between structural, ideological, institutional and behavioural processes, but it can be overcome. • Characterised by the desire to take responsibility for change, which is not restricted to behaviour alone. • Focus on paradigm shifts and concrete interventions • Dynamic and creative solutions through co-creation. • Rejection of deficit models and acceptance of the link between white privilege and educational outcomes. • Share power, privilege, risk and vulnerability. • Actively divesting from histories, systems and structures that reproduce racism. • Onus on white to build sustained partnerships with black people.

Note: *The term 'black' here is used to denote all those people who are positioned outside of whiteness and as a result experience racial disadvantage. The degree of racial disadvantage will vary as a result of other factors primarily associated with gender, class, ethnicity.

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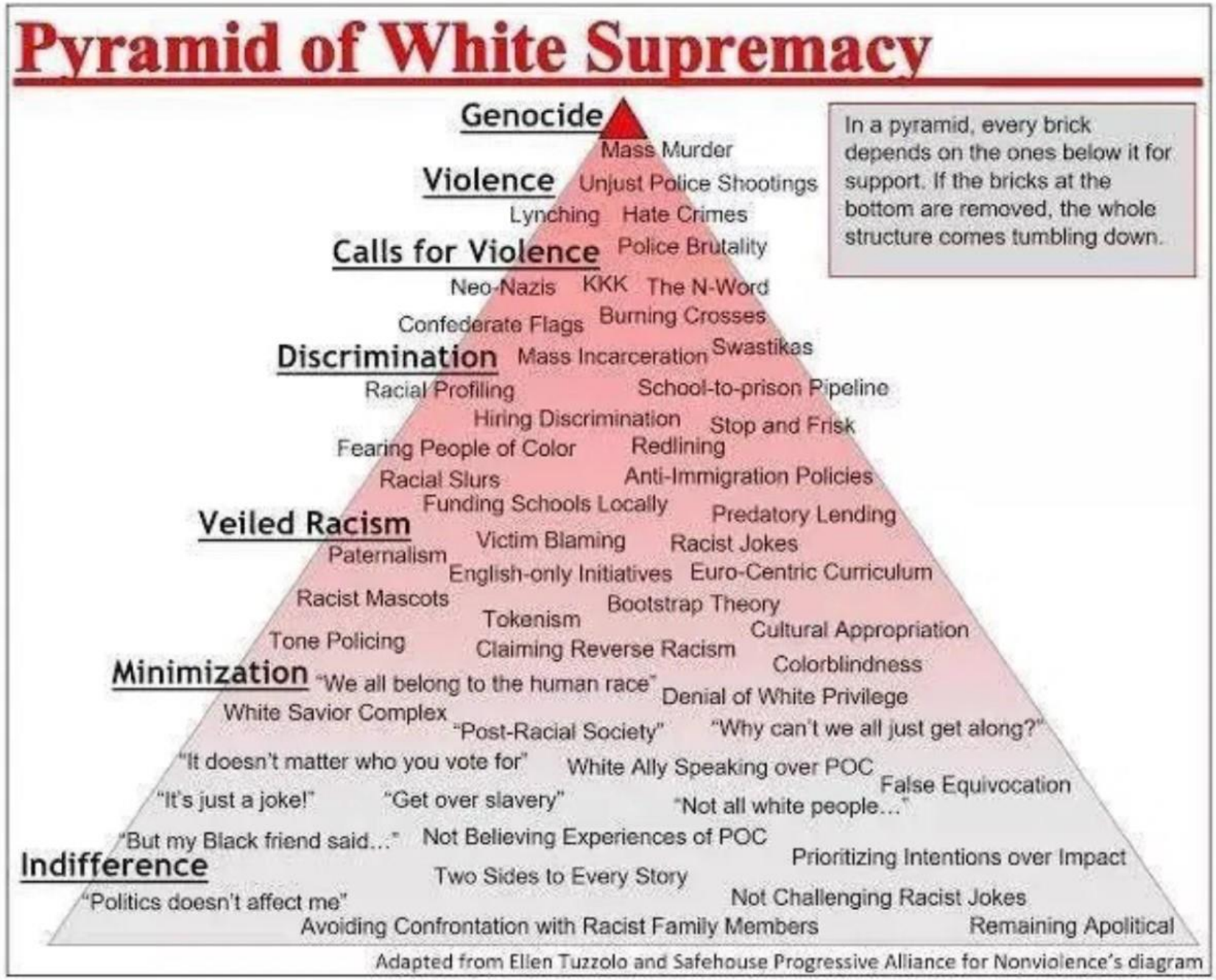
Professional responsibilities

