



Freedom From Racism

**Be the Activist
or
Wait for Someone**

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Welcome

Thank you for picking up this booklet called 'Freedom from Racism'. It has been produced as a part of a project to stimulate conversations & debates on how we can achieve Freedom from Racism – **for all people of colour, both Black and White.**

Racism is systemic in our society, at times it is obvious but often it isn't, sometimes we feel able to challenge it while at other times we don't. Some days we feel ready to take on the world, some days we may feel tired from the battle.

Freeing ourselves from Racism is a battle, a conscious decision to act; to recognise and expose racism where it occurs, to change systems and processes to remove oppression & bias from our world.

I would like to share a scenario with you:

I was waiting in the car park, as he approached me, I knew that something was wrong.

His hands were stuffed deep into his jackets pocket, the hood was up
hiding his face.

He walked pass me not wanting to talk, I could see the tears in his eyes.

My heart sank, I felt the tears swell in my eyes - I knew it had happened again.

He eventually told me that a member of another team had called him a black b****.

He didn't want them to see that he was upset, that would mean they had won.

Some of his team members came over & told him to ignore it, others said he should report it asap.

He reported it to his team manager who acted immediately, the incident was recorded & raised with the team manager of the other team. No-one would admit to having said it, it was his word against

another's, no further action would be taken.

As we sat in the car, I looked over at his tear stained face – I wanted to be strong for him.

I wanted to say it wouldn't happen again, but I knew the probability was that it would.

Eventually he told me he'd scored a cracking Goal; his team had won the match 2 – 1.

As the other under 11 football team members left the tournament, we watched as they talked excitedly & relived moments of the matches with their friends, parents & carers.

They were oblivious to our pain, our feelings of vulnerability & our anger that others still feel that it is acceptable to devalue & oppress others due to their culture, beliefs & or skin colour without fear of recourse.

We travelled home in silence, closed the front door & left that world behind. We both knew it was still there & ignoring it wasn't going to make it any easier the next time it happened, but for now I knew my grandson was safe.

Racism can take place anywhere, in an office, a factory, a training event or a social gathering. It is by working together to be free from Racism that we achieve positive change.

My key message is one of encouragement – I would encourage you to take an active part in joining a movement to recognise and expose systemic racism, a movement that aims to act and a make a difference.

Thank You,

Karen Eddy

Branch Secretary

Foreword

Racism is a daily event It is tiring. This booklet is something that encourages people to become more active in the fight against all forms of “Racism”

It was evident in the Windrush scandal and the anti-immigrant rhetoric in the Brexit vote. It is evident in the education system, employment market, and the healthcare system.

To eliminate racism, the UK first needs to acknowledge that it exists, that it is systemic, and that it is affecting the lives and livelihoods of millions of Britons -that includes you.

Experiencing, Suffering, Enduring: the feelings that motivates our negotiating agenda and we wanted to share with you some of thought and ideas that motivated us. To share our journey through a set of Freedom From Racism Webinars and how we have moved from a reactive, to take a more proactive stance.

This enabled us to sharpen our thinking and move out of our comfort zones. Beginning to understand what we are up against -even though we thought we knew.

We faced and face many challenges, how we do things, how we challenge the culture that creates the barriers -understanding it is a marathon and not a sprint.

It is also a movement that needs your involvement: more views, we needed to know and understand what is really happening. This starts with us -members and potential members' experiences - the starting point is our experiences and the strength that comes through commonality.

Activism leads to Action and understanding that:
We are all Leaders.

This book we hope will develop leadership.

This book, we hope, will make you think.

If this book stimulates debate, uncomfortable conversations, difficult conversations or makes you angry, makes you want to protest, and helps channel that anger into progressive, negotiated agreements...

...If it does that then it has worked!

James Minto

Branch Chair

Chair of East Midlands Regional Black Members Network

Unison Defining “Black”

“Black” is used to indicate people with a shared history.

Black with a capital ‘B’ is used in it’s broad political and inclusive sense to describe people in Britain that have suffered colonialism and enslavement in the past and continue to experience racism and diminished opportunities in today’s society.

