



**Publish & Be Damned! : Lenny Henry & Kit de  
Waal talk Books & Black Writers | Reporting  
Europe's Fault Lines : Assed Baig, Djarah Kan,  
Sabika Shah Povia & Wafaa Albadry | Research  
- Unmuted : Erika Jones on Deaf Media Access  
& Beth Johnson on Diversity & Care | Toxic  
masculinity in digital spaces, BBC radio cuts  
& cultural highlights with Jonathan Nunn,  
Juliet Jacques and the The UK Drill Project**

# DIVERSITY PRESENT OLOGY

**The Journal  
of Media and  
Diversity**

**Issue 04  
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# REPRESENTOLOGY

The Journal of Media and Diversity

## Editorial Mission Statement

**Welcome to Representology**, a journal dedicated to research and best-practice perspectives on how to make the media more representative of all sections of society.

A starting point for effective representation are the “protected characteristics” defined by the Equality Act 2010 including, but not limited to, race, gender, sexuality, and disability, as well as their intersections. We recognise that definitions of diversity and representation are dynamic and constantly evolving and our content will aim to reflect this.

**Representology** is a forum where academic researchers and media industry professionals can come together to pool expertise and experience. We seek to create a better understanding of the current barriers to media participation as well as examine and promote the most effective ways to overcome such barriers. We hope the journal will influence policy and practice in the media industry through a rigorous, evidence-based approach.

Our belief is that a more representative media workforce will enrich and improve media output, enabling media organisations to better serve their audiences, and encourage a more pluralistic and inclusive public discourse. This is vital for a healthy society and well-functioning democracy. We look forward to working with everyone who shares this vision.



**BIRMINGHAM CITY**  
University



**Representology is a collaboration  
between Birmingham City University  
and Cardiff University**

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## EDITORIAL

**Welcome to Issue Four of Representology - The Journal of Media and Diversity. 2022 was a challenging year for British journalism as budget cuts continue to bite. Though it has become clear that audiences can often experience a distance between news coverage and their day-to-day lives, we highlight that this is not solely a national phenomenon - it's replicated outside Britain's shores.**

We have important features on intersectionality in European media, the impact of local radio cuts, and groundbreaking research on deaf access to the industry, care and diversity schemes. In addition to lucid conversations around the publishing industry and 'toxic masculinity', we include, as always, cultural highlights from leading voices changing the public conversation in Britain.

The Representology team wishes everyone a restful New Year.

If you are interested in contributing, or wish to send your views and suggestions for future issues, please write to us: [Representology@bcu.ac.uk](mailto:Representology@bcu.ac.uk)

**K Biswas**  
Editor

# PUBLISHERS AND BE DAMNED!

**Sir Lenny Henry**  
talks to  
**Kit de Waal**

**Kit is a bestselling author, with numerous screenwriting credits. Her debut novel, 'My Name is Leon', was published in 2016, and shortlisted for the Costa Book Awards. Sir Lenny Henry voiced the audiobook and his production company, Douglas Road, adapted the book for TV, screening on BBC2 earlier this year. Here, they talk about transforming the publishing industry, their issues with the 'diversity' agenda, and getting unknown writers a foot in the door.**

**Lenny (LH):**

First question, and it is a bit of an obvious one - why do you think it's so important that there's diversity when it comes to writing?

**Kit de Waal (KdW):**

Okay, so let's talk about publishing and books that are in the shops, and compare that to films. If we look at films, they have come a long way in having black men and women in leading roles and as stars of the show. Everyone knows that's an improvement. A black boy watches, and he thinks 'I can be Denzel Washington'. He is no longer the black friend that's going to die in the second act - he has agency, he has power, he matters.

Now, we all know that's important. We all know that it's progress to have those



black actors in key roles. Less so in publishing. Do you have a black person as master of their own destiny - front and centre - in books? Until it's normalised that a black person is the hero of their book in a white world, then you're not having the range of experiences presented to the child.

**LH:** A lot of people would say that there's more black people on the front covers of books now than there's ever been.

**KdW:** I would agree with that. And that's great, but we all know about how often that's a knee jerk reaction. That these books are put out in Black History Month, and then in November, December, and the rest of the year, the publishers feel they don't have to do anything.

So, it's great that it's happening, and it's completely progress, but it's not on the scale of progress I'm seeing in TV and film. And it needs to continue, and it needs to continue in a concerted way, and not just for one month a year.



**LH:** OK – well, I'm not sure film and TV are brilliant – it's all relative, I guess. Let's move onto my second question: 'Diversity', how helpful is the word nowadays? I've really gone off it recently.

**KdW:** The problem with 'diversity' is that the fixed point – and we all know this – is white, and middle class, and able bodied, and everything else is 'diverse' in relation to that norm. So, I don't like the word at all, and I haven't liked it for a long time. I preferred it when the word was 'equality', so now I try very hard not to say 'diversity'.

**LH:** So, what do you think of the poor person working in 'Diversity and Inclusion' in large publishing and media organisations? Is there any advice you would give them?

**KdW:** It really depends on the status of that person within the company. So, if that person is one of the directors, that's a really different role. They're not going to be - but let's just assume they were one of the

directors on a board of ten directors, then they probably have teeth. They'll have a budget, they will be able to influence policy, they will be able to actually get things done, have initiatives, blah, blah, blah. But it's really rare that you would have a D&I person on the board of a company. More likely, they are sort of middle management - certainly won't be senior management.

**LH:** They need real power with a proper budget?

**KdW:** That is the bare minimum.

**LH:** What about big diversity events – you often see companies putting on big events and talks – what do you think of these?

**KdW:** I truly believe it's all about personal relationships, instead of putting on an event for the whole company, where people turn up – tick, they've got their CPD (Continuing Professional Development) points. What I've learned over the years is to find the person, let's say, in 'Sales', or 'Marketing', and say, "can I take you to lunch?" And I would ask, "is there anything you think I can do to make your job better?" Don't even mention race. Do not mention disability. "How can I make your job better? How can I make you advance through your company? How can I take a problem you have and help you with it?" It might not be to do with race, or you can make it about race. Because you can say, "you know, I think so and so might really work with you, and, well, that person happens to be black." So, in other words, do not hammer that nail and go, "you will do this, here's the quota." It needs to be about personal relationships. The best results come from someone doing it from the heart – from a good heart. Not because they've got a quota, not because they got a memo.

**LH:** Wise words, I wonder if people have got time to take everybody out, one at a time. I want to ask you this: you've got this brilliant scholarship for writers from disadvantaged backgrounds. Explain why you felt the need to do that. And I'm guessing that you are trying to level the playing field.

**KdW:** I Oh, do you know what? I never thought it would get the attention that it got. I said, "I've got a friend at Birkbeck University - she's really, really keen on helping people become better writers." And I want to call it the 'Fat Chance Scholarship'. Because when I used to say to people, "Why don't you do a creative writing MA?", they used to say: "Fat chance". So, let's call it 'the Fat Chance Scholarship', for someone that goes 'I am never going to have the opportunity to go to university.'

**LH:** So, it is the sixth year and it's still going strong, and you're still giving your money to these people. Now, you often talked about socio-economic underrepresentation, as well as racial underrepresentation. Do you think these things are ever in conflict?

**KdW:** Yes, I do. Because I have nothing in common with Kwasi Kwarteng. And he's the same colour as me. If you look at Priti Patel and Suella Braverman, the only thing I have in common with these people is pigmentation. And you cannot

say all black people are underprivileged, for example, and that all black people need help.

If you take those three examples of people, I believe they have zero consideration, zero consideration, for the black people at the bottom of the heap. So for me, that's the conflict. That is not to say that those three names that I've mentioned have never encountered racism - I'm quite sure that they have. What they haven't encountered is the underprivilege, marginalisation and limited life chances that 99% of black people have encountered. So, that's an issue that you – that we – have to take into consideration. However, I think class, for me, is the leveller. So I have more in common with the white girl from Scunthorpe, in a tower block, than I have with Kwasi Kwarteng. And he's black, and I'm black. And that girl would be white, and I'm black. But I've got something in common with her. I know her life. I know what's in her cupboards. I know the fight she has. I have zero conception of, nor do I know, somebody like those three.

**LH:** In 2019, you edited an anthology called 'Common People', which brings together 17 well-known published authors, and 17 unknown new authors. Explain why you did it that way. Is this a model you think people who want to improve diversity in the media could learn from?

**KdW:** Absolutely. For example, when organizers are putting on literary festivals, they are thinking: "We need members of the public to pay seven pounds to sit in that chair, and they're going to pay seven pounds to sit in that chair if it's Lenny Henry or Kit de Waal, or if it's blah, blah, blah." However, if it's "unknown from Rotherham", who's got their debut book out - I don't know if anyone is gonna come, and we won't break even." And those festivals run on a very tight budget. So, what I say to the festival is, "I'm really happy to do this event, I will bring the "nobody" with me." They get a little taste, they get a little bit of the marketing budget for that festival. They get some exposure, they've got some books with them. And they get a stamp of approval from an established writer.

**LH:** You are basically saying, "I'm gonna make them slightly more famous than they were before they sat down."

**KdW:** 3It's a – it's a nice thing to do. And, I've had it happen to me. I was a complete nobody when 'My

Name is Leon' first came out, and nobody knew who I was. And I was in Ireland, doing a festival, and everyone had come to see Marian Keyes and John Boyne, who wrote 'The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas'. And they both had me on the stage with them, and, let me tell you, they both shut up and gave me space. So, the question would be like this:

- "So, John, tell us about your new novel."
- "Yes, it's my fifth novel, blah, blah, blah, but Kit's novel is really great."

I'm not joking. Both of them were really most generous - lovely behaviour. And that's where the idea for 'Common People' came from – profiling 17 unknown writers with well-established writers. I think it came from having

that experience of enormous kindness done to me by people that did not have to do it.

**LH:** Even if things may be slightly more thoughtful in publishing, tell me why you joined the recently established Black Writers' Guild?

**KdW:** We need a Black Writers' Guild because some of the issues that face Black writers are particular to Black writers. For instance, not being promoted, not having a good marketing budget, being in the Black section of the shop. So, you need to have a place where we can go and speak about the issues that affect us in publishing.

**The best results come from someone doing it from the heart – from a good heart. Not because they've got a quota, not because they got a memo.**





**LH:** Sounds like the nuts and bolts admin stuff that just needs to be taken care of, because that affects the bigger picture.

**KdW:** Exactly. And, you know, even if we don't change anything, having somewhere to go, where you

publishers say: "We've got Black writers, we've got Sathnam Sanghera, we've got..." and they go through all the Asian writers, and we're going: "That's not my experience. Don't keep saying that, because, where's – where's me?"