It is imperative that Social Workers evaluate their roles and (moral and regulatory) responsibilities. Current race relations require Social Workers to be proactive and do our homework to stay contemporarily astute as allies to Black and Ethnic Minority colleagues and service-users.

Black and Ethnic Minority Social Workers cannot and should not be expected to 'fix' the racism in their workplace. However, those of us who are confident and capable enough (with the right support) can have a crucial role in educating, empowering and equipping ourselves and (potential) allies and influencers to enhance and shape anti-racism initiatives in our workplace settings.

EVERYONE has a duty to combat racism (and other forms of discrimination) in the spaces they occupy. This includes reporting racist incidents when they occur; forming like-minded alliances with peers to tackle key issues; raising awareness and making suggestions for positive reform.

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Barriers to meaningful organisational change

Before any meaningful change can be achieved, Social Work leaders must acknowledge the inherent and intrinsic nature of 'whiteness', 'White fragility', 'White privilege' and white supremacy as unconscious bias in most (if not all) institutions, structures and organisational cultures. Individual and organisational awareness is an imperative first step for Social Workers, employers and educators to address workplace racism effectively.



Performative allyship from people WITHOUT colour involves…*

- X A pretence of being anti-racist, but rarely communicating or behaving in a way which demonstrates this
- X Re-traumatising survivors of racism by asking them the same old questions and encouraging circular discussions
- X Offering solidarity/support with no intention of taking action
- X Making cringe/feeble public statements with no accountability or commitment to action
- X Employing people of colour to 'fix' racism within an organisation
- X Making all the right noises' but taking no responsibility for individual, group or organisational action
- X People WITHOUT colour using anti-racism as a vehicle to further their own agenda
- X Diluting the essence of anti-racism (euphemistically) with the language of equality, diversity and inclusion
- X Expecting survivors of racism to share their experiences, with no recognition of their trauma and no offer of remuneration
- X Organisations expecting survivors of racism to engage with tokenistic activities
- X Responding to evidence of racism with platitudes and 'toxic positivity' only
- X Telling survivors of racism what constitutes 'evidence' of racism
- X Showing support for anti-racism on social media, but taking no action in real-life
- X Making bold statements, but an unwillingness to share knowledge, power, privilege, vulnerability and risk
- X Senior leaders identifying themselves as allies, but not making any attempt to advise/support/protect survivors of racism
- X Undertaking anti-racism activities in a 'one-size fits all' or 'tick-box' approach
- X Making tokenistic gestures to nullify feelings of guilt, embarrassment and shame
- X A motivation to engage with anti-racism (but only superficially) to appear non-racist
- X Asking survivors of racism to regurgitate their experiences (via surveys, forums etc) for no real benefit
- X Committing to transformative change, but continuing to use problematic terminology such as BAME

* Not an exhaustive list



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#BPS

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THE FOUR OF DIMENSIONS RACISM



INSTITUTIONAL

Policies and practices that reinforce racist standards within a workspace or organization.

STRUCTURAL

Multiple institutions collectively upholding racist policies and practices, i.e. society.

INTERPERSONAL

Racist acts and micro-aggressions carried out from one person to another.

INTERNALIZED

The subtle and overt messages that reinforce negative beliefs and self-hatred in individuals.

