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Searching for Belonging: Institutional Racism and the 'Silent Crisis' in Higher Education

A Thesis

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By

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<u>Abstract</u>

It is often that when discussing issues around race and racism within Higher Education, people ask, "where is the data?" In this thesis, I look back at some of the contemporary student decolonial movements that have happened across the UK. I share insights from these movements and the experiences of several students from the global majority – their experiences of marginalisation in higher education institutions are very common. This is the data.

Drawing from data collected through interviews conducted with students engaged in decolonising efforts at the University of Kent and my own observations of events hosted by student decolonial groups involved in contemporary decolonial activism across universities in the UK, I discuss how Black People and People of Colour (BPOC) students agree that universities have done very little to support impactful and long-term changes. This has had an adverse effect on students' sense of belonging and by extension their academic outcomes, mental health, and lived experiences. Despite this, BPOC students still find a sense of belonging amongst one another. Though, this does not compensate for the gaps that universities are failing to respond to and does not apply to everyone.

Keywords: Decolonising the university, anti-racism, institutional racism, critical race theory

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<u>Dedication</u>

To my grandfather, Munatsi Shoko

Thank you for being my father and thank you for loving me with everything in your might. I am inspired by your love for your family, education and the community that surrounds you. I hope to share as much of myself with the world as you have, with as much grace, willingness, and ease.

Declaration

I, Lisa Nyashayashe Shoko declare that this thesis is my own original work and that it has not been presented and will not be presented to any other University for a similar or any other degree award.

Signature…………………………………….

encouragement with me during the first COVID-19 lockdown in 2020 when I was living in London.

Third I want to thank my family for the continued support throughout my time at Kent Law school. I especially want to thank my mum, my sister, my brothers, and my grandparents who encouraged me to work to the best of my abilities and to step out of the shade and into the light where I am meant to be.

Fourth, I would like to thank my supervisors Dr. Luis Eslava and Dr. Suhraiya Jivraj. It is difficult to know how to thank people who have given you so much and expected so little in return. This journey has been challenging and unorthodox for many reasons even outside of the pandemic. Thank you for your kindness, your patience, your expertise. Thank you for your encouragement, your persistence, and your candour. Thank you for your friendship, counsel, and supervision.

Lastly, I want to like the Larry Grant Steering Committee who awarded me the Larry Grant Scholarship and continuously supported me 2019-2022 and throughout the pandemic. I am eternally grateful for your patience, support, and generosity.

With love,

Lisa

Introduction

In this thesis I engage in a long overdue conversation about the importance of belonging in Higher Education (HE). I understand belonging in this dissertation as "students' sense of being accepted, valued, included, and encouraged by others [on campus] and in the academic classroom setting and of feeling oneself to be an important part of the life and activity of the [student community] (Goodenow, 1993)[1]. I invite the reader to consider the experiences of being a Black person or a person of Colour (BPOC) studying at the University of Kent, and other institutions across the UK, where the impact of race, racialisation, and racism (Groothius, 2021) are often ignored[2]. Groothius says that the aforementioned core attributes share "a socially constructed nature; categorisation of a group as "other"; naturalisation of characteristics thought to belong to a group; and being concerned with presumed community-like group"[3]. [Therefore], the process of racism signifies unjust and negative discrimination based on ideas regarding race. In each of these chapters, I talk about the search of belonging for minoritised[4] students and share with the reader my own experiences as a Black immigrant woman searching for belonging at the university.

In Chapter 1, I describe some of the contemporary movements on decolonising the university that have happened since 2015 when the Rhodes Must Fall Movement started. This thesis will be a roadmap from Rhodes Must Fall to Decolonise UoK[5], and I focus on those that were initiated, heavily influenced and/or supported by BPOC students studying in Higher Education institutions (HEI) in different parts of the UK. In Chapters 2 and 3, using two data sets I explore insights from student activists who have been at the forefront of the decolonial

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[1] C. Goodenow, 'Classroom Belonging Among Early Adolescent Students' (1993) 13 The Journal of Early Adolescence.

[2] R. Bennett, 'Universities Ignoring Racism, Says Equality and Human Rights Commission' (*Thetimes.co.uk*, 2021) <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/uk-universities-ignoring-racism-says-equality-and-human-rights-commission-jzm6ktjj6>

[3] S. Groothuis, 'Researching Race, Racialisation, And Racism in Critical Terrorism Studies: Clarifying Conceptual Ambiguities' (2020) 13 Critical Studies on Terrorism.

[4] Minoritised ethnic' (or the similar term 'racially minoritised') has been recommended more recently as it recognises that individuals have been minoritised through social processes of power and domination rather than just existing in distinct statistical minorities. It also better reflects the fact that ethnic groups that are minorities in the UK are majorities in the global population.
A. Milner and S. Jumbe, 'Using the Right Words to Address Racial Disparities In COVID-19' (2020) 5 The Lancet Public Health <https://www.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/lanpub/PIIS2468-2667(20)30162-6.pdf>

[5] Decolonise the University of Kent (Decolonise UoK) was a student activist group at the University of Kent that challenged institutional racism and organised focus groups to create the Decolonise UoK Manifesto that details the experiences of students from racialised backgrounds, at the University of Kent.

movement at the University of Kent and other student activists who attended the 'Stories of (Un)Belonging' Conference (2020) organised by Decolonise UoK, which I was a part of[6]. The first data set reflects on the outcomes of intimate conversations that I had with student activists. The second data set reflects how conversations around decolonising the university - and the impact that this has on BPOC students - are shared in public spaces and debates by students themselves. This data points to the tensions in belonging and sense of unbelonging that BPOC students face which has a significant impact on student performance and mental health, rather than the narrative that structural racism has little to no impact on students, in particular, BPOC students. The key argument is that the silent crisis in Higher Education is the result of institutional racism and though BPOC students continuously counteract this, the onus should not be on them because of the emotional, psychological, and physical impact that they experience from racial trauma [7] . In this dissertation I understand institutional racism as "that which covertly or overtly resides in the policies, procedures, operations and culture of public and private institutions-reinforcing individual prejudices and being reinforced by them in turn" (Sivanandan, 2021).[8] It is the failure of (UoK, 2021) (lvarez, Milner, & O'Connor, 2016) institutions to provide "appropriate and professional services to people because of their colour, culture, or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness, and racial stereotyping" (Macpherson Report, 1999)[9]. In Chapter 4, I argue that the 'permanence of racism' (Bell, 2018)[10] – as articulated through Critical Race Theory perspectives which I explore below – plays a significant role in silencing the students. It heavily impacts those students who are brave enough to share their experiences and challenge institutions to reconsider their policies and structures that are inherently biased and staggered against them. Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) must consider their role in perpetuating (un)belonging not least when the same institutions directly and inadvertently silence the voices of students who have exposed these inequalities.

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[6] Decolonise UoK Collective, 'Stories Of (Un)Belonging: Student Decolonising Groups In The UK Share Their Stories' (*Youtube.com*, 2021)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=irkeT2aalIE&t=1s&ab_channel=KentLawSchool >
[7] Alvarez, A. J., Milner, H. R. & Delale-O'Connor, L. (2016). Race, trauma, and education: What educators need to know. In T. Husband (Ed) *But I Don't See Color: The Perils, Practices, And Possibilities of Antiracist Education* (pp. 27-40). Rotterdam, Netherlands: Sense Publishers
[8] 'What Is Institutional Racism?' (*The Guardian*, 2022)
<https://www.theguardian.com/uk/1999/feb/24/lawrence.ukcrime7>
[9] W. Macpherson, 'The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry' (William Macpherson 1999)
<https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/277111/4262.pdf>
[10] D. Bell, *Faces at The Bottom Of The Well: The Permanence Of Racism 2018 Oct 30.* (Hachette UK 2018).

Methodology

This thesis emerges from my involvement in the Decolonise UoK project between students and staff of colour. As part of the project, I was part of a team of 8 focus group leaders who conducted research that was concerned with finding out what students from Black backgrounds and other people of colour felt about their experiences of living with intersectionalities such as race, gender, sexuality on the Canterbury campus. In total we engaged through interviews and other activities, including a group of around 50 students[11]. We drew on Critical Race Theories and approaches to research which I outline further below. In particular, the counter-narratives and counter-storytelling through interviews, art and poetry paints are intended to elevate the conversation around the racialised experiences of BPOC students and to move away from the notion that there is no evidence of students being treated differently to their white counterparts because of the colour of their skin

I conducted the interviews for this thesis with students who had participated in that action at the University of Kent. The interviewees have been from different ethnic backgrounds and at different stages of their studies.

The research methodology in this thesis combines gathering empirical data through interviews with desk-based research on decolonising student movements. Critical Race Theory forms the theoretical framework in which this dissertation sits, in conjunction with taking a decolonial studies perspective which allows me to highlight the colonialities embedded within higher education.

Ethics

Ethics approval for this research was granted by the Kent Law School Research Ethics Officer in February 2020.

For the completion of this work, I referred to the General Data Protection Act (GDPR, 2018) to conduct these interviews ethically and to lawfully record, store and share data including anonymising participants. Participants were consulted on whether they wanted to use pseudonyms, but everyone who was involved preferred to be named 'participant' in the data results. Each of the participants that engaged with the research was provided with an information sheet prior to the interview and required to sign a consent form, reassured of their

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[11] W. Ahmed and others, Decolonising the Curriculum Project Manifesto: Through the Kaleidoscope (2019) <https://decoloniseukc.files.wordpress.com/2019/03/decolonising-the-curriculum-manifesto-final-2.pdf>

right to confidentiality and informed of their right to withdraw at any time (before, during and after the interview).

The principal ethical concern was that this study would be asking questions about race/racism, a cultural, political and a social issue which is particularly sensitive given the current climate, e.g., post-Brexit, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, disproportionate impact of COVID-19 and many other such events. Some of the issues that we discussed included conversations on racial violence and verbal abuse. Some of the issues raised were to do with intersectionality and/or the experience of being marginalised people, sometimes severally within the student community at the University of Kent.

Due to Covid-19, all the data that I have collected was uploaded onto OneDrive to keep the documents secure in line with my Ethics approval.

Theoretical Framework

"Critical Race Theory is a body of scholarship steeped in radical activism that seeks to explore and challenge the prevalence of race inequality in society. It is based on the understanding that race and racism are the product of social thought and power relations; CRT theorists endeavour to expose the way in which racial inequality is maintained through the operation of structures and assumptions that appear normal and unremarkable" (Rollock and Gilborn, 2011)[12].

Critical Race Theory has been the underpinning framework for challenging power differentials, which has opened educational researcher opportunities for transformational change with regards to the place of race in law and society and opportunities to discuss and explore the possibilities around re-thinking the ways in which we internalise knowledge and understand the structures in which we exist.[13] I have used Critical Race Theory in this dissertation to hold discussions about the complexity of institutional racism and the different ways in which academic institutions perpetuate this systemic violence. I have shared and analysed the experiences of five students from underrepresented ethnic groups in academic spaces to show the permanence of race and the necessity for decolonising the university.

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[12] N. Rollock and D. Gillborn, (2011). Critical Race Theory (CRT). *British Educational Research Association* online resource. <https://www.bera.ac.uk/publication/critical-race>
[13] Ibid.

As mentioned above, in this thesis I rely heavily on counter-narratives and counter-story telling, these are significant to communicating the student-centred reflections that will come later.[14] This thesis is informed by the tenets of Critical Race Theory which include:

- Counter-storytelling
- Permanence of Racism
- Intersectionality
- Whiteness as Property and
- Interest convergence[15]

Main Tenants of Critical Race Theory

Historically, the foundations of Critical Race Theory were laid down by the likes of Bell (1992), Ladson-Billings & Tate (2016), Crenshaw et al. (1996), Delgado & Stefancic (1993). Critical Race Theorists are concerned with exposing, disrupting, challenging, and changing racist policies and continue to use this framework to capture the continuous and unaddressed issues that historically marginalised groups often face in higher education spaces. Contemporary scholars that have engaged with the issue of searching for belonging in Higher Education include the likes of Bhambra (2018), Arday (2018), Ahmed (2017), Andrews (2018), Mirza (1997), Jivraj (2020), Joseph-Salisbury (2019) and Adewumi (2020) Through Critical Race Theory, BPOC academics and researchers have been provided with a framework that allows them to share their lived experiences of racialisation (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001) and more specifically to this thesis, the experiences of being from a minoritised group in the socio-political context of Higher Education in the UK. Solorzano and Yosso (2002) argue that the sharing of stories "Challenges white privilege, rejects notions of "neutral" research or "objective" researchers, and exposes deficit-informed research that silence and distorts epistemologies of people of colour"[16]. In addition, stories that are told through composite characters should equally be valued, as it is not how the story is told, it is that the story must be told e.g., through art, spoken word, prose or poetry (see Chapter 4). In this dissertation, I respond to the question that I have posed, and challenge readers to engage with the work in a way that embraces "what it means to be human outside a

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[14] D. Solorzano and T. Yosso (2002) Critical Race Methodology: Counter-Storytelling as an Analytical Framework for Education Research., *Qualitative Inquiry*, 2002.

[15] P. Hiraldo, 'The Role of Critical Race Theory in Higher Education' (2010) 31 *The Vermont Connection.*

[16] D. Solorzano and T. Yosso (2002) Critical Race Methodology: Counter-Storytelling as an Analytical Framework for Education Research., *Qualitative Inquiry*, 2002.

philosophical and anthropology that stipulates whiteness as normative" (Yancy and Del Guadalupe Davidson 2016). Whiteness is a "dominant cultural space with enormous political significance, with the purpose to keep others on the margin" (Frankenburg, 1993)[17]. It does not simply refer to skin colour, but to its ideology based on beliefs, values, behaviours, habits, and attitudes, which result in the unequal distribution of power and privilege based on skin colour (Frye, 1983; Kivel, 1996). Whiteness is a set of normative privileges that are granted to white people, and it is normalised such that its operations are "invisible" to those privileged by it, but not to those who are oppressed by it. It is often invisible to white people, and this perpetuates a lack of knowledge or understanding of difference which is a root cause of oppression (hooks, 1994).

In the past, universities have taken the approach that we are living in a 'post-race' society, and they are not the only ones, this is informed by the context that we are living in as a country.[18] Even though the experiences of BPOC in this country are well documented, and we have witnessed contemporary examples of racial injustices in several sectors, including education, institutions that conform to whiteness continue to reinforce institutional racism by publicly endorsing political instruments such as the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities Report (2021) which denies racism's contemporary existence (Goldberg, 2015) and makes it seem like racism is in the past. "Despite a well-established record of equalities legislation in the UK, despite the policies, guidance documents and professed commitments of higher education institutions, and the supposedly liberal, inclusive ideals of many academics, meaningful change on race equality might be labelled at best slow and at worse, abysmally static" (Rollock, 2018). Whiteness in academia is satisfied with throwing equality and diversity policies and strategies which are not effective (Ahmed, 2012) at those who challenge institutional racism. Ahmed (2016) explains that much of anti-racist and feminist work is trying to convince others that these issues have not ended and remain pertinent issues that need to be addressed. BPOC students and staff continue to experience overt racism in Higher Education Institutions. There is also evidence to suggest that such discriminatory and exclusionary behaviour is often ignored or brushed off by managers who fail to act when complaints of racism are made (Bhopal, 2020)[19]. What institutionalised anti-racist policy and

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[17] R. Frankenberg, *White Women* (1st edn, Routledge 1993).

[18] A. Johnson and R. Joseph-Salisbury. (2018). 'Are You Supposed to Be in Here?' Racial Microaggressions and Knowledge Production in Higher Education: Racism, Whiteness and Decolonising the Academy. 10.1007/978-3-319-60261-5_8.

[19] K. Bhopal and C. Pitkin (2020) 'Same old story, just a different policy': race and policy making in higher education in the UK, *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 23:4, 530-547, DOI: 10.1080/13613324.2020.1718082.

practice within institutions have done is to seek institutional transformation through changing structures and processes which militate against equality of access, process, and outcome because of the impact of whiteness (Tate, 2018).

In these spaces racism rarely presents as someone saying the n- word, making monkey noises and having bananas thrown at you– all of which we know to have happened in universities across the UK.[20] Racism is usually enacted through microaggressions.

Microaggressions are a form of systemic, everyday racism… often subtle and seemingly innocuous in nature (Pierce 1969) used to keep those at the racial margins in their place (Rollock, 2012). Microaggressions are verbal and non-verbal assaults directed toward BPOC, often carried out in subtle, automatic, or unconscious forms; layered assaults, based on race and its intersections with gender, class, sexuality, language, immigration status, phenotype, accent or surname and cumulative assaults that take psychological, physiological, and academic toll on BPOC (Perez Huber and Solorzano, 2015; 302).

We should be careful not to theorise microaggressions as an abstract phenomenon occurring out there. They do not occur in abstraction from white supremacist racial structures, they are inextricably linked to those structures and act to reinforce those very ideologies (Perez Huber and Solorzano, 2015). I present evidence in Chapter 2 of the impact that racism; especially microaggressions and alienation have had on students' sense of belonging and by extension their academic outcomes, mental health, and lived experiences. For BPOC, racism is a part of daily life in society as the assumptions of White superiority are deeply ingrained in political, legal, and educational structures (Bhopal, 2020)[21]. At the University of Kent there have been more overt displays of racism including graffiti and a student union group sharing hateful messages on social media. These emboldened expressions of hatred show that we are not 'post-race' as some literature claims, but that whiteness finds old and recyclable ways of leveraging power and privilege over Black and minoritised people. BBC documentary "Is Uni Racist" (2021) shows that there are several universities across the United Kingdom where BPOC students are subjected to terrible instances of racism.[22] They gave examples of universities including University of Manchester, Nottingham Trent University, University of Oxford, Cardiff University, and University of Essex.

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[20] R. Joseph-Salisbury (2019) 'Does anybody really care what a racist says?' Anti-racism in 'post-racial' times. *The Sociological Review*, 67(1), 63–78. https://doi.org/10.1177/0038026118807672.

[21] K. Bhopal and C. Pitkin (2020) 'Same old story, just a different policy': race and policy making in higher education in the UK, Race Ethnicity and Education, 23:4, 530-547.

[22] Reported by L. Adey, *Is Uni Racist,* Directed by D. Webster, Executive Produced by M. Mistrati, BBC, 2021.

Many of the students who were interviewed reported that in some cases the university would investigate but there was no transparency within these processes for example, what the procedure of the investigation involves, how long the investigation could take, and adequately reporting the findings of the investigation to the students that are impacted. For example, a student who attended Cardiff described their own experience of emotional and psychological trauma of existing in the academic space as a person of colour and the complexity of being invisible most of the time but at other times hyper-visible in a way that was dangerous and isolating specifically when challenging other students and the institution. In this instance, there were letters of apology that were written by the students who had incited racial hatred on the Cardiff campus. The student who was interviewed said that she never saw any of the apologies and that the university said that due to data protection these letters could not be shared (University of Cardiff). In another example, a student from the University of Manchester said that the way that the University handled his broadly publicised and racially charged assault by campus security "showed [him] that the university's reputation and how they portray themselves was way more important than the welfare and well-being of students" (University of Manchester). This is common and echoed by Thomas and Jivraj who say that speaking back to the institution carries risks (Decolonise UoK Collective, 2019)[23]. Resistance has a counter-reaction, whether this is done through activism groups or by individuals is irrelevant. These and other universities, including the University of Kent continue to uphold whiteness by throwing equality and diversity policies and strategies at students, instead of initiating and seeing through transformative change. Upholding whiteness reinforces to students from racially marginalised communities that they do not belong in academic spaces, that their existence in these spaces is radical, rather than usual and that they are unwelcome in these spaces – only to speak when spoken to and celebrated whenever they exist within the confines of whiteness.