**“Let’s keep the Black people out. Let’s keep the Black stuff where no one will find it.” Nobody thinks like that. Everybody’s saying: “yes, what can we do?”**

can say “this is shit”, is sometimes enough. Maybe you're not going to change the system. Maybe there's no answer. Maybe it's nothing to do with you being Black, but you want this space where you can go, and you can say, “this happened to me”, and people aren't gonna go, “That's not because you're Black. That's because of XYZ.” And sometimes, people only want somewhere where they can go and vent. It's the equivalent of sitting with a mate and going: “Oh, man. Yeah. Put my book in the window.” You need somebody to say that too, because otherwise there's a feeling that you're not being listened to, and you're not taken seriously.

**LH:** It's a rigged deck

**KdW:** Yes! The other thing. The other thing is that the Black Writers' Guild is for people of African and African Caribbean descent. And what happens so often, in publishing, is that the

Where's the African Caribbean person?" And we get lumped in with Chinese writers, we get lumped in with whoever. They're all lovely people, by the way, but they have different issues.

**LH:** Isn't this a massive job? Who's going to do this job? Because, I mean, I know why it should happen, because everybody deserves a fair shake, and we should all be represented, but until there's somebody that thinks like us running things, it feels like change is a long way off.

**KdW:** Yeah, but let me just say this: I do think that, in publishing, change is happening. I really do. And there is nobody - and I say this all the time - there's no one sitting at the top of Penguin Random House going: “Let's keep the Black people out. Let's keep the Black stuff where no one will find it.” Nobody thinks like that. Everybody's saying: “yes, what can we do?”

There are structural systems, there are real problems with the economics of moving to London, where the publishing industry lies, and all that kind of thing. So, there's no conspiracy to keep Black people out, or down. There are systems, and the systems need to change, and the staff understanding needs to improve, but there are good people in publishing out there.

**LH:** Well, I see that there are lots of good people around who want to help, but the system doesn't help them. Now, I know you're setting up your own production development company, 'Portopia Productions', which is brilliant. I admire that, but what should executives who are looking for the next Kit de Waal be looking out for?

**KdW:** So, First of all, there are so many new 'Kit de Waals' already out there, thank goodness, but what commissioning executives should be looking for is somebody with something to say about a story that you never thought was

interesting. Just like 'My Name is Leon' was a tiny story - tiny world, tiny boy - the micro world if you like, because those micro worlds are really what the whole world is made up of. Lots and lots of micro worlds. And maybe executives should look for someone unexpected - I was 55 when I first got published. So, maybe someone from a sector, maybe an older person, maybe someone over 65, maybe someone who is just an unexpected author, who has come through an unexpected route. That's what I'd really like to see.

**LH:** You're great. I've loved - I love this. Every time I talk to you, every jam we play, we break three needles, there's two of us, but we're not the Beatles. You really deliver on this stuff!

**Kit de Waal is an award-winning author and screenwriter.**

**Representology takeaways**

The UK publishing industry has serious representation, diversity and inclusion issues which must be addressed with consequences for the entire media sector:

- Diversity is often encouraged through personal relationships, framed as a solution to a problem as opposed to an issue itself
- The perceived “risk” of encouraging diverse talent can be mitigated by pairing people from under-represented groups with established talent
- Social class disparity is a serious issue in publishing. Understanding and monitoring intersectionality is imperative as opposed to solely monitoring individual characteristics

**THE BLACK WRITERS’ GUILD**

**Nels Abbey**

**2020 was a pivotal year in Black history, principally for one reason: George Floyd, an economically-challenged Black man, was murdered on tape. The aftermath of the murder, captured in 4K, rendered anti-Black racism, in its various forms, undeniable. At least for a moment in time. Anyone with any astuteness knew that moment would not last, and unless proper infrastructure was put in place to attain long-term structural change, there would be a swift return to the status quo.**

On June 15th 2020, over 100 Black writers wrote to the leading publishing companies in the UK to demand that they tackle their industry's systemic inequalities and the chronic under-representation of Black authors, commissioners and senior decision-makers. In the process, the Black writers agreed to form a guild, with the aim of holding the industry to account and improving Britain's literary culture. That was the genesis of the Black Writers' Guild.

The Black Writers' Guild, now a community interest company, exists to represent professional and emerging British writers of Black African and Black African-Caribbean heritage. Membership now stands at over 400 Black writers, including some of Britain's best-selling authors and leading literary figures. Our purpose is to create a sustainable, profitable, fair and equal ecosystem for Black literary talent in British publishing. And, to date, we have worked tirelessly to find innovative ways to make good on our promise.

Staffed, thus far, purely by volunteers (all of whom are Black writers), over the last couple of years, the Guild has established writer-led stakeholder groups with Penguin Random House, Harper Collins, Simon & Schuster, Bloomsbury, Pan Macmillan, Faber and Hachette. Each group is at a different stage, but the groups are a channel of communication between the Guild and Britain's largest publishers. So far, we have held over 40 separate meetings with publishers to hold them to account and offer guidance on how they can improve outcomes for Black writers and publishing professionals.

The Guild has been developing a uniform 'Gold standard' with which to fairly measure ethnic diversity in publishing. We have worked with the Publishers' Association on the creation of an author survey to collate diversity data, and we have built a relationship with the Society of Authors. We have worked with publishers to create and share career opportunities for Black writers, publishing staff, and those working on the diversification of the school curriculum. The Black Writers' Guild has hosted

multiple sessions with TV and film production companies to provide a broader range of writing opportunities for our members.

The Guild has supported the creation of guidelines for publishers on what new and emerging writers need to know about author expectations and have provided advice to Black writers on negotiation, securing an agent, publishing guidance and navigating conflict (creative and otherwise). We've created publishing opportunity-related events – such as our editorial speed-networking sessions with HarperCollins. We have continued to reinforce the case for greater equity in publishing (and beyond) and have fiercely advocated for our members with Government, publishers, the broader creative world and in the public domain.

These are still early days and we're in it for the long-haul. With our continued focus, we are certain the future is bright for Black literary talent and consumers, both in the UK and beyond.

**Nels Abbey is the Author of ‘Think Like A White Man’ (Canongate).**





# COVERING THE WAR IN UKRAINE with **Assed Baig**

Artist: My Dog Sighs

The Al Jazeera English reporter reflects on witnessing and reporting from global conflict zones





We closed the curtains and turned off the lights so we wouldn't become a target. This was our daily evening routine. The hotel had told us that we had to keep the lights off, just as many of those who still remained in Ukraine's second largest city, Kharkiv, did every night. The mayor had said nowhere in the city was safe – it certainly felt that way.

On the cold nights, I would put on my coat, pull out a stool onto the balcony, and look out across the city. There was the constant sound of artillery, our hotel rooms would shake as the Ukrainians fired towards Russian positions. Kharkiv's dogs would bark in symphony at the sounds of the loud bangs and air raid sirens. I saw the flashes of light, the anti-aircraft fire lighting up the sky, and the amber burning of buildings in the distance.

It was a city that was being pounded by Russian forces – during the day, there were few people who were outside on the streets. For weeks, I didn't see children in any of the playgrounds. Instead, I saw them in underground metro stations, which were meant to be nuclear bunkers during the Soviet Era – the irony was that now they were sheltering the population from the Russians, not from an American nuclear strike.

I met six-year-old Kira, who wanted to be a break-dancer. Instead, she was in a cellar sheltering from the shelling outside in Saltivka, the worst hit area of Kharkiv. Kira recited poetry about her love for her mother, the constant thud of artillery outside acting as an unlikely soundtrack to her heartfelt words.

One particular night, I struggled to sleep. The image of dead Russian

soldiers was imprinted on my mind. I asked myself why it disturbed me so much, having seen so many dead in my career. Earlier in the day, we saw the bodies of two Russian soldiers, forced out of their trenches against the tree-line, their bodies torn apart as if by artillery fire – twisted the way that bodies are when confronted with life-wrenching pain. They were just young boys, maybe no more than 19 years old. One had been on a stretcher – he lay face down in the soil, the back of his head blown off, along with two of his limbs. The other, who had obviously been trying to carry him to safety, lay on his back, fist now clenched. Their bodies were unclaimed, as Ukrainian soldiers scavenged for what was left of their supplies. Yes, the Russians are the aggressors, but these were just young boys, sent to war on orders, probably not aware of what

life has to offer, let alone of the reality of death. I still don't have an answer as to why seeing these particular young soldiers affected me emotionally, but as a journalist I was also aware that I shouldn't let my emotional reactions impact my journalistic news values.

I was then taken, by mistake it seems, to a dairy factory. Earlier, some Ukrainian soldiers had apparently filmed themselves shooting captured Russian soldiers in the legs. I saw the aftermath. Charred black bodies, hands seemingly tied behind their backs, drag marks on the floor... I counted three, although one of them didn't have much left. The red of their insides stood out from their black, burnt corpses.

This is a war. Terrible things happen, and although Russia has been accused of the bulk of the war crimes, Ukrainian soldiers are not absolved from their actions.

**“If only there were evil people somewhere insidiously committing evil deeds, and it were necessary only to separate them from the rest of us and destroy them. But the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being. And who is willing to destroy a piece of his own heart?”**

Alexander Solzhenitsyn

**A colleague sent me this quotation after I discussed with him what I had witnessed.**

If there is one thing that stuck out for me during my time in Kharkiv, it is the maternity hospital, forced to operate partly from a basement. Maya was just one day old and still had not felt the warmth of the sun on her skin. Amidst the constant bombardment her mother, Ksenia, didn't ask for victory, didn't ask for the Russians to be beaten – she wanted peace for her newborn. A peaceful future and coexistence. This war will continue, and, as I write this, Russia has called up reserves, possibly introducing hundreds of thousands more men into this war. ‘Referendums’ take place in Russian-held territory to make those areas parts of Russia. It is the desire for peace for which Ksenia wished for Maya that

I recall. A child born into a world of war – from the shelter of her mother's womb, to the underground shelter where she remained until it was safe enough to go outside.

I mention these incidents – the dead Russian soldiers, the apparent filming of the shooting of the Russian soldiers at the dairy, the Ukrainian mother simply wanting peace – not because they are any more important than the atrocities inflicted on the Ukrainian population and military. Far from it – but to illustrate that there are often perspectives and parts of important news stories that go under-reported. For me, diversity is about having a multitude of different perspectives.

Ukraine is the defining war of Europe in our lifetimes. It has been covered mainly by Western, white journalists. I wanted to be there, I wanted

to report on it, I wanted to witness it. But I also realised what it meant for our audiences and for young journalists. For far too long, the field of the foreign correspondent seems to have been reserved for white, public school boys. I'm glad I work for a network that doesn't think that way, either in action or in thought. When I was a student, I was told by a lecturer that being a foreign correspondent and covering conflicts was the holy grail of journalism. For a very long time it felt that, for a journalist of colour like me, sections of the British media were still exclusive and I feel that diversity is often rather superficial. In the face of this, I think we need to keep pushing, not just asking questions of our journalists, but also of media organisations and institutions. Pushing the boundaries is key, calling broadcasters and news



outlets to account is necessary. We need more journalists of colour. Not just on screen, but in decision-making positions, so we can have real representation and diversity of ideas and coverage.



