

## Episode 3: "We need to stop talking about race!"

**Ndidi:** Hello and welcome to are you convinced, I'm Ndidi Okezie.

**Laura:** I'm Laura McInerney, and we're your hosts for this brand-new podcast. The debate show that bridges the gap between all things education and youth services.

**Ndidi:** Each episode, we will take turns to persuade each other to see an issue in an entirely new way.

We'll bring guest experts in to bolster or judge our positions. And at the end, we'll ask that all important question - are you convinced?

**Laura:** We want to open up these debates to our listeners as well. So come along for the ride and spread the word. You can subscribe to the show on Apple podcasts, Spotify, SoundCloud, or anywhere you get your podcasts, and be sure to join the community and follow us on Twitter, Instagram, and Clubhouse.

But for now, let's get started.

**Ndidi:** Okay. I'm really excited about this one because I'm trying to find an angle that at the very least gives us all something new to think about. So the title is we need to stop talking about race and I can already see the faces full of dismay ready to attack. Why would I be saying that? How could I even possibly be considering such a notion?

Well, I'll tell you why. It's because I'm tired. I am so tired. I'm actually exhausted, primarily by the fact that race is still framed as a topic of debate. When you raise issues where race is a component, we seem to immediately get drawn into a back and forth cycle that at its heart is questioning the right.

For a person to even communicate the truth of their lived visceral experience, a debate that forces that person to second guess doubt or be silent about the insidious nature of living in a society that refuses to stop questioning the validity of race as an issue. So let's stop it. It's not working. The definition of insanity is to keep doing the same thing and expect a different result.

So for all of those who get caught up in the, it should be all lives matter. And why do we need to divide people up philosophy. This is for you. Let's try this from a different angle entirely. What if we said we wanted to talk about lived experiences? What if the call to arms was to better understand and improve the lived experiences of Black, Asian, and ethnic minority communities.

Now, before I lose listeners who may be screaming, why just them, let's talk about everyone. Everyone has problems. Well, let me just say you are very familiar and comfortable with this idea of focusing on a particular subject matter at a time in order to make real progress on it. I know you're familiar with it because focus is what good organizations are built on.

Focus is what good government is built on. And focus is what social change agendas are built on. When we recently had a surge in conversations about women's safety, we witnessed what happened when there is real focus on a topic. We had some men wanting to spotlight that it isn't all men that behave in these problematic ways, but they quickly accepted that that would actually be an unhelpful lens from which to engage in this discussion. And on the whole, they fed in line with either being in listening mode to learn and proactively try to show greater empathy and modify their behaviour to ensure they were not a part of the problem.

But the bigger issue here is that as a society, we gave space to that discussion. We didn't silence it with debates about whether it was right, that so many women feel this way. We didn't shout those conversations down with all the examples of when women are not subjected to that kind of negative behavior.

The very fact that most women could recount even one time in their recent past, where they had been treated in ways that perpetuated the fear and anger being expressed was enough for meaningful dialogue to be allowed to take place. But yet we don't afford that same grace to the topic of race. I could draw the same parallels in the way we discuss women's safety.

With the way we tend to approach discussions on mental health, class LGBTQ issues, on an on - topics where we may have people disagreeing on many aspects across an issue, but we don't allow ourselves to be drawn into a debate on whether that issue is even real or not. And yet that is where the topic of race remains stuck.

Do we have a race problem or not? So enough is enough. I am tired. If we are going to build on the momentum that started in 2020, we need a paradigm shift on how we engage in the discussions of race. And so my proposition is that we need to sidestep the trap door of doom that inevitably ends up being stuck in, prove it.

And focus in on a call to action that is about truly understanding, sharing, and improving the lived experiences of Black, Asian, and ethnic minority communities. Because if you can say no to that as an area where for your focus, then that does start to crystallize what some of the real barriers to progress actually are.

That's it? That's my proposition. Laura, are you with me?

**Laura:** That's it. That's your, that's your mic drop right there. Like you said it like, this is no big deal.

**Ndidi:** Just do it.

**Laura:** No. I mean, you've, you've thrown me off slightly. I think it's fair. I'm allowed to tell the listeners that, um, I knew that this topic was going to be raised, but I didn't know exactly what the proposition was going to be.