Inspired by
Race Forward Trainings

Slow Factory
Foundation

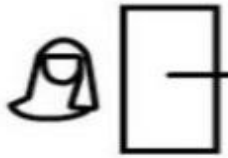
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The "Problem" Woman of Colour in the Workplace

COCo

white leadership

The Woman of Colour enters the organization





Honeymoon

- the Woman of Colour feels welcomed, needed, and happy

tokenized hire

Reality

- the Woman of Colour points out issues within the organization
- she tries to work within the organization's structure and policies
- she pushes for accountability



repetitive injury & microaggressions



Response

- the organization denies, ignores, and blames
- the responsibility of fixing the problem is placed on the Woman of Colour
- People of Colour are pitted against one another

Retaliation

- the organization decides that the woman of colour is the problem and targets her
- the organization labels the conflict as a "communication issue" or claims that she is not qualified or "not a good fit

denial of racism

target & attack



The Woman of Colour exits the organization

Adapted from "The Chronicle of the Problem Woman of Color in a Non-Profit" by the Safehouse Progressive Alliance for Nonviolence
www.coco-net.org

You can’t read yourself into activism

Anti-racism in Social Work risks being perceived as radical activism or anarchic ideology. Our social work leaders must reverse this flawed belief system. Social Work policy, practice and education needs to properly recognise and reflect that ‘race’ is a socially constructed idea with no scientific validity – invented and refined principally to oppress Black people. Race remains an unstable concept because it is superficially based on physical appearance. When race was constructed people knew very little about DNA, genetics and human origins. It is an outdated colonial invention that still permeates modern society. Intellectually and morally, as a profession and as a society, we must see beyond what was pre-determined for us centuries ago.

So, if society is built on plantations of racism, still celebrates racist history and traditions and reminds us daily of the inescapability of White supremacy, it’s not enough for Social Workers (and Social Work organisations) to be ‘colour-blind’ or ‘non-racist’. We must be PROACTIVELY anti-racist – otherwise anything else is just tiresome lip-service.

If anti-racism in Social Work does not exist for Social Workers, can it ever truly exist for service-users? Anti-racism is absolutely integral to Social Work, so when will it be given the credence it deserves? Without standing up for our defining values and ethics, what is to stop us succumbing to the pervasive and pernicious post-modern sleaze?

Dr Muna Abdi (a leading anti-racism educator) states: “The work of anti-racism is to fight racism wherever you see it… even in yourself. The struggle cannot be found in the pages of a book. You can’t read yourself into activism. Sooner or later, you’ll have to make a choice… Do what is safe or do what is right.”

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The *Pyramid* shows biased behaviors, growing in complexity from the bottom to the top. Although the behaviors at each level negatively impact individuals and groups, as one moves up the pyramid, the behaviors have more life-threatening consequences. Like a pyramid, the upper levels are supported by the lower levels. If people or institutions treat behaviors on the lower levels as being acceptable or "normal," it results in the behaviors at the next level becoming more accepted. In response to the questions of the world community about where the hate of genocide comes from, the *Pyramid of Hate* demonstrates that the hate of genocide is built upon the acceptance of behaviors described in the lower levels of the pyramid.



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3 typical responses to anti-racism from Social Work organisations

From my cultured social work experience, the responses below generally indicate an organisation's prioritisation and level of commitment (or not) to anti-racism.

1. Keep silent, keep things the same and "hope all this Black Lives Matter (BLM) 'stuff' just blows over". This kind of inaction and paralysis of fear correlates with and reinforces perceptions of 'White fragility', 'White privilege' and white supremacy for some POC. This type of organisational response usually commends staff for being resilient and deflects attention away from the essential redesign of systems that routinely make people suffer.

2. Publish lukewarm organisational statements that recycle and regurgitate previous rhetoric on workforce unity with predictable (and borderline offensive) platitudes – often proposing only superficial changes. For example, publishing a sympathetic, but non-committal kneejerk brief statement; possibly delegating responsibilities to an already overworked Equalities Officer or proposing minor changes to already vague policies/procedures on 'valuing diversity' with little or no accountability. Approaches at this level are usually well-intended, but tokenistic and overlook the nuanced obstacles and pitfalls POC face every day. Unfortunately, this response is common.