Space Invaders

Puwar (2004) has shown how some become 'space invaders' when they enter spaces that are not intended for them and in academic spaces we can become 'space invaders' just by referring to alternative texts and theorists that come from the global majority. Whiteness tells us who can and cannot produce knowledge and what knowledge is accepted in these

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[23] D. Thomas and S. Jivraj, eds., *Towards Decolonising the University: A Kaleidoscope for Empowered Action* (Oxford: Counterpress 2020).

academic spaces. It is after much resistance and with great difficulty that BPOC students see their colour and their intersectionalities reflected in the curriculum. However, as space invaders we afford ourselves the dignity of being accounted for in text, on university boards and amongst the faculty by showing up and using our bodies as resistance to the structural and institutional factors which are also the failings of these academic spaces that are meant for personal and professional learning for everyone.

Whilst some argue that are lived in a 'colour blind' (Bonilla-Silva, 2006) or a 'post-racial' Britain (Goldberg, 2015), I would l like to highlight three contemporary examples that will show that Britain is neither of these.

In 2017, Femi Nylander, a Black Oxford alumnus, walked through the grounds of Oxford University, Harris Manchester College. Later that morning a CCTV image of Nylander was circulated to staff and students who were urged to 'maintain vigilance'. Nylander was attending his alma mater and using the space to work on a forthcoming book so, why was it deemed necessary, as the email suggested, for staff and students to 'maintain vigilance'? (Salisbury, 2019)[24]

In 2020, Zac Adan was racially profiled by campus security. Footage recorded by onlookers went viral on social media and it showed security officers detaining the student against a wall while demanding his identification. A friend of the student who witnessed the incident told the Guardian "The security guards decided that he didn't look like he belonged in the area"[25]. The reason cited by the security officers was that there was drug dealing happening on campus and they were searching for said drug dealers.

Lastly, in 2020 an anonymous student, a Black man, shared some of his experiences with me of anti-blackness on campus, in particular his interactions with campus security. At every opportunity he would be stopped, searched, and harassed by campus security who would nearly always racially profile him. On several occasions, campus security was seen outside his university accommodation, surveying him. This is another instance of a Black student on campus being treated like a criminal because of his Blackness.

It is difficult to argue that we live in a post-race society, when Black students are racially profiled on university campuses, where traditionally students have been able to openly access the university space and freely explore their personal and professional interests. Whiteness

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[24] R. Joseph-Salisbury (2019) 'Institutionalised whiteness, racial microaggressions and Black bodies out of place in Higher Education', *Whiteness and Education*. https://doi.org/10.1080/23793406.2019.1620629.

[25] B. Hayward, 'University Suspends Security Guards After Claims Of 'Racial Profiling' By Student | TOTUM' (*Totum.com*, 2020) <https://www.totum.com/news/university-suspends-security-guards-after-claims-of-racial-profiling-by>

continues to imply that BPOC are second class citizens and when it treats BPOC poorly; whiteness uses its own policies and structures to defend both its ignorance and its arrogance; whiteness is not apologetic for the emotional, psychological, and physical violence which it exposes BPOC students to. Whiteness is a law unto itself and is constantly evolving, reinventing old systems of oppression to suit new social norms.

Even though Nylander held one of the most prestigious degrees across the country (PPE), from one of the most prestigious universities in the world (University of Oxford), he was still reduced to his Blackness. Nirmal Puwar (2001) argues that this could be a form of cultural exclusion suggesting that black bodies out of place are considered to be space invaders "when they do not represent the racial somatic norm within white institutions"[26]. She writes, "Social spaces are not blank and open for anybody to occupy. Over time, through processes of historical sedimentation, certain bodies are designated as being the "natural" occupants of specific spaces… Some bodies have the right to belong in certain locations, while others are marked out as trespassers who are in accordance with how both spaces and bodies are imagined, politically, historically, and conceptually circumscribed as being 'out of place'. Not being the somatic norm, they are space invaders".[27]

Whiteness keeps reinforcing that the physical presence of BPOC bodies on university campuses is "unnatural", as seen in the examples of Nylander, Adan and the Black male student from the University of Kent campus. Is it possible then for BPOC students to truly foster belonging in the university space, if their mere existence is perceived as threatening and the violence that they are forced to endure is never properly addressed?

The Permanence Of Race

The permanence of race (Delgado and Stefancic, 2001) suggests that issues of race and racism have always been and will always have an impact on how society operates. It is far removed from the idea that we live in a post-race society and centres the idea that because of the permanence of race there could never be such a thing as a "post-race" society. Rather, racism must be understood as deeply embedded in our society, within our institutions and our psyches. For example, often when issues of race are brought up, institutions say that there is simply not enough data to indicate that there is an issue around institutional racism. At best,

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[26] N. Puwar (2001). The Racialised Somatic Norm and the Senior Civil Service. Sociology. 35. 10.1017/S0038038501000335.

[27] M. Gatens (2007). Space Invaders: Race, Gender and Bodies Out of Place. Feminist Review.

they admit that there is an issue with institutional racism except it is not as serious as critical race theorists, or students of colour claim it is (e.g., Sewell Report, 2021) [28]. They would likely argue that the experiences that are shared in this dissertation in Chapters 2 and 4 are individual experiences rather than indicative of a worse proportion of society. In other cases, such as police, we see them admit that institutional racism exists (MacPherson Report, 1999)[29], but do not show a willingness to do anything about this (Sewell Report, 2021). We ought to realise the dominant role that racism has played and continues to play within our institutions, Delgado and Stefancic say, and this can be a conscious and unconscious act" (2001: 1). We should consider the permanence of racism.

Derek Bell says that:

> "Black people are the magical faces at the bottom of society's well, even the poorest whites those who must live their lives only a few levels above, gain their self-esteem by gazing down on us… over time many reach out but most simply watch mesmerised into maintaining their unspoken commitment to keeping us where we are at whatever cost to them or us" (2008: 5).

When discussing the permanence of race, he claims that there are a few issues, embedded within the fabric of society that keep Black people right at the bottom, and any attempt that Black people make to better themselves is undermined by the system. This includes institutions like the government, policing, education, and housing. Although he writes about this in the context of modern-day America, it remains an equally valid argument in Britain. An example of this is the Sewell Report which Kalawant Bhopal said "displays a basic misunderstanding of how racism works.[30]The report challenges the view that Britain has "failed to make progress in tackling racial inequality" but rather, suggests that the "well meaning 'idealism' of many young people who claim the country is still institutionally racist is not borne out by evidence". [31] In the Macpherson report, institutional racism is defined as "The collective failure of an organisation to provide and appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour". The continued and persistent failure to make meaningful progress in tackling racial inequality undermines the experiences of subjugation and oppression of people of colour living in Britain, in particular young people who often find

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[28] The report of the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities 2021.

[29] W. MacPherson, The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry (MacPherson Report) 1999.

[30]K. Bhopal, The Sewell Report Displays a Basic Misunderstanding of How Racism Works (*The Guardian, 2021)* <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/mar/31/sewell-report-racism-government-racial-disparity-uk>

[31] ibid.

themselves being disproportionately disadvantaged in different aspects of their lives. There is ample evidence of institutional racism, historical and contemporary, to deny that is to misunderstand what institutional racism is. However, even statistics cannot begin "to express the havoc caused by joblessness and poverty, broken homes, anarchy in communities, futility in the public schools, all are the bitter harvest of race determined unemployment in a society where work provides sustenance, status and the all-important sense of self worth."[32] Following Bell's discussion, he argues that very few white people are readily active to support movements around civil rights, decolonisation, and anti-racism. This is because of "an irrational but easily roused fear that any social reform will benefit Blacks...fearful that Blacks will get ahead of them" (Derek Bell, 2001: 42)[33]. In failing to provide this support, this widens the gap between the rich and the poor, both Black and white doomed into life-long poverty, living on the fringes of society. The Sewell report is "a regeneration of the problem in a perverse form,"[34] ignoring glaring societal issues e.g. the rates of prosecution and sentencing for Black people being three times higher than that of White people[35] or the fact that Black women in the UK are four times more likely than white women to die in pregnancy or childbirth and women from Asian ethnic backgrounds face twice,[36] and that these matters amongst many others marginalise people of colour.

In 2020, the entire world became aware of George Floyd after he was unlawfully murdered by the police in Minneapolis in North America. Following his murder, many companies and institutions made a public pledge to reflect on institutional racism, challenging their own biases and policies that inherently disadvantage people of colour. For example, in June 2020, Sky announced a series of commitments to improve their approach to diversity and inclusion as a response to wider systemic issues and in support of the Black Lives Matter movement.[37] However, one year on, many of those promises remain unfulfilled. It appears that more companies have absorbed the energy and the passion behind the Black Lives Matter

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[32] D. Bell, *Faces at The Bottom of The Well* (HarperCollins Press 1992).

[33] B. Arrighi ed. *Understanding inequality: the intersection of race/ethnicity, class, and gender*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2001.

[34] ibid.

[35] 18 per thousand population compared with 6 per thousand population for White people and for sentencing it was 13 per thousand population for Black people and 5 per thousand population for White people.

[36] Original study is from Saving Lives, Improving Mothers' Care Lessons learned to inform maternity care from the UK and Ireland Confidential Enquiries into Maternal Deaths and Morbidity 2015-17, but the guardian reported that this is true today.

[37] Sky Group 2022. *Sky sets ambitious 2025 target to increase its ethnic diversity and representation*. [online] Available at: <https://www.skygroup.sky/en-gb/article/sky-sets-ambitious-2025-target-to-increase-its-ethnic-diversity-and-representation>

movement, without taking any meaningful action. There are several reasons for this, "ranging from a disbelief in the fundamental problem of racial inequality to realities about how hard it can be to pinpoint certain inequitable behaviours"[38]. The question that we need to be asking is whether or not anti-racism is important enough for institutions who are heavily invested in upholding whiteness because it assures their political and social power. For some the issue of race and racism is negotiable, whereas for people of colour this issue can be rooted in their survival. For example, whether they will be able to survive their encounters with institutions such as the police, general health, and mental health facilities, in corporate spaces or academic spaces. Institutions need to establish accountability, be transparent about current levels of racial representation, future goals, and progress; develop incentives for leaders to practice inclusive leadership and penalties for when they don't meet those goals; and pay close attention to the language used to discuss equity in the workplace to show that they are invested evolving.

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[38] L. Roberts, M. Grayson, Businesses Must Be Accountable for their Promises on Racial Justice (*Harvard Business Review,* 2021*)* <https://hbr.org/2021/06/businesses-must-be-accountable-for-their-promises-on-racial-justice>

Chapter 1: The Continued Struggle of Contemporary Student Decolonial Movements

Introduction

In this chapter, I describe how Decolonise University of Kent (Decolonise UoK) began as a student movement from the perspective of a student activist. I concentrate on the student movements nationally and internationally that informed the mobilisation at Kent and other universities across the UK. In this chapter the examiner encounters the core decolonial campaigns that have instructed and continue to instruct the contemporary decolonial student movements i.e. Rhodes Must Fall (2015) University of Cape Town[39] and University of Oxford[40], Why Is My Curriculum White, University College of London (2014)[41], Decolonise SOAS (2016) School of Oriental and African Studies University of London (SOAS)(2016)[42], Goldsmiths Anti-Racist Action (GARA)(2019) Goldsmiths University[43], Decolonise QMUL (2017), Queen Mary's University of London and Decolonising the University of Kent (Decolonise UoK) Manifesto (2019), University of Kent.

Many of these movements were inspired by Rhodes Must Fall and for students who have been involved in decolonial work, there has been a greater aspiration for actualisation of the universal goals set out in the Rhodes Must Fall movement. Students have been challenging systemic racism in higher education institutions and encouraging one another to take their positions as stakeholders in the learning system and loudly challenge their respective institutions to become more equitable. Students have been acting through different forms of activism such as campaigns, art exhibitions and demonstrations etc. In the case of Decolonise UoK, they have held events such as the decolonial café, student conferences and like events

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[39] E. Fairbanks, 'The Birth of Rhodes Must Fall' (*The Guardian*, 18 November 2015) <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2015/nov/18/why-south-african-students-have-turned-on-their-parents-generation>

[40] N. Khomami, 'Over one third of Oxford students want Cecil Rhodes statue removed' (*The Guardian*, 18 November 2015) <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2016/jan/15/oxford-students-cecil-rhodes-statue-removed>

[41] University College of London, 'Why Is My Curriculum White' (*YouTube*, 11 November 2014) <https://www.youtube.com/watch/Dscx4h2l-Pk>

[42] SOAS university of London, 'What is Decolonising SOAS' (*Decolonising SOAS*, 1 January) <https://blogs.soas.ac.uk/decolonisingsoas/what-is-decolonising-soas/>

[43] Goldsmiths Anti-Racist Action, 'GARA (Goldsmiths Anti-Racist Action): Everything You Need to Know' (*Goldsmiths Students' Union,* 1 September 2020) <https://www.goldsmithssu.org/news/article/6013/GARA-Goldsmiths-Anti-Racist-Action-everything-you-need-to-know/>

for BPOC students with the aim of creating spaces for education and solidarity. These spaces have also been communities and resources for lived experiences of BPOC students at the university. Some of these efforts have been directed at educating and informing their peers, academic tutors, and institutions of learning about their experiences of being minoritised at university and the importance of addressing issues of race/racialisation within Higher Education.

The ambitions of the Rhodes Must Fall (2015) movement at the University of Cape Town (UCT, spread like wildfire and developed into an international student movement. The call for decolonisation at UCT emerged because of racial tensions and tensions brought about by the realities of colonial and apartheid South Africa. The UCT #RhodesMustFall encouraged other movements in the country of South Africa such as Fees Must Fall and beyond borders, including Rhodes Must Fall at Oxford #RMFO. RMFO brought the movement to Britain where it grew and spread quickly across British universities.

Like Rhodes Must Fall (2015) at UCT, Oxford students wanted to start a conversation with their university about structural racism and to challenge neo-liberalist and colonial ideologies in Higher Education [44]'. Then, they asked and even today students continue to ask if we are living in a postcolonial Britain the way that some commentators in modern day Britain have suggested. Post colonialism suggests that we have moved on from the times of colonialism and that it no longer exists. However, there are power structures and systems of oppression that are based on colonialism and that exist in the context of Higher Education perpetuating colonial violence. Whilst the oppressors, beneficiaries or those who are indifferent might agree that colonialism is behind us; on the other hand, the oppressed and the descendants of colonised people might argue that they still experience the violence of colonialism and imperialism on a day-to-day basis.

Students in Britain, in particular those from Decolonise UoK that I had conversations with all acknowledge the reverberations of colonialism and some said that they experienced racialisation on a daily basis.[45] This was anything from the statues that we see when walking around campus to the inadvertent exclusion from spaces, because it was clear that those spaces were created with whiteness in mind and not ethnic diversity. They recognise that structural racism in Higher Education is deeply embedded in the way that universities operate and that universities are reluctant to make any impactful changes. One example is the way

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[44] A. Chaudhuri, 'The real meaning of Rhodes Must Fall' (*The Guardian*, 16 March 2016) <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/mar/16/the-real-meaning-of-rhodes-must-fall>
[45] See Student B in Chapter 2: What about the Data? II Buildings, Statues, Graffiti and a Lack of Accountability.

that Black students encounter race on campus. This is often as outsiders that have to operate within the system. The perfect phrase or analogy for this is invited to sit at the table, but not to speak at the table, a form of virtue signalling, Senator Elizabeth Warren is credited for saying, ""If you don't have a seat at the table, you're probably on the menu". A large number of students are invited to join the University of Kent which advertises BPOC in their literature but fail to take the political demands of BPOC students seriously. For some BPOC students, the action of the university suggests that BPOC people are admitted into the university for their value as bodies in the universities that represent modern social diversity and political correctness. The institutions accept them without accepting the burden and labour of making the appropriate adjustments to reflect the increase in BPOC students at the university. There is a negative psychological and physical impact of continuously denying BPOC students' spaces where they are not degraded and broken down. This is evidenced in some of the interviews that are in the following chapter. The general consensus from students is that to be accepted into the walls of the institution physically but not in the policies and in the structure is inadequate. The other example that I gave was of the statues that BPOC students see when they are walking around campus. The removal of the Cecil John Rhodes (Rhodes) statue and others like him is a debate about symbolism and imagery on campus.[46] Rhodes is celebrated by some and considered a mass murderer by others. It is true that Rhodes is considered by many to be a hero, but for me as a Shona Zimbabwean, the statue of Rhodes and his comrades who participated in the exploitation of Bantu people amongst others through colonialization. The trauma and the consequences of colonisation are intergenerational and an emotionally and psychologically violent experience for me as a Zimbabwean[47]. Zimbabwe formerly known as Rhodesia.[48] It is these kinds of experiences that act as a small mirror reflecting on the personal experience of the colonised. This and other issues around the wider and under-illuminated impact of British Imperial rule has been explored in depth in projects such as Decolonising Keynes.[49]

When students are talking about decolonising the curriculum, we are also talking about decolonising knowledge systems and looking at historical accounts from the perspective of

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[46] A. Chaudhuri, 'The real meaning of Rhodes Must Fall' (*The Guardian*, 16 March 2016) <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/mar/16/the-real-meaning-of-rhodes-must-fall>
[47] S. Newey and others, "We don't want to erase Cecil Rhodes from history. We want everyone to know his crimes", 2021.
[48] S. Chigudu, "Colonialism Had Never Really Ended': My Life in the Shadow of Cecil Rhodes", 2021.
[49] Kent Law School, 'Decolonising the Curriculum Project: 2019 Conference: Anamika Misra' (*Youtube*, 23 July 2010) <https://youtu.be/x38NMNk6K0c>

the oppressed and the oppressor. Decolonisation is about imagery and symbolism such as Rhodes and Keynes. It is also about the representation of BPOC people in the university pipeline and in senior leadership positions. It is about the curriculum content that is prioritised at different stages of study and not least, the disproportionate policing of BPOC students on campus and other like issues.

I will explore some of these issues in this chapter to give context to the reader about the general feeling of BPOC students and the ongoing work in this field. In Chapters 2 and 3 the reader will encounter the affective experiences of individual students and in Chapter 4, the reflections of the author.

Decolonise University of Kent

Decolonise UoK was initiated and facilitated by Dr. Suhraiya Jivraj, Dave Thomas and Sheree Palmer. The facilitators were joined by enthusiastic students mostly from Kent Law School. Decolonise UoK came at a time where BPOC students like myself were feeling out of place in the university. This was reflected in the Manifesto that was presented by the collective at the Decolonise UoK 20th March 2019 conference[50]. The research that informed the Manifesto was the result of focus groups and interviews that we conducted to understand and centre the experiences of BPOC students. To begin, we started thinking about the infamous 'BAME attainment gap'. It was infamous because Advance HE's report on student attainment showed that BPOC students were underachieving at the end of their final year of university in comparison to their white counterparts. White students were achieving far more first and second upper class degrees when compared to BPOC students (Degree attainment gaps, Advance HE, 2022) [51]. The Advance HE report was not clear about the contributing factors that ought to be considered and in the minds of anyone who engaged with this work, nationwide it was implied that BPOC students were underperforming. It implied that we should almost always expect our white students to outperform our BPOC students[52].