And you know, you're normally like miss let's have a conversation about everything. Let's all sit down and talk.

**Ndidi:** I'm not quite sure what you're doing there, but okay.

**Laura:** But, so it's sort of thrown me off a little bit when I heard that's what you were going to do. So we need to stop talking about race.

That's it in a nutshell, right?

**Ndidi:** I don't want to hear it. I don't want to hear racist. The opening conversation. Let's talk about the lived experiences, the realities of these key communities in our society.

**Laura:** I'm with you. And I think that's why it's a little bit surprising, right? Like I'm almost convinced, but you're going to have to give me a second because you, you drew a really interesting parallel there with the gender stuff.

And you know, the parallel for me here is as a woman, who's living at the moment after the death of Sarah Everett earlier this year. There's been a great deal of conversation about the fact that women feel unsafe and they face a great deal of discrimination. And one of the interesting parallels between that conversation and the conversation that's been happening really on the back of the recent commission on race and ethnic disparities report, which a lot of people feel very, very aggrieved about, is it feels as if the race conversation has really got into, as you say, a fight about a, is it institutional or isn't it.

And then does it exist or doesn't it? And it's weird to me because the gender stuff hasn't gone down that route. And in fact, the institutional thing never gets mentioned with gender at all. And I'm hoping as we move on to the guests, maybe we can have a think about why that is, because I don't think we can say that there isn't an institutional sexism.

We literally have laws in this country, which are sexist. Like as a woman, you cannot inherit it. A hereditary peership, that's a very specific institution, example of sexism, but we don't even get into it. And I was sort of hoping that what you'd say is you

want to stop talking about race because what you want to focus on, isn't even listening or understanding, but change actual change in the study.

But for me with the commission and race report is there's lots of things about it to debate and lots of things that aren't how people would have, would have chosen it to be. And I think there are things as criticized, but it does have, I've got in front of me 24, maybe 25 very clear recommendations.

Some of which are really big deals like properly fund the equality and human rights commission to ensure compliance enforcement and litigation of significant and unjust racial disadvantages. That's quite a massive deal. It's saying that the police should have local residency requirement for recruitment to each police force.

So you would be forced as the police. To recruit from the community around you and where they try this in London actually doubled ethnic minority recruitment. Those are conversations. I absolutely think we should be having, because I'm sure there are some people in the police who were pushed back against that, but ultimately it could lead to quite a big change.

And so I found like you some of this just really disappointing, like, can we not just crack on and accept this is a problem.

I suspect there's parts of this I'm missing. And that's why we've got two expert guests who are here with us today to see if they're convinced by you or even convinced by anything I've just said. So I'm going to turn now to our first guests. We've got Jon Cornejo, who is an anti-racism consultant, as well as an organizer at Charity So White – a people of colour led campaign group seeking to tackle institutional racism in the charity sector. So Jon, I've said some stuff that might be directly against some of the things that you stand for. So please do challenge me. What am I missing on this discussion?

**Jon:** You've caught me off guard with this proposition as well.

Cause I'm still trying to work out in my head where I stand. And for me, it's not so much about whether or not we need to still talk about race. And I agree with a lot of the conversation around it is really frustrating, but for me it's about, are we prepared to have the sort of in-depth reflective, analytical conversations, looking at ourselves, our institutions, our organizations that will actually lead to transformative change.

And I think so often we think within charts to why it was so focused on tackling institutional racism in the charity sector. And you'd think that these are fairly warm targets. And the charity side too, you know, a lot of charge people see themselves as good people and that sort of, that whole era of sort of goodness around the

sector is something you'd think you're knocking at an open door, but it's just the lack of willpower [00:10:00] to really talk about it in any real depth to really think about how recruitment practices or workplace cultures and behaviors reinforce racism on a daily basis and keep people of color lower down in the chain of command.

And I think. We aren't ready yet. I think we started to have deeper conversations with the black lives matter protests and with everything that's been happening, particularly in the last couple of months around the report, but we're not there yet. And I think we need to talk about it better and deeper in order to get to the action that will end this cycle of madness.

That I totally feel as well.