3. Publish an authentic anti-racism action plan outlining significant reforms that commit to specific, measurable, achievable and realistic targets (suggestions below). For example, publishing a strong mission/position statement condemning George Floyd's murder and racism in all its forms and committing to BASW's Code of Ethics, anti-oppressive, anti-discriminatory and anti-racist practice. This approach interlinks with the 'Anti-Racist commitment framework' (below).

The acid test is to share this presentation with your social work leaders and see what response you get.

3 typical responses to anti-racism from Social Work organisations

1.DISMAL

Noteworthy silences. Anti-racism is not discussed and there are no attempts to acknowledge or address racism. Leaders "hope all this Black Lives Matter (BLM) 'stuff' just blows over".

2. FLUFFED IT

Cringe position statements and feeble blogs. Recycled statements from years ago, regurgitated previous rhetoric on workforce unity with predictable platitudes – but no action. Unfortunately, this response is common.

3. GOAL!!!

Authentic anti-racism action plans are published outlining significant reforms that commit to specific, measurable, achievable and realistic targets.



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ANTI-RACIST COMMITMENT FRAMEWORK		ACTIONS FOR CHANGE
ACCELERATING DIVERSITY WITHIN	Build a workforce more reflective of the communities we serve by promoting opportunities for Black and Ethnic Minority people to enter and advance within organisations.	A **fast-track scheme for high potential people from Ethnic Minority backgrounds,** fuelled by targeted recruitment for senior leadership and work with partners to help grow diverse talent pools. Selected staff will be mentored by a member of the Senior Leadership Team as they progress through different opportunities designed to build their career foundations. This will be maintained by ensuring there are diverse shortlists for every senior management role across the organisation.
EDUCATING, EMPOWERING and EQUIPPING PEOPLE	Transform the working culture to zero tolerance of discrimination. Introduce new immersive training to enhance awareness and support, to underpin inclusive management approaches and meet various learning styles.	**Race and culture awareness training will be mandatory for everyone**. This will go beyond routine online training by: offering guidance; peer support groups; recognising local issues; providing support to equip managers to champion diversity and utilising external specialist advice/support as/when necessary.
LEADING BY EXAMPLE	Ensure that every senior leader has a greater understanding of the issues faced by Ethnic Minority communities and are equipped to lead the fight for equality.	**Every senior leader will commit to either a) to have an Ethnic Minority reverse mentor or b) provide professional support** to a community organisation serving Ethnic Minority groups.
BUILDING TRANSPARENCY	Any gaps in data collection will be addressed, ensuring that senior leaders can be held to account for the progress made in tackling both discrimination and equality of opportunity.	Staff are encouraged to self-declare their identity, enabling a rich profile of the workforce's diverse needs to be built. This will underpin the introduction of an **annual ethnicity pay audit,** backed by any immediate action required. An 'ethnicity dashboard' will help to track progress across the colleague lifecycle and set targets for senior leaders. This will be published internally annually.

What needs to happen nationally?

The existing national frameworks and initiatives to support social workers of colour are fragmented and optional. This creates confusion and dilution in their coherence and implementation in practice. Social work has a long history of committing to anti-discriminatory practice, but less in the way of practical mandatory implementation or robust challenge on these issues. Now is the time for social work leaders to properly address this by meaningfully and purposefully moving this agenda forward by establishing a mandatory 'anti-discriminatory national framework' that is universal across social work.

An important first step, would be to explicitly reintroduce anti-discriminatory, anti-oppressive practices and anti-racist values and ethics into the professional and qualifying education and training standards. This should also involve partnership working between key stakeholders to enforce these values and ethics across the professional landscape. Key aims/objectives should be to: ensure consistency, introduce mandatory requirements, emphasise 'anti-racist' values and be universally applicable to all social workers like the Professional Capabilities Framework and the professional standards.

We all know that organisations can sometimes be avoidant of anti-racism, but as social workers we must recognise that silence (or inaction) on racism is complicity with the oppressors. Unfortunately, as a profession we have been complacent and have much more to do to cultivate equality, diversity and inclusion in the workplace and society.