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[50] Decolonise UoK, 'Decolonising the Curriculum Project: Through the Kaleidoscope' (*Decolonising the Curriculum UoK*, 19 March 2019) <https://decoloniseukc.files.wordpress.com/2019/03/decolonising-the-curriculum-manifesto-final-2.pdf>

[51] Advance HE, Degree Attainment Gaps <https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/guidance/equality-diversity-and-inclusion/student-recruitment-retention-and-attainment/degree-attainment-gaps>

[52] R. Shilliam (2015). Black Academia: The doors have been opened but the architecture remains the same. C. Alexander and J. Arday (Eds). Aiming higher: Race, inequality, and diversity in the academy. Runnymede Trust. <www.runnymedetrust.org/companies/187/74/Aiming-Higher.html>

In the meantime, racial tensions were rising on campus, with multiple incidents that happened on campus being left unaddressed. Some of the events happened before Decolonise UoK, some whilst it was still being established and others happened well after it was established. I would have liked to say that as a collective we managed to eliminate racism on campus altogether, but the legacy of the country is built on imperialism and colonialism. These ideologies have been focussed on separating people and dividing them into smaller factions based on the colour of their skin colour and ethnic identities.

The conference was an electric event that reflected the collaboration and co-production of knowledge between students and lecturers. The document was influenced by students from undergraduate, postgraduate and staff all of which had different ethnic, sometimes shared backgrounds. Some students were international, and some spoke about their experiences of growing up Black and British. There were different communities that were represented e.g., Challenging Ableism, a conversation that I led, invited BPOC with disabilities. In the manifesto Decolonise UoK students made a list of recommendations directed at the institution through the voices off BPOC students studying at the university to consider many pressing issues, amongst which was "the colour of [the] curriculum".

"The colour of the curriculum" considers different aspects of the BPOC student experience for example, whether BPOC authors are represented in the curriculum, which would allow BPOC students to see the reflections of their stories and lived experiences in their primary reading lists and be able to draw from these experiences in their essays and theses. It also encourages lecturers to re-think their pedagogical approaches to be more inclusive of the students that they are teaching in their classroom. This would be helpful for all students and would especially encourage BPOC students to engage with the teaching where they otherwise might have felt like outsiders or like they did not belong. For more BPOC students to feel like they belong, educators need to think critically about whether their pedagogical style including access to learning.

The manifesto also suggested that the University should encourage cultural competency within the classroom (Jivraj, 2020)[53]. The students since Rhodes Must Fall have been loudly challenging the curriculum, arguing that across universities, the curriculum is too white, too pale and too old[54]. Decolonise UoK suggested that the institution could do this by teaching students about different forms of knowledge from all around the world including countries

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[53] D. Thomas, S Jivraj, eds., *Towards Decolonising the University: A Kaleidoscope for Empowered Action* (Oxford: Counterpress 2020).

[54] J. Muldoon, "Academics: It's Time to Get Behind Decolonising the Curriculum", 2019.

from the Global South e.g., Zimbabwe, India, China and Brazil. This is mainly because the knowledge that is most valued within universities has usually been developed in the "Western" world. However, BPOC people make up the global majority. Arguably, there are non-Western knowledge systems that have been ignored because of their origin instead of being celebrated and acknowledged for their merit.

The institution has a responsibility to be part of the learning and development of all its students and to challenge them to critically analyse and think about knowledge systems from all around the world as this would be a reflection of the world, compared to the alternative, which is only a reflection of Europe. Through reading lists students might be encouraged to explore worlds beyond their own understanding and have the opportunity to explore cultures and practices outside of the Britain or Europe. Achille Mbembe (2016) proposes that we need to reframe our thinking around knowledge production and redefine the university as an entity "capable of convening various publics in new forms of assemblies that become points of convergence of and platforms for the redistribution of different kinds of knowledge"[55]. If we looked at it this way, abandoning the Eurocentric canon, obsolete forms of knowledge and pedagogies then perhaps we could start to make progress in this area. Independent of its context, knowledge produced outside of the Eurocentric canon should be valued for its capacity to inform on matters across the world. There should be a malleable structure that embraces [difference of the ages], context and background when it comes to the heritage of its students and to the authors of the knowledge which it chooses to validate.

Students from Decolonise UoK also highlighted the importance of 'promoting inclusion and countering exclusion' (Decolonise UoK Manifesto, 2019). This can be achieved by the recommendations noted above, specifically thinking about how to make learning more accessible and inclusive to marginalised students. Another way to do this would be through improved representation amongst staff at the University in areas such as student well-being and other student support services which would likely increase the number of students who engage with these services (Jivraj, 2020). In the research from the manifesto, a high majority of students reported that they felt like they were very few staff who looked like them and they did not feel like they were receiving adequate support from the institution to help them overcome some of the cultural differences and/or changes that they were facing during their time of studying. At present, students do not feel that the institution has the competence or

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[55] A. Mbembe, "Decolonizing Knowledge and the Question of the Archive" 2015 Decolonizing the University, University of Witswatersrand.

the personnel to respond to their interpersonal needs. This gap has a direct and often an adverse impact on student outcomes as a whole (Salisbury, 2020)[56].

This conversation is important because often, BPOC students find it difficult to speak about their experiences because no one understands them or what they are going through. It is already difficult to admit that you need help, but even more difficult to not receive it when you have asked. Sometimes being BPOC is a lonely feeling because it is so easy to be misunderstood by people who are not conscious of their biases. I can provide the example of being a Black student at the University of Kent. Students have shared their experiences of being over-policed on campus, by official bodies such as campus security. The Afro-Diasporic Legal Network have been focussing on centring some of these stories where campus security have used illegitimate force on BPOC students, to show the impact this has on students from BPOC backgrounds who are expected to learn in an environment where they feel physically or psychologically unsafe(Afro-Diasporic Legal Network, 2019).[57] Some Black students have reported being surveyed by campus security who failed to provide reasonable grounds, whilst they were staying at their university accommodation. These examples shine a light on one of the main issues that causes tension between Black students and the university because they are disproportionately stopped and searched in general, but also on university campuses. This happens at other universities too, like the University of Manchester where a Zac Adan was held against a wall by security guards for "looking like a drug dealer".[58]

This physically and psychologically intrusive method implemented on university campuses without reason is unjustified and unfair. These incidents contribute to the BAME student retention and BAME student drop out figures.

Decolonise UoK in the Manifesto and the Afro-Diasporic Legal Network in the Student Demands[59] wanted to ensure that the voices of the students were heard and wanted to put an end to the silence on racism and unbelonging on university campuses. Decolonise UoK demanded improved dialogue through Student-Staff forums including the University of Kent

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[56] R. Joseph Salisbury 2020, Decolonizing the University: A movement that must look to history, and remain radical. In Dave Thomas, Suhraiya Jivraj (eds) *Towards Decolonising the University* p.71-74.

[57] Afro-Diasporic Legal Network, "BME societies submit a Statement of Solidarity & Demands to the University of Kent", 2019 <https://medium.com/@afrodiasporiclegalnetwork/bme-societies-submit-a-statement-of-solidarity-demands-to-the-university-of-kent-a353c351e9df>

[58] S. Freeman-Powell, 'Manchester University Student 'Traumatised' By 'Racial Profiling' Incident' (*BBC News*, 16 November 2020) <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-54954602>

[59] Afro-Diasporic Legal Network, "BME societies submit a Statement of Solidarity & Demands to the University of Kent", 2019 https://medium.com/@afrodiasporiclegalnetwork/bme-societies-submit-a-statement-of-solidarity-demands-to-the-university-of-kent-a353c351e9df

and Kent Union, separately. These forums were suggested for students to express their grievances and concerns directly, hoping that this improves student-staff relations and transparency between the students and the institution.

Rhodes Must Fall, University of Cape Town

Rhodes Must Fall was made up of two main movements. The first began at the University of Cape Town, well known as UCT. Students called for the removal of the Rhodes statue situated in the middle of the university campus. The students at the centre of this movement, represented the indigenous people of South Africa (predominantly from the Bantu tribe). To understand the significance of this movement, you need to understand that for decades South Africans were dominated and oppressed by both the Boers and the British Empire.

The statue of Rhodes that was standing in the middle of the UCT campus was symbolic of the oppression that South Africans and other indigenous people from the Bantu tribe endured under British rule. Segregationist laws made it so that the Black people were not allowed to mix with the white in restaurants and schools for example. There were clear boundaries separating the British from the indigenous people in colour and in class with Black indigenous South Africans driven to the bottom of the societal hierarchy by imperialist and apartheid systems.

By many, Rhodes is remembered as an invader who plundered and pillaged through southern Africa, dispossessing any indigenous people that were there. He used "mercenaries and gangs to evict people from their land down the barrel of a gun"[60]. In death, he was one of the world's wealthiest men, with a vast mining empire and more than 8.8 million square kilometres of land which he appropriated through the annexation of the South Rhodesia which today is known as Zimbabwe. It would be thoughtless not to pay mind to the psychological implications of this-the psychological implications of having a man who inflicted this level of violence commemorated and celebrated and the identities of those who he harmed.

The students at UCT organised against the systemic injustices that were happening at the university. They challenged the curriculum by asking questions about the absence of their histories in the books which they study – including the absence of Black South African

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[60] University of Cape Town, 'The Big Racial Divide: Rhodes Statue' (*University of Cape Town News*, 24 March 2015) <https://www.news.uct.ac.za/article/-2015-03-24-the-big-racial-divide-rhodes-statue>

heroes and civilians. They argued that their experiences were hard to find in their learning and their identities were being repressed at the university that was insensitive to Black South Africans and upheld colonialist ideologies as part of their structure.

To show that they were unsatisfied with the administration, students from the SRC and those in support started to show their dissent.

They occupied the UCT offices, demonstrated and through less peaceful conduct, started using violence, burning art, vehicles and buildings. One student even threw human faeces at the Rhodes statue. Students drew most of their support through social media activism and digital disobedience using their hashtag #RhodesMustFall.

Rhodes Must Fall was not and is not just a movement about the removal of a statue. It is a movement that directly opposes the systems of oppression which that statue represents. The resistance is about challenging institutions and insisting on impactful action against white supremacy and white privilege[61]. This is what mobilised other student groups e.g., at University of Cambridge, Oxford, Harvard eventually University of Kent. Rhodes being left to tower over the students at the University can be seen as powerful imagery subtly hinting at the inescapable history of British Empire and colonialism. The legacy of colonialism continues to loom over their existence, shapeshifting to fit the society of the time. As one student, Mamelo Melepho, the SRC member in charge of sports and recreation said, "We've been told transformation doesn't happen overnight, and now we are saying if it could not be achieved 20 years ago, what is the hold-up 20 years later?"[62]. Nothing in the last 20 years has changed. The statue, for indigenous people is a representation of the power dynamics which still exist in leading academies such as UCT today where the proportion of Black professors does not reflect the student population – which has a majority of Black students.

University of Stellenbosch

Other stories of decolonisation and resistance through student organisations began to merge following student action at the University of Cape Town. In 2015, Open Stellenbosch, a

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[61] R. Chantiluke, B. Kwoba and A. Nkopo, *Rhodes Must Fall* (Zed Books Ltd 2018).

[62] L. Stander and M. Vilakazi, 'Rhodes: As Divisive in Death as in Life' (*News24*, 22 March 2015) <https://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/Cecil-John-Rhodes-As-divisive-in-death-as-in-life-20150322>

student and staff led activist organisation emerged to tackle the same systems of oppression that were highlighted in the previous paragraph at UCT campus, with a focus on the role of language in Higher Education. Stellenbosch has a long-standing reputation for being under Afrikaans instruction. Language has always been and remains a big debate topic in South Africa, especially the argument about which language should be the language of command and how that ought to be determined. Many students at Stellenbosch University were forced to boycott their classes because of the overt racism on campus which affects their day-to-day experiences and their learning. In one instance, a lecturer on the Stellenbosch campus refused to teach in English, despite the majority of the students in the classroom having English as a common language. Black students were largely concerned that the lecturer insisted on teaching in a language that was not accessible for the students who were historically had been allowed to go to universities such as Stellenbosch. In allowing this, the institution and academic boards who allow it, are complicit to the exclusion of students from indigenous backgrounds. The Afrikaners benefitted grossly from the conquests of Rhodes and other colonialists like him. The gate keeping within these academic institutions through language is a tool to prevent indigenous South Africans from learning. It is a reflection of the institution having predetermined who belongs in the university space and reminding Black students for whom these spaces were designed and created.

The Rhodes Must Fall movement was never about the statue[63]. It was about the fall of white privilege and white supremacy. It was about denouncing the legacy of Rhodes and his role in designing divisive, classist and racist practices that would severely diminish the position of Black South Africans. It was about interrogating the symbolism of Rhodes, infamous for his conquests from Cape to Cairo. It is also about confronting the recurring trauma of Rhodes towering over the University and over the city of Cape Town in general – and realising that those who undermine this by refusing to acknowledge the harm are usually the beneficiaries of either colonialism and/or apartheid. Other issues that were raised by students were the access to higher education and student accommodation in the #FeesMustFall movements.

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[63] Z. Matebeni, '#RhodesMustFall – It was Never Just About the Statue' (*Heinrich Boll Stiftung*, 19 February 2018) <https://za.boell.org/en/2018/02/19/rhodesmustfall-it-was-never-just-about-statue>

Rhodes Must Fall, University of Oxford

Rhodes Must Fall, Oxford challenged the statue of Rhodes in front of Oriel College. Their protests had a similar tone to those at the University of Cape Town where there were calls for decolonisation. There were pertinent questions surrounding Oxford being recognised as a prestigious institution across the globe, but also as an institution which was failing to engage in critical discussions around race, racism and colonialism. Some argued that Rhodes was the "liberator of Africa"[64] They were most criticised for leaving the statue of Rhodes untouched following the student action and knowingly participating in the erasure of knowledge systems in southern Africa. The commentary surrounding the removal of the statues illustrated the extent of the racial discourse. The debates were made up of people who did not understand that 'decolonising' knowledge in this way was not about erasing the history of Britain or even of Rhodes. Instead, it is about challenging the narrative of heroism surrounding these political actors which is often told in half truths. Where some see a businessman and a politician, others see a thief of diamonds and ivory, a perpetrator of genocide whose bones are buried in the lands which he colonised. The former, is usually the view of people who have benefitted from Rhodes's conquests and the latter is usually the perspective of people who were forced to sacrifice fundamental parts of their personhood under colonial rule.

Decolonial student movements have been spreading across campuses nationwide. Whilst some action emerged from Rhodes Must Fall (2015) at the University of Cape Town and Oxford University, the more contemporary movements that have emerged in recent years are deeply rooted in critically addressing the institutional racism that students and staff of colour encounter on a daily basis within the "white walls" of academia. Students became activists, talking back to institutional practice asking, "Why is my curriculum white?" causing an uprising of students against the "Eurocentric domination and lack of diversity I the curricula"[65]. Students are particularly concerned about their relationship with the institution including how a "white" [meaning centred around the experiences of white people and in a wider context the idea that they are morally and intellectually superior] curriculum compromises the quality of education which reflects global experience and thought. With an

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[64] J. Newsinger (2016), "Why Rhodes Must Fall".

[65]N. Abou El Magd", 'Why is My Curriculum White? - Decolonising the Academy' (*National Union for Students Connect*, 9 February 2016) <https://www.nusconnect.org.uk/articles/why-is-my-curriculum-white-decolonising-the-academy>

increasingly diverse student population (Shilliam), it is no longer acceptable that the academy remains, "normatively, habitually, and intellectually 'white'"[66].

Through the experiences of their respective institutions, BIPOC students continue to challenge the ways in which they often experience erasure from within the academy. Students are interrogating "whiteness" and arguing that academia needs to work toward dismantling the power structures that are embedded and invisibilized (Hylton, 2012) within it – which often perpetuate systemic injustices that exceedingly disadvantage students from Black, Asian and ethnic minority backgrounds. Institutions should apply decolonial critique, thought and practices and engage with anti-blackness to inform on pedagogical practices and to address students' sense of (un)belonging on university campuses.

Contemporary Decolonial Movements

Contemporary movements were galvanised by the student action that was taking place across the country in response to Rhodes Must Fall but action was predominantly as a response to the Advance HE's report on the BAME attainment gap. As part of this discussion, I will discuss Why is My Professor not Black (UCL) and Why is My Curriculum so White (UCL). I will also discuss Decolonise QMUL, Decolonising SOAS and the Goldsmiths Anti-Racist Action in depth because they are of a particular interest to the work that collaborators of Decolonise UoK have been doing at their universities. Some of the examples that I have given show that students can be collaborators and co-producers of knowledge, that there have been times when institutions have responded, however limited, to the challenge of decolonising and that other times, students have had to endure great suffering to find spaces where the colour of their skin is not politicised.

Why is My Curriculum White? University College of London

They may not have been vandalising university property or literally dismantling the masters' house at UCL, but they were disrupting thinking and challenging the modes of learning that were most common at the university. There is a 20-minute video that was created by students at UCL uploaded on YouTube and the video documents the experiences of students at UCL

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[66] C. Alexander (ed) Aiming Higher: Race, Inequality and Diversity in the Academy. 2015. London: Runnymede Trust.

who point out that there is a lack of awareness at the university and criticise the university for focussing on 'white ideas' by 'white authors' because of empire and colonialism[67]. They criticise the University for failing to rise to the challenge of addressing this and to recognise the experiences of others and their philosophical ideas. Minna Salami makes the argument that 'we should not dismiss white, western or male thinking simply on the premise that it is white, western and males' but also makes the point that 'modern philosophical concepts of personhood, human rights, justice and modernity are deeply shaped by race'[68], in reference to the work of Michael McEchreane[69].

'Racism rarely figures on philosophy of education conference agendas and papers discussing the ethics of education that tend to talk in general and abstract terms neglecting issues of race or gender'[70]. The UCL collective explained, "…when we are talking about whiteness we are not talking about white people, but an ideology that empowers people racialised as white" and to the question "Why is My Curriculum White", they responded with the following answers:

1. To many, whiteness is invisible
2. A curriculum racialised as white was fundamental to the development of capitalism
3. Because its power is intersectional
4. The white curriculum thinks for us; so, we don't have to
5. The physical environment of the academy is built on white domination
6. The white curriculum need not only include white people.
7. The white curriculum is based on a (very) popular myth.
8. Because if it isn't white, it isn't right (apparently)[71]

Not far away from UCL, the Student Union at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) at the University of London were demanding that the curriculum was decolonised.

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[67] University College of London, 'Why Is My Curriculum White' (*Youtube*, 11 November 2014) <https://www.youtube.com/watch/Dscx4h2l-Pk>

[68] M. Salami, 'Philosophy Has to be About More Than White Men' (*The Guardian, 2015*) <https://www.theguardian.com/education/commentisfree/2015/mar/23/philosophy-white-men-university-courses>

[69] M. Peters, 2018 Why is My Curriculum White? A Brief Genealogy of Resistance. In: Arday, J., Mirza, H. (eds) Dismantling Race in Higher Education. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham <https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007%2F978-3-319-60261-5_14>

[70] <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00131857.2015.1037227>

[71] Michael Peters 2020, Why is my curriculum, white? PESA Agora. <https://pesaagora.com/epat/why-is-my-curriculum-white/>

The title, "They Kant Be Serious" appeared on the Daily Mail's headline[72]. Students were demanding that figures such as Plato, Descartes, Immanuel Kant and Bert and Russell be re-evaluated as part of the curriculum because "the majority of philosophers on [our] courses" should be from Africa and Asia. The students commented that the current curriculum was too male and pale and began trying to reshape the narrative by challenging the University to take an interest in Decolonising the Curriculum. They set up a campaign backed by lecturers to decolonise minds using the "Decolonising SOAS Learning and Teaching Toolkit[73]". By their definition, the students described decolonisation as a concept that connects "contemporary racialised disadvantages with wider historical processes of colonialism [which] seeks to expose and transform them through forms of collective reflection and action"[74].