**Ndidi:** But this is it. Like I think you've hit the nail on the head. And so did Laura in the point that we can't keep saying, well, let's just act because we've been trained to do that. We need to stop and understand why aren't we able to get past to the recommendation phases, the amount of reports that have come out.

In the recent years, not even way back, we're not missing recommendations. That isn't the point. They don't get acted on. They don't get implemented. We keep going round and round. Why? Because look at what's happened with that race report, the amount of pain that I feel coming out of that report, I can't even put it into words, but the biggest thing that causes pain is more that look at where the conversation went.

Immediately the conversation went down to see nothing to see here. Where actually the report doesn't say that in a lot of places. So my proposition is clearly that the entry into this conversation is not working and we do need to learn from what happens. Why can we have a conversation about women and gender and not get drawn into this exhibition exists?

Or doesn't it? Why can we have conversations about other issues and not be drawn and stalled? At the very beginning when it comes to race, this is the bit we keep getting tripped up on. So my tiredness, my exhaustion is that I think we keep banging our heads against the wrong wall. It's time to like fine.

Okay. Let's come at this from a different angle. And that's what for me, the lived experience is awesome.

**Laura:** We can bring in then the second guest expert who can perhaps give us that second or different angle - we've got Amjad Ali, who's the co-founder of BAMEed, a

movement initiated in response to the continual call for intersectionality and diversity in the education sector. And he is also a trainer at try this teaching.

What have you thought about what we've said so far?

**Amjad:** Firstly, it seems as though all three of you are on the same page in terms of thinking about this idea of, we need to, we do indeed need to stop talking about race because there is a different angle we need to come out. Unfortunately, I'm on the complete opposite side of the spectrum to you all.

I think, firstly, we need to understand what we mean by these two parts of this statement. So yeah. We, who is we? Firstly, um, is we people like myself, I'm an Asian, British, Pakistani, Muslim male. Who is the we? Or is it the, the white male prime minister? Or is it somebody else? Like who is we? Firstly, because I think we'll have two different answers to that.

Secondly, what does race mean? I mean, I don't need to lecture anyone to explain to anyone that historians, anthropologists and sociologists all regard it as a social construct. So the idea of race is flawed anyway in itself. So we need to think about what do we mean by race? Let's, let's dig a bit deeper than just the simple premise of race, right?

And the reason why gender is often an easier concept to grasp is because visibly it's straightforward and it's actually physically quite measurable in order for a company, an executive, CEO, boards, uh, parliamentary representative, et cetera, to just be able to visually represent the diversity within, say a gender construct.

Now it, the same principle applies with words like BAME. BAME has come under so much fire recently, the concept of BAME, being Black, Asian, minority ethnic, lots of people would argue actually we are a global majority. So why are we referring to ourselves as a minority? And even BAMEed itself, as a movement, that we've initiated as a charity now, um, has been called upon, you know, why are you still using that term and the issue here and the issue that I would chuck back to all of you is okay, fine.

Let's stop talking about it, but let's not just say we should say something else. Tell me what that something else is. If we want to change the term BAME we need to refer to, well, what else would it be? And my worry with all of this is it's another distraction. It's another way of us moving away from what we need to be talking about.

The Sewell report has created exactly what it cynically might have been in my view. Aim to do, create another distraction. And what we say in BAMEed is all the time,

keep the focus, the focus, and what we need to consider. When we think about this idea of do we need to stop talking about race? Here's my small part.

Yes, but we need to start understanding what race means and the damage and the limitations on discrimination around race. So that's what we need to start talking about. Ndidi, you talked about lived experiences. A problem with lived experiences are me as a straight male, can't live the experiences of the homosexual male, right?

Because I've never lived those experiences. And unfortunately, we only really understand oppression through the oppression that we've experienced or faced. And therefore, lived experiences becomes a bit difficult because people say things, but. Surely, it's not a problem. Surely you haven't experienced that.

And that's where the stupid, useless hashtags, like not all men originate from because people started getting defensive around this idea. Men, especially, well, I don't do that. And it's that idea of actually we do need to continue talking about race, but what we need to talk about is. What race means, how race affects our lives and how race like you, you and you might be damaging my life more than you.