The ‘BAME’ conundrum

BAME does not describe who *I* am. BAME is a clumsy, cluttered and incoherent acronym that is opportune for categorising people of colour as a homogenous group - when we quite clearly are not. Of course, I cannot speak for all people of colour. I understand that ‘BAME’ can be operationally helpful when exploring the overarching effects of all things racist. However, it misses so much nuance and subtlety, that it can be seized upon by those who wish to deny racism as a white problem. Routinely, I hear people comfortably stating that: “BAME people can’t even agree amongst themselves”. This sloppy reductivism, leads to terms being invented such as ‘Black on Black’ crime. I never hear about “White on White” crime – ever.

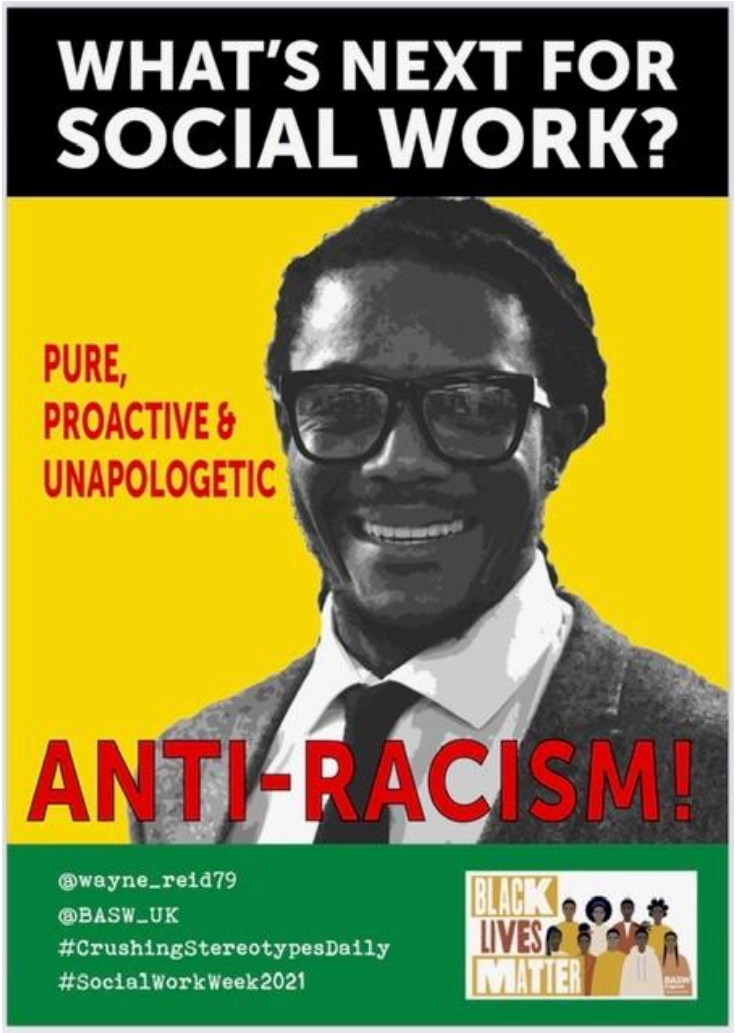


What might an anti-racist working environment look like? What can social work employers do to promote anti-racism in the workplace? What would the experience be like for Black and Ethnic Minority social workers?

Recruitment

Anti-racist recruitment targets are set to employ Black and Ethnic Minority senior leaders and educators to better reflect local communities and the workforce (where necessary/possible).

The ‘Rooney Rule’ is adopted, similar to senior recruitment in American Football. This involves at least one POC candidate being interviewed for each senior leader vacancy.