Start with where you are
Start with where we are
Start with our experiences



Our Power is the membership ...it is our potential

When people share their concerns then, I becomes a WE

Start with the lives of our members - do you know their stories - do you know what they are feeling?

Connect people together Grow our Power

Activity:

How might you engage with the union?

How might you engage others?



Educate Yourself

+

Educate Others

+

Learn Together

Activity:

Start with stories and words to go under the surface to look at who continues to benefit from racism and how racism operates in your organisation. Use this space to write down what you think now - what are your first thoughts?



Know the difference between moving and movement

Activity:

Are you reacting to events or are you creating the opportunity to move things forward?

Is it better to do nothing or do something?



fight off
new deans



or just don't
have any.

TCTK ^{DOA} 70576

RESISTANCE IS NOT
FUTILE



Be clear about what you want to happen

How do you define success?

Activity:

You need to know what your objectives are, otherwise you will get buffeted by events, Knowing what we seek is a starting point to provide focus but remember - it is a draft and as things unfold it means we can make decisions about whether we continue or change our objectives.

Your objective is:



Speed of Response

Activates
and Energises... it
creates real action

Activity:

Think about a time when you have waited for someone to respond - how did it feel?



Do not outsource your Intelligence

Direct your own Future

Activity:

We often passively accept everything from acronyms such as BAME or policies that have been produced by other people.

Should we use BAME?

Should we negotiate agreements on Race with our employer?



Think

Go beneath the surface

If you, uncritically, accept what you are told then someone else is doing the thinking

Activity:

Use your own experience and intelligence of your situation: your employer, the attitude of HR, your own attitude...to use any information in that context.

Context is almost everything



How to tackle Racism:

TAKE OWNERSHIP

...but do not see things at the individual level... of individual failure...the context is systemic racism

Activity:

A question arises why Black people find it hard to get employment and even harder to get promotion.

Who does it suit to keep things personal...at the individual level?

Reject your Conditioning

Racism perpetuates because it seeks to get us to perform as if our lives don't matter.

Understanding we are being conditioned is the first step in overcoming it.

**Own your body and mind:
Reject mental slavery**

Be the whole person and embody who you are

Activity:

What is the impact of racism on you?

Do you think other Black people think the same?



Be Self-compassionate Shield against Mental Injury

What is your social medicine?

Activity:

How is mental injury inflicted?

How do we deal with it?

How do we want to deal with it?



Can you tackle Racism by Yourself?

Activity:

Describe:

The story of yourself

and

The story of us



Whether you are Black or White

What is the 'truth' that has been handed down to you?

Activity:

Make sure you learn about your own, and others history, and are not reliant on what you have been taught in schools, a lot is missing.

Seek out autobiographies as a starting point or a relevant film to get a feel of things.



There are no Racists... **...There are everyday racist acts**

Calling someone a racist leads them to defending themselves.

Calling out a racist act or a systemic racist criteria, process or practice means some action is needed.

Takes less energy to go down a hill - dont create a mountain for yourself.

Be compassionate to those you may call racist and be wise by challenging them to change their behaviour and how they do things.

Activity:

In family therapy there is a notion of 'ABC': You have done A, it has made me feel B, I want you to do C.

Think of an incident that you challenged or did not challenge - how might you have used ABC?



Getting Change: Hearts and Minds

A small coordinating and responding group

Keep everyone informed

Political education - explain what you are doing and why

Explain the values that are important

Give members an opportunity to contribute

Celebrate movement

Be creative - this is at the heart of problem-solving

Activity:

What are the values that are important to you and the Members?

Who would belong to the small coordinating group?



How do we work collectively from I to WE?

Going from I to WE is about getting a rhythm and dealing with dissonances
- it is not a method, it is like playing music - the drum beat is louder when
we start playing together in rhythm.

Activity:

Getting to WE often relies on dealing with an issue which is important to members.

In relation to Race what do you think are the pressing issues?

How might you engage Members in identifying the issues?



What Can you Share:

Thoughts?

Stories?

Time?

We understand another person through hearing their stories, from recognising that we have been through similar or, if we have not, how can we provide support.