It is interesting that they chose to use this title, because of the influence that Kant had on philosophy as an academic discipline in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. However, "it was an account that demolished existing accounts beginning in Egypt or Western Asia thus establishing an exclusionary canon of philosophy. Hegel's account of world history was strongly racist and imbued European philosophy with a prejudicial history we are trying to escape from. These two philosophers contributed so much to a contemporary understanding of modernity as fundamentally Western" (Peters, 2014)[75].

Goldsmiths Anti-Racist Action, Goldsmiths University of London

We can all agree that the actions that were taken by students across the UK and in SA were brave and courageous. The student movement that stood out to me the most was the occupation of Deptford Town Hall by Goldsmiths Anti-Racist Action from Goldsmiths University at the University of London. GARA demanded an institution-wide response to tackling racism on campus. Their protest action began after a candidate in the student elections complained that she had been subjected to racist abuse. Racist graffiti was scrawled

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[72] J. Petre, 'They Kant Be Serious! PC Students Demand White Philosophers Including Plato and Descartes Be Dropped From the University Syllabus' (*The Daily Mail,* 2017) <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4098332/They-Kant-PC-students-demand-white-philosophers-including-Plato-Descartes-dropped-university-syllabus.html>

[73] Decolonising SOAS Working Group, 'Decolonising SOAS Learning and Teaching Toolkit for Programme and Module Convenors 2018 <https://blogs.soas.ac.uk/decolonisingsoas/files/2018/10/Decolonising-SOAS-Learning-and-Teaching-Toolkit-AB.pdf>

[74] Ibid.

[75] M. Peters 2014, Eurocentrism and the Critique of 'Universal World History': The Eastern origins of Western civilisation. *Geopolitics, History, and International Relations*, 1 63-77.

over her campaign posters mocking her accent, and although the banner was removed, students felt that this was yet another example of the institution failing to adequately respond to students of colour where minority ethnic groups make up 40% of the student population. In response, GARA and supporting students occupied Deptford Hall for 137 days challenging the 'systemic and endemic' issue of institutionalised racism and managed to secure all their demands including revision of the job description for the wellbeing advisor and counselling team staff, so as to better meet the needs of BAME students, and to hire BAME wellbeing advisors, the reform of the hate-crime reporting centre, with a new taskforce to be set up to design the new complaints procedure, meeting a minimum of 3 times a month, with GARA representation, to allocate £20k for Black History events, funds for a reparative justice programme, with an open call for BAME academic researchers, whose finding on Goldsmiths' colonial legacy will be published and a statement from Goldsmiths on its complicity in racism after has faced serious backlash from the Senior Management Team at the University who took legal action against black and minority ethnic, Muslim, LGBTQ and disabled students for their participation in the action[76]. The students made many great sacrifices for these demands to be fulfilled, and although the response has been partially successful, so far, it is in no way proportional to the commitment that organising students made but it is encouraging to see that the demands that they secured in writing are being enacted. There is still work that needs to be done and the progress of these demands can be found on the university website[77].

Decolonising the Curriculum Toolkits

In addition to some of the student's movements that I have mentioned, I also wanted to add some of the toolkits that show how practical decolonising the curriculum is. These are designed as guides to transforming the university space. In a significant way, this is also a form of resistance because of the labour that goes into producing one of these toolkits and bridges the "how to" gap that often alienates those who want to support decolonisation. It allows allies to take a step further and gives them the know-how, and at the least, a place to

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[76] Goldsmiths Students' Union, 'GARA (Goldsmiths Anti-Racist Action): Everything You Need to Know <https://www.goldsmithssu.org/news/article/6013/GARA-Goldsmiths-Anti-Racist-Action-everything-you-need-to-know/>

[77] Goldsmiths University of London, 'Commitments to Goldsmiths Anti-Racist Action' <https://www.gold.ac.uk/racial-justice/commitments/>

start. These are Decolonising SOAS Learning and Teaching Toolkit, Decolonising the Curriculum Toolkit (University of Westminster) and Towards Anti-Racist Legal Pedagogy (University of Kent)[78]. Implementing these toolkits will make decolonising less abstract, and less theoretical as they speak to issues that have an impact on the everyday experiences of people from ethnic minority backgrounds e.g., the need for representation.

Conclusion

Decolonising movements have been increasing in the last few years, more students, staff and universities are purchasing the idea in Britain. Several student and staff movements have emerged to challenge the neo-liberalist university, its domination and the lack of diversity that often leaves students from racially minoritised backgrounds feeling isolated and unaccounted for. These movements have the common goal of dismantling the masters' house, which is racism in Higher Education institutions. The pursuit of social justice and equality in the academic space is not only about re-dressing the curriculum and including otherwise silenced decolonial work but it is also about offering resources to racially minoritised students, academics and allies looking to challenge and undo forms of coloniality in their classrooms and campuses[79]. An essential part of thinking about decoloniality is looking back at the legacies of colonialism within these institutions and considering the impact that that perpetuating these histories has on racially minoritised groups, especially those who are members of the university community on all levels. It is often argued that we are not living in a post-colonial Britain because even today there is evidence of the different ways that colonialism continues to disadvantage specific groups and the ex-colonies. As Higher Education institutions continue to set the tone for what information is valued and respected, it is expected that they take a strong position in reshaping policy and furthering research in this area to help inform the public sphere and in order to help them address their own inadequacies.

From Rhodes Must Fall at the University of Cape Town to Goldsmiths Anti-Racist Action at Goldsmiths, students have been inspired to make an impact and make their voices heard. Arguably, they should be focussing on their studies, but this level of action and the absolute

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[78] S. Jivraj, 2020 'Towards Anti-Racist Legal Pedagogy: A Resource - Research at Kent' <https://research.kent.ac.uk/decolonising-law-schools/> accessed 20 April 2022.
[79] G. Bhambra, D. Gebrial, K, Nişancıoğlu. 2018. *Decolonising the University 2018 (*Pluto Press 2018).

need for it, suggests that this is a privilege which they cannot afford. Part of their journey has been committed to responding to the persistent institutional racism in Higher Education and bringing attention to issues of inequality and violence against students from marginalised backgrounds. In the next chapter, I reflect on conversations with student activists from the University of Kent and hear from them about their student experiences.

Chapter 2: What About the Data?: Race and Intersectionality

Introduction

Intersectionality challenges us to explore "how racism may impact or manifest differently for different racialised groups" (Rollock and Gillborn, 2011). In this chapter, I explore the experiences of BPOC students at the University of Kent. I retell the accounts of five student activists who I interviewed about their experiences of studying and learning on the University of Kent campus and working in solidarity to work towards transforming the university space for racial minorities. It is my hope that these insights are "useful for designing effective and appropriate equality interventions and strategies and prevent 'single strand' work to 'compete' for resource and understanding (Bhopal and Henderson, 2019).[80]

My exercise here focuses and centres on the voices of Black students and students of colour, particularly the students who have been engaging with institutions in the hopes of creating a better sense of belonging. This is a statement on the invisibility and visibility of students such as these, who engage with the violence of challenging and confronting institutions which perpetuate colonial legacies and are reluctant to change this history despite racial minorities being major stakeholders of their student community.

I look at how BPOC students are invisible in higher education institutions, to the extent where they cannot identify themselves on campus, in their curriculum and in other student activities. Student life and communities across higher education institutions across Britain often echo the experiences of white students and have a stubborn tendency to broadly discriminate against marginalised students.

I also look at how BPOC students are visible when it comes to issues of race on campus, for example often being asked to be an authority on issues surrounding race in the classroom, even though they are attending the class as students and not being remunerated for their labour. In some cases, students are asked to teach members of staff but again, fail to be remunerated for their labour. It is common knowledge that racism on campus often goes

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[80] Advance HE, 'Understanding Structural Racism in UK Higher Education: An Introduction' *(Advance HE, 2021)* <https://warwick.ac.uk/services/sg/si/diversity/advance_he_-_understanding_racism_report.pdf>

unpunished. There are policies such as the Prevent Strategy[81] that have contributed to a sense of unbelonging for some racial minorities. As a result, some students have reported feeling isolated, silenced and discriminated against because of the way these policies are enforced on campus[82].

Finally, I discuss the labour of BPOC students towards enhancing their university experiences in order for them to forge an academic environment and a sense of belonging.

Principled Spaces Can Create Belonging.

When I was talking to Student A, she was calm in the way that she spoke about her experiences, with an acceptance. I found this to be discouraging because she is an example of a student who strives to perform well academically through diligence and hard work, and in times of difficulty has done her part in seeking the appropriate services, schools and departments to ensure that the challenges she is facing have no direct or permanent impact on her academics. However, some of the issues are difficult to insulate, and or keep under control, in some instances she cannot separate her academic experiences from her personal experiences because often they coincide. Her intersectional positionality as a Chinese woman who is also a member of the LGBTQ community, makes it all the more challenging for her to manoeuvre life through campus because often she finds herself being discriminated against. This is even despite the rhetoric on campus that suggests that the University of Kent is a diverse campus. The evidence points to the contrary, this student is an example.

When I was interviewing student A, it was a multi-faceted discussion which concerned mainly what it was like to be a student at the University of Kent, living on campus with the reality of being in multiple minority groups. At University, "there is not much representation and people hold different stereotypes". Student A continued to tell me about her experiences with micro-aggressions and direct racism whilst studying at the university, inside and outside of the classroom, including in on campus accommodation. Racial Micro-aggressions are

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[81] See the NUS guidance to Student Union Officers on the Prevent strategy here:
<https://www.nusconnect.org.uk/articles/students-not-suspects-building-your-campaign-against-prevent>
[82] Decolonise University of Kent Collective. 2019 Decolonise the Curriculum Project: Through the Kaleidoscope Manifesto *Race, Identity & Belonging: Promoting Inclusion/ Countering Exclusion*.

"everyday slights and degradations" as opposed to direct racism. They can seem "innocuous in isolation" but cumulative experiences of these microaggressions can impact the well-being and life chances of minoritised people[83].

She felt like she never belonged at the university, even after joining student societies, which they were a part of in order to share her passion with others who shared the same passion, to help create a sense of belonging at the start. However, she was only partially successful, because whilst she enjoyed the society, often she felt "quite left out" especially after joining the committee. "I am human", when they exclude me, "that makes me feel sad". In an interview, Student A admitted that although they were part of a society which they enjoyed, whenever they were there, they were the only person of colour and often experienced micro-aggressions from other members of that society such as being ignored, excluded from essential communications and verbally abused when they asked for clarification from white members of their society.

Student A admitted that she had never experienced micro-aggressions or discriminatory behaviour from any faculty members but also observed that in the classroom that white students were passive aggressive in group discussions, sometimes excluding her and another minority student. In the classroom Student A felt that it was more obvious to her which of her white classmates was racist, because of their willingness to exclude and their telling contributions to the classroom. She did think that there was an issue with representation at the university, never having been taught by a teacher who looks like her. She approached this thought with honesty talking about how "she didn't expect this to happen at the university", it appears that they (the university) have very little interest when it comes to issues of race and racialised students.

In contrast, when describing her experiences Student, A was glad to find Decolonise UoK, she said, "people can understand what I am feeling", which was welcome reprieve from the usual isolation and made it different to all the other spaces that they encountered on campus. When she joined Decolonise, she found some sense of belonging on campus, because like her, other there were other students who felt lost because they had similar experiences. Most

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[83] R. Joseph-Salisbury (2019). Institutionalised whiteness, racial microaggressions and black bodies out of place in Higher Education. *Whiteness and Education*, *4*(1), 1-17.

of these students had been excluded for being different or having different perspectives and growing up in different contexts.

Student A also found herself isolated at home and found life to be particularly difficult when she had a bone fracture and needed to use crutches. Her housemates were not sensitive to her vulnerability. In fact, they laughed at her for using crutches and when communicating, it appeared that they had a separate Whatsapp group chat which excluded her. Unsurprisingly she found that she was almost always responsible for taking out the bins, a chore which others refused to share responsibility for. It sounds like a simple task, which doesn't need to be discussed further, but truly it does. When Student A thinks about the fact that her housemates are unkind to her without provocation, have a group chat where they share everything that happens in their campus flat and another group chat that excludes her, and almost always pick on her to do a chore that is supposed to be shared with the whole house. Why is that? Is it because of the colour of her skin? This is how micro-aggressions are. There is always enough for the victim of racism to know what they experienced and what it meant, but it's always very simple for the other party to explain away without admitting that it was an issue of race/racialization.

It is interesting that some researchers (Vaccaro and Newman, 2016) have argued that extra-curricular activities i.e., joining clubs and societies at university can be a way to improve sense of belonging amongst students who are marginalised[84], even though this was only partially successful for Student A. She found that within her society, which she thought was going to be a safe space, she was often isolated and deliberately excluded. Despite her efforts and her enjoyment of participating in society activities she found that she was often isolated on campus, sometimes in the classroom other times at societies and in on campus accommodation.

Naturally, she turned to student well-being services to help her process her bone fracture, the relationship that she had with her housemates more specifically and the negative impact that this was having on her academic work and mental health. Student A felt that the counsellors that she saw whilst at the well-being centre could not fully understand the experiences that

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[84] A. Vaccaro and B. Newman (2016). Development of a sense of belonging for privileged and minoritized students: An emergent model. *Journal of College Student Development*, *57*(8), 926.

she was describing to them and why they had such a great impact on her academics and her well-being. She also felt that whilst there was some support from her School, the support structures at the University, did not provide her with the safe space that she needed to discuss what it was like being racialised in every aspect of her life at Kent, and also the challenges that she faced, and gaps that she felt through when it came to her sexuality and how that married in with race whilst living on campus. She felt overall that the University did not care about her mental well-being and maybe not even whether she performed well or not, but instead that they only cared about the bottom line and that her value, was exorbitant tuition fees that her parents paid every year since she first began at Kent.

Buildings, Statues, Graffiti and a Lack of Accountability

At the very start of the Covid – 19 lockdown period, I had the opportunity to interview Student B. They were interesting to engage with because unlike Student A, they said that they had never experienced direct racism in the classroom and could not remember a time where either a member of staff or another student had been directly racist to them. Student B, a Black African student from Kenya admitted that she had been in the room when her white counterparts referred to Africa as being a country and expressed demeaning views when talking about international development in Africa which she sometimes interpreted as micro-aggressions.

Whilst she did not experience any direct racism, she often experienced structural racism. One of the concerns she had was that whilst at the University of Kent she had witnessed systemic injustices and the disadvantages that Black students and other students of colour experienced on a daily basis. Some of these were everyday microaggressions, like having to walk around campus noticing the different ways in which colonialism was celebrated. For example, at the University of Kent, students have been exploring and asking questions about the 'Keynes' building, named after "the leading 20th century economist, John Maynard Keynes". But it is left for those who carry the violence of his history to educate whom? "The other side of history". Equally, Student B shared her concerns about the University's refusal to respond to the anti-Blackness and other more prominent forms of racism that she could see on campus. For example, she questioned why the University had failed to hold responsible the students who had scrawled a Nazi swastika on an Eliot College wall reported on 8th November 2018.

Student B said that in such instances she was reminded of how passing her time was at university and that there were spaces that automatically excluded her because they were not a reflection of her, and in some cases were a rejection of her intersectionality.

When we carried out our interview, it was at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic and when discussing the impact that this was having on her, Student B expressed that she was more interested in looking after herself and her mental health, especially as there were not any certainties surrounding the pandemic i.e., how the government would deal with it and when it would likely end. Equally, at this stage there was very little information from universities, but a continuation of classes and examinations as planned even in light of the thousands of deaths that were occurring in the world across countries and continents. To her it appeared as if the university was paying very little attention to the needs of the students at large and as a Black African student, she found it difficult being isolated and away from family. Her concerns were two pronged, first she was afraid that she would be isolated in Canterbury without being able to see any friends or family for a prolonged period of time; secondly, if she were to go home, she was afraid that she would not be able to meet her academic requirements because of constraints in regard to connectivity. She anticipated that there would be no Wi-Fi connection where she was in her country, and even if she was able to connect to the internet, there was still a possibility that there would be problems with electricity and power outages.

The other part of this concern was that even if she had taken the opportunity to be with loved ones, she would not be allowed to return to the University and if she was not able to do so, she was afraid that she might be penalised for not being able to complete her work remotely and would be unable to finish her degree and graduate alongside her peers. So eventually, she decided that she needed to be in Kent, and try to manage her mental health alongside her assignments and revision for upcoming exams.

As student B reflected on her experiences of racism on campus at the University of Kent, she specifically thought back to the incident of the swastika scrawled on the walls of Eliot College. The University did not acknowledge that this ever happened, and the graffiti was quickly removed by one of the sabbatical officers from Kent Union. Student B felt like this was one of the moments that helped her define her position in relation to the institution. There was no dialogue between the students who were affected by the violence of such

apparent and violent racism on campus and the institution. There was no opportunity for Black students and other students of colour to air their grievances surrounding the psychological violence and also the possibility of physical violence on campus. Student B said that it seemed to her that the University was more invested in silencing the voices of student movements i.e., Decolonise UoK and instances of racism such as the one above than they are concerned about student welfare. Issues such as these are simply swept under the rug by the institution in order for them to maintain their reputation and their bottom line. This is why the University did not respond to the Nazi graffiti on their school walls and failed to hold the students that were involved accountable. It was not an issue that they found shocking or wanted to thoroughly investigate. It was not a priority for the institution.

When asked what she would have wanted the University to do, Student B said that she expected the institution to show more concern for the welfare of their students, if not because it was important to them then because students invest in the entire experience of being at university and not just the academic aspect. She thought that they ought to be addressing the issue, investigating it and letting people know what happened as a consequence of that investigation – whether it is successful or not. It is important for the University to take a clear position on matters such as this and be clear about the consequences for students who participate in hateful and racist conduct even if it is only as a deterrent.

However, this is not the only time that Student B was reminded that her Blackness made her feel threatened. Student B remembered that she found it surprising and offensive that Selina Todd invited by the English Department and Kate Hopkins invited by Liberty Union had both on separate occasions been invited to speak on campus. Although their invitations were from student societies, their invitations were approved by the University. Both speakers are widely known for hateful and transphobic views and their presence on campus was not in keeping with the idea of an inclusive and diverse campus that they often try to pedal. On both occasions students were forced to intervene where the institution could have refused the speakers a platform. One must ask if this is deliberate. Whatever the case, it is disappointing.