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The workforce

- Anti-racism is: explicitly promoted in mission/position statements (good example here) along with other forms of discrimination; included in relevant polices/procedures and forms part of employees' employment contracts to underline its importance.
- Workforce diversity and 'protected characteristics' (ethnicity, gender, religion, sexuality etc) informs the support available, training for all staff and organisational policies and procedures.
- The workforce is encouraged to self-declare their identity and individual/group wellbeing at work provisions are developed in partnership with them. Personal wellbeing is a mandatory agenda item for supervision meetings.
- Provisions are also developed for those who have experienced workplace trauma associated with racism (and other types of discrimination). This includes peer-led support groups for members to reflect fully on their personal and professional experiences.
- By using this 'identity dashboard' approach, organisational efforts are more focussed and genuine; progress is properly managed through a cycle of reviewing data output and periodic verbal/written feedback from the workforce.
- Safe and informal systems are introduced for Social Workers of colour in the workplace. For example, discriminatory practices or constructive solutions are made anonymously in an 'honesty box' to empower POC without fear of reprisals. Arising issues are then explored in supervision, team meetings or with senior leaders (if necessary).
- Annual ethnicity pay audits ensure that any anomalies and discrepancies for Black and Ethnic Minority staff are properly reviewed and resolved.
- The Covid-19 risk assessment is consistently used for all staff (particularly those from Black and Ethnic Minority groups).

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Education

Anti-racist education is recognised as being at the heart of developing a more cultured and inclusive workforce and healthy workplace.

Education providers 'decolonialise' social work training programmes with the input of Black and Ethnic Minority academics, social workers and service-users integrated at all stages of programme development and delivery.

ADP, AOP and anti-racist practice form a fundamental and mandatory requirement of social workers professional development and registration. This includes a range of educational tools and training opportunities (for different learning styles) to ensure *quality* cultural diversity education is prioritised and valued. Staff continuously learn and better understand microaggressions, stereotypes and how they can demonstrate 'anti-racist practice'.

The expertise of specialist external trainers and consultants is instrumental in shaping effective anti-racist approaches – with no reliance on tokenistic online courses.

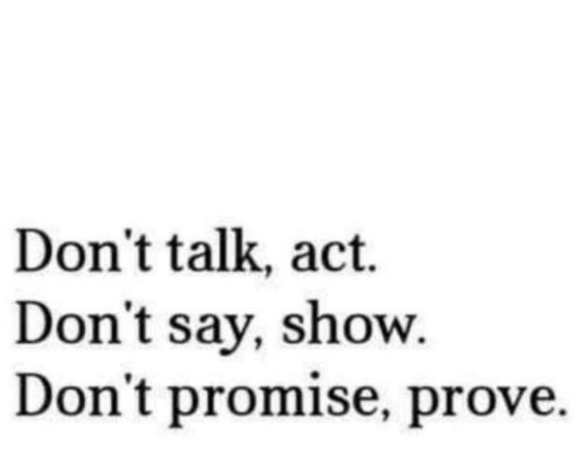
Here are some additional weblinks to anti-racist education: 1, 2 and 3.

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Allyship

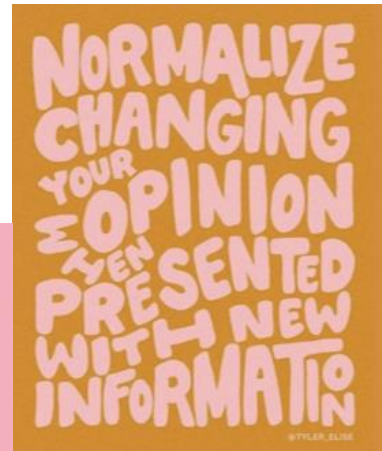
Anti-racist allyship is understood by senior leaders, educators and practitioners to be vital in combating all manifestations of racism. Educating, empowering and equipping allies to actively support colleagues from marginalised and minority groups is common practice.

Allyship actively promotes ways in which managers and staff can become allies or become *better* allies to support their Black and Ethnic Minority colleagues. Social work employers and educators demonstrate they are willing to keep listening and learning from POC to instigate meaningful change.