**Assed Baig is a former Channel 4 News journalist and currently a correspondent for Al Jazeera English**



# EUROPEAN GATES

**Representology participated in enlightening conversations around media and diversity at the International Journalism Festival 2022, held in the Italian city of Perugia in April. We follow up with three leading journalists - Sabika Shah Povia, Wafaa Albadry and Djarah Kan - who recount their experiences of working in European media, and explore routes towards transforming their industry.**



# PREJUDICE AND PLURALISM

Sabika Shah  
Povia



I never got to pick who I wanted to be and what I wanted to do when I grew up. And, no, that wasn't because I am the daughter of Pakistani immigrants, who fulfilled their dream of turning me into a doctor or a lawyer, but because I live in Italy, a country where others choose who you're going to do, based on the color of your skin, your religion, your origins.

In high school, this meant I was the 'exotic' brown girl who spoke perfect English. Everything I touched became just as 'exotic' as I was, somehow. If I bought a scarf from H&M, it turned into a pashmina from Kashmir. If I made a chicken and mayo sandwich, people could taste the tandoori I never used in it. Handmade

A 2018 survey, based on interviews with European citizens, showed that people in Italy are the most wrong when it comes to key facts about their society. For example, the majority of Italians tend to overestimate the number of non-EU immigrants and think that they represent more than 25% of the total population, compared to the actual 5%; 47% of Italians believe that there are more irregular migrants than regular ones, while in reality irregular migrants only represent about 10% of the total number of migrants in the country; when it comes to Muslims, Italians guess 19% of the population to be Muslim, when it's not even 5%.

Italians have an abstract vision of the migratory

**There was a time when we used “We are all the same” as an antiracist expression. Today, I believe it is important to say “We are not all the same, and that is ok”.**

Persian carpets appeared everywhere I stepped, like lotus flowers after Buddha's footsteps. I called this my 'magic touch'. It was something I'd laugh off when I was younger, only to realise as I grew older how problematic it was and what it told me about the society I lived in. Even the people who were closest to me, couldn't really see who I was. They had an idea of who I was based entirely on their perception of me. My identity was lost somewhere in between.

phenomenon, filtered and influenced for the most part from the image conveyed by mainstream media, which helps to shape reality, reinterpret it and reproduce an imaginary that often roots judgments and prejudices in public opinion that strongly influence the perception of the foreigner, their symbolic status, and the legitimisation of inclusion or exclusion policies.

My personal experience in the media industry testifies to this. When I am invited to join a left-leaning TV programme, I am referred to as “the expert”, because of the way I look. When I am invited to join a more right-wing TV programme, I am referred to as “biased”, also because of the way I look. Certainly, many of those who invite me to join these discussions don't do so because I am a qualified journalist, but whenever I accept an invitation, I do so because I know I am well-prepared on the subject. And although I know I will be given less time to speak, if compared to non-POC colleagues, I try to squeeze as much sense as I can into my one-minute slots. But does anyone listen to what I have to say, or is everyone just busy promoting their own agenda and using me as a token?

According to a recent report published by the Association Carta di Roma - an organization that for over ten years has focused on monitoring the media on issues of migration and ethnic minorities - in news stories concerned with immigration, people from a migratory background affect only 6% of the coverage. This means that their opinions, testimony or expertise is not often considered relevant in relation to issues that concern them directly.

I am never considered just a 'journalist'. I am always the 'Pakistani journalist', the 'Muslim journalist', the 'daughter-of-immigrants journalist'. I am asked to cover so-called 'honor killings' in the Pakistani community, to give my opinion on the 'burkini ban', or to discuss Italy's draconian and anachronistic citizenship laws. No one cares to know my opinion on the newly-elected government, the economic crisis and youth unemployment, or the effects of climate change on marginalised communities. Why? Because they believe that people who look like me can't discuss things in regard to what they perceive to be our 'host country'. We are treated as immigrants, as outsiders, within our own communities.

This happens because the Italian media talks about the children of immigrants and migrants as if they were the same thing. Children of foreign parents who are born and raised in Italy are referred to as 'second generation immigrants', even if they have never migrated themselves. And because our current laws make it very difficult for them to obtain citizenship, it becomes hard to dismantle this rhetoric. Most of the children of immigrants that I know are, in fact, activists. This isn't a choice, but a necessity. We've come to realise that we have to create our own space in this society if we want our voices to be heard and our rights to be recognised.

It would really help if the Italian information and entertainment industries were more diverse. What is missing is, in fact, the on-screen representation of the pluralism which already exists in the streets, the schools, the workplaces, in our society. Despite the duration and characteristics of the migratory phenomenon in Italy, the representation of immigration and the immigrant population continues to label this social phenomenon as exceptional and extraordinary, rather than as structural.

There was a time when we used “We are all the same” as an antiracist expression. Today, I believe it is important to say “We are not all the same, and that is ok”. I hope the Italian media industry will contribute towards normalising diversity in a country struggling to maintain basic human values intact, as the newly-elected far right government pushes its xenophobic, anti-immigration, nationalist, anti-minority rights agenda forward.

**Sabika Shah Povia is a broadcast and print journalist working in Rome.**



# SHOULDN'T WE START TALKING ABOUT SOCIAL CLASS DIVERSITY IN NEWS-ROOMS?

Wafaa Albadry



I learned English from TV, especially from the globally famous TV series, *Friends*. Thanks to Egypt, which doesn't do television series dubbing in the same way that Germany does, I learned from the TV, because I couldn't afford the money, or the time to go to a private English institution to learn the language.

When I started learning German, I went to that most prestigious, most expensive institution, The Goethe Institute. The first class I attended was for free, as a gift for journalists, and then I continued to pay for my intensive course. I worked three jobs - I was a daily TV reporter in the morning; I created and headed an online department in the evening; and with the little time and energy I had left, also sold pieces for international media outlets. I was a single mother - an independent woman in what is a rough country for women, and a journalist with passion in a conflicted region, which didn't make things easier.

I needed to hustle more and more in order to learn English, and I had to do the TEFL test twice, paying half a month of my income each time to learn, and prove that I had taken it. The Goethe Institute certificate was also valuable in my career, when I moved to work in Germany.

I believe languages are critical tools for journalists, so I always invest the time and money I can to improve them. Yet, neither the native English speakers nor the native German speakers in newsrooms see my investment as an achievement - there is always someone there who wants people like me to do more and to compete.

I'm writing this as a person who consistently raises the topic of diversity in newsrooms. Many colleagues in the industry advocate for this cause, hoping to create better journalism. We see some dimensions more clearly than others: ethnic diversity, gender and gender identity, disability, religion, sexual orientation, and age.

However, we often forget or delay discussing social background or class diversity. By class, here, I don't mean it in any political sense - I mean a financial situation that may be a barrier for journalists in pursuing their work in the ways they wish to. Decision-makers in newsrooms tend not to open a discussion about it. Why? Because it is seen as shameful to talk about social or class background, or those that carry this burden are too busy making ends meet to talk about it. Maybe it's because it has not become mainstream in diversity conversations yet.

Everyone in the newsroom wants to be recognised, broadly, as middle class. It makes it easier for the privileged ones, so they are not focused upon because of their privileges. They wish to be considered as having got to their positions on merit. Conversely, the underprivileged don't want to be seen as less competent than their peers because they come from different backgrounds.

## A global issue

Some journalists have had to bring this up. The American former journalist, Carrington J. Tatum, decided to leave the profession at a young age unable to afford to pay his student debt. I quote here from an article written for the non-profit publication, *MLK50: Justice Through Journalism*:

**Loans got me into journalism. Student debt pushed me out.**

"My journalism degree was more expensive than my wealthier classmates' degrees because I couldn't afford to pay in cash. But that's a common theme with American systems. Poor people pay high prices. Rich people get discounts."

An award-winning European colleague told me a story that the most prestigious newspaper in his country offered him 40 euros per story when he used to work as a correspondent in a Middle Eastern country. After some time, he felt burned out and thought of leaving journalism. He left for a year and then returned to do some great investigative work.

When I used to work between Egypt and Europe, I was sometimes paid as low as 10% of what my colleagues working in the same job on the same stories in the same place were paid. I was paid differently because I carried a different passport. I was allowed only to be paid what they called "local fees".

Moving to Germany didn't allow for much improvement. I still live in a financially precarious situation as a journalist, along with others who are migrants, exiled, Black, people of color, LGBTQI+, single parents - the list is long.

The intersectionality of these factors could create the perfect conditions to report on ongoing social struggles. I, like others, have expressed fears to my colleagues that I'm considering leaving journalism. How many of us will quietly quit journalism because we can't afford to be journalists?

I don't like being considered a victim - I'm still privileged in many aspects of my life. I've got a university degree and grew up in a vast cosmopolitan city offering many ways to develop intellectually. My family supported me emotionally, as a passionate woman who wanted to travel and discover the world - something which is often not the case in Egypt where I'm from.

But what about those who want to be journalists but who live in rural areas? What about those who were unlucky and didn't get a formal education? What about those who think they can never be journalists, because they know no one in that detached industry? Are they represented in the newsrooms? And how will we be able to tell their stories?

In my opinion, they are not represented. Being less financially or socially privileged is different to being an intellectual. Everyone can be an intellectual, but not everyone can make their way into newsrooms. This necessarily leads to a poor representation of segments of our audiences, telling their stories in shallow ways, without agency.

## Byline or payment?

To become a journalist, you must afford the expenses of education, training, and, nowadays, technology. Navigating through unpaid or poorly paid internships, you are often only offered the possibility of being paid by exposure, AKA a byline, instead of cash. Since you are told to work for free to get your name on your own work, many editors and organisations habitually deny young journalists their dues.

The financially and socially privileged take up all the space to experiment, specialise, learn, train, and put prestigious institutions' names on their CVs.

This tempts journalism's decision-makers to hire and promote them, which in the end, keeps newsrooms homogeneous, resulting in a situation where only privileged people lead newsrooms. This makes it harder for journalists from non-traditional backgrounds to progress into decision-making positions.

## Money, Money, Money...

Journalism across the world needs more funding. Some countries enjoy acceptable levels of financing and high freedom of expression, compared to others.

Recently, German public broadcasting has been shaken by a corruption scandal, reviving interest in how the country's broadcasters are funded. The Director of the Berlin broadcaster, RBB, was fired for reportedly using public funds to bankroll a lavish lifestyle, and it has been reported that some directors of the ARD broadcasting corporations receive a more lavish annual salary than the Federal Chancellor. So, maybe there is some money available, but we need transparency in order to understand whether or not it goes into journalism that serves the public interest. And, by the way, we also need more transparency in talking about salaries, because, in a country like Germany, where I practice journalism now, it is still taboo to speak openly with colleagues about our pay.

I followed with worry the situation when journalists at the BBC received the news that radio broadcasts in 10 languages, including Arabic, Persian, Chinese, and Bengali, would cease - although the BBC said no language services would close, and that many will move online. That still leaves the journalists in these departments confused and worried about their future.