You and you much argument would be, we need to continue talking about race because Prince Philip peace be upon him. Rest in peace. I read an article recently that he had memorable one-liners that could make people chuckle and others cringe. Is that, is that how we're referring to racist comments? Boris Johnson.

Oh, it's just, you know, Breaking the ice. Is that how we're referring to racist comments? So. The issue with stopping talking is racist people don't agree with what racism is. So maybe we need to define the parameters really, really clearly.

**Ndidi:** See, this is my point. That's what I don't think we're all agreed on - the premise.

I think I'll probably still go a bit what to do on that, but in a way, I think you've kind of gone full circle in your response there, because for me, even in the way that you've initially broke down that title, that for me, is what tends to happen. Well, okay. Let's dissect the very words we're talking about.

We haven't even got to the issue. We haven't even got to the context or the substance. We're now looking at the words, we're now looking at definitions and the energy gets caught up in that initial bit before we even get to the actual thing that we're trying to understand and change. And the thing about the lived experience, we can't live the experience of other people who are very different to us, but I completely disagree with the notion that we can't understand or give space to it because we've just demonstrated we can, the example with the women point that I

was just making, was that when that hashtag, #notallmen, came up, it quite quickly, got shut down and you actually had a lot of people able to say, Oh, okay. I get why that isn't helpful. Like, I get that. Like, it's not actually about the ones that it isn't about those men. It's actually about the men that it is about. And that for me is like a really great parallel where we can stop.

**Amjad:** So the lived experiences bit is not that we can never understand anybody else's lived experience.

The issue is the distractions occur to invalidate my lived experiences. And that's what we need to be clear about. If I'm experiencing these notions, these factors, these discriminations, these prejudices, then we need to understand and accept it. And I guess the issue with breaking down the words is this conversation would be different if I was talking to a different audience.

So I wouldn't need to break down the we or talk about race. If I was talking to say my steering group in BAMEed. So we need to be clear who our audience are in order for us to break down what the rationale behind the languages.

**Laura:** I'm going to come back to the we point. Cause I actually, I think it's really helpful.

So I'm gonna go with Amjad on why I think that might be handy. But before then, Jon just to bring you back in, one point raised there is this issue around not all men and the fact that for her, the conversation doesn't need to be like, I'm not saying you're racist. One of the problems when we come back to this issue of tackling institutional racism is that feeling like you are saying, everybody in an organization is racist. And I just wondered how you've tackled that. Or if you've experienced that kind of conversation before.

**Jon:** I mean, if I had a penny for every time, I've heard it, what are you saying? Oh, white people are racist. It's a common trope. And I think you can see it across all forms of systemic oppression.

And it's exactly why, the purpose of not all men is supposed to be. And I think the problem with racism specifically and what I keep seeing both as an activist and as a consultant now is people just don't understand what racism is. They can only understand it from a very interpersonal lens in terms of like, I haven't said a racist thing to Black person, I haven't said the N word is sort of that extreme definition and version of what racism is.

It's the only frame that people have. And it gets so emotive that people kind of jump immediately to that picture and feel very called out. And like you ended up



having to deal with white tears, but we need to have a better conversation and sort of instill a better understanding amongst people. And that takes a lot of work around the complexity of it that it's around the ideas that we grow up in the ideologies.

Behind our institutions, the structures within our organizations, all of these things, and the interpersonal is a part of it, an important part of it, but it's not the only frame that we can really grapple with. And that's what I try and work so much on within my work as an anti-racism trainer is just trying to answer that question and really explore what is racism and get white people in particular thinking really deeply around all the different ways that it manifests and how they can perpetuate those systems and structures without necessarily being a racist.

**Ndidi:** Can I just jump on like, cause I feel like I might be able to win Jon over right now. So hold on to Jon, that literally what you are saying is my proposition. So I'm saying that, remember I said, my proposition is let's talk about the lived experiences. What if the calls to arms was to better understand and improve the lived experiences of Black, Asian, and ethnic minority communities?

So for me, the thing is I still think it's the same agenda ultimately. But what, for me, that sidesteps is that immediate visceral rejection of the, the initial conversation and this isn't to distract or anything like that. Um, Amjad, I can promise you that couldn't be further from my desire, but my point is I am willing to come at you with all of the riots, you know, I mean, as a trained teacher, we often talk about differentiation, right? So for me, it's like, I'm not going to say, sorry, this is all that I've got in my toolkit. You're either going to have to get on board or get out the way I am very comfortable flexing my, um, dare I say, weaponry to suit to the audience or the moment that I need.