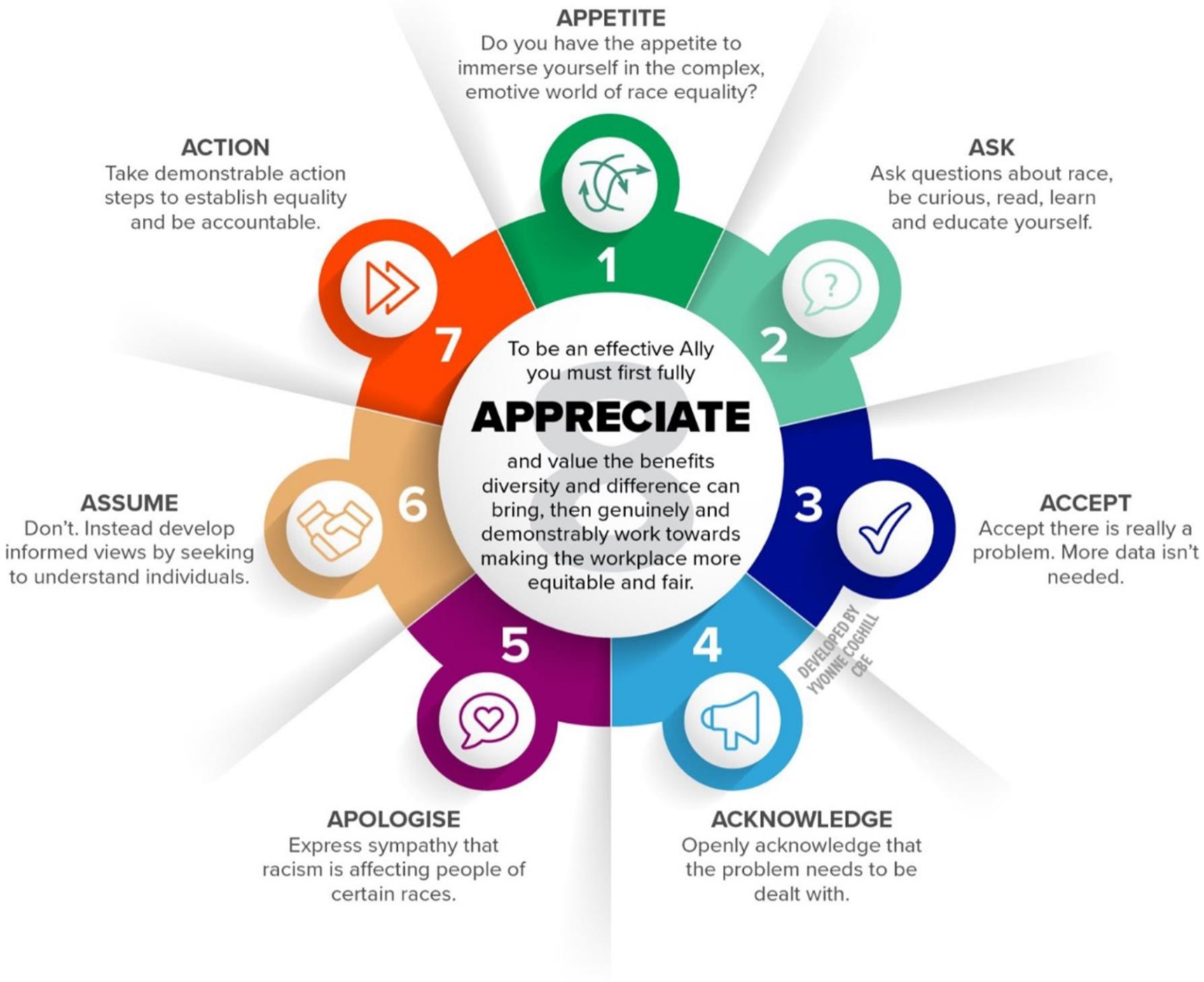








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Reverse mentoring

Anti-racist 'reverse-mentoring' enables Black and Ethnic Minority social workers to mentor senior leaders and educators on anti-racism (especially those with identified 'anti-racist needs'). It is important reverse-mentoring allows mentors some autonomy in their approach. Furthermore, mentoring agreements (considering confidentiality, power dynamics and conflict resolution) are agreed and signed by both parties at the outset.

Leadership programmes

To combat 'glass ceiling racism', various professional development opportunities are available designed to provide advice/support colleagues from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds to enhance their career progression.