In relation to the development and dissemination of programmes, imagery, or digital media, we must remember that journalists are the catalysts of the future of information. Investing in human resources is the most essential investment that newsrooms can make.

## Competition and collaboration

In many newsrooms, underprivileged journalists are put under immense pressure to compete. They are challenged and told that they need to learn more and do more to keep up with their competitors. Those who can't, or who don't want to compete, are shamed or called lazy. Some talk about 'equality of opportunity' - in other words, compete with others if you want to be recognised. They forget the vast difference between equality and equity. Equality in running a marathon is giving everyone the same pair of shoes, while equity is giving everyone a pair of shoes that fit.

It is also about the ground we stand on. The discrimination, oppression, marginalisation of the socially and financially unprivileged, which makes us stand on unequal ground.

The competition culture in newsrooms has replaced a collaboration culture over the years. To fit the vision of often white, patriarchal, and economically privileged-led newsrooms, less privileged journalists have had to sacrifice who they are, sitting in underfunded newsrooms far away or overseas.

Competition might cause conflict on earth, but collaborative journalism may well be its resolution.

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# ITALIAN MEDIA STILL ASKING ITSELF IF RACISM EXISTS

Djarah Kan



My mother, a Ghanaian immigrant who arrived in Italy in the late 1970s, was unemployed for most of her life there. However, as is frequently the case with individuals living in difficult economic circumstances, when she was lucky enough to work - and in my community, work was always a fortune, even when underpaid - the first thing she did was to spend all of her money on electronic goods. We were one of those few black families who had a blender, a toaster, an electric oven, a VCR. Then, in the summer of 2005, that

woman who had never given up on the idea of being a poor black immigrant to whom Europe had wanted to deny fabulous hidden riches, returned from work with a decoder and a huge satellite dish. The arrival of the satellite dish transformed our connection with Italian television and media permanently, and it was never the same again.

We gradually stopped staying tuned into Italian television networks. They did not inform us. They did not entertain us. They had no regard or respect for our lives, so it was useless to stay with our eyes and minds in a country that insisted on calling itself desperately white, when, instead, the colonial and contemporary history of those years described Italy as white, even though the colonial and modern history of the time told an opposite truth.

I was born in Italy, and all my life I have been exposed to a shamelessly white type of information and entertainment. In 2005, it was surreal to observe the thousand ways in which the Italian media tried to erase our colour and our identity from the skin of an entire nation. There had been racially motivated murders, such as that of Jerry Masslo in 1989, and numerous riots, notably the one that followed the Pescopagano Massacre in 1990, when five people died. Traumatic and violent events that, in any other European country, may have led to the opening of serious discussions on a racism that split the country in two, were treated in Italy as episodic events. Immigrants - especially Africans - were described using vocabulary that was often humiliating

and that was aimed at creating fear, contempt and suspicion in white people. I was deeply ashamed of being black and poor, and of coming from an immigrant family. I felt a great sense of guilt for being poor, black, and an immigrant.

Absence is a very violent way of establishing hierarchies of power when we talk about race. Through the lack of bodies and identities that are capable of representing a non-white Italy, television sent me and all racialised people one clear message: we were objects and not subjects. Consequently, we existed only as a function of the morbid curiosity or fear that whites had towards us.

I didn't even imagine in my wildest dreams that black people could occupy the media space as subjects and not objects, until access to international TV channels showed me how racist and anachronistic the approach to information and entertainment was in Italy. Today, I am nearly thirty years old. I am a writer, I work in the media field and I write articles and make podcasts focusing on the themes of race and representation. The world of 'Western Media' is in turmoil, undermined by the demands of those marginalised subjectivities who today try to deconstruct and tell the ways in which 'White Thought' influences and dominates entertainment and information. On the other hand, the news of this ongoing cultural revolution arrives in Italy as an irritation, one to which the nation reacts by shutting doors and windows.

From that magical summer of 2005, when I discovered Al Jazeera, the BBC, CNN, and news programmes from various African countries, to the present, the Italian media has remained white, and they are uninterested in inclusion and the solutions offered by diversity policies and inclusion, as evidenced by the latest Diversity Media Report of 2022 (DMR). According to the yearly study on representation and diversity in the Italian media, the stubbornly 'white gaze' - classist and full of dangerous preconceptions - triumphs, in terms of both enjoyment and information. "In mainstream TV programmes" says Francesca Vecchioni, the President of Diversity and the creator of the Diversity Media Awards, "people are still too often more 'narrated' than made protagonists of their stories: they are the object, not the subject. There is still an expression of diversity naturally inserted in the media offering and free from stereotyped patterns and registers. A sign, probably, that television production - compared to other mediums such as digital products or podcasts - is more inclined to consider its target less capable of 'understanding' some issues related to diversity".

The report also indicates how immigrants and, more generally, racialised people, appear in the public debate only in relation to bad news. According to the ninth report of the Rome Charter in 2021, media attention on the issue of immigration has decreased significantly in the last two years. In Italy, there is little or no talk of both racism and those conditions in which immigrant citizens live. However, the lack of interest in the media,

followed by the progressive abandonment of a racist lexicon linked to fascist culture, has not automatically been translated into improving the quality of information that continues to suffer from a strong implicit racial bias.

The case of Alika Ogorchukwu is the purest example of misrepresentation and racism in the Italian media. A short and dramatic story about how it feels to live and work as an Italian black writer in a country that, two years after George Floyd's death, still needs to use his legacy as a platform upon which to make the murders and massacres of immigrants in Italy more relatable to the public. The murder of Alika Ogorchukwu - a 39-year-old Nigerian citizen who died on the Civitanova Marche sidewalk - was fast and deadly. A stifled, precise, rational assault that lasted little more than four minutes, as shown in video shots taken by some bystanders. Four minutes in which the black man is kicked, punched and finally strangled with that same crutch he was forced to lean on since an accident at work had made him disabled. The most horrifying part of the videos, however, is not the murder of the black man, which occurred in broad daylight in the richest and most visited section of the city, but the responses of passers-by.

Someone tried to say "stop, you're killing him", but beyond the subdued voices of those who observe, almost hypnotised, the ritual of *the white man who re-educates the black man* - with symbolism that recalls the racial violence clearly inscribed in the cultural heritage of Italian fascist

ideology, which always knew how to treat and re-educate black people - no one tried to intervene.

Alika Ogorchukwu was murdered by a man who swore during interrogation that he had not killed for racial reasons. Indeed, he blamed his violence on a bipolar disorder, which had been diagnosed years earlier, but which had never been kept under control. A motive that is impossible to fully process, especially for a large part of the Italian black community, which for decades has been accustomed to counting the victims of racial murders - despite the tragic numbers and circumstances, these victims disappear from the memory and conscience of the country. A few days after the murder, Gianni Riotta and Massimo Giannini - two prominent Italian journalists - published articles in which Alika Ogorchukwu was called "the Italian George Floyd".

I was shocked when I read those headlines. Summarising his life, starting from the assumption that Mr Ogorchukwu was Italian, is paradoxical. Alika Ogorchukwu was not Italian - it is important to underline this statement. At the time of his death, the man did not have access to the possibility of filing an application for Italian citizenship, due to his lacking the legal requirements related to his social class and legal status.

In these articles, there was no critique or discussion about the specific condition in which Alika Ogorchukwu was trapped, as a dark-skinned Nigerian immigrant. He was disabled, poor, and possibly exposed to abuse, but none of these elements

were analysed by the journalists.

Alika Ogorchukwu's life slipped into a tunnel with no way out. The same tunnel in which all the black immigrants that had been murdered before him were systematically forgotten and erased. It was so simple for the Italian media to find the American racism that killed immigrants, black and other POC, more relatable and recognisable. In Italy, racism is American, and America is 'Racism'. There's a story to hear, a story that is supported by movies, books, music, research and studies - in a phrase: American cultural hegemony.

It is hard to even imagine the story of a black immigrant integrated into the specific dynamics of power, race and discrimination in Italy, like so many others before him. The racism that we and our parents have faced in this country does not match the standards and expectations of white public opinion. It is still impossible for Italy to admit that Italian racism and colonialism in Africa during the Fascist era were as ferocious as everyone else's.

Asking for more diversity in Italy is often labelled as encouraging a victimisation of our subjectivity, also a way of being in a society that continues to push a narrative that belittles racism, fascism and anti-immigrant policies. The lack of an authentic and decolonised imaginary delegitimises our work, our identity and, most of all, our right to be safe.

We are not asking for any favours. We are developing a new agenda that values diversity as a starting point for including and representing ourselves, in the Italian media, as agents of social, cultural and political change.

**Djarah Kan is a Ghanaian-Italian writer, activist, and artist**

## Representology takeaways

Issues around diversity and representation in British journalism are replicated throughout Europe and the wider world:

- The intersection of race, class, gender and migration status in Europe is frequently overlooked by media platforms, meaning that journalists from marginalised backgrounds have to fight harder than more privileged colleagues to be acknowledged by their employers
- People of colour will have crucial perspectives on rising nationalist sentiment in Europe. Platforms employing people of colour should be more proactive in dismantling social barriers, supporting their colleagues in pursuing long-term careers in journalism



Erika Jones

# REPRESENTOLOGY

# UNMUTED

## ABSTRACT

Believed to be the first ever study to focus exclusively on deaf people’s experiences behind the camera within the TV and film industry, UNMUTED - which is based on data from an online survey with over 50 participants, plus an analysis of over 150 films & programmes - builds a picture of discrimination and inequality, causing a haemorrhage of deaf off-screen talent from the industry. The full report is due to be published in early 2023. This is an exclusive summary for Representology.

Key Findings:

- 1. A potential **£12,000** (50%) **deaf pay gap**
- 2. **83%** of the deaf survey respondents have considered **leaving the industry**
- 3. A dearth of **young deaf people** entering the industry
- 4. A **serious decline** in the number of deaf-led production companies commissioned by one of the major commissioning bodies
- 5. **85%** of deaf survey respondents reported that they had experienced **discrimination** in their roles.



## Unmuted

The aim of this Unmuted report is to give voice to deaf professionals working behind the camera. Far from being ‘silent’ (a popular, but often mistaken perception of deaf people), they are people who have made a place in the industry, overcoming discrimination while making amazing content. Despite raising their concerns and difficulties, all too frequently deaf people in the industry feel their issues have been dismissed, minimised, or muted.

I originally embarked on this study almost as a ‘passion project’ driven by my own lived experiences and knowledge which give me insight into these issues. I’ve worked in the television industry for about a decade and have had the privilege to work with many talented deaf media professionals. I’m also deaf myself, one of the 20% of the UK population who has some degree of deafness<sup>1</sup>, ranging from mild to profound hearing loss. This 20% of the population is a diverse group, not just by their degree of hearing loss, but also since they use a range of communication methods, choice of main language, and cultural identity. Some people view their hearing loss as a medical condition and others identify themselves as members of a linguistic & cultural community – as Deaf with a capital D. For this article, the term ‘deaf’ is used inclusively to cover the full spectrum of this group.