Student B's views on the institution were powerful and her clear distinction between the role of the University and of the Student Union helped to inform these views. When talking about the impact of racism on students, she said that "it is something that puts you on high alert", depending on how it is handled by the institution. It has a lot to do with how you define your

position and your value in the institution. Even as a student who engaged in student activism with broad knowledge of how the institution functioned, Student B said that she did not feel that she knew where to report racialised incidents on campus and that although Kent Union had a' Zero Tolerance' policy she found it to be inaccessible and "superficial". There was no way of actioning the policy when it came to instances of race and racism, and there was never a time when the policy worked in favour of a minoritized student. She thought that perhaps she could go to campus security if there was a racial incident but was not sure. However, she knew where to go if she needed well-being and engagement support and has used these services in the past. Although this was a service that she engaged with, she found that there was a shortage of racial minority staff in the well-being department and felt that this applied across the university. There isn't enough career support and professional support especially for international students who are looking for opportunities to stay working in the country. Student B felt that there was a need for better representation on campus and for the University of Kent to look into hiring people from more diverse backgrounds, who have the ability to guide the decisions of the institution from a management level. That for student B would be a show of dedication by the university to understanding the experiences of marginalised students and what it means for these students to be a Black or a person of colour on campus.

Classroom Conversations: Being Black British

When I started engaging with Student C, we got talking about the pandemic. She had some thoughts on the situation and how she felt the University was responding at the time. Having moved back in with her parents, she was glad to be with family and just like Student B felt that the University had not thought carefully about the impact that Covid-19 was having on students from racial minority backgrounds especially those from a poor socio-economic background. The response from the university required students to continue online and did not take into consideration the living conditions of students, whether they had the capacity to study at home and whether they had the necessary resources (e.g., laptops and stable wi-fi) that would allow them to produce their best work.

When it came to answering questions about how she encountered race, Student C confessed that in the classroom seminar leaders sometimes looked at her for approval when talking about matters that involved racial injustice or oppression. This would often leave her with the uncomfortable feeling as if everyone was glaring at her as the authority on anything about race. It is not fair that as a Black woman it is assumed that she is the expert on race as this is not always the case.

In her Critical Introduction to Law module, Student C noted that some of her course mates did not feel as though there was any purpose in having any such module. It was the only compulsory module that she had, which provided students with the opportunity to have open discussions about race. Some of her course mates felt like Critical Intro "didn't need to be its own module", but instead be tied in with other modules like Criminal Law, some students even asked, "why is this module here". Student C thought that this was a reflection of the kind of ignorance she witnessed often in the classroom, where she thought that there should be more compulsory modules and readings that reflected the experiences of Black people and people of colour, she also regularly interacted with people who felt that her experiences had no place in the classroom and wouldn't add to the learning experience of other students. Hearing some of these comments contributed to the invisibility she felt when she found herself in group study situations. In her perspective, there was little effort put into engaging with students of colour and their experiences, and there was no effort put into dismantling stereotypes.

Even when it came to societies, Student C felt that some of them were centred around whiteness and found that there were social and cultural barriers within the society that made it difficult to build any authentic relationships or that she could participate in the different activities that they did e.g., society socials. It felt to her that there was a division and social culture that almost always excluded her, and she consistently felt misplaced. Had she not found Decolonise UoK and made an effort to meet with Black friends and friends of colour then she would never have experienced sense of belonging on campus[85].

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[85] A. Vaccaro and B. Newman (2016). Development of a Sense of Belonging for Privileged and Minoritized Students: An Emergent Model. *Journal of College Student Development 57*(8), 925-942. doi:10.1353/csd.2016.0091.

Like many of the others she had tough experiences as a Black student, especially when it came to welfare issues. Student C felt that she had been failed by an academic advisor who did not understand her needs and a student well-being advisor who was equally out of touch with the issues that she was facing on and off campus because of her Blackness. She was not aware of any policies that Kent Union or the University may have that she could rely on. If something were to happen to her on campus, she would not know anyone that she could speak to who could escalate her complaint.

Throughout her degree, Student C had never seen the University respond to instances of racism, but instead looked to Kent Union for responses to different campaigns e.g., cultural appropriation at Halloween. Even then, this would only happen if the university received bad publicity over the issue. She felt that the University did not stand against racism and were not interested in interrogating why students of colour and Black students had higher dropout rates for example. Student C did say that there were some places she though the University had done well for example she said that the University needed more programmes like the Kent Law School Academic Coaching for Excellence programme (ACE) and Black student support officers like Sheree Palmer from Student Success but also, sometimes "it can be isolating being on campus… it stops you wanting to come to uni".

Race, Religion and Exclusion

Student D shared the experiences that she had at the University of Kent as a Muslim woman. She was in the unique position to tell me about her experiences before and after she started wearing a hijab. Specifically, she noticed that when she started wearing a hijab many of the people that she had met during her first years at the University stopped speaking to her and some even made insensitive jokes saying, "she'll blow us up". In the classroom, she heard other Muslim students being called "Paki's" and upon reflection she remembered her seminar leader in Politics and International Law seminars asking her to lead the discussion whenever they were discussing Islam. Student D found this burdensome and thought that it was unfair to put that kind of obligation on a select few to carry the discussion.

Having attended both her undergraduate and Master's at the University of Kent, she had broad experiences with faculty, the student union and the institution itself. I attempted to

capture the different ways that she experienced discrimination or witnessed discrimination whilst on campus. Student D made it a point that she wanted to discuss the different ways that the institution had not taken any action, even when presented with overwhelming evidence of Islamophobia.

One year, following the summer ball – an annual end of year party hosted by Kent Union and the University – Student D was at the mosque with other members of the Muslim community. There was a young white man who was walking past the mosque shouting, who went on to shout drunken and racist slurs. The people who witnessed the incident reported the man to the police. The police attended the mosque and took written statements on the incident that had occurred. It was later discovered that the shouting man had been part of the police cadet programme from which he was removed but was still allowed to remain at the University despite the violence and verbal abuse that Student D and others had experienced. The University failed to take any formal or other action.

Another time, the "Anti-Fascist" group at the University released screenshots of the Liberty Union (LU) another student group on campus whose committee were engaging in racist, anti-Semitic and Islamophobic conversations in a Facebook group chat. In this group chat, they shared "disgusting political views on different marginalised groups". LU were most well-known for inviting Katie Hopkins and Carl Benjamin on campus in 2018/2019 and for their debate, "Is Islamophobia Real ". They often used Freedom of Speech as an argument to engage in Hate Speech on campus, causing many students from marginalised backgrounds to feel unsafe. They argued that the principles of their platforms were in line with the University's. In these messages they suggested that LU should be the new Nazi's wearing "brown shirts" and saying that the Muslims who were performing the Jummah prayer on the plaza area of campus, following the Christchurch Mosque shootings on 15 March 2019, would be "first on the trains". Although everyone on campus knew the students who were involved in the LU scandal, there was no action taken by the University. Kent Union suspended the society and requested the committee members undergo diversity and inclusivity training. However, there were no further consequences for LU committee members and even though the society was successfully suspended, none of the LU committee members attended training, instead they chose to disband the society.

On a third occasion, a few years ago, the Islamic Society (ISOC) at the University suggested that they wanted to put on an event on campus, where they could share and sell food to students on campus to rain money for charity, supported by the student union. Unfortunately, the student union refused this, saying that they did not have the facilities to accommodate such an event. Without the permission of the student union to host the event on campus, ISOC ended up hosting their event near the mosque. The following year and every year since, Kent Union has hosted a food fair. Although the two may seem unrelated, the food fair requires the same facilities as what ISOC required. Student D said there seems to be a suggestion that Muslims are not welcome on campus or at least that they cannot be visible on campus. Knowing this, it is not surprising that Student D feels like she is not safe on campus even in "spaces like the library and some societies".

This interview was conducted during Covid-19 lockdown and at the same time the Black Lives Matter movement had started again, protesting the murder of George Floyd and the death of Belly Mujinga across the country. This would be followed by several weeks of notable Black deaths specifically in America resulting in weeks of protesting against racism across the world. As such, many prominent individuals, businesses and organisations made open statements either standing against racism or admitting that they were not doing enough to educate themselves or ensure that there was better representation and support for black people – including customers and employees. Amongst these organisations were different universities together with Kent.

When the University and Kent Union made a "joint statement on racism", Student D was disappointed by the brevity of the statement and its failure to show any commitment towards being anti-racist. She was offended by the University citing Decolonise UoK, as she had been an active member for 2 years before it was disbanded and found it embarrassing that the University had failed to meet the demands of the manifesto made by Decolonise UoK in an effort to persuade the University to stand against racism. The University treated Decolonise UoK "like a poster boy" or one of the people of colour that they use on brochures. They did not want anything to do with Decolonise UoK when it was first launched, and when they presented the university with the manifesto detailing the needs of Black students and students of colour on campus, "but now they do because it is a hot topic". Looking at examples from the past, it is Kent's culture to "brush things under the rug" instead of taking accountability for their actions and having conversations with students that will lead to critical change. The

University is "hiding behind the black faces" of the two Black women leading Kent Union, who signed the University statement alongside the Vice-Chancellor, and we know this because they have proven that they do not care about Black students or Muslim students.

Student D said that she felt like she did not belong in the university but belonged to communities like ISOC and Decolonise UoK. She felt like she didn't have the same opportunities as other students to have an enriching or enjoyable student experience and on many occasions was forced to go outside of the university to get well-being support. There were no teachers that looked like her and she found that there was only one faculty member throughout the university who she trusted, and she could rely on. It is only after she met this faculty member in her final year of undergraduate in the 2nd semester that she really found her feet. Having guidance from this teacher made it easier for her when she was looking for Masters' programmes. She said, "it would have helped to have someone" during the earlier stages of her studies and it's a shame that only in her final year did she feel some sense of belonging.

When asked how the University could learn from students, Student D said, "ask them what they want and do what they want".

The Intersection of Race, Gender and Identity

When I first started speaking to Student E, he explained to me that when talking about his experiences it was important to take into account all the different marginalisations which he experienced. When he first came to Kent, he arrived as a mature student. It had been 10 years since he was last in Higher Education because of the "structural exclusions" that trans students face at universities in his home country, India. For example, he vividly remembered his friend, who went back into further education after 22 years of being a man had been forced to conduct an exam in his dead name and in his given gender which he had rejected.

When Student E chose to move to the UK, it was to move to a place that would not inflict violence on him or exclude him because of his trans identity. However, soon after arriving here, he found that the UK was no different to India in some ways. Kimberele Crenshaw talks about the "skid marks" that the accident makes at the junction of our identities and when you

analyse the skid marks, you cannot tell which car did what from which road[86]. "I cannot tell whether it is me being Indian or being trans that is a problem". Student E shared that he had been doing some research and found that according to the 2019 Advance Higher Education UK Report "3.6% of students have declared themselves to be trans[87] and 3.6% is a low number for a first world…" but looking at this figure, there is not a breakdown of ethnic groups "so never having met other trans students at the University, I assume that the majority are white and home students". Even where Student E had founded a LGBTQ people of colour collective which he thought was highly attended, he only knew one other person who had similar experiences as he had but identified as non-binary.

When asked about his experiences with faculty and students, the participant said he had been "lucky to have a great supervisor who is very conscious of power and is very careful in her interactions with me the other one who is a white supervisor is also someone who I consider to be a good ally if not accomplice". However, in the Research Methods course for postgraduate students, there was a lecturer who would keep saying things after he shared something in class. He would often say "okay, what about the legal arguments" as if to say he didn't have the expertise to comment because he hadn't done law before. Student E thought there was something "insidious" about this and trailed off… "the instances are so many, that the person who is at the receiving end has to grade how bad it is" before they think about taking any further actions. Besides the backlash, no one is going to understand it even though it exists, and this stops students of colour from even looking at reporting mechanisms.

In interactions with other students, the participant indicated that when thinking about racialisation he included the question of caste and he said that he had experienced "certain remarks and certain comments in class which are very subtle, and which are not visible to the others sitting in the room" that perpetuated violence. These comments were from other Indian students in the same Research Methods class. Caste is "based on the eugenicist's idea of

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[86] K. Crenshaw, Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics.

[87] 'Equality In Higher Education: Statistical Report 2019' (Advance Higher Education 2019) <https://s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/assets.creode.advancehe-document-manager/documents/advance-he/AdvanceHE_EqHE_Student_Stats_Report_infographics_%202019_1570106779.pdf?X-Amz-Content-Sha256=UNSIGNED-PAYLOAD&X-Amz-Algorithm=AWS4-HMAC-SHA256&X-Amz-Credential=AKIATYAYEYO3HUY745WI%2F20200721%2Feu-west-2%2Fs3%2Faws4_request&X-Amz-Date=20200721T171339Z&X-Amz-SignedHeaders=host&X-Amz-Expires=604800&X-Amz-Signature=e6118b6a8db3bece025084f0c150f3e43b50c13a120275a3cf5f908a903ae104>

purity and pollution where people on the highest rungs who are the brahmins are by birth and hereditary thought to be cleverer and hence had total access over knowledge production". He reflected that in his classroom, he was always thought of as the person who would bring up this "extra frame" on caste, yet it was experiencing it in that very class. This is just another example of how Student E felt silenced in the classroom, he did not want to be seen as someone "harping on and on" about an issue. On one occasion, another Indian student said, "we have to think of this act of knowledge producing a spiritual". It is with the spirituality framework that Brahmins "violently usurped the knowledge production realm and so for her to say knowledge has to be linked with spirituality – the spiritual link is violence". Student E thought it was unfortunate that anti-racist movements in the UK hardly acknowledge caste as an important issue saying, "there is hardly any acknowledgment or knowledge about it".

In his classroom they were discussing "Stop and Search". As a graduate teaching assistant (GTA) he had been teaching the Critical Introduction to Law module and in one of these seminars a white student turned to his class and said, "but racism in the UK is not as bad as in the US". Without internalising the statement made, he helped steer first the white student who had made the comment and then the rest of the classroom into answering the question in a critical manner. Had it been another teacher who did not have critical consciousness, Student E thought "the silence would have remained in that classroom until a Black student had spoken and informed that things are better in the UK". It is important for more of these conversations to happen in the classroom without shaming students but also, whilst protecting marginalised students.

The University needs to make more institutional efforts to bring in race as a lens through which we explore the law. Student E said he thought that it was important for the Kent Law School to rethink what it means to be "critical". At the moment, discussing and learning about race feels optional because the institution sends an implicit message that race is not important, which is why it is an add on. Perhaps students would think about race differently if the university introduced race as a critical lens in all modules. Could race be an assignment question? E.g. "What are the ways in which racism is embedded in Law?" or allotted more credits to modules that address race and racism (e.g. 15 credits for one semester or 30 credits for two semesters) or made sure that the readings on the module were not optional and were important to answer pertinent questions that could show up in examinations instead of having two readings which are at the end of the semester where attendance in classrooms is lower.

Unless that is done, Student E feels that the actions that university have done so far have been to meet the bare minimum requirements to look progressive and getaway with not taking any real action. He said that even in Critical Introduction to Law, it was only when there was a guest faculty attending that there were conversations about critical race theory and other jurisprudence. For a course that claims to be critical there are only topics about race, but race is not seen as a lens and that's where the difference lies. "This is not just a topic it's a way in which we see the world, like gender, faith and all these other things that are embedded within institutions".

Returning to how he interacts with his supervisors, Student E told me a story about an instance where his supervisor had said something to him that could have been interpreted as offensive via email. What Student E respected most about this supervisor was that although they did not have similar experiences, she always made an effort to engage with him. He respected that she had the ability to go back and think about what she had said and done and if she felt like she had been offensive, she would apologise without provocation. He said he wished that more white supervisors understood that it was ok to do this. Despite being a "professor of a higher grade I think writing to your student, checking in with them and saying that I didn't mean it in that way and apologising for something without putting the onus on the student to bring it up in an uncomfortable conversation when the power dynamic is in your favour - I think that's a good model to begin with".

The University understands equality as a policy framework not as a social justice framework and for Student E, he said that he noticed that the university "understands equality as putting faces on a bus which is the first thing you will see when you come to University, where there pictures of smiling Black students but when you enter the University, you will see that the smiles do not exist. "The University understands equality as imaging. It is the quick fix band-aid that they put on". There has to be a total shift in how equality is understood across the board in terms of the curriculum. There is hardly any representation.

Student E said that he noticed that whenever he greeted cleaning staff or checked on them to see if they had breakfast that there was always a look of shock or that they had been taken aback on their faces. Perhaps this is because people do not often do that, and they are "the invisible labour that works on the corridors unseen and unacknowledged by others. During the Covid-19 pandemics, I never saw any information from the University pertaining to whether or not the most precarious staff (which is usually cleaning staff) would continue getting payments or whether they have any employment insurance or health policies".

Representation matters. "The under-representation of Black scholars in the teaching staff and the over representation of immigrants or people of colour in non-academic or cleaning staff is symptomatic of the problem within the institution because it is giving out messages to young Black students who come in that the pipeline from their education to their employment does not lead to professorships or vice chancellor-ships. Instead, it leads to those cleaning jobs or nowhere. That's the despair. That's why visuals are important"

Student E spoke about this also being an issue in the criminal law module at the University where for example in the slide shows they always showed white police officers and the perpetrators as Black. "We know the power of visuals… the pictures speak volumes of what we think…we normalise white supremacy" through such visuals, thorough our hiring and firing policies, writing over representation of immigrants in cleaning staff. When Black students walk through the corridors, they do not just see who represents them on campus, but the visuals that they see also tell them what they are allowed to imagine. This is a very important point because these are the messages that academic institutions need to be sending to their Black students.

Racism is an "act of dehumanising, it makes you feel like you are not worthy of being in the knowledge production realm, you are not intelligent enough, you are too emotional, you are angry, you are imagining things". It definitely affects your academic performance and your mental health and your self-esteem he said, "…and there are no well-being counsellors that are sensitive on racism". Most of the counsellors at Kent are white and when you articulate these issues of racism, they're going to individuate it to help you work on yourself, but the problem is not you the problem is the system.

"I don't feel a sense of belonging with South Asians for the reasons that I've already mentioned. The second thing is that as the only trans person that I know and given the statistics of 3.6% trans students in all of UK in the higher education I think it would be at least 50 years before a person from my experiences and background can feel any sense of belonging in any institutionalised spaces in the UK and that's really the reality".

Chapter 3: Resisting and Existing in the Ivory Tower: Sense of (Un)Belonging in Higher Education

In this chapter, I draw on theoretical frameworks to analyse the lived experiences of students discussed in interviews in the previous chapter. My aim is to demonstrate other ways that students from Black and other minoritised backgrounds have expressed the un/belonging that they have felt on university campuses.

I will be doing this using a wide range of resources including literature, videos, and art mediums. These will be a reflection of the voices of students across minority ethnic groups and I will be illustrating how they experience belonging in Higher Education. I will be engaging with the voices of these students and their expressions of un/belonging aimed at the public e.g., institutions through the work that they have produced in the form of documents, conferences and creative work.

I will be looking at a poem written by Gee Semmalar, 'Homes That Aren't on Maps' and art work that was produced by some of the student activists from Decolonise UoK and Decolonise Keele. Through poetry and art, I will be showing how students have been able to act in solidarity against the neo-liberal university by making their voices heard. In addition, the work that I have produced so far and continue to produce is a show of resistance within itself because it does not conform to the rules of traditional frameworks, and it brings the voices of students that are usually marginalised to the forefront.

This chapter, like all the others, aims to bring forward the voices of students, but also brings in literature especially from critical race and decolonial studies theories that consolidate the research data discussed in Chapter 3. My aim is for the reader to be able to identify the common issues affecting students, focusing on the impact that a "sense of belonging" or "unbelonging" can have on a racially marginalised student.