So for me, the issue is. What if the call to arms, to society. And that's the we, I mean society, I'm talking in general about us as a community of people. What if it was actually, we want to better understand and improve the lived experiences, because for me, one of the biggest takeaways from last year is that I do think there was a moment there.

There was like an awakening of wait. I don't understand. Wow. Let me do some work to understand. And there were so many of us that were like, what are you talking about? We've been talking about this for decades. Why are you suddenly, but let's run with it. Fine. You suddenly want to pay attention. Great.

I don't think we get to recommend implementation of solutions without understanding.

**Laura:** I'm shaking my head. I'm afraid, on that one. If we were in the same room, you'd see me because to go back, I know that the gender thing and it's slightly different. But to go back to that, you know, I am with you in being really bored of having certain conversations.

And it didn't matter to me that like a million men were going, Oh my goodness. I didn't realize now I finally understand how terrible like life is for women when they're getting all this sexual harassment. I don't care. I don't even need you to understand. I don't need you to experience what I've experienced.

I don't need you to understand what I need men to do is like have the sorts of conversations, Jon, you were just saying about like, when you're out with your friends and you're a bit drunk and a girl walks past, it is unacceptable to say anything to her, just unacceptable, right? Like I'm too bored now to even help you understand it.

I'm sorry. I really understand. I really do. I love jokes. I love banter. But I have come to the conclusion that sometimes we do allow that, as you said, I'm just like, Oh, it's just the prime minister. That's just the way it is. Like, that's not okay. And to me, the longer we, we say, we have to have a conversation.

**Ndidi:** I couldn't disagree more. I couldn't. And I'm like, it's so odd to be in this position. But like for me, the problem is that approach is why we're still here. That approach is why we are still having the same conversations over and over again as a society, because you cannot truly change without understanding you can do what's acceptable in a particular room, but you haven't changed.

You haven't modified your behavior and without the understanding, do you know what Laura, I don't just want you not to make that joke. I want you to understand why it's downright outrageous for you to do so. I want you to work harder than playing the rules of the group or the room that you're in.

**Amjad:** I guess what Laura isn't suggesting is that we stop the educating.

**Laura:** I think I was - thank you for jumping in, though. You should carry on saving me. This is good.

**Amjad:** No, but the thing is in Ndidi, like, you know, as a person of color, if that's an appropriate term, I know some people don't like that phrase as a person of color, lots of us have stated over the last six months to a year, I'm tired of telling you.

Well, it is now, and I'm tired of educating you. Uh, lots of us have openly phrased do your own work, learn yourself. So, uh, and John will know lots of people have stated

that and have said that for us to do that. So I'm siding with Laura in this regard when actually it might be okay to just say, you know what I'm done.

Stop trying to touch my hair. Stop trying to ask me what I eat and actually figure out things yourself, because there's enough out there. There's enough there for you to learn. And, you know, we used to say the phrase, you know, let me have a seat at the table. Let me come into the door, let me come into the room.

All of those kinds of phrases I've used them quoted everywhere, et cetera. Now what I'm saying is move over. Let me sit down and listen, because we've done that now. And this is a, this is what we need to be doing and I get it hasn't worked and I get, it's not getting there. But until right from the top.

It's not just shoved off and brushed off as nothing. We're going to have issues.

**Jon:** I think there is a line between the two and I think there is space for the two. I totally understand the people that are so fed up. I've been there many times that like, I've just, I'm not going to talk to you about this.

I'm not going to educate this. I mean, part of the reason why I'm a consultant now is so I don't have to do it for free and I can actually get paid for talking to white people about racism, but like, you know, I'm setting my own parameters, but I think we need to think about the context and the framing and the kind of spaces that we're having these conversations in.

We can't step completely out of the conversation because if we leave people to just sort of be there and learning and just gloss at whatever's out there on the internet, that's not a good thing in my eyes.