While I initiated this study on my own, as I am not an academic I wanted to ensure that it was conducted as robustly as possible. To this end, I made contact with the Sir Lenny Henry Centre for Media Diversity, who assigned me an academic mentor and guide, Dr Jami Rogers, who was able to ensure the academic rigour of my final conclusions and recommendations.

Here in the UK, deaf people have been working behind the camera for over four decades, but I haven’t found any studies focusing solely on them. There have been important studies showing that disabled people, in general, are among the most underrepresented groups working behind the camera. Currently, it is estimated that disabled people within the industry amount to 1% in Film<sup>2</sup> and 5.6%<sup>3</sup> in TV, far behind the UK’s disabled workforce of 20%<sup>4</sup>. This is despite the creation of about 100 different schemes and initiatives in the last 10 years<sup>5</sup>.

Why are we so behind? What is not working? A thought worth entertaining is that policymakers and scheme initiatives keep treating disabled people as a single homogenous group, yet they represent a diverse group, with many types of disability. How is it possible to really understand the barriers if a wheelchair user and a blind person are put within the same category, when their access needs and experiences are so vastly different? This is why a deaf-specific, focused study was required.

As there is a lack of information focusing on deaf industry professionals, the first question when composing the survey was: Who are the deaf people in the industry?

## Demographics

The survey aimed to ascertain the demographics of deaf people working in the industry: gender, age, location and so on. With 50-70 respondents (the exact number is protected, as the deaf community is very small, and we wanted respondents’ identities to be protected), we can’t claim to have full representation of the whole of the deaf workforce in the industry, but this does offer us an insight and, going forward, could provide useful reference points.

### Key survey demographic findings:

1. Good racial diversity
2. Disproportionately from lower socio-economic backgrounds
3. Workforce disproportionately in the Southeast, with very little representation in Scotland and none in Wales and Northern Ireland
4. An ageing workforce with a worrying lack of new young entrants

The data indicates, similarly to the wider industry<sup>6</sup>, that deaf women are under-represented (40%). Comparatively, at 18%, there seems to be slightly better representation from Black, Asian and other ethnic groups, surpassing the wider industry averages of 11%<sup>7</sup>. Members of the deaf LGBTQI+ community are at 14%, which is a similar percentage to the non-deaf workforce<sup>8</sup>. We also found that deaf professionals may be more than twice as likely to come from a working-class background than their hearing peers within the industry.<sup>9</sup>

The respondents were mainly from south-eastern England, including London – with nearly half, 47%, hailing from the region. There were 2% from Scotland and none from Wales or Ireland. This suggests that there may not be the same opportunities across the country.

Only 2% of our respondents were younger than 25 years old. Although, this could be down, at least in some way, to younger people being less motivated to fill out the survey compared to those who have been in the industry longer, a stronger suggestion is, maybe, that the industry is not attractive or accessible to younger deaf people.

The age group most represented by respondents was those aged between 30 and 49 years old. The data on the respondents’ career pathways indicated that many of these professionals got their first opportunity to work in the media during a ‘golden era’ between the 2000s to the mid-2010s – a time when there was a glut of deaf programming being made, and a high turnover of commissions by deaf-led productions which potentially brought with them more opportunities for deaf individuals to enter the workforce.

This begs a question – are deaf media professionals worse off today than two decades ago?

## Types of Job

Key findings:

1. Deaf people working in the screen sector overwhelmingly (78%) work in TV
2. Deaf people working in TV overwhelmingly (80%) do not work on “mainstream” programming, but on deaf specific content.
3. There appears to be a serious ‘skills gap’, with deaf people in disproportionately low numbers in “technical and craft roles”.
4. Deaf people appear to be disproportionately excluded from senior management positions.

The data revealed that 22% of the respondents currently worked, or most recently worked, in the film industry, whilst the other 78% worked in television. The vast difference implies that there may be more barriers within the film industry for deaf employees.

Within the off-screen industry, three main areas have been identified in which deaf people are employed:

- a. **Deaf commissioned content** - Film, TV programmes or series involving deaf people/stories that are commissioned for deaf people.
- b. **Deaf programming at major broadcasters** - delivering deaf content, mainly for a deaf audience. Currently, there are only a limited number of opportunities.
- c. **Mainstream** - where a deaf professional works in a team with hearing professionals, on a programme/film that is

not specifically aimed at a deaf audience.

The majority of respondents currently work, or very recently worked, on deaf content – either deaf commissioned content or deaf programming – for major broadcasters: 80%.

When asked what best described their role in TV/Film, 48% of the respondents worked in roles as directors or producers (at various levels). This is much higher if compared to other roles - there were just 12% in technical roles, 8% in production management roles and 6% in the craft department. These figures highlight a potential skill gap amongst deaf professionals - could it be due to the barriers for progression in certain fields, a lack of accessible training, and

**Only 6% of respondents worked in a senior role . . . a far lower number compared to non-disabled workers. This illustrates that there is a glass ceiling for deaf workers in their career progression.**

limited opportunities?

Only 6% of respondents worked in a senior role (series or executive producer, for example) – a far lower number compared to non-disabled workers. This illustrates that there is a glass ceiling for deaf workers in their career progression. Furthermore, none of those senior roles were found in mainstream programming.



Perhaps one of the reasons could be hearing people's attitudes and perceptions of deaf people. A 2018 report by Scope, 'The Disability Perception Gap'<sup>10</sup>, found that 3 in 4 people think that disabled people need to be 'cared for', and found that, in a work environment, they are likely to be viewed as being less productive than their non-disabled counterparts. It could thus be difficult, whether consciously or not, to work against this bias, especially in the risk-averse environment that the off-screen industry often is.

To gauge how much broadcast content actually involved deaf people behind the scenes, we ran an analysis of over 150 deaf

numbers fell to less than half, and those who were production coordinators were the most underrepresented. The inequity here is that the majority of deaf interest programming is made by hearing people, and is not produced, nor is it made, by people from the community.

The skill gap, the seniority, and the lack of full representation insinuates a negative picture – examining the respondents' job opportunities would help us to understand the causes of this image.

## Opportunities & Progression

Key findings:

**Research has established that a pay gap can contribute to poor mental health<sup>12</sup> – a risk that is greater among deaf people, as they are twice as likely to experience mental health challenges<sup>13</sup>**

content programmes that aired between 2017 and 2020. We found that producers and directors made up the highest representation of deaf professionals.

In those roles as well as in roles as executive producers, a little over 50% representation is achieved. However, it is worth noting that fewer than 5 deaf executive producers had worked on the 154 episodes of deaf programming that we studied. For all other roles across the board, the

1. Deaf specific content and productions provide a valuable entry point for deaf people entering the industry.
2. Overwhelmingly, (80%) of respondents identified that there was a lack of career opportunities.
3. Approximately half (49%) of respondents have taken second jobs outside of the screen sector, due to low wages and a lack of opportunities.
4. The deaf pay gap may be as high as £12,000 (or 50%)

The off-screen industry is notoriously hard to break into, so how did the respondents get their foot in the door? More than 60% found their first job in deaf-led productions and deaf programming. This illustrates how important specialist programming is in giving deaf people a start in their careers.

However, 80% of the respondents believed that there were not enough work opportunities for deaf professionals in the industry – only 4% felt there were.

Limited opportunities, and – often consequently – low income, are the reasons the respondents have had to perform multiple/additional roles outside their main role within the industry. Furthermore, almost half of the respondents (49%), have had to work outside the industry – for the same reasons.

This indicates a real struggle in order to have a continuous role within the industry and to earn a living.

Income may be a good indicator of inequalities. The average income of the respondents was £22,000. This was considerably lower than the average income of the wider industry, which was £33,900<sup>11</sup> – suggesting that there is a £12,000 gap in average income between deaf and hearing professionals.

Research has established that a pay gap can contribute to poor mental health<sup>12</sup> – a risk that is greater among deaf people, as they are twice as likely to experience mental health challenges<sup>13</sup>. The low pay gap has contributed to some of the respondents leaving the industry altogether.

## Barriers

So, what is limiting the opportunities for deaf professionals? What kind of barriers are there? We asked the respondents to share what held them back in their careers. From the responses, we identified several key barriers, including but not limited to: Communication, Ghettoisation, the Hearing Mainstream, and Discrimination.

### Communication

This may be the most obvious one – the difference in language, the degree of deafness and a low number of hearing people using sign language mean that workplaces, especially in the hearing environment, are largely inaccessible for many deaf professionals. Even the most proficient lip-readers struggle, as only about 30% to 40% of speech sounds can be lip-read.

Those requiring additional support at their workplace due to their disability can apply for a government grant, 'Access to Work'<sup>14</sup>. It is a lifeline for many deaf professionals, who use the fund to pay for their communication support: interpreters, notetakers and lipspeakers. However, it has its limitations. As the grant has been capped in recent years, the support costs sometimes exceed the amount of the grant available. Larger production companies may be able to make up the shortfall, but for smaller production companies, finding those funds may be more challenging. This leads to a perception that deaf people are 'more expensive' to employ and, to counteract this, some of the respondents have had to make some tough sacrifices in order to manage the cost of their support – sacrifices which included working without interpreters a few days a week.

The main criticism of the 'Access to Work' grant from some of the respondents, however, is that it does not cover anything outside of the 'day job' (i.e., it excludes preparatory work and other activities, such as networking, pitching, seminars, festivals etc) – a massive barrier in an industry that relies on word of mouth and who you know.

The grant was also criticised for its inability to match the flexibility of much of the work in the screen industry, which is far from ideal in a fast-moving industry. This has the most impact on the freelancers.

Moreover, there are only around 1,000 registered & qualified sign language interpreters<sup>15</sup> (for approximately 87,000 sign language users<sup>16</sup>) and fewer than 50 registered lip-speakers in the UK<sup>17</sup>. It comes as no surprise that they're in such high demand and it can be difficult to secure an interpreter at short notice. In a fast-moving industry, which uses lots of jargon and technical terms, interpreters would ideally be specifically trained and experienced in media – a few specialists amid an already small number of interpreters.

The use of any who are less qualified, or less experienced, may result in miscommunication and incorrect translation – potentially leading to poor, unfavourable impressions of yourself in the workplace.

### Ghettoisation

Some of the survey respondents raised concerns about being 'ghettoised' in deaf specific programming and unable to break into 'mainstream' programming. One example of how this concern manifests itself is the practice in the off-screen industry of keeping deaf employees in deaf-specific content making. While the report could find no evidence of this being a deliberate policy on the part of broadcasters, respondents within larger broadcasters were particularly frustrated. Anecdotally, many respondents felt they saw their non-deaf colleagues move around different programmes/areas across broadcasters – gaining new experiences and skills – more than their deaf colleagues. The perception, supported by the survey results – points to deaf professionals being kept on in deaf programming areas, even if they had expressed a wish to move onto other programmes, just as their hearing peers had.

