



Decolonising Minds @Leeds

Open letter

To:

Sir Alan Langlands – Vice Chancellor

Tom Ward – Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Student Education

Francesca Fowler – Director of Human Resources

Professor Jeremy Higham – Dean of the Faculty of Education, Social Sciences and Law

Norma Martin Clement – Pro-Dean of Student Education of the Faculty of Education,
Social Sciences and Law

Anne Kerr – Head of the School of Sociology and Social Policy

Alison Sheldon – Equality and Inclusion Committee

We as scholars, staff, and students of ESSL at the University of Leeds are concerned the direction of the curriculum and staff makeup in our School. As those who wish to achieve a high standing and global academic excellence for the university we are requesting a dialogue to discuss inclusion and diversity.

In the changing domestic demography, post Brexit and with emergence of states with economic power outside of Europe we believe the adoption of a decolonial perspective in both the curriculum and the activities will be beneficial for this institution. Further, this will acknowledge knowledge production from a non-European and male centric perspective.

We believe that a commitment to such will allow the University to maintain its high ranking, attract more students domestically and internationally and at the same time ensure the positive impact that the Social Sciences can have on the social, academic and political lives of students and staff members.



What is the Decolonising of the curriculum request?

Decolonizing the circular is organised around acknowledging different ways of knowing, being, doing and producing knowledge. It request the adoption of authors that challenge Eurocentric narrative and provide an alternative discourse to power, dominance, freedom and empowerment. This is a call for a balanced teaching perspective that equips a student to articulate his/her argument from a robust grounding.

How can this be achieved at Leeds?

1. The reintroduction of modules around race and racism at undergraduate level, and the MA programme of Global Racisms.

The Centre for Racism and Ethnicity Studies (CERS) established in the School of Social Policy has been a key organisation in the development of Critical Race Theory in the UK. The research area has an internationally recognised reputation for its theoretically ambitious and policy relevant research on racism, which among other things shows in form of collaboration with respected scholars around the world, such as Charles Mills, Barnor Hesse, Deborah Gabriel, Kehinde Andrews, Lisa Palmer, and many others who can be found on CERS website. This together with the highly productive work of senior scholars has created an environment that attracts students both from the UK and beyond.

However, with the removal of the BA option in racism, the main source of feeding into the MA course, has meant the staff involved in this course have been reduced and the MA programme run by it retracted.

2. Greater Transparency

We are concerned with the lack of transparency during the planning process to refurbish modules in the Undergraduate and Postgraduate programme, as well as the process of decision making to discontinue the MA programme of Global Rac-

isms. In the case of ethnicity and racism studies we feel the programme should not only be maintained but developed further. To keep the focus area vital it is necessary to ensure its own specific position in the teaching programme, merging it into a subtext of another discipline would be a great loss and reproduce the dilution/invisibility of such ideas.

3. The introduction of a new curriculum.

In order to achieve a balanced curriculum we suggest a revision to the reading list. One process would be to introduce around 3 authors in the bibliography (main reading list – not suggestion for further readings) every year for over the next 3 years. The objective would be to have a complete reorganised curriculum in which at least 50% of the authors break from the European-white-abled-male norm dominating the Social Sciences. We believe such an approach would set our institute on a track to success that would attract the brightest and the best from around the globe. Practically this could be assisted by adopting the following:

- The curriculum should include modules dedicated exclusively to discuss topics on race/ ethnicity and nation, not only be added in other modules to be presented in one or two lectures and dissolving the opportunity of addressing to such important issues in more depth.
- The modules on race, ethnicity, nation should be mandatory, not elective/discovery modules as an essential topic to encourage students to understand their own positions in society and build up a broader dialogue in the way we understand the world.

4. Introducing policy to hire scholars and staff of colour.

We are aware that the University of Leeds is inclined to promote diversity on the campus. However, we wish to see this extend in the Human Resources policies as a way to guarantee Racialised Minorities in the staff, including professors. Having professors of colour is not only about racial representation, but a way to offer diversity of thoughts and standpoints within the academy. All students from all races and backgrounds deserve to have a pedagogical strategy that enables them to engage in knowledge production with racialised teachers.

We understand that following such items will develop initiatives and solutions for anti-racist actions to promote diversity, which will reflect well by attaining an award in the next round of the Race Equality Charter and allow the university to improve the representation, progression, and success of minority ethnic students and staff.

We hope you take our concerns on board and look forward to hear from.

We will be circulating this document to other students within the campus and academic peers and hopefully forward you the signatures of those who stand in agreement with our concerns.

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- Tasnim Al-Ahdal
- Alex Chelegeer
- Ashley Bullard
- Claudia Radiven
- Ismail Patel
- James Beresford
- Juntao Lyu
- LaTonia Siler-Holloman
- Remi Joseph-Salisbury
- Sally-Anne Beverley
- Tiffany Holloman