Activity:

When listening to stories how do you show understanding?
How can we get into the same boat?

**What is your
Radar?**

Where are we going?

How are we navigating?

**Treacherous
waters ahead?**

**Who are we
travelling with?**



There are always barriers in the way: Navigate around them

Remind yourself that things will go wrong, it will not be smooth and will probably throw up something unanticipated. This is the way all change is.

Activity:

Answer the questions posed on the image



What W

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Our Approach

Nothing is guaranteed

Doing is the key thing

If WE do nothing, nothing changes

If I do nothing, no one else gets involved

We used the energy we had from the anger of the number of Black people who were dying from Covid-19 and the suggestion it was genetic as a way of justifying inaction by the authorities - we wanted to do something and did not let the lockdown stop us.

We set up a series of 3 webinars, with the first one based on the current issue which was of concern to members: Covid and Race.

We did not know if it would work but the alternative was to sit back and do nothing.

We recognised that leadership sometimes means recognising that our strategy comes from the common views of members - they are also leaders.

We brought in outside presenters to bring their knowledge and experience to help connect us to the wider world, provide inspiration and encourage us all to share our stories.

We did not want to lose what were doing and so recorded the webinars and posted short videos on the union website for others to share (we did this for each Webinar)

**As a membership organisation we
problem-solve jointly**

Webinar 1:

Race in a post viral world: A trade union response

Keynote:

Challenging racism work shouldn't stop, and something needs to be done now

Presenters:

- how Race is being used in the current crisis
- what are effective strategies to deal with the narrative that is being promoted which ignores the dimension of Race

Panellists in plenary session to address the Members' questions and share stories, experiences and concerns

Action:

- transform the Health and Safety advice into what members could do in the workplace
- raise the issue with management to get agreement on the advice given to managers in dealing with Covid-19

Our Approach

**Knowing what we want:
What is relevant
What is important**

Webinar 1 helped us to set the agenda for Webinar 2 and we needed to know our history with the employer, and how this has changed over time. This would bring us to the present time and the challenges we face now - everyone had an opportunity to contribute.

We also considered what is important - our priorities - this meant that no challenge was forgotten...it was simply that some things need to be done first before we can proceed to other actions.

**When we set an Agenda we start to
shape our futures, we become
activists**

&

**Setting an Agenda is setting the path
of change we want to see happen**

Webinar 2:

Our Agenda on Race

Keynote:

Where is race at our workplace, how did we get here and where do we want to go?

Presenters:

- how the idea of Race has changed
- the challenges that have been faced and successful strategies in dealing with them
- what are the current challenges?

Panellists and Members to define a set of key issues and to further consult with members by using a Questionnaire [Google Forms]

Action:

Branch officers to set out the Agenda in more detail and return to Webinar 3 with proposals for implementing the change

Questionnaire Questions:

Have you ever faced or witnessed racism in the workplace?

Do you believe Promotion is blocked or made difficult for Black staff?

Do you feel you are under close scrutiny when it comes to Performance management?

Is there Unfairness in the allocation of tasks for Black staff?

Does your employer's workforce reflect the local community it serves

Do you believe the employer is aware of or acknowledges the issues faced by Black employees

Do you feel you can challenge racism - when it occurs?

Optional box for any comments or experiences to share?

Our Approach

**Activism means:
Let Members Contribute
It is about what WE do
It is about taking the employer along
with US**

There was a dawning realisation that we had drifted into accepting policy and even the name we use to describe ourselves was being given to us - BAME does not come from unions or from Black people. Accepting policy had made us reactive and we had become energised through Webinars 1 & 2 and were now taking a proactive stance: in other words, we were going to negotiate agreements which could only change with our agreement...recognising that this is the fundamental base of power for workers.

**Recognise that implementation
is tough
...this thought, paradoxically,
makes it easier!**

Webinar 3:

Let's mobilise around Race

Keynote:

From Reactive to Proactive & From Policy to Negotiated Agreements

Presenters:

- key success factors necessary to develop union power
- the importance of the individual and what each of us can do (within the context of a collectivised trade union).