Being kept on deaf programming means their prospects may be restricted – they've been actively stopped from progressing onto other programmes, prevented from developing their skills and from making any potential career moves. Additionally, there is a study<sup>18</sup> which has highlighted the practice of ghettoisation in the industry,

**the practice of ghettoisation in the industry, suggesting that disability-specific programming was seen as “devalued and of inferior quality” in comparison to mainstream programming**



suggesting that disability-specific programming was seen as “devalued and of inferior quality” in comparison to mainstream programming – potentially affecting career prospects negatively.

It is important to say that this doesn’t take away at all from how important a broadcaster’s deaf programming is, both as a cultural value and as an area of employment for deaf people. The teams are, however, often small - at the time of writing, there are only between five and ten roles for each team at the BBC and ITV. Staff being kept on could prevent any new entry, or anyone from moving up the ladder if the staff above you are also not moving on to other roles!

The respondents have testified how this results in some of deaf professionals leaving the industry due to ghettoisation.

### Hearing Mainstream

For this study, we define a ‘mainstream’ production as one in which deaf people are working in a team with hearing professionals, on a programme/film that is not specifically designed for a deaf audience.

Only 22% of the respondents had their current or most recent job on a mainstream production. On the whole, 88% of the respondents had experienced working in mainstream media productions but, for most of them, it was a short-lived experience – with just 14% having worked the whole of, or almost all of, their career on mainstream productions. This suggests how difficult it may be to find continuous employment in such an environment, at least for the 73% of the respondents who would like to have some more work in the mainstream arena.

Only 6% of the respondents think that there are enough opportunities for deaf professionals in the mainstream media, but that very same group of people have worked in the mainstream for over half of their careers.

Attitudes toward deaf professionals in the mainstream industry are often cited as one of the biggest hurdles. One of the most common experiences for respondents was the feeling that they may have just been brought in to ‘tick a box’:

### Discrimination

More than 85% of the respondents reported that they had experienced discrimination in their roles, including ableism, audism (specific to their deafness), and tokenism.

44% of Black, Asian, and Other Ethnic respondents told us that they’ve faced racism, and have been bullied – leading all of them to consider leaving the industry. 73% of all respondents did not think the industry is diverse enough in relation to the deaf talent working behind the camera, thus creating a double barrier for this group of deaf professionals.

More than half of LBGQTQI+, 57% - all of them female - reported experiencing homophobia. Respondents reported that they’ve experienced other forms of discrimination: ageism, maternity discrimination; classism; religious discrimination; sexism; elitism; favouritism.

In addition, 51% of the respondents shared that they had been bullied. In an industry rife with bullying and poor mental health conditions (87% in comparison to 65% of the general population<sup>19</sup>), this is something we must not ignore, especially since deaf people have a higher risk of developing mental health challenges.

## Conclusion

This just covers some of the findings from **Unmuted**, but the picture is clear. It suggests that the industry’s attitudes, perceptions, and systematic failures – including, but not limited to, flawed ‘Access to Work’, organisational pigeonholing, ghettoisation, and limiting creative freedom – create barriers and lead to discriminatory behaviours. These, reportedly, restrict career opportunities and hold back the progress of the respondents and, potentially, of other deaf professionals in the off-screen industry. More seriously, this could mean that we’re in danger of worsening the mental health of deaf professionals and losing deaf talent – 83% of the respondents have considered leaving the industry.

I have outlined some of the recommendations in the **Unmuted** report: How we can act, and improve the industry in order to make it a better place to work in. The study may also act as a reference for any future research and new ideas.

The onus is not just on us to make changes, it is the responsibility of the off-screen industry too - to listen, to **Unmuted** and to turn up the volume. We’re much more than just tokens - we can bring much more.

There is a long road ahead of us, but I hope this report helps in some way to help achieve a truly diverse and healthy industry for everyone.

Erika Jones is an Assistant Producer

**In an industry rife with bullying and poor mental health conditions . . . this is something we must not ignore . . .**

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## Representology takeaways

The UNMUTED report reveals serious issues for deaf people working in the UK television industry:

- Production companies need to carefully monitor issues of retention and career progression for deaf members of staff and address inequalities where they arise
- Monitoring of disability pay gaps needs to look at the specific pay gaps of different impairments. Pay gaps – and therefore the appropriate ways to address them – will differ depending on the impairment
- Extra effort must be made to ensure deaf-led production companies are commissioned both for deaf audiences and for a more general “mainstream” audience





# Diversity Discourse and

**Dr Beth Johnson**, School of Media and  
Communication, University of Leeds

# Dialogue: Centring Lived Experience



**Discourses of diversity and inclusion have come to occupy a central place in national and international media landscapes. As an academic working in the field of media studies, and, more specifically, across television and film, research on the deep inequalities that exist in the make-up of creative screen labour and the failure of diversity and inclusion initiatives to create substantial change, have provided critical insight regarding why significant patterns of failure persist.**

In addition to the understanding that many companies still mistake diversity for inclusion, research has provided statistics and analysis on entrenched inequalities (*Panic!* 2018; *Gender Inequality and Screenwriters* 2018; *We Need to Talk about Caring* 2019; *Racial Diversity Initiatives in UK Film & TV* 2021; *Screened Out* 2021), assessed policy and policy discourse shifts (Malik, 2013; Newsinger, 2012; Liddy 2020), and told important, situated stories about institutional inclusion (Ahmed, 2012), disability related employment gaps (Jones and Wass, 2013), production models (Eikhof and Warhurst 2013), unpaid work (Percival & Hesmondhalgh 2014), off-shoreing (Zoellner, 2015), the myth of meritocracy (Littler, 2017), ‘plastic representation’ (Warner, 2017), the language and practice of institutionalised diversity (Nwonka, 2020), and race-making (Saha, 2021).

In my own recent research in this area, part of which I introduce below, my aim was to add to this body of scholarship through centring the lived-experiences of people working in the UK screen industries, to better understand their experiences of/encounters with industry entry, progression, creativity, parenthood, precarity, diversity schemes and discourses, their experiences of oppression and discrimination, and their hopes for the future.

Throughout 2020, I undertook a short research project interviewing people who were working across the UK screen industries, who had different levels of professional experience and were based in a number of geographical locations. This

work was funded by Research England and was developed while I was working in the role of Diversity and Inclusion Lead of the *Screen Industries Growth Network* project. While one key output from this research was a film series, created with our participants and the regional production company Candour – *Industry Voices*, the interviews undertaken revealed other critical cognisance pertaining to both the experience and perception of diversity discourse, diversity schemes, diversity hires and attendant career impacts. In addition, the interviews brought to the surface a multitude of intersectional oppressions that were associated with five key aspects of identity – race, gender, social class, disability and region.

With participants from across television, film, the games industry and regional screen organisations, the premise from which I started was that lived experience matters, and it is critical in research. As storytelling is central to the screen industries, it was essential that the interviews provided the space for participants to tell their stories at their own pace, in their own voice, that they understood the risks and affordances of speaking out, had access to counselling following their interviews, worked with a diverse production team, and had an ability to shape the ways in which their stories were ultimately rendered on screen.

The focus of this article is not to reflect on the filmic outputs (although I would encourage readers to view the 22 minute extended cut), but to bring into dialogue the participants’ experiences and perceptions of diversity

in both discourse and in practice. In speaking to participants, I explored the ways in which aspects of their identities (understood intersectionally) had impacted upon their working lives, and, in the wake of #MeToo and #BLM, how oppressions and hopes for change were experienced and felt.

## Diversity schemes

Diversity schemes in the UK screen industries and, more broadly, in the cultural and creative industries, take a number of different forms. From apprenticeships and internships, to directed networking and mentoring, to discreet training programmes and ‘step up’ shadowing, such schemes or initiatives aim to improve representation amongst under-represented groups. The framing of particular demographic groups as being ‘under-represented’, rather than as being structurally excluded is, in itself, problematic, and many, although certainly not all diversity schemes, operate on a deficit model. As Doris Eikhof and Stevie Marden (2019: 254) note, initiatives operating on this model, such as additional training, are designed to “make good the “deficiencies” of individual workers – their lack of social or economic capital, knowledge or skills’, and, as such, while they may be successful in supporting individual workers, ultimately work to keep in place the barriers that limit, if not actually prevent, structural change.

Speaking of diversity schemes, research participants in this study frequently focused on the clustering of such schemes at the point of screen industries’ entry:

Diversity schemes in the industry are nearly always about entry level. It is always about ‘young Black’. I have found diversity schemes are often window dressing, essentially. My feeling is that, unless I can go into a place and there are people in positions of authority who I can look up to, and who I know are creating an environment which is safe for me, there is really no point. Companies would do well to first create a safe space, rather than to be inviting in what are essentially the cannon fodder of young people, to be like, ‘Look! Look how many brown and black people we have got around. Young ones. We are helping!’ But they never progress. (Participant 1)

Another participant noted:

I actually did do a lot of diversity schemes. I did a lot of networking when I first moved to London. That really helped me to connect to other people of colour who were in the industry. I actually got my first job opportunities because of those networking events. But the more senior you get, the more you realise that, actually, it only really helps at the beginning of your career. As you get more senior, you start to really see these things for what they are. When you’re senior, the networking events, which are for diverse people, tend to be full of a lot of people who are just like, ‘Hmm, we are just here because we have to be here so we can tick that box.’ You end up not going, because they don’t really seem to care that much. They have just got the funding to do it, or they have to be there. There is no worse feeling than sitting opposite someone and they don’t actually care about you. (Participant 2)

The lack of care noted by participants 1 and 2, speaks to a power disparity between those who are networking to hire diverse talent, and those who are networking to connect and be hired. As noted in *The Care Manifesto* (2020: 7), ‘the crisis of care has become particularly acute over the last forty years, as governments accepted neoliberal capitalism’s near-ubiquitous positioning of profit-making as the organising principle of life.’ Alongside commercial imperatives which centre profit over care, the above experiences bring to the surface what the participants have experienced as both a focus on entry level diverse visibility, and a disconnect between diversity and inclusion. The analogy of ‘window dressing’ is particularly pertinent, drawing attention to the disparity between how diversity schemes can be used as a ‘front’ to make diverse talent visible as commercial and arguably political exemplars of values, while the shop, its stock, and its managers remain the same.



**Companies would do well to first create a safe space, rather than to be inviting in what are essentially the cannon fodder of young people, to be like, ‘Look! Look how many brown and black people we have got around. Young ones. We are helping!’ But they never progress.**



Returning to care for a moment, it’s also important to note that while the participants’ stories have revealed the above as a point of significant common experience, all of the participants told me that care was found among colleagues on the same level as they were. This aligns with what Alacovska and Bissonnette (2021) found on the ground, ‘mutual dependencies’ or ‘practical ethical responsibilities and affectivities’ toward those others that structure the creative industries. These experiences – of people supporting one another -, were a significant source of hope for participants, and they were noted by several participants as being the relationships that helped them to remain (for now) in the industry.