The main questions here are to qualify what un/belonging means for students from racially marginalised backgrounds and how we can foster the university community in order for there to be a framework that we can shape issues of racism and marginalisation around. How can

we and why should we transform the ivory tower? I will look at the use of poetry, art and community to show the value of collective experiences.

Poetry

In 2020, Decolonise UoK hosted a series of events. These included "Queerly Yours, An Artistic Evening" and the Decolonial Café hosted by Decolonise UoK and Decolonise QMUL. Both of these events were for the purpose of encouraging students from Black backgrounds and other students of colour to think about spoken word, poetry and art as a form of resistance and empowerment. I will discuss the Decolonial Café in more detail later in this chapter as it primarily focussed on creating art i.e., drawings to share and express feelings around our experiences as racially marginalised students at university.

Queerly Yours was an event hosted by the BAME LGBTQI collective at the University of Kent. This was one of the first events that was hosted by the BAME LGBTQI group on campus supported by Decolonise UoK. Although this was not initiated by Decolonise UoK, these are the kind of events that we created the Kaleidoscope Hub The vision of the Kaleidoscope Hub was one that I shared with Ahmed Memon and was a result of the inspiration that was spurred from sitting and talking to the Building the Anti-Racist Classroom Collective (BARC)[88]. We thought that it was important for students like us to have this experience of being in a "principled space" in which they would be able to "vulnerably reflect" on their experiences and learn to navigate and explore their Blackness and/or marginalisation as a result of being in a predominantly white academic institution without their thoughts, emotions and creative processes being adapted to the white gaze[89]. Queerly Yours is a perfect representation of the kind of spaces that we thought we would be able to create through the Kaleidoscope Hub for students who usually find themselves on the peripheries of student life and often, society. It was an empowering experience for those who

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[88] BARC facilitated workshops attended by members of Decolonise UoK. These were Building the Anti-Racist Classroom Workshop, University of Kent, 23 May 2019; Zine Making Workshop, University of Kent School of Law, Centre for Sexuality, Race and Gender Justice, 20 March 2019; and Building the Anti-Racist Classroom: Organising for Liberation, Queen Mary University of London, 25-26 October 2019, where Decolonise UoK were invited to co-facilitate with Dr. Suhraiya Jivraj.

[89] F. Fanon, Wretched Earth (1961).

were involved in showcasing their art, but also those who simply got the chance to engage with the guest artist, Black/Trans/Queer Poet and Educator, JMase III[90].

One of the observations that has surprised me, has been witnessing how vulnerable students of colour can be about their thoughts and experiences, with their words and through art when they are in each other's company. This may be because of this unspoken understanding that they (BPOC students) speak from similar experiences. This can be seen here and again through the Decolonise UoK conference in 2020[91].

'Homes That Aren't on Maps', written by Gee Semmalar.

"I googled how to write spoken word,

Google told me,

"Spoken word is an oral performance art that is word-based"

I know oral performance intimately,

But I am scared words that are only spoken and not written

Can be erased

By the giant eraser that is white supremacy.

I have spoken before and not been heard

My memory is rusty

Like every exposed surface in the place I come from,

Clothes lines, clips on clothes lines, marks left by clips on clothes on the lines.

We don't have dryers there.

We have the sun.

Before I came here,

I had to pass,

A test that proved to the master that I can speak, write and understand the only language he owns,

Before I came here,

I had to pass,

A test that proved I looked the gender they put on my passport

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[90] JMASE III <https://jmaseiii.com/>

[91] Decolonise UoK Stories of (Un)Belonging with Lowkey <https://research.kent.ac.uk/sergj/decolonise-uok-stories-of-unbelonging-with-lowkey/>

Before I came here,

I had to pass,

Multiple ports that the white man drew with his maps.

I do not come from a place I call mine

I have not come to a place I can call mine

The only map I know is the lines on my chest

Drawn by the scalpel of a doctor who was not an artist.

Maps of my pain, lines still not my own.

I came here because I was drowning,

Only to freeze in the harshness of a winter as cold

As the white man who lives here.

I came here because I need the institution

To give me a degree

Because all my other degrees belong to a daughter who never was.

I am now nobody's son.

I don't feel like an imposter,

I know this world of frauds, crooks, climbers, cheats too well to know that it is

the institution that names its buildings after imperial heroes that is the imposter.

My brother Raju Rage took me out to Margate

At the Madhatter's tea room,

We drank what they called English tea,

In antique tea cups made in China,

Tea leaves from India and the sugar from Caribbean plantations.

When I looked into my cup at the end,

I couldn't read my future in the marks left by the tea leaves

But I saw many centuries of colonialism

In the map left at the bottom of the tea cup.

I speak 5 languages, and the white man speaks one

He took a million spices, but can still cook none

His mouth is as bland as his food, and so I refuse to kiss him

Neither on his mouth nor his arse.

I need my spices.

Don't test me anymore.

The place I come from is not home.

I keep house but I don't have a home.

Home is a place you can call your own, they say.

I can't even call my body, my own.

They say I am dysphoric about my gender

But the only thing I am dysphoric about is the world.

Indians passing me by avert their eyes,

Pretend like they don't hear my spoken words,

They have learnt the accents of the master,

And eat food shaped in squares and circles.

Steak slice, mince pies, scones, shepherd's pie, crumpets, Yorkshire pudding.

The masters whose boots they lick, in turn,

Call a chicken tikka masala that they can't cook or taste, their own.

The place I come from is not home

Humans are divided into high and low based on birth there.

We send young dalit men into gas chambers underground to die.

Death caste in stone

We send armies that rape and kill into Kashmir

To blind and maim the youth with pellets and bullets.

A dystopic nation built on blood.

And the celebrity imposters in academia call this "post-colonial". Hah!

Shhhhhhhhhh!

We flush down our conscience everyday with our shit.

But it still leaves a stink

That no perfumes, no room fresheners, no plastic product sold by plastic, capitalist markets in

plastic packaging can mask

You say you care about the environment?

Let's see you fight your own shit extinction.

The wretched of the earth live in a country without a post office,

There is no place called home

But tonight,

I have some people I call my own in this room

For tonight, just for tonight that is enough.

We are enough"[92].

An analytical reading of 'Homes Aren't on Maps' by Gee Semmalar

Gee Semmalar, an experienced poet and speaker performed an intelligent piece that deals with the challenging task of writing a spoken word piece whilst articulating his grappling with themes to follow. with. For the purpose of this thesis, we will call this a poem, because only in performing it can it truly be "spoken" word. The poem above was performed by him at Queerly Yours, University of Kent. It is a clever piece of art that reveals different themes related to identity including whiteness, colonialism, and caste that the writer reflects on.

This is an important piece to share because it embodies the experience of an international student, coming to Britain from a former British colony, India. This is true for many students who enrol to the university, and even though they might not always be from former colonies or India, it is true that this demographic is often ignored and rendered invisible. Some of the experiences that we encounter through the lens of the author offer food for thought and introspection. He writes about his fear that words that are spoken and not written down will be forgotten – indigenous knowledge systems often rely on oral histories and uphold them as reliable sources of knowledge. This approach is often undermined and "erased by the giant eraser that is white supremacy" within the Western context and it appears that this is one of the earliest challenges that the author brings to the table.

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[92] Gee Semmalar has given me permission to share this poem as part of my thesis and has given me permission.

His experience of this country (Britain) has been that it is not at all what it seems and is not a place where he feels like he belongs. Even where he was before, he did not feel like he belonged. In India, there was the "sun" which he compares with "the harshness of a winter" in Britain. He describes people who live here to be as cold as that winter and the reason that he won't leave is because he needs the institution to give him a degree because all his "other degrees belong to a daughter who never was". This starts helping us to explore where his feeling of unbelonging stems from.

He does not think of himself as an "imposter" because according to him the real "frauds, crooks, climbers and cheats" are the ones who uphold white supremacy and name "buildings after imperial heroes" (like Keynes or Rhodes). He continues the conversation and criticises a country built on the history and resources of other countries through British imperialism e.g., the "English tea" which can be found in India and sugar from the Caribbean plantations. He takes issue with the fact that all these cultures, even the teacup which is made in China have been appropriated by the British.

Though the author has gone through the process of being examined – physically, linguistically, and academically to be allowed to pass through borders and institutions none of these things are proof of faculty or skill e.g., he "speaks 5 languages and the white man speaks one". Here he could also be criticising western knowledge systems for their unvaried way of knowing and examining as well as their esteem for some knowledge systems placing them above others – usually indigenous knowledge systems. It could be argued that this is the continued erasure of colonised identities and Britain's attempt to uphold whiteness. He does not want to be intimate with whiteness or to kiss it. He is confused by how other Indians who pass him by "avert their eyes" and pretend that they do not hear him when he speaks. They, unlike him, have become comfortable and continue to edge closer towards whiteness, or having to wear white masks as a way of hiding one's racialised identities as expressed in the seminal work of Frantz Fanon[93].

In the final paragraphs of his spoken word, the author confronts the caste system and challenges its divisiveness separating low from high caste. That is not where he belongs. He condemns the system for the death sentence that it imposes on the lowest castes ("death caste in stone"); arguing that the caste system gives sanctions to those who seek it to treat others as unworthy of life, dignity and respect. Knowing all of this, he says that we cannot call this a "post-colonial" world. It cannot be - because issues such as these are pertinent and until they

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[93] F. Fanon, *The Wretched Earth* (New York Grove 1961).

are addressed, we should call this a colonial world. The silence around racially oppressive systems is blaring, especially the caste system. We "flush down our conscience" because we cannot face the truth of our own complicities.

Even after the rocky world that the author narrates us through, and even though we understand that he doesn't truly believe that he belongs in any place (that can be found on a map), he finally writes, 'But tonight…I have some people I call my own… for tonight that is enough'. Largely, he feels like he is being constantly pressed against the margins of society and he does not feel like he belongs in any place that can be found on a map; but in that space, at that time, he felt like he belonged and that is in keeping with the theme of this thesis- finding pockets of belonging in a sea of unbelonging.

Art

The Decolonial Café was hosted ahead of the "Voices of (Un)Belonging" Conference 2020 as a way to bring the student groups who were also going to be panellists come together and participate in a collective and creative process of creating different representations of their individual understandings of belonging/unbelonging.

These are some of the examples of the artwork that was produced at the café at Queen Mary's University of London. Participants were asked to draw their impressions of when they felt like they belonged and when they felt like they did not belong. Although there are quotes and descriptions attached to the work, all of the work is open to interpretation as it relates to your own experiences of belonging and unbelonging in and beyond higher education institutions.

Picture 1 "Diversity is a Band-Aid; it cannot heal the wounds of the university".

Description: There is a band-aid stuck to the top left corner of the A4 page and beneath it, a painting showing people of different colours standing outside of a building ready to go in.
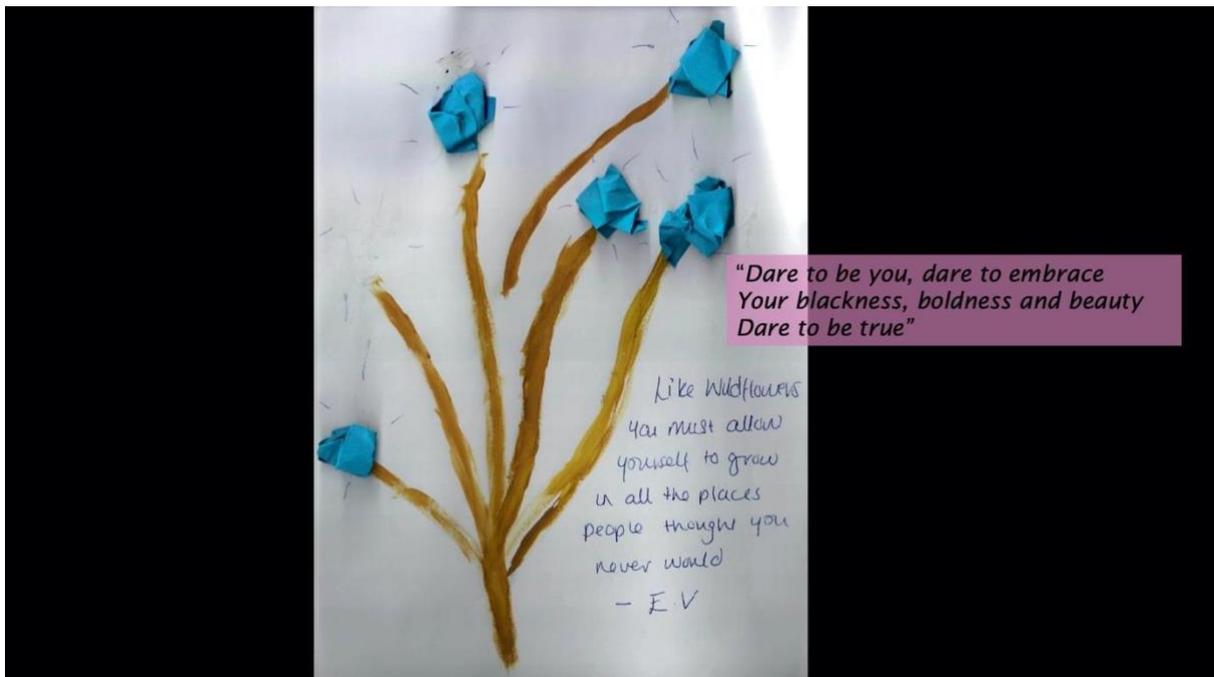
Picture 2 "Dare to be you, dare to embrace your Blackness, boldness and beauty. dare to be true"

Description: There is short poem, "Like wildflowers you must allow yourself to grow in all the places people thought you never would", E.V. Next to the poem is a painting of brown stems with scrunched up balls of paper to show the plant and ball point marks used to complete the drawing of wildflowers.

Picture 2

Description: Painting of buildings of different colours and people of different colours walking in between the buildings. The people also appear to be "boxed in", perhaps boxed into their identities
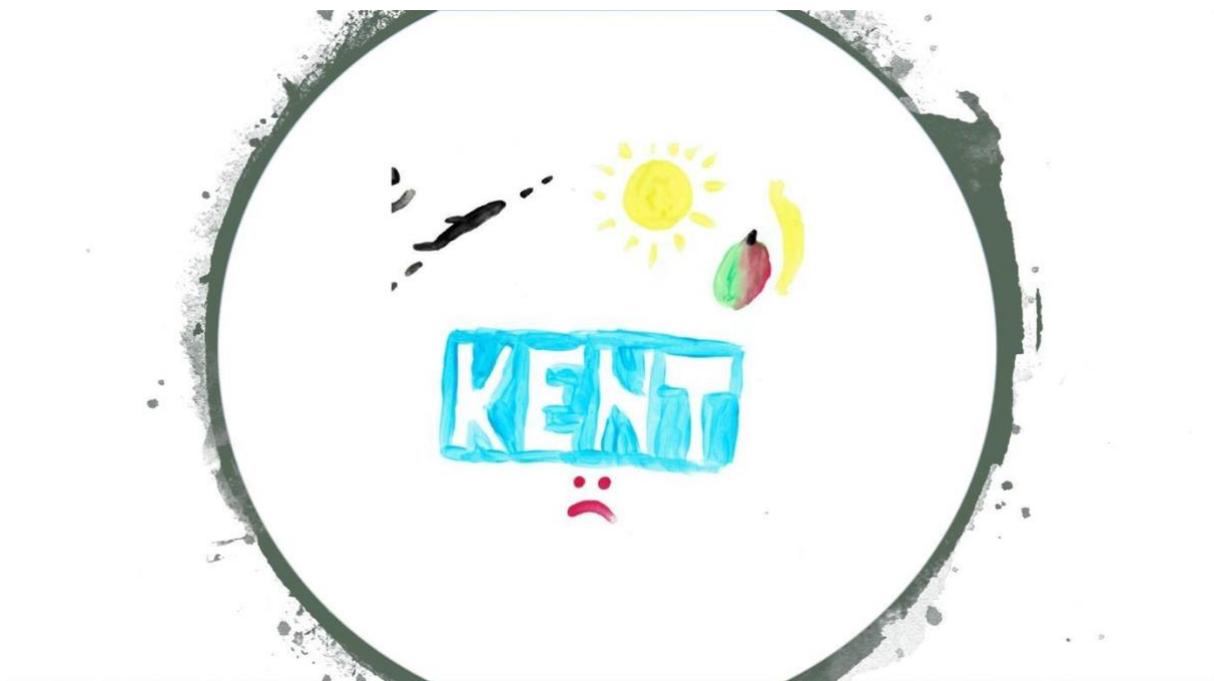
Picture 3
Description: Painting of the word "Kent" in blue and a sad face beneath it and above a picture of an aeroplane flying towards a sunnier and more tropical location -maybe home.

Picture "Show them your true colours, break free from your box. Release your soul".

Conference: Stories of (Un)Belonging

In March 2020. Decolonise UoK had their second and final conference before disbanding later in the year.

It can be argued that Decolonise UoK disbanded because of many of the issues that were highlighted in the conference. The conference was unique because it focussed on the voices of students and their experiences, much like the work that I have been showing throughout this thesis. For the first time, student groups from across the country were sitting together in a room discussing their journeys in different locations of the country and the complexities and nuances that came with being students of colour on campus, other intersectionalities that contributed to their identities and the practical challenges that come with being student activists who often have to speak out against the institutions which they attend.

Below I will provide a summary of some the discussions that the panel was having. This video is available to view on YouTube by searching "Decolonise UoK – Stories of (Un)belonging student decolonising groups in the UK share their stories"[94].

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[94] Decolonise UoK Collective, 'Stories Of (Un)Belonging: Student Decolonising Groups in The UK Share Their Stories' (2020) <https://youtu.be/irkeT2aalIE>

The chair at the event, Dr Sweta Rajan-Rankin began the conversation by asking the students about their experiences of being both invisible and yet also hyper-visible on university campuses at the same time. The invisibility is in being student activists whose work often goes unacknowledged, is ignored, and sometimes co-opted. The visibility is in how student activists use their bodies and their work as a form of resistance that in many cases comes in direct conflict with the institutions which they attend. This also applies to staff members who engage in anti-racist work, some of which are precarious staff who risk their jobs in doing this work.

For example, one of the students from QMUL shared a story about an occurrence at her university. This was a story about a Black woman working at QMUL to diversify the university in the role of Inclusion and Diversity Manager. One day, the principal asked her if in her opinion, the Queen Mary's policy was racist to which she responded with a detailed email outlining all the issues that people of colour were suffering at the University. The letter was distributed across campus and posted on the door of the principal. However, nothing ever happened as a result of that email despite everyone, students and staff, having read the letter and shared it. As a response to this, Sandra Brown, the manager submitted her resignation letter[95]. In it she addresses the effort to diversify the curriculum at QMUL as being "watered down"[96] and the "environment remains toxic and disproportionately affecting the experiences of the diverse community at QM"[97]. She also shares that although the University insists that it take a zero-tolerance approach to harassment and bullying, this like the effort to diversify remains a tick box exercise. This is a concern that has been raised on multiple occasions by several student groups across the country including Decolonise UoK. She signed off in response to the initial question asked and answered "Yes."[98] QM is institutionally racist[99].