**Amjad:** Jon. That's why we can't stop talking about race.

**Jon:** Yeah but I think it's about how we talk about it.

And I think we have to build the right spaces for those conversations. I've been in both sides of it where I have just sort of directed thinking like, no, you have to do this. This particular policy is bad or this and that. And like trying to be instructive and sort of lay down the line. And it doesn't necessarily always work.

But when I come into my trainings, I'm talking as a Latin American person and talking as a queer person as a non-binary person and then bringing all of those aspects, migrant background as well. All of those into how they've shaped my experiences of racism within the charity sector and working with charities in general.

And that's the thing that can connect people more clearly to what racism is. And that's the thing that gets other people of color and other white people to talk about

their own experiences and perceptions and have that sort of deeper conversation than just the sort of like you need to just stop.

**Ndidi:** Can we just like, take a moment and like literally what Jon has just said. Obviously he's doing my work for me, but like that, what that last line, especially that is the thing that gets people to a better place of understanding what racism is and allows them to do the deeper work. That's my argument. The thing that will actually work, not the thing that we think is like right or wrong.

I'm interested in what is actually going to progress. Change.

**Laura:** But doesn't that mean your proposition should be, we need to talk better about race?

**Ndidi:** No because it's the same because it's like, it's not it's because for me, it's, it's literally, when we had like the word race, look at what immediately happened. This is what happens when we have a race report that came out, the recommendations that came out.

The thing that came, that people took away was, was, oh, there's no institutional racism or yes, there is that. We aren't even able look at the things you reamed off at the beginning. Laura. Noone's even talking about those issues. Noone's talking about that. For me in talking about those issues, we're still talking about race.

We're still talking about the issues at hand, but we entered the conversation from a perspective that just sidestepped this trapdoor, as I say of doom, which is like, just for me is the distraction.

**Amjad:** The race report, invalidates people's experiences, to be honest, because if it said it didn't exist, then that's saying what's happened in my life didn't happen.

And I think it was an incredibly, like quite painful, missed opportunity, but it gave people the permission to hook onto key phrases or key statements. Whether you agree with them or not. I know quite a few people that were involved in not these are good people. They're not crazy. Right. So again, I'm not a camp of like, let's demonize everybody that we happen to disagree with.

I'm not interested in that. Right. But like there's data that backs up what they're saying. Right. And for some reason they have. Decided to focus on some data and not the others, but most importantly, whoever was responsible for the communication of that decided to take the most controversial statement.

That for me, was the gaslight to this. That meant that people were excused from looking at the detail, the data and the recommendations. I guess there's a small part that I could agree on.

**Amjad:** Yeah. I mean, it's not in regards to that. It's the distraction. There again is the weaponry of the words demonize and, and all of those to invalidate.

The constructs of the report, lots of people that have argued against the report will say, we didn't demonize. We just challenged. And the hundreds of academics that have written and signed to say, we don't agree. They're not demonizing the people that are good to people by definition of whatever that means in terms of, you know, everybody knows their own people in that way.

But the arguments against the race report are far greater than that. My arguments are. And like Laura mentioned, maybe we don't need to stop talking about race, but we need to talk about race differently. And I'm from a camp where the BAMEed network, we just sign post. We just elevate. We just share. We just say, right.

Have a look at this, have a read of this, have a think of this. And I don't personally, I do EDI training because actually even the phrase anti-racism training is uncomfortable for some people. And so when I'm doing training, I don't refer to things like supremacy and privilege and fragility and scars and all of those things.

But guess what? Being an English teacher, I could sit you in hymns or those words quite comfortably without using any of those words. So it's that idea of actually, are we pushing people's backs against the walls. And the issue with the racial port for me is far bigger than people in validating, whether it's real or not.

**Ndidi:** Again, this is my point. And if you notice the reason why I was trying to frame this in a way that it wasn't like, Oh yeah. Obviously is because what I am essentially saying is we need to talk about race differently.

Like, that is what I'm saying. I said, what if we reframed it? What if we came at this from a different angle, everything else has substance of what I'm talking about is still very much the issues that sit beneath that headline. But what I'm saying is. The headline. Exactly. As you've said, English teachers were very comfortable using different entry points into things.