More broadly however, three quarters of the participants expressed serious misgivings about screen industry diversity schemes, and their short-term focus:

**If you had asked me whether I thought diversity schemes worked, 10 years ago, I probably would have said that they were vital. They are giving people opportunities. The more I learn, I worry that they are enormously damaging. I have heard of too many writers, particularly writers of colour, who have experienced a stigma that is attached to them because they got onto a show because they came through a scheme.**

**Then there is the stigma of: ‘You are only here because of diversity, not because you are a great writer, not because you did a brilliant sample script, not because you did a great interview, but because of the colour of your skin.’ Even for the most liberal members of the team, it is still there. (Participant 3)**

In addition, Participant 4 noted:

**Honestly, I have mixed feelings about diversity schemes. I think that they have been really helpful to lots of people I know, but you also feel like there is a stigma attached to them. (Participant 4)**

The notion of a stigma being associated with diversity schemes was identified by almost half of all participants. In her recent book on stigma, Imogen Tyler (2020: 8) notes that ‘we employ ‘stigma’ to describe the degrading marks that are affixed to particular bodies, people, conditions and places within humiliating social interaction’, and she cites Robert Pinker (1970: 17), who argued that ‘stigma is the commonest form of violence used within democratic societies.’ If we accept that stigmas are a form of violence through which power and control are enacted, then we can begin to understand why so many of the participants who were interviewed have actively avoided partaking in diversity schemes.

Of those interviewed, the diversity initiatives undertaken were diverse networking events, training provided by Raising Films (who aim to support, promote and campaign for parents and carers in the UK screen sector), ‘director training’ and ‘assistant commissioner training’. What is interesting about this is that, apart from diverse networking events (which themselves sit more on the side of being an initiative rather than scheme), the schemes that our participants did attend were directly linked to tenable career progression, and were only attended by women. The women who undertook these training initiatives (three in all) noted that the schemes

enabled them to shift from roles in which they felt pigeonholed by their gender.

Arguably, the stigma noted by participants in the research associated with diversity schemes, was particularly powerful – and thus the notion of schemes was predominantly rejected - due to the fact that all but one participant interviewed (notably a white male with a non-visible disability) had also experienced oppression or discrimination in the screen industries due to their ‘diverse’ identity characteristics. On being asked by a manager to discuss experiences associated with diverse identity, specifically ethnicity and working-class origins, one participant noted ‘Why would I make myself vulnerable to tell you how I really feel when all I feel prior to that is that it will ruin my career, if I don’t feel like it is actually going to make any change? Why would I take that risk?’ (Participant 5). In addition, intersectional identity and the multiple and non-homogenous oppressions and discriminations experienced due to those identities, as well as feelings of shame, were central to the stories that the participants shared:

**I constantly feel as if I have to hide, deny, negate parts of myself, my culture, smooth the edges of a stereotype, both in my work and in the way in which I present myself, in order to be accepted. I don’t want to do that. (Participant 6)**

**I think I felt a lot of shame about who I was, being working class, coming from a family where my parents did not speak English. I think I did pretend to be someone I wasn’t for a long time. (Participant 7)**

**I think the biggest barrier is being a Black woman. It is a double whammy. It is so hard. You are constantly having to prove yourself. When you are from a working-class background and you are starting out in TV, it is quite unforgiving. I thought people could see my poverty [...] I was working as a runner in these studios. We had these trollies where we delivered tea and toast to the edits. I was slightly in front of my colleague. He said, ‘Oi, Rosa, get to the back of the bus.’ I was so shocked I didn’t say anything. (Participant 8)**

**If you are working class, if you come from the regions, if you are a woman, or a Black or an Asian person, the barriers start to build up. (Participant 9)**

**I don’t want to be hired just because I am Black. No way. I don’t want to be hired just because you need someone who can operate a camera who has a vagina. I just want to be hired because I have the talent. Equally, I need that equal footing. Treat me like you treat anyone else. That is all we are all asking for, right? (Participant 10)**

**The biggest barrier has been existing at the intersection of all of those things [being a Black, single mother] and having to juggle all of those various identities and then also trying to find myself in them. The biggest**

**barrier has been the intersection. It is all the roads converging at once. (Participant 1).**

The lived experiences noted above are small fragments of the longer dialogues around diversity discourse and practices within the screen industries. Despite this, the power of these stories is central to listening carefully to and enacting a much-needed, long-term, change. Writing here, in **Representology**, about this research feels both relevant and valuable, not just because of what the journal aims to do, but because when I began the research the primary audience envisioned for it was the industry itself.

Collaborations between industry and academia are vital. Working together, we can evidence not only the inequalities of the past and present, but create a different future. In *Access All Areas* (2020: 88) Lenny Henry and Marcus Ryder note that ‘Behind every boring, cold, diversity statistic there are thousands of real people whose lives are affected.’ Personally, I find statistics rather interesting, but lived experience and the stories that people are willing and able to share are immensely powerful. Arguably, while statistics interest policy makers, it is, I believe, the human stories that light the fire for real action. Rigorous academics need both, and, as Henry and Ryder argue, those collaborations are crucial to achieving inclusive change.

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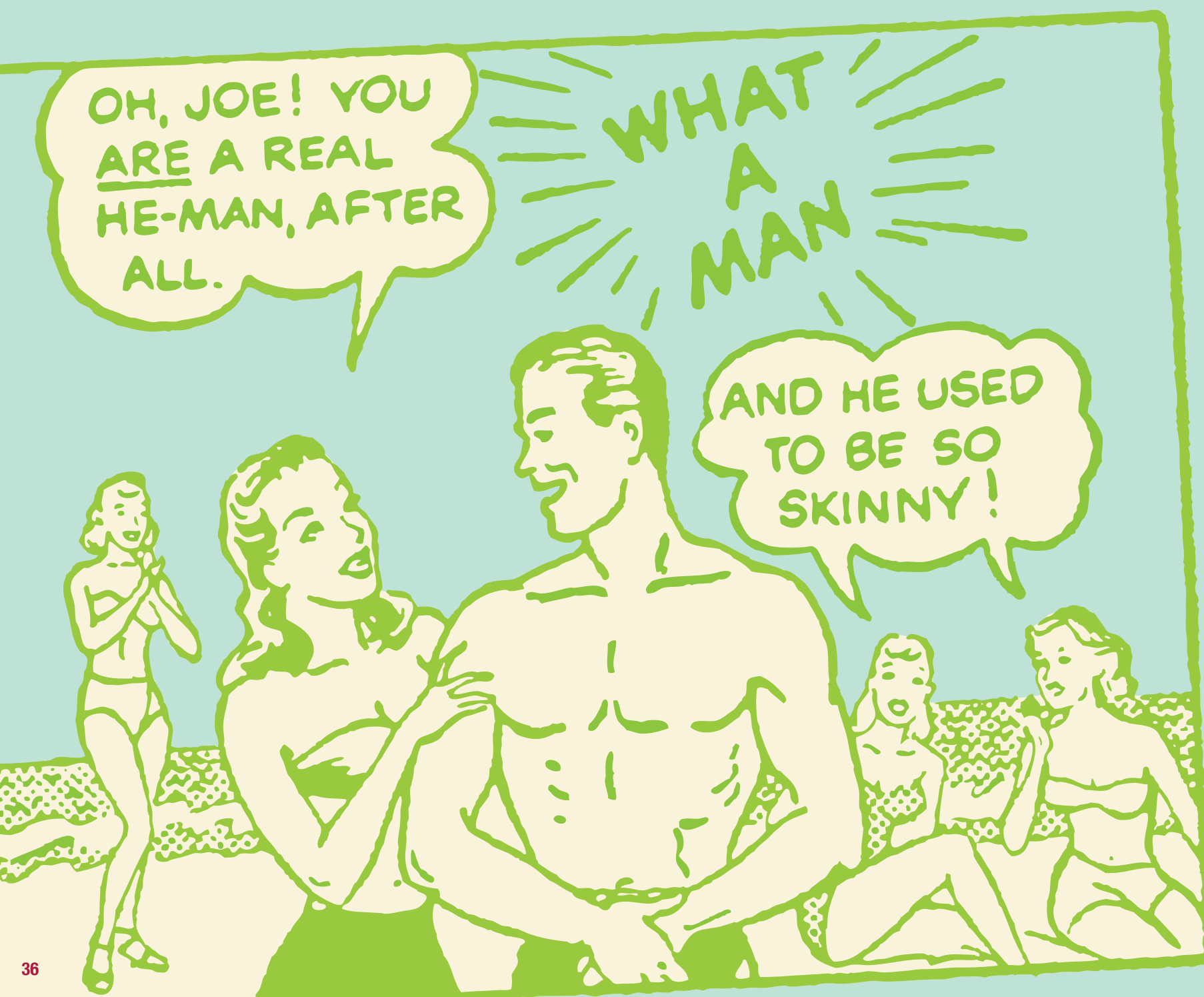
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# TOXIC masculinity



**John Mercer**, Professor of Gender and Sexuality in the Birmingham Centre for Media and Cultural Research, talks to Representology's Professor Diane Kemp about men, masculinity, and digital media.

**John Mercer (JM):** The book initially emerged from a workplace conversation, really. In many ways, it shows you that it is still possible to have coffee and a chat with colleagues in a university and then come up with an idea that eventually turns into a publication in its own right.

It was really a conversation that Rob Lawson, Mark McGlashan and I had in the School of English, and it was just about us. We were all variously interested in researching aspects of contemporary masculinity, and thinking about masculinity and the digital realm. Mark and Rob were both conducting discourse analysis of the ways in which incel groups use social media and the kind of language that they use. From that, we decided to organise a symposium and get a conversation going. Not least because we felt the term itself - 'toxic masculinity' - was something needing discussion.

It's an example of how language gets used, particularly media language, to capture ideas that it's really difficult to articulate, and then it becomes a buzzword that develops a life of its own. And that is particularly true in conversations about masculinity. There may well be a set of behaviours and activities that are going on, or hovering in the ether. And there's something about the coinage that brings a whole set of different activities and behaviours together and seems to articulate or capture something, but it's not necessarily especially accurate.



Then I got some AHRC grant money to run a network called Masculinity, Sex and Popular Culture, and that's how the book came about with Routledge. We wanted to produce an edited collection on toxic masculinity and, particularly, on how it relates to digital media and things that are going on in the digital realm - the fact that these contexts are sometimes quite discrete areas of activity.

Rather than lumping everything together and labelling a whole subculture as a subculture of toxic masculinity, what we wanted to do was look at or commission essays on Incels, on digital activism, on politics - for example, the last essay in the book is about Trump and his followers. It's one I wrote, fairly polemical, and I argue that his followers exhibit a Zombie masculinity - that the reason these men are so angry is because, like zombies, they don't realise that their ideology and politics are just dead and they're dead. And that's what they're angry about. They're thrashing around because they can't accept that they don't matter anymore. And, of course, since I've written that, if you look at what's happened in Russia, and elsewhere in Europe, for that matter, you suddenly realise what seems like a camp or funny idea with which to frame an essay is kind of timely, and it's not really very funny at all. It's not funny when they're in charge.