Panellists and attendees to determine the negotiating priorities on Race and the details of the work involved

Action:

Putting forward our Agenda on Race to the employer and using our existing relationships to get change

A Proposed Statement on Race Equality

Note: The proposed statement is an example and something for you to start with - you need to amend and change to reflect your own reality.

This statement focuses on Race Equality, in part because of recent events in the US and other parts of the world and the issues arising out of the series of Webinars (Freedom From Racism)

Context

<Put the name of your employer> is an important employer in *<your location>* and so can impact on Race in both its employment practices and services.

We recognise that the *<Put the name of your employer>* is not outside of society and has a responsibility towards society.

<Put the name of your employer> is rich in diversity, however direct observation tells us we have further to go in relation to Race equality. Diversity depends also on how we measure it and our approach should not be one of doing the minimum or being prompted by legislation and other policy issues. Rather it should be through a proactive anti-racist stance.

This Workplace is No Place for Racists

Barriers

A passive approach to Race Equality: usually this is done as a “protective” measure and is evidenced by virtue signalling or listing initiatives or comparison to similar institutions.

Remedies

Take a more proactive role & become an antiracist organisation.

Seek to lead or innovate in Race Equality. Recognise this does not happen by trying to meet criteria at a minimum level but going for maximal impact.

Understanding this has to be done as a whole organisational and Race Equality can only be achieved with the involvement of Black people working with White people...and then understanding that we are the same people

Focus on Impact

Recognise the impact of racism on the self-confidence of Black people. Racism inflicts mental injury and should be seen in the same way as a physical assault - they are both violent.

The violence also affects bystanders whether they are Black or White - let us give everyone the tools to challenge racism and put resources into training programmes and other support.

Criteria for appointment and progression reflect choices which perpetuate what we already have: a system of racism which suppresses the career aspirations of Black people.

Impact is not measured by statistics alone. It is the everyday and banal interactions which perpetuate inequality. We - the union and the employer - need to work together to create a culture of anti-racism.

We are not waiting for good practice, we are going to create good practice ourselves.

(See opposite for examples)

Practice	Recommendation
Stories, or how we see the world	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introduce black people into our everyday work. - Tackling racism means positive action, treating people the same does not overcome racism - Check and address any pay gaps if identified.
Criteria/ Process/ Procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Involvement of Black people in shortlisting and in the interview – where there is no Black person at a specific level then seek out from other institutions - Shortlist Black candidates as part of positive action - If no black person is appointed then require a one-page justification of why this is the case. Interview panels will be invited to also give recommendations on how to gain more Black employees - Monitor and reward effort in becoming more inclusive via the annual review document
People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Symbolise commitment and Show belief in the people we already have by asking every single one to contribute e.g. a website page, where they can recount a story or experience around Race Equality. <p>This can include practices that are then shared which will help to increase everyone's capabilities in tackling racism.</p>

It is now up to you and for you to decide what agreements you want to negotiate!



Why this book?

You will have gathered that this book is designed to stimulate you, provide inspiration and help you to come to your own thoughts and ideas.

This book does not provide advice, because context is almost everything and, in any event, you need to decide what is best for your own situation.

When you pick up this book, you are acknowledging that this book does not give advice, one can only give advice when the context is known - you know your own situation, and your sense of reality will increase as you work with members and reps who have their own perspectives.


We all have responsibility towards society and to support those who are experiencing difficulties. As trade unionists we come from a heritage of creating our rights and the threads go all the way back to before workers organised themselves...it was not gifted to us we had to claim it.

This book is part of that tradition and seeks change with and for and by Black people. We call ourselves 'unions' because change is a dish best eaten together.

No matter what background you are from, this book is written for you.

Once you have read this book, pass it on and share it.



The image shows three vertical stone pillars of varying heights and textures. The pillars are light-colored, possibly limestone or marble, and show signs of weathering and repair. Each pillar has a decorative band of small, rectangular stones or bricks wrapped around it. The top of the leftmost pillar is a capital with a scalloped, fluted design. The background is a clear, light blue sky.

**Do let us know how you get on and share your experiences with us!
Each one of your stories is a pillar of strength - let's build**

**Visit
www.freedomfromracism.com**

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