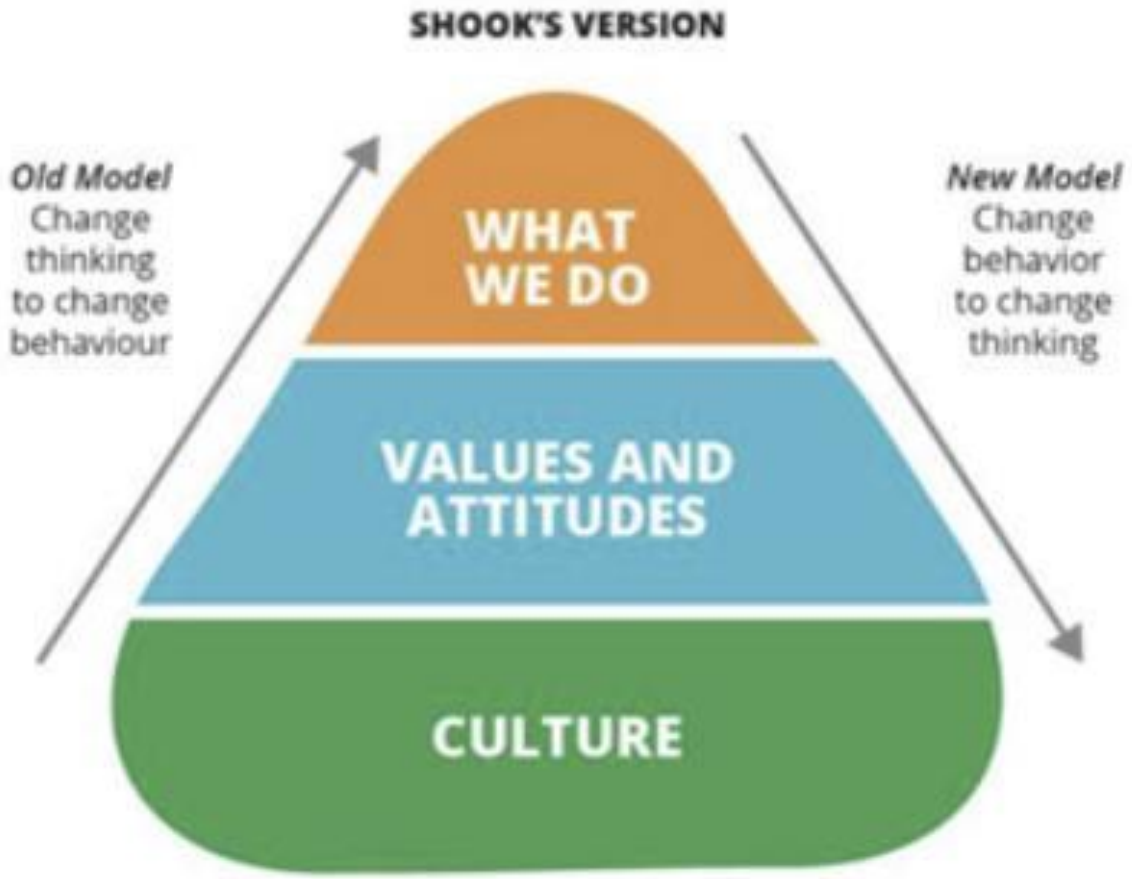
'Positive representation' recognises the disadvantages and obstacles for POC and provides opportunities (mentoring, nominations, secondments, shadowing etc) to support them in reaching their full potential.

Due to the representational imbalance, ring-fenced investment and operational resources to support leadership programmes is in place. This addresses the lack of Black and Ethnic Minority Social Workers in senior roles and provides support for those who are.

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How can managers change the culture of their organization?

1. Start by changing what people do rather than how they think.
2. "It's easier to act your way to a new way of thinking, than to think your way to a new way of acting."
3. Give employees the means by which they can successfully do their jobs.
4. Recognize that the way that problems are treated reflects your corporate culture. __



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Any questions?





REMEMBER:

Anti-racism in Social Work portfolio

Anti-racism in Social Work repository

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Keep in touch

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