**Diane Kemp (DK):** Is the context for all the essays the digital space these behaviours take place in?

JM: Yes. Digital spaces are spaces that enable people to articulate views that have been excluded from the mainstream of conversation, in part because they're politically incorrect or seen as offensive. And a lot of this offensive speech, or challenging speech, can be connected to masculinity and particular versions of masculinity, or to specific conditions of masculinity in contemporary moments, but we can't lump all of those things together into one homogeneous whole. At one point, you have a group of ostensibly middle class, white men - young, white men - who are really angry about the fact that they can't get a girlfriend.

It's a very different order to the kinds of right wing populist politics of somebody like Donald Trump, at another point in the spectrum. You can see that connective tissue, you can see that there are threads that might link these people together. You can see the way in which a political figure, like Trump, has an appeal to those people, or tries to leverage their anger in some kind of way, but they're not the same thing.

**DK:** Well, let's stay with the notion of buzzwords, like 'toxic masculinity'. Is there no use in a catch-all term like that? Should we not be using it?

**JM:** I don't think it's ever the case that anybody in our line of work - academics - should be saying we shouldn't be using this language or that language. I think our job is to look at the way in which media culture, political cultures, academia,

use language and ask critical questions about it. I would step right away from the idea that it's the wrong term. It's a term that people use. It has purchase. We therefore have to ask questions about what's happening - who's included in the ring that is drawn around this group of activities, and who isn't. And there's something interesting to say there about questions of generation, questions of class and race, and so on.

For me, as somebody who's spent most of my academic career looking at masculinity in one way or another, one of the things that has become more interesting to me is the extent to which there's a really close rapport, a relationship, or a sort of passing-the-baton relation, between the language that journalists use, media reportage, and the way in which that language carries over into academia. If you look at any new expressions, like the 'new man', the 'metrosexual', and so on, all of these ideas are about trying to say something about masculinity in the contemporary moment, and why it's different, as well as how it used to be in the past.

A lot of the coinage actually comes from media reportage. It comes from journalists. And so, the old classic, 'the crisis of masculinity' - which feels like a sociological term or a historical term - it isn't. Arthur Schlesinger, the American political reporter, coined the term in the late 1950s. It was about postwar, American masculinity - men working in offices, rather than, you know, ploughing the fields, and how these men were somehow emasculated. It's a term that you think has its origin in the social sciences, but... not at all.

**DK:** So is there no basis for these buzzwords in research?

**JM:** Strangely, toxic masculinity does have a tenuous relation to men's movements and men's studies. Or, rather, to specific aspects of men's studies, from the mythopoetic men's movements, which were a big thing in the 1990s, and this was the idea that men needed to connect with their essential manliness. It's an American idea - very 19th century - about going back to nature. The notion of American manhood was that, if you were connected to nature, you're a proper man. Proponents of this version of the men's movement were very keen on camping and building fires, and all of that stuff. And they saw that as this essential masculinity that was the cure for any forms of aggressive behaviours that were unnecessary, and that were toxic. That's where the term comes from, but it's a term that, for the most part, sociologists have never been very keen on. It's hovered around in the background for a while and it's suddenly become useful, because we live in a contemporary moment where cultures of offence are so prevalent, and people are looking around for somebody to cast blame at.

**DK:** Let's go back to your earlier point about the need for digital space as a place in which to air offensive, or 'challenging' speech, as you put it. Does the book square the circle of saying 'yes' to misogynistic, hateful speech, with all that entails, because to ban is problematic, as it doesn't get rid of the thoughts behind the language - are there any solutions offered?

**JM:** I can't offer solutions in that instrumental way, but my prescription is to challenge the offensive, to engage, not to stigmatise and label, and to not indulge yourself in the same practices and behaviours that result in the offensive language to begin with. I think there's something naive and utopian about the idea that, if you shut conversation down, somehow the thoughts go away. Of course, they don't. There is value in enabling people to say and think really terrible things. I think the evidence base that this results in harm is debatable.

I'd ask a whole load of questions about harm itself, as a term. I think 'harm' is one of those things that we now throw around because its lack of precision is very politically and strategically useful.

For example, if you call me a 'faggot' in the professional setting of our university, I would be able to take out a grievance claim against you and say you were using offensive and homophobic language, but is that causing me harm? As a 56 year old man, it's not causing me harm! We operate within a professionalised context and in a cultural context in which we almost equate the fact that you called me something that I didn't like, with you whacking me over the head with a stick.

**DK:** It may not harm you, but name calling is absolutely harmful. It can make people suicidal. Take the social media abuse and trolling which is particularly targeted at women journalists and women of colour. It's obscene and unwarranted. Are you saying they should engage with the abuse - the advice is to definitely not do that.

**JM:** I think what you're pointing to is the important thing - it's a question of scale. And if somebody is receiving relentless abuse, unwarranted abuse, it seems entirely reasonable for me that that person should have an expectation that they should feel safe. What you're doing is making the case that I'm trying to make. I think seeing that as coming under the same umbrella as somebody saying something unpleasant to me in passing, as if they are equally harmful, that's the problem, and it's the situation we're in at the moment, where it's become convenient for right wing commentators to talk about 'woke' culture and how this is harmful and destructive. I think scale is really important. I don't think I'm the person who needs, or should be deciding, what levels are acceptable, but I think proportion is very important. There's quite a big difference between individualised and personalised attacks on people based on their protected characteristics, and conversations in the abstract that are rude, offensive, even aggressive. I think it's important for us as a democracy to know this - to know what's at stake in a democracy.

This is not to lull 'incels', for example, into some false sense that there is a consensus over what's acceptable behaviour, acceptable thoughts and acceptable language. Sometimes, by shutting those things down, we kid ourselves into thinking that nobody thinks those things - that no right-minded person thinks any differently to the way we think, and that by shutting it down, it's gone away. As if those are problems of the past.

**We operate within a professionalised context and in a cultural context in which we almost equate the fact that you called me something that I didn't like, with you whacking me over the head with a stick.**

They're not problems of the past. It's a long time since anybody shouted homophobic abuse at me, but I'll bet you there are places I could go in this city where something like that would happen.

**DK:** So you're saying freedom of expression in a democracy is about having that public space which is messy, where you have to accept that we might see people saying things we really don't like?

**JM:** Yes. To bring it back to toxic masculinity - to conflate a set of unacceptable behaviours with gender - I think is kind of problematic. It's convenient for some people, because it reinforces the narrative that there are acceptable ways of being a man. These are largely class-based notions. So, that a middle class model of masculinity is an acceptable and appropriate one, but working class or marginal forms of masculinity we can associate with a set of unacceptable behaviours that we can call 'toxic'. What that does is to reinforce ideas around class that we thought were settled now - that we supposedly live in a 'classless society'. Well, that's another example of us thinking that because we don't talk about it: class, it's gone away.

John Mercer is Professor of Gender and Sexuality in the Birmingham Centre for Media and Cultural Research. Toxic Masculinity: Men, Meaning, and Digital Media (Masculinity, Sex and Popular Culture) is co-authored with Mark McGlashan, Lecturer in English Language in the Birmingham Institute of Media and English at Birmingham City University, and out on Routledge at the end of January.

Diane Kemp is Professor of Broadcast Journalism at Birmingham City University, Director of the Sir Lenny Henry Centre for Media Diversity, and a board member of Representology.





# DIVERSITY CANNOT BE A CASUALTY OF BBC LOCAL RADIO RESTRUCT URING

Marcus Ryder



BBC local radio has underserved Black, Asian and audiences of colour for decades. It is now at risk of failing them altogether.

In 2021, The Sir Lenny Henry Centre for Media Diversity published the report “Diversity of Senior Leaders in BBC Radio News” by Nina Robinson, which was overseen by Dr Siobhan Stevenson.

The report found that there was a shocking lack of racial diversity in local and regional newsrooms across the BBC.

At the time of writing the report:

- There were no senior leaders of colour working in BBC radio news for Wales.
- BBC radio news for Scotland not only had no senior leaders of colour, but had no journalists of colour working in its newsroom at any level.
- BBC Northern Ireland not only had no senior leaders of colour, but had no journalists of colour working in its newsroom at any level.
- One BBC radio newsroom, serving a population which is over 40% non-white, had no senior leaders of colour, and no journalists of colour working in its newsroom at any level.
- As a whole, only 6% of the BBC’s radio news’s senior leadership across the UK were people of colour, and only 8% across their entire News and Current Affairs division.

This is a damning indictment of racial representation in local radio newsrooms, which are meant to serve their local populations.

On 30th October 2022, we learned that the situation could become even worse, as already under-served local communities could see the service they receive from the BBC reduced. *The Guardian* exclusively reported that the BBC planned to dramatically restructure its local radio offering:

“Plans under consideration include cutting the number of weekday shows on each BBC local radio station to two, leaving just a breakfast show and a lunchtime programme. Output during the afternoons and evenings would consist of shows broadcast on multiple local stations across large swathes of the UK or nationally.

Weekend output, with the exception of sport coverage, would also be largely run on a regional basis – spelling the end for many of the unique shows now airing on local stations.”

The following day, the BBC confirmed much of *The Guardian*’s exclusive, revealing that the Corporation was looking to “cut 48 jobs as part of the overhaul of local radio that will dramatically reduce content made exclusively for specific stations.”

If this plan (or a version of this plan) is implemented, the fear is that it would disproportionately affect the service provided to local Black and Asian audiences, and the job cuts would also be disproportionately felt by journalists of colour.

These fears are primarily based around the fact that a large part of BBC local radio programming specifically targeting racial minorities is broadcast on a Sunday evening. Many BBC local radio stations have shows looking at local Asian issues between 18.00 - 20.00 followed by shows focusing on local Black issues, broadcast between 20.00 - 22.00.

These time slots are precisely the times which the BBC is looking at reducing its original local programming.

On 4th November 2022, I met with Chris Burns, the ‘Head of Audio & Digital BBC England’, who helms local radio. The stakes were high - the meeting was initiated by Chris, who had seen a series of tweets about my concerns. This approach to engage external parties is not the way many BBC execs approach criticism, and it should be commended.

Our conversation was extremely constructive, but it was not possible to definitively allay my fears (and the fears I hear from many people, both internal and external to the BBC), as the BBC is still in a consultative phase on how it will restructure local radio.

Also, while I believe it would be inappropriate to outline the exact details from our wide-ranging conversation, I think it is important to put on record the main concerns and fears I raised about the restructuring:

- People are concerned that a restructuring of Black and Asian regional programming could result in, say, one ‘Black show’, and one ‘Asian show’, made in one location in England, with limited additional input from the other nations and regions - a “Dotun Adebayo plus” model, for want of a better term (a ‘Black show’ made in London with limited additional input from other parts of the country).
- Journalists to whom I have spoken are looking for reassurances that any restructuring should not disproportionately result in reducing the hours of Black programming on BBC Sounds. I recognise this does not mean that the Sunday schedule is sacrosanct - podcasts play an important