Sahra-Isha (Decolonise QMUL) also spoke about how Sandra Brown is an example of how people of colour within the institution go through physical and emotional labour[100]. For

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[95] Sandra Brown's Resignation Letter (2019) https://qmucu.org/2019/11/20/sandra-browns-resignation-email/
[96] Ibid.
[97] Ibid.
[98] Ibid.
[99] Decolonise UoK Collective, 'Stories Of (Un)Belonging: Student Decolonising Groups in The UK Share Their Stories' (2020) <https://youtu.be/irkeT2aalIE?t=933>
[100] Naima talks about how draining the burden of educating others about race is physically, emotionally, and mentally draining this here: Decolonise UoK Collective, 'Stories Of (Un)Belonging: Student Decolonising Groups in The UK Share Their Stories' (2020) <https://youtu.be/irkeT2aalIE?t=780> (13:00).

example, trying to engage the institution by attending meetings, being asked to review documents or policies at times without being appropriately remunerated, whilst also maintaining their academic grades, without seeing any meaningful change.

Naima (Decolonise UoK) who spoke before her said, Black and brown people have to face a triple burden of sorts, "We are having to explain the racism that white people perpetuate, then we have to do something about it and then we have to do something about it" [101]… we also have to "continuously educate the people that are bringing about this oppression"[102]. She emphasised the importance of thinking about the psyche of diverse leaders within institutions and prioritising their mental and physical safety. Naima brought to the stage the conversation surrounding the significance of visual and psychological impressions that Black students have to experience whilst walking around University of Kent campuses both, Canterbury and Medway.

Another student, Lauren (Decolonise King's College, London) brought up an issue of concern that student activists who have been doing racial justice work in Higher Education are often concerned about. They said that "white people [have a tendency of] taking the ideas of people of colour and rebranding it as their own"[103]. Senior management is guilty of this too and have a tendency of co-opting the work of students especially taking the labour of students/staff of colour and claiming the work as their own. She specifically raised concern with the issue where within these institutions people of colour are considered to be the subjective eye and white the objective eye[104]. This only leaves room for whiteness to validate and invalidate the experiences of people of colour as they see fit.

The chair of the conversation, Dr. Rajan Rankin referenced the work of Tuck & Young (2012) in stating that "Decolonisation is not a metaphor, it is a movement"[105]. This is to

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[101] Decolonise UoK Collective, 'Stories Of (Un)Belonging: Student Decolonising Groups in The UK Share Their Stories' (2020) <https://youtu.be/irkeT2aalIE?t=754> (12:37).
[102] Decolonise UoK Collective, 'Stories Of (Un)Belonging: Student Decolonising Groups In The UK Share Their Stories' (2020) <https://youtu.be/irkeT2aalIE?t=794> (13:14).
[103] Decolonise UoK Collective, 'Stories Of (Un)Belonging: Student Decolonising Groups in The UK Share Their Stories' (2020) <https://youtu.be/irkeT2aalIE?t=834> (13:58).
[104] Decolonise UoK Collective, 'Stories Of (Un)Belonging: Student Decolonising Groups in The UK Share Their Stories' (2020) <https://youtu.be/irkeT2aalIE?t=853> (14:13).
[105] E. Tuck, K Yang, (2012).Decolonization is Not a Metaphor. Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society p. 1-40

reiterate that the decolonisation is not simply a concept, or a theory designed for exploration or debate. It is not intangible. The impact of colonialism is something that people of colour especially have to confront, more often than they should and so the decolonial movement is a lived reality. This is how I interpret that. These experiences cannot be denied because it offends the people who benefit most from it or makes them uncomfortable. Students spoke about senior leadership in universities gaslighting students saying things like "Islamophobia does not exist, I eradicated it last year"[106] or "the gender pay gap does not exist".

This becomes more important when you consider some of the statistics, Yasmin (Decolonise QMUL) revealed that at her university 61% of the students are non-white and although diversity is celebrated it is not reflected in the curriculum or in the teachers who are teaching it[107]. Instead, it is seen around campus as the marketisation of the university e.g., Black and brown faces on posters, brochures and the university website[108].
As a reflection of how high 61% is, the number of non-white students at the University of Kent is at 34.28 % and at a national stage 24.37% of students across the country in Advance Higher Education were from non-white backgrounds. [109]
Although QM had an extremely high percentage of students from non-white backgrounds, both staff and students of colour continue to challenge the institution because it is racist.

A student from Lancaster who spoke about his visibility at the University made it such that he was invited into the room but was not allowed to speak at the table. In fact, he found that he would be ignored, his questions would be left till last and sometimes completely ignored. He also describes how even though he was in his final year, he felt that in doing decolonial work he was risking losing his place at the University. When he first volunteered, a supportive member of staff warned him of that he had to make sure he "kept his grades and attendance up because the University would look for any reason" to kick him out. Another way in which

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<https://clas.osu.edu/sites/clas.osu.edu/files/Tuck%20and%20Yang%202012%20Decolonization%20is%20not%20a%20metaphor.pdf>

[106] Decolonise UoK Collective, 'Stories Of (Un)Belonging: Student Decolonising Groups in The UK Share Their Stories' (2020) <https://youtu.be/irkeT2aalIE?t=2861>(47:43).

[107] Decolonise UoK Collective, 'Stories Of (Un)Belonging: Student Decolonising Groups In The UK Share Their Stories' (2020) <https://youtu.be/irkeT2aalIE?t=362> (6:06).

[108] Decolonise UoK Collective, 'Stories Of (Un)Belonging: Student Decolonising Groups in The UK Share Their Stories' (2020) <https://youtu.be/irkeT2aalIE?t=1716> (28:38).

[109] https://www.kent.ac.uk/hr-equalityanddiversity/annual-reports/edi-annual-report2018-2019.pdf p. 42
This is when you find the sum of "BME" and "Other". This does not include "Not Known" or "Information Refused".

he had felt the threat of being visible whilst doing racial justice work was through a poster campaign that he did as a racial justice project. There was a significant amount of backlash and comments made on the internet about this which made him glad that he had not applied the Decolonise Lancaster logo or attached his name to the campaign[110].

Another example of this came from Fides (Decolonise Keele) who shared her experience of being the most visible person in her group and because of her role in decolonising she found that she was vulnerable to attacks. In about 90 days she shared with the conference attendees that she had received misogynoir hate. She received "hundreds" of hateful messages via her social media accounts because of audaciousness when doing this work a noted one, "you black and brown people, it is always about race with you", a common statement said by people who are usually trying to derail the conversation [111].

When it came to addressing the issue of belonging/unbelonging, Anamika (Decolonise UoK) spoke about her experiences as an immigrant at the University of Kent. She shared that her experiences as an immigrant being closely monitored because of her status under Tier 4, undermined the issues that she was facing more as a person in fear of her sponsorship being revoked. She spoke about this nature of policing being a reflection of who had a genuine place at the university and who did not. This was disheartening knowing that international students contribute significantly more to tuition fees to the university. International students are the most "disrespected", she said and the institution "leeches off us and chucks us out"[112].

An example of this from the University of Kent was given by Naima (Decolonise UoK) who reflected on her experiences of undergraduate walking around the Medway campus where she often walked past symbols of Sir John Hawkins, the first slave owner. You think about "that being something that we have to walk past every single day"[113]. She drew from other universities, saying that this was not unique to the University of Kent. "In London, UCL

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[110] Decolonise UoK Collective, 'Stories Of (Un)Belonging: Student Decolonising Groups in The UK Share Their Stories' (2020) https://youtu.be/irkeT2aalIE?t=1386 (23:06).

[111] Decolonise UoK Collective, 'Stories Of (Un)Belonging: Student Decolonising Groups in The UK Share Their Stories' (2020) https://youtu.be/irkeT2aalIE?t=572 (9:32).

[112] Decolonise UoK Collective, 'Stories Of (Un)Belonging: Student Decolonising Groups in The UK Share Their Stories' (2020) https://youtu.be/irkeT2aalIE?t=1063 (17:43).

[113] Decolonise UoK Collective, 'Stories Of (Un)Belonging: Student Decolonising Groups in The UK Share Their Stories' (2020) https://youtu.be/irkeT2aalIE?t=1223 (20:23).

cannot seem to get rid of their Eugenics building which we all know is an absolute joke!" [114]
The student gave a nod to the Rhodes Must Fall movement in South Africa and Oxford, England where students began protesting against the representation and psychological violence of colonialism i.e., the statue of Cecil John Rhodes. "We look around and we see things that are oppressive to us and no matter how much we seem to petition the University, no matter how much we seem to be paying we don't seem to have a strong enough voice compared to the donors or you know the people who are working so hard to ensure that these buildings and these statues stay, and it is so oppressive on our psyche." [115]

A more disturbing example of how spaces are defined on campus is King's College. Due to the nature of this account, I will share this quote from one of their students:

"At King's College, physical space is just a very clear experience. We have barriers at every entrance [and] we have additional barriers for Muslim prayer rooms which you have to like get authorization for your card to be able to enter. There have been some claims that these barriers are benign that you know they're just there for security, but we saw last year when 13 students, the majority of whom are black and Brown, had their access into the University barred through the ticket barriers. The ID card barriers and the way their information was found was through like kind of digging up the data of who tapped in where and matching it with security footage…. You cannot enter the university without feeling like you are being watched"[116].

[114] Decolonise UoK Collective, 'Stories Of (Un)Belonging: Student Decolonising Groups in The UK Share Their Stories' (2020) https://youtu.be/irkeT2aalIE?t=1223 (21:07).
[115] Decolonise UoK Collective, 'Stories Of (Un)Belonging: Student Decolonising Groups in The UK Share Their Stories' (2020) https://youtu.be/irkeT2aalIE?t=1320 (22:00).
[116] Decolonise UoK Collective, 'Stories Of (Un)Belonging: Student Decolonising Groups in The UK Share Their Stories' (2020) https://youtu.be/irkeT2aalIE?t=1163 (19:27).

Chapter 4: Anti-Racism in the Face of Structural Racism

Introduction

In this chapter I share my reflections of being involved in Decolonise UoK in the context of growing up in a place like Zimbabwe, where I had the privilege of being part of the Black majority. I arrived at the work of decolonisation late in the UK because my Blackness only became an issue in my early teens when I moved there. Moving to Liverpool, which was starkly different to the city of Bulawayo where I grew up, I experienced bullying and exclusion, usually because of my broad shoulders and my dark skin which was most distinct because at the time I was one of 5 Black students across the whole school. Only later would I start to understand that my athletic shoulders were an affront to some, who saw me as too Black, too African and too masculine.

It was not until my final year in university 2018-2019 that I joined Decolonise UoK and started applying theory to my experiences that I fully understood the magnitude of institutional racism and the absolute need to engage with the work of feminist, critical race and social justice theorists. When I joined DUoK, I had just completed a year of study in China where I felt that I was always aware of my skin colour and race in the face of anti-blackness. Being there, it was impossible to run away from the glares on the subway, or from seeing Blackface as part of the Spring Festival celebrations or having people take my picture, point at me or touch my hair without my permission. Everything about me physically stood out like a sore thumb and locals did not make a secret of it. I love being Black, but it carries with it so much strife and often gives people the permission to treat me like I am less than and that physically hurts. Candice Brathwaite in one of her reflections said, "Being a dark skin woman still sucks in a lot of ways"[117]. I truly felt that. Truly understanding this, is to be knowing about what it takes to survive being Black on a day-to-day basis.

Decolonise UoK had not quite started but just hearing about this sort of project piqued my interest. Serendipity. I was not looking for it, it found me.

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[117] Candice Brathwaite (6 February 2021) "I haven't felt like this…" [Video]. Instagram. Retrieved from <https://www.instagram.com/tv/CKw5k7zn0Ra/?utm_medium=copy_link>

When we all finally got together, the group became a place where we would meet frequently and talk about the experiences that we had in university and society as people of colour. Coming from different ethnic minority backgrounds, we found that we had common stories to tell about coming from former British colonies or being educated in strict Convents the way Jasmyn and I were. In Decolonise UoK we had the chance to talk about and to explore the feeling of being on the inside but feeling and being treated like an outsider. We permitted ourselves to ask questions about why we did not fit in/belong and the permission to challenge the university to do better. Whilst we did not feel like we belonged in the student community as a whole, we did find little pockets of belonging through student societies e.g., sports or ethnic societies. This would later provide me with the basis of my thesis "Searching for Belonging" Institutional Racism and the Silent Crisis in Higher Education, all the crevices in which we found it.

Decolonise UoK

Decolonise UoK was solidified through relationships that were built through vulnerability (courage) and trust. The work was important, but the people were even more so. We worked so well together because before it became a working space, it was a psychologically safe environment to share, vent and just be (you). It was the first time I had ever been in a space like this as a Black student and I know that many others felt the same.

When we first started doing the work, we were using zines to document our thoughts around students' needs. We drew up concepts of what we felt would be an ideal academic institution that is inclusive of people from different backgrounds, rather than one that favours some and not others. This task was very hard at first because for many of us we had never been invited to think about what an alternative model would look like. Before university, I always believed my teachers when they spoke, even if I *knew* they were wrong. I just took the attitude that teachers know best, and I had to unlearn that, to start speaking up for myself and start speaking the truth to power.

Alongside that, there was a podcast that Joy and Ufnaan hosted called "Stripping the White Walls"[118]. This was another empowering experience because students were trained to do this and had the opportunity to interview scholars, authors and activists who were doing the same work that they were. I believe that being able to build those one-to-one relationships with them was encouraging because we often saw, sat with and spoke to people who looked like us, who were doing the work. They were always able to provide an extra motivational push whenever things were hard, and any one of us felt like giving up.

The manifesto helped students to deconstruct their experiences of institutional racism and to challenge the existing power structures within the university.
For example, students considered why young Black men were being overpoliced on campus, by campus security like in the instance of Zac Adan, which I mentioned earlier.

Following the manifesto, the focus group leaders documented their findings, and experiences of the process in chapters for a book we co-authored with each other, and academics involved in and leading the project. Through co-collaboration in Towards *Decolonising the University* 2021[119], we were able to capture different thoughts on decolonisation and how they impact different marginalised groups and individuals including international students. The book is rich in lived experiences, academic and professional experiences such that if you entered academia as a person of colour you could find at least one story that resonates with you and that is what makes it so powerful. It is important that these stories were told, and ideas shared about decolonial thinking but more importantly about the ordinary lives of students and the impact that institutional racism can have and the difference that principled spaces can make. I know that for students it was empowering to develop this and create something out of their lived experiences and their learning experiences. Frankly, it was also exhausting, to reflect on times where I was overlooked or racialised and also on the severe impact that being side-lined had on my mental health[120].

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[118] W. Ahmed and others, Decolonising the Curriculum Project Manifesto: Through the Kaleidoscope (2019) <https://decoloniseukc.files.wordpress.com/2019/03/decolonising-the-curriculum-manifesto-final-2.pdf>
[119] D. Thomas, S Jivraj, eds., *Towards Decolonising the University: A Kaleidoscope for Empowered Action* (Oxford: Counterpress 2020).
[120] L. Shoko, (2020) The Audacity to Occupy Spaces and Contribute to Knowledge. In Thomas, S Jivraj, eds., *Towards Decolonising the University: A Kaleidoscope for Empowered Action* p.143-147 (Oxford: Counterpress 2020).

We collaborated with other student societies i.e., Decolonise QMUL, Decolonise Keele, Decolonise Kings and Decolonise Lancaster. I most enjoyed the events we held that allowed us to tell our stories on our terms whether it be through poetry, art or film. Storytelling is still my favourite because it allows us to tell our stories as we imagine them and encourages us to be creative when doing so. For me, telling stories the way that I do is a way of honouring my ancestors whose stories are scrawled all over Great Zimbabwe ruins. Some of the events you will already know of, or you would have attended and that was the Decolonise UoK conference (2019) and the Decolonise UoK Conference 'Voices of (Un)belonging' (2020). (Both are available to watch on YouTube).

Being part of a student activist movement was not without its challenges. We were a group of young people and without a lot of experience in this work. There were differences of opinion sometimes that caused schisms within the group. Often, this was usually to do with decisions that would affect the group in a broad sense/in the long term.

I remember two instances in particular. The first had to do with the Student Union. Was Decolonise UoK going to work alongside the Union? Some said that it should because the union had great networks, and this would allow us to connect with more students across disciplines and interests. The other side of the argument was that unfortunately, the Union had already presented our work as if it was theirs before this debate and more importantly, they had been accused by students whom we had interviewed of being compromised and too closely linked to the University.

The second was much later in the project, towards the end. Did we trust the university to take over the decolonial work that we were doing and make it institution-wide, whilst still maintaining the principles on which it was created? One side argued that this is what would be the best outcome because of possible issues with continuity and that the work was for the university to do, not us as students. The opposite side argued that the University had proven itself to be highly resistant to the ideas of decolonising and that they would only co-opt the work and turn it into something that we did not recognise.

Students chose not to work too closely with the Union and thought it better to disband the project completely rather than allow it to be co-opted. Several other issues had come about but these are the ones that I remember most vividly. We were adamantly against how

performative the university was and strongly felt that in participating in this, we would be betraying the trust that the students had put in us.

Becoming Anti-Racist

The Manifesto was broken down into three main themes. These were Pedagogy and Powerful Learning Experiences: Colour of The Curriculum, Race, Identity & Belonging: Promoting Inclusion/Countering Exclusion and Student Voice & Co-Production with Academics: Stakeholders Within the University

The document was drafted by the students who researched to argue their case for change and the co-facilitators. The research itself was made up of 7 different focus groups. These were: International Students of Colour; Challenging Ableism and Racialisation; Muslim Women x2; Muslim Men x2; Black Men x2; SSPSSR; Open to all students focus group x3

A sample of 80 students from across the UoK Canterbury campus and different departments and stages of study attended the focus groups, with additional individual interviews and input from students who stated that they did not feel comfortable or 'safe' attending the group sessions. Some students who signed up did not attend because they did not feel that there would be any change from the institution as a result of the project. Some feared being under some kind of surveillance from the university even though they were assured that their responses would be completely anonymised[121]. This is where most of the lessons lie.

Pedagogy and powerful learning experiences: Colour of the Curriculum taught us that it is important for students to see themselves reflected amongst graduates and for students to develop trusting and respectful relationships with academics and other students of all cultures and backgrounds. The notion of a one size fits all student experience is outdated. Students report that they attend university with the hope of achieving personal growth but that the opportunities for enhancement including employability and so on, that are on offer can often feel daunting and unsuitable especially when students are struggling to keep up with study

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and other commitments. Lecturers should be more explicit about what is expected from students and "how to succeed" during obligatory sessions e.g., Induction Weeks. These sessions could tackle university myths and set up high expectations with sufficient time slots allocated for current and past students of colour and other professionals in the field to talk about what has helped them on their journey of achievement in a variety of formats (e.g., masterclasses, podcasts and discussion forums).

Race, identity & belonging: Promoting inclusion/Countering exclusion taught us that it is important for us to feel like we are part of the student community and we wanted other marginalised students to have the same. The Kaleidoscope Hub was designed with students of colour in mind, for them to have a physical space (Centre for Sexuality, Race and Gender Justice) where they aren't forced to navigate the politics of their race, sexuality, gender or religion. It was a physical space in the Centre for Sexuality, Race and Gender Justice where students could access reading materials, mentorship and research training to give a few examples. This was successful in part because we had the opportunity to launch the Kaleidoscope Network for allies and the BAME Network. Also, the Centre for Sexuality, Race and Gender Justice is still a space that is open to students. However, we did not have the opportunity to fully implement all of our plans.