I'm actually really comfortable with it. I don't think it negates what we're trying to do at all. But for me, when you both were talking about the exhaustion earlier about like explaining things to people, do you know what I'm actually not in there? I don't mind taking the time to allow people to grow and change.

I really don't. I believe that it's inconceivable that people have to go on the journey with this. I'm very comfortable with that. Well, I am exhausted by it. I'm not going to do bait this with you. I'm not going to debate whether my experience is real. I'm not doing that. I'm not getting into that. And that for me is where we often, that's the starting point.

It's like all before we can even get to like, Oh, what's this recommendation. Is this thing a thing? Is this a thing? What are we talking about?

**Laura:** I think we're getting near to probably coming up with conclusions, but Jon, I just wanted to give you a bit of space, I think, um, Amjad made a really compelling case of the way that he presents his training. But I heard you say very quietly that you, you do use some of those words. And I guess for me, just before I go into the, are you convinced final round, I'd like to know why you do your training and the way that you do it.

**Jon:** In a nutshell, my journey through the charity. So when I started out in my career, I was doing everything to try and fit in within a very middle-class, very sort of white institution and contexts that I found myself in. And I think as I continue to get to know other people of color, as they sort of got stuck into the world of anti-racist organizing within the charity sector, that it's wonder smoke and confidence.

So my own sort of abilities to challenge these things. And I think now that I've gone through this whole journey with charities as well, we're very outspoken. We're very, sort of to the point in terms of what the charity sector needs to do better on and what they need to tackle within themselves. I'm not going to sugarcoat it for white people anymore.

And I think if you, as an organization, wants to sort of come and work with me, like we are going to make sure that you are in the right head space to actually really deeply analyze the structures and environments that you have within your organization. And that does include really digging into what racism is in terms of definitional terms.

For me, a really important part of that is using words and phrases like white supremacy to talk about colonialism, to talk about white fragility, white tears, all of these things, because these are all words and concepts that are out there in the wild that people are talking about, that these conversations are being had.

If we can't get white people within charities to talk about these things and really think about it in a non-emotive way, then we haven't done the job in terms of actually breaking through that barrier and actually get into the depth that we need

within these conversations to lead to that real transformative change in an organization.

And I won't work with anyone that wants it sugarcoated and wants. Um, that sort of more traditional hand-holding.

**\*#AskYouth feature here – ask for separate transcript for this\***

**Ndidi:** Okay. Well, I think already, we're all on the same page. I really do. Um, okay. So really my point is that. I don't know that we can afford to keep circling this drain for much longer.

I don't think we can afford to just keep doing the same things, bringing out reports, making recommendations when no action is taken. No real progress is made on this issue. And so for me, the main opportunity we have now is to reframe the call to action. And for me, as I said, coming at it from a different angle, which is very much about, we do want to talk about, understand and improve the lived experiences of Black, Asian, and ethnic minority communities. If you enter that proposition that opens the door to all the things that we're looking to understand and discuss that opens the door to solutions. But what it does is it allows people to drop the armor.

And it also allows us to sidestep this notion of debates. That for me is actually the reason why I wanted to have this conversation. We underestimate the damage debating your existence does to people. For me, that is the most insidious thing that we are doing to communities of color across the UK.

This constant back and forth rhetoric about whether what you've experienced, what you know, to be true is a thing or not is incredibly damaging. My biggest takeaways over the last year has just been, that is where my pain has come from. And so I want to have a conversation about what is going on for people.

And my optimism, my belief is that I think you can bring more people with you on that. I think we have seen lots and lots of examples where as a society, we are all willing to lean into trying to understand others better. And I think we haven't done that with race in a way that we possibly could. So that's my proposition.

Let's stop talking about race just as this umbrella, catch-all title. Let's start talking about the issues that sit underneath that. And we can do that by elevating the conversation around, trying to understand, and then take action to improve the lived experiences of Black, Asian, and ethnic minority communities.

That's my proposition. And so I'm going to see whether I've been able to convince anyone I'm going to start with, who I think is most friendly in this room at this moment, to my point, Jon, are you convinced?

**Jon:** Yeah I am. Um, I think the important thing for me is we need to start doing, and part of the action is talking about our lived experiences and building our understanding of each other.