Student voice & co-production with academics: Stakeholders within the university taught us that students wanted the university to be more accountable and communicate with them through student forums and to discuss, feedback and offer advice and guidance on issues such as assessment patterns, campus security and the disproportional incidents involving Black students and staff training to deal with discrimination in the classroom e.g., Racism and Islamophobia. It was widely felt that there was a dire lack of student consultation on BME issues and if this was happening via KU this was insufficient and other student-led channels should be created with a senior member of staff acting as a race champion or via a student-staff forum. Participants reported that there was a severe under-representation of black academics or BME success on campus and seeing 'yourself represented' did make a big difference to engagement in academic life. "University staff often lack the understanding, skills and confidence to manage conversations about race effectively… Students and staff gave examples of how this lack of understanding has led to poorly handled complaints and in some cases, complaints are being dismissed altogether". (Tackling Racial Harassment: University Challenged, Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2019)

Academic Research

Right from the beginning, we have had the opportunity to explore the experiences of students who have found a way to use their voice as activists, challenging institutions to make an impactful change for all students.

This is not the experience of all students. Decolonise UoK gave me the permission. "I had gone through so much in terms of university and my mental health such that I had developed a stutter. It was difficult because before then, I was a very articulate speaker and I didn't like that I was going through these difficulties- but it was a testament to this young person whose experiences had been invalidated time and time again", (Lisa Shoko, Activism and Academia, Black History Year, University of Westminster (15 February 2021).

I did this qualitative research during the Covid-19 period, especially the interviews which were conducted between March-June 2020. Some interviews were conducted right at the beginning of the lockdown period in March and April, these were the first three interviews with students A, B and C; the rest of the interviews were conducted in May and June specifically, these were the last two interviews with students D and E. As the Covid-19 situation developed and lockdown measures were implemented, I found it challenging to implement my plans of having c. 20 participants from different institutions. It was more reasonable to focus on telling the stories of 5-6 participants who were doing student activist work at the University of Kent. It was important to consider that it was determined that Black people were four times more likely to die from Covid-19 in May 2020.[122] There was a considerable amount of fear around the unknown effects of the virus which threatened to be around for an undetermined period of time. In some instances, the virus wiped out entire families. Everyone I spoke to expressed concerns including grief and anxiety due to being separated from their families, stuck without a conducive environment to study in, no support system and reasonably afraid for their own health and the health of their loved ones.

At the same time the killing of George Floyd "an act so callous and brazen his family described it as a modern-day lynching" (Hirsch, 2020) was heart-breaking for many Black people across the world. Followed by the injustices witnessed in the cases of Breonna

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[122] R. Booth, C. Barr, ' Black People Four Times More Likely to Die From Covid-19, ONS Finds', (*The Guardian, 2021*) <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/07/black-people-four-times-more-likely-to-die-from-covid-19-ons-finds>

Taylor[123], Ahmaud Arbery[124], Belly Mujinga[125], Shukri Abdi[126] and so many others, the Black community was mourning, including me. It was challenging to navigate work through the Covid-19 crisis, the resurgence of Black Lives Matter and the violence of Zimbabwean Lives Matter[127]. 2020 was filled with grief and mourning over systemic injustices, rampant with racial hatred, health crises and hunger crises. It was a year of finding strength in being vulnerable, forgiving and being kind to oneself and to others.

Two main concerns were brought up by participants. The first being that the University expected them to continue, as though there was not a pandemic going on, even where they did not have the appropriate resources to work and sometimes were deterred from doing work because their living environment was not conducive for learning. The second concern arose following the "A Way Forward: Kent Union and University Statement on Racism". In the statement, the University claimed that they would be adopting recommendations from Student Success, the BAME Staff Network, Kent Union and Decolonise UoK. They cited that they were committed to tackling all forms of racism "to help bring about long-overdue changes within our society". However, students were disillusioned by this response, they saw it as posturing and the following of a trend which at the time was denouncing racism[128]. In failing to do this, it would have been more obvious that there were issues of racism on campus some of which have been highlighted by student groups i.e., Decolonise UoK and the Afro-Diasporic Legal Network[129]. Moreover, the University had piggy-backed on the work of groups that would otherwise be independent of the institution. E.g., Decolonise UoK, including the BAME staff network and the Kaleidoscope Network, were created by people of colour and students of colour who were concerned with creating principled spaces for

[123] Louisville-police.org. 2022. *Breonna Taylor Investigation | Louisville Metro PD, KY*. [online] Available at: <https://louisville-police.org/751/Breonna-Taylor-Investigation>

[124] BBC News, 'Ahamud Arbery: What You Need to Know About the Case', (*BBC News, 2021*) <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-52623151>

[125] Criminal Prosecution Service, 'Death of Belly Mujinga: CPS Statement' (*West Midlands CPS News,2020*) <https://www.cps.gov.uk/west-midlands/news/death-belly-mujinga-statement>

[126] D. Taylor, 'Shukri Abdi: Family of Refugee Schoolgirl Who Drowned Sues Police' (*The Guardian 2021*) <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/jan/05/shukri-abdi-family-of-refugee-schoolgirl-who-drowned-sues-police>

[127] N. Chingono, C. Mavhunga, 'President Mnangagwa Defiant as Citizens Protest Violations UDing #Zimbabweanlivesmatter' (*CNN, 2020*) <https://edition.cnn.com/2020/08/04/africa/zimbabwe-clamp-down-opposition/index.html>

[128] University of Kent, Kent Students Union (2020) 'A Way Forward: Kent Union and University Statement on Racism' <https://www.kent.ac.uk/news/kentlife/25628/a-way-forward-kent-union-and-university-statement-on-racism>

[129] Afro-Diasporic Legal Network, "BME societies submit a Statement of Solidarity & Demands to the University of Kent", 2019 <https://medium.com/@afrodiasporiclegalnetwork/bme-societies-submit-a-statement-of-solidarity-demands-to-the-university-of-kent-a353c351e9df>

students and staff of colour in an academic environment that perpetuated Whiteness – for their own wellbeing. None of these had been driven by the institution. In 2019/2020, there were two Black women who were two time serving officers in Kent Union including the President, so the Union had to be vocal on the issue of race. In any case, the joint statement, especially the institution relying on the labour of Black people and people of colour to do the labour and take credit for it, as part of a greater initiative was shocking and disappointing. The day after this "statement" on was made, Decolonise UoK released a statement saying, "Our energy will be directed to survive and thrive not resist appropriation #NotInOur Name

Student Activism in Academia

In '*Dismantling Race in Higher Education',* Nicola Rollock relies on the Cambridge English Dictionary which says that gesture politics is 'any action by a person or organisation done for political reasons and intended to attract public attention but having little real effect'[130]. Some of the examples of things that the University can do to make an impactful change have already been outlined in the Decolonise UoK Manifesto 2019, but also from another student group, The Afro-Diasporic Legal Network which emerged in 2020. On 28th June 2020, the group released a ['Solidarity Statement and Call to Action'](#) signed by 8 student committees primarily for students of colour, 'condemning systemic violence and all its forms'[131] The Afro-Diasporic Legal Network continues to be an inspired and motivated student society at the University of Kent that has furthered conversations around the university about anti-Blackness, racism and access to opportunities on campus grounds. They led the university in 2020 by challenging the university to respond to student demands following the murder of George Floyd. Like many other students they said that they were unsatisfied with the university's solidarity statement which they published in conjunction with Kent Union. This was because the university had already been criticised for hiding behind the union and failing to speak directly to the students, especially about their concerns around institutional racism and un-belonging among BPOC students. They are well known for their direct approach when addressing institutional racism. ALDN provides further evidence of the resistance to

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[130] N. Rollock, 'The Heart of Whiteness: Racial Gesture Politics, Equity and Higher Education' [2018] Dismantling Race in Higher Education.

[131] Afro-Diasporic Legal Network, "BME societies submit a Statement of Solidarity & Demands to the University of Kent", 2019 <https://medium.com/@afrodiasporiclegalnetwork/bme-societies-submit-a-statement-of-solidarity-demands-to-the-university-of-kent-a353c351e9df>

change that we see in higher education institutions. It is another space of resistance and empowerment like Decolonise UoK. These are examples of 'pockets of belonging' that have been created by BPOC students for them to acquire the sense of belonging that I mention in the title of this thesis. Even though the number of students from ethnic minority backgrounds continues to increase year after year with the exception of 2019 where that number fell from 60% to 59% students have argued that the universities have not adequately responded to this need. Students say that the universities have done very little to support impactful and long-term changes like the student demands from Decolonise UoK and the Afro-Diasporic Legal Network, the majority of which have been ignored. The work that students of colour do to improve their university experience does not compensate for the gaps that universities are failing to respond to.

Even though more students are talking about decolonisation and universities are aware of it, the changes have been few and terribly slow. This issue remains a crisis because there is evidence of persistent racism on our campus and the different instances of overt racism, covert racism, casual racism are issues that are not discussed e.g., the over-policing of Black men on university campuses (specifically being racially profiled, surveyed whilst living in on campus accommodation, stopped and searched and even assaulted to give a few examples. It also remains a state of crisis because institutions remain quiet and continuously delay change. An example of whiteness is continually finding recycled reasons and renewed methods of excluding BPOC from their institutions. Although for some it may seem like an over-exaggeration, Black students especially are racialised on a daily basis within these academic institutions. This is what we are trying to address.

The first example that I can give of this is the University falling silent on issues that matter, or inadequately responding to situations where students of colour or Black students have felt like their well-being was under threat. There are multiple examples of this for instance, the Liberty Union incident that I mentioned from 2019, where the University failed to adequately punish students who were implicated in the scandal even though there was evidence of what was said and who said it. These students were inciting hate on campus, and were not penalised, fined or expelled for their actions. This does not align itself with the message of 'zero tolerance' that the institution is always pedalling.

Secondly, the University has failed to respond adequately to the Manifesto recommendations made by Decolonise UoK in 2018 and the Call for Action - Student Demands that were publicly shared by ADLN. Solidarity is not a statement; it is a verb. Whilst the University hides behind the work of student groups who have had to create spaces for themselves where

they belong, the institution itself has not done enough to ensure that all students are welcome and well looked after. There has been very little meaningful action regarding the work that both these student groups have done – which for the University has been free labour, that they have adequately responded to. Firstly, there is something to be said about the fact that the students have to do this work themselves, and that is that this issue is important to their survival, and for the 3-4 years that they are in university, that space provides them with the support that can carry them through. However, the emotional burden and the responsibility to make sure that there is the time commitment to make all of these things happen is on the students.

We have found places of belonging amongst ourselves through Decolonise UoK, ADLN and communities that do not deny the reality of our experiences in a society that resists our existence even at government level i.e., Racial and Ethnic Disparities report 2021. However, in as much as we hold the power of telling our truth we suffer the same fate as Bell mentioned above, where discrimination is covert and hard to prove. Often in the work that we do, there are 'temporary peaks of progress' and 'short lived victories that slide into irrelevance as racial patterns adapt in ways that maintain white dominance'[132].

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[132] D. Gillborn (2018) Heads I Win, Tails You Lose: Anti-Black Racism as Fluid, Relentless, Individual and Systemic, Peabody Journal of Education, 93:1, 66-77, DOI: 10.1080/0161956X.2017.1403178.

Conclusion: Recommendations and Reflections

In Faces at the Bottom of the Well 2018, Bell reminds us that all too often the experiences of Black people are ignored, no matter their experiences or their expertise, Black people are subjected to a "special pleading" for their work to be taken seriously. It is common that their (Black people) views are discounted and that instead the work of white people is of greater value because in traditionally white academic institutions it is considered as objective, whereas Black people's knowledge are often seen as being incapable of objectivity when it comes to matters of race[133]. In this context, it becomes increasingly important to produce work such as this dissertation which amplify the experiences of the "other". hooks complains about the challenges of working within the confines of white supremacy especially when confronted with criticism from well-meaning white folks who cannot understand why a Black person might want to say something a certain way or choose to write for their community and others like them instead of repeating the white gaze. For me there is power in this form of resistance. In this thesis, I have chosen to use academic and experiential knowledge of BPOC to reinforce that these are valid and should be modelled. It actively defies the overplayed stereotype that Black people are not interested in further education – we are.

Higher Education institutions should be more careful to build structures and examine their policies to ensure that they are transformed into anti-racist structures and policies. That work is intentional and demanding. Institutions should not be deliberate in deceiving students to believe that they have achieved decolonisation or anti-racism. Such a position perpetuates a cycle of marginalisation of minority ethnic groups.

Often institutions argue that there is insufficient data proving that people of colour, however there is ample evidence and discussion around the systemic injustices that BPOC students experience in higher education institutions. Furthermore, there is a growing concern that these institutions are failing to acknowledge the psychological impact of racial trauma when it falls on people of colour. For example, the lack of adequate support structures for people of colour who experience racial and colonial violence on campus and students who are criminalised by campus security for their Blackness rather than their conduct. Some of these experiences have the potential to develop into physical health issues (Hackett, Ronaldson, Bhui *et al,* 2020). In the same vein, inherently racist institutions provide limitations on how much people of colour can achieve professionally and financially for example amongst a

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[133] D. Bell, *Faces At The Bottom Of The Well: The Permanence Of Racism 2018* . (Hachette UK 2018).

world of other exclusions. This has an impact on the way that people of colour are perceived and perceive themselves in the world.

This thesis is an affirmation of other scholars who are like me, those who have participated in producing evidence for the thesis, and others whose experiences I was not able to capture in the time frame and within the limitations of this work. Rather than producing necessarily new information about oppression of BPOC students, this dissertation demonstrates that the question "what about the data?" or "where is the data?" has been asked and answered extensively within this field. However, the task of advancing evidence remains an important exercise which poses challenges to institutional racism and structures that insist on upholding white supremacy for the benefit of some, but not all.

This thesis itself, as a result, is a form of resistance because it actively shows how knowledge can be used to help us consider what knowledge is valued, and why it is valued over other knowledge systems e.g., indigenous knowledge systems, lived experiences, counter-story telling, oral histories and how we can rethink academic spaces to be more inclusive of people of colour. It also exists as an affirmation to, and an acknowledgement of all the work plight and efforts of students, activists, scholars, academics who do this work and find themselves demoralised by the failings of academic institutions to meet their demands.

Although institutions are making changes, these are far and few between and we know that "racism is sustained more through law, policies and practices than through individual biases and discrimination" (Jasmine Gonzales Rose)[134]. Even though some people are changing their mind, following the Black Lives Matter movement of 2020 and the death of George Floyd, some people are interested in supporting anti-racism as a trend, rather than a continuous effort that should be everyone's concern regardless of race or privilege. More than anything, the changes can be demoralising when the hard work done by students and staff is co-opted and diminished, when their experiences are simplified and undermined. Despite the efforts of those who have a vested interest in the work of decolonisation, if institutional racism remains and continues to evolve itself and its methods, their results will always have limitations. As I have argued in this thesis, the resistance that Black people and other people of colour, students and personnel encounter means that they continue to be undervalued and are forced to create their own spaces where they belong outside the control of higher education institutions. In an educational setting, these spaces have the potential to be more successful

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[134] Gabriella Borter, 'Explainer: What 'Critical Race Theory Means and Why Its Igniting a Debate' (*Reuters, 2021)* <https://www.reuters.com/legal/government/what-critical-race-theory-means-why-its-igniting-debate-2021-09-21/>

because they are designed and created for people of colour and are not organise according to white supremacy principles. However, these spaces are inadequate because they are a direct contradiction of the system to which they also belong. Therefore, people of colour are stuck in the repetitiveness of this cycle, stifled by the permanence of race that Derek Bell speaks about (Gillborn, 2018).

Traditionally, Black students are accustomed to seeing themselves being depicted as the criminal in their case studies, even with the understanding that they are incarcerated at higher rates than any other racial group. Although this is a wider systemic issue, there are pockets of academia which reinforce the idea that Black students, especially Black men are pre-destined to become criminals and inevitably enter the prison system. In challenging this way of learning, it would be adept to rethink the way we encounter legal education to include fair and accurate depictions of Black lives, and to qualify the true reasons why Black men are stopped and searched more often the other racial groups and imprisoned at higher rates than other racial groups. In short, this is because racial bias, intention or otherwise is embedded in England's criminal justice system. That is only one example.

There is a combination of ways that we can use to explore how legal education and law are offered to students, such as the methods implemented in this thesis, for example, mixed interviews, historical overviews, lived experiences, art, poetry, videos, articles, and others such as print media and oral histories.

I had to significantly change my research design because there would not have been enough time to conduct the research in the way that I wanted to at first instance. I wanted my thesis to look at indigenous knowledge systems and see what lessons there are to be learnt around knowledge production, and teaching that could be brought into higher education institutions. I wanted this thesis to evidence that indigenous knowledge systems are not inferior to Western knowledge systems. I wish that this thesis was not done within the limitations of Covid-19 and lockdown rules. I wish that I could have had the opportunity and the time to interview a greater sample of students at different institutions where they are decolonising methodologies, that way I could assess how this could have an impact institution-wide on outcomes for students from all cohorts and racial backgrounds.

An area of interest which I hope to have the opportunity to pursue in the future is to further explore is the role of racial trauma on people of colour. Whilst there are ongoing conversations about the psychological impact of racism, I would like to focus on racial trauma specifically to show how devastating acts of institutionalised racism. Camara Jones discusses internalised racism and says that this is "an acceptance by members of the

stigmatised races of negative messages about their own abilities and intrinsic worth". She adds that "it is characterised by their not believing in others who look like them, and not believing in themselves" (Jones, 2022).

Neurological research has found that social rejection activates the same systems as physical pain (De Wall Eisenberger). Rejection has serious implications on an individual's psychological state and can influence emotion, cognition and even physical health.

Finally, I hope to see Critical Race Theory and decolonial practice being referred to and being deployed as the basis for best practice across disciplines to help us address racial inequalities in academia, healthcare, housing etc.

I am happy that I could share my story with the readers, and the powerful experiences of all those who participated and all those that have show courage in doing decolonial work. I am privileged to be able to produce a thesis that calls for meaningful accountability and for institutions to address the silence and inaction surrounding racial inequalities.

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Appendix

Research Questions

The interviews mentioned above were semi-structured and led by the following research questions:

- What are your experiences of racism/racialisation/other barriers in class (including 'jokes or 'banter')?
  - a) With faculty or
  - b) With other students
- What are your experiences of racism/racialisation on campus (e.g., relationships/friendships, canteens, student sports, societies, Campus Security, Kent Union), including as a result of PREVENT duty/strategy with faculty or with other students?
- In your view, could incidents of racism impact on academic performance?
- Do you feel that there are enough staff, academics, student support that reflect or understand your cultural background? Give reasons for your answer.
- Are you aware of any equalities/reporting policies at the institution, provided by you Student Union and/or University? If so, do you find them useful and what impact have they had on you?
- Do you feel that your university challenges (or is responsive to) issues of discrimination/race/racism in the academy, what are your experiences of this?
- Do you feel that your university adequately meets its duty to ensure that as they have protected characteristics, racially marginalised students are treated equally in accordance with the Equality Act 2010? How do you think the University understands equality?
- Do you feel that the curriculum allows you to interact with different narratives/perspectives (i.e., from the Global South) of learning at your University – including those that are reflective of your life experiences/ the experiences of racially marginalised people at the university?
- How do you think your university could improve their engagement with students from marginalised backgrounds on campus?

- Do you feel like you belong at your university as a student? Give reasons for your answer.

The responses to these questions can be found in the "Chapter 2: What About the Data".