**Ndidi:** Thank you. Um, we need to stop talking about race. Amjad, are you convinced?

**Amjad:** No, I'm not convinced that we need to stop because my fear of just talking about lived experiences that is that we just have an extended black history month every month. And everyone just thinks that we need to talk about difficulties and overcoming barriers and getting out of the hood and all of those kinds of things that they expect from us coming through and coming out of.

What I want us to do is continue talking about race and if it's not happening, then let's become the first have to make things happen.

**Ndidi:** We need to stop talking about race. Laura, are you convinced?

**Laura:** Oh, this is a really complicated one. I mean, I think I was kind of on your side from, from near the beginning, but I want to come back to something that I've just said before about the we and who is the we in that statement.

And I know it's almost like linguistic, to go on about it, but I think it would be really unfair of me to say earlier in the conversation, men, I want you to take some responsibility and you to sort out your friends and do a bunch of stuff. And then me as a white person say, actually like if the we involves me, we can just stop talking about race because even this conversation today has been really important for me to hear different points of view.

And so I am. Obviously at a point where I felt like, I couldn't say there's no conversations that need to be had, but something else you did say. It really, really got to me earlier. It was when you talked about the stories of individuals - and I know I'm a real institution focused person, right. I came in with my recommendations and big statistics usually, but you are right.

It is the stories of individuals. As themselves and their experiences that do win people over. Not because you're trying to just win an argument, but because this is about understanding that other people are having experiences and those experiences really matter. And if there's something we can do to make those experiences better in life, we should all be doing it.

And so if what you're saying is we shouldn't be talking about races, as big concepts. And instead we should be working to understand individual lived experiences as



part of a bigger conversation that takes in lots and lots of people. Then I am convinced, I am definitely convinced by that. Yeah, you win.

**Ndidi:** I was going to say I'm so going to try and come at the end and I thought you were going to bat my hand away. So I was like, I think one and a half, I was three, but it sounds like I've got two out of three.

**Laura:** Yeah, this was a real, I can say, Ms. Conversation about everything you really caught me off guard here, but it has been, it has been fantastic.

Thank you so much to our guests for coming with us on this. You've been absolutely fantastic. And, um, really I've learned so much from you.

Jon, where can our listeners find out more about you and the work that you do?

**Jon:** So you can follow me on Twitter @jon\_cornejo. You can hire me at [jmbconsulting.co.uk](http://jmbconsulting.co.uk). If you're a leader, looking for an anti-racist, hit me up.

**Laura:** Fantastic. And Amjad, where can our listeners connect with you?

**Amjad:** Me personally, you can find me @TeachLeadAli on Twitter. You can find a variety of resources and documentation stats on [bameednetwork.com](http://bameednetwork.com) and our Twitter handle's @BAMEednetwork.

**Laura:** Brilliant. Thank you. Ndidi, I don't know if this went, how you were expecting at all.

**Ndidi:** No, I thought was brilliant. Actually. Amjad right at the end there just raised something. I thought it was so powerful, but I was like, Oh God, I'm not going to be allowed to pick up on it, but I loved the, what we need to avoid doing. And that definitely wasn't my intention, but I thought it was such a really important point to raise.

Thank you both. As Laura said, these are the kinds of conversations that I really think most people would be open to be able to have. So that's what we want to see more of. So, thank you again, are you convinced is out every fortnight. If you've enjoyed listening to us, then let people know, subscribe on iTunes, Spotify, SoundCloud, or wherever you get your podcasts from. Also rate and review the show.

It really helps us and we welcome the feedback. And lastly, Do you tell a friend and spread the word about this new podcast.

**Laura:** Remember, we'd also love to hear from you via our social channels too. You can join the community by following us at UK youth on Twitter and Instagram. Do tell us what you thought of the show?

We've obviously raised a whole range of different issues today, and we'd love to hear more about your experiences as well.

**Ndidi:** And we are also on Clubhouse. We're going to be continuing the conversation on there. So search for the are you convinced club. Hopefully we're able to get, Amjad and Jon on there as well, but we want to hear from you.

This is a really important topic, so let's keep the communication going until next time. It is goodbye from me, Ndidi.

**Laura:** and it's goodbye from me.

**Ndidi:** Ah, thank you guys so much. That was so good. Oh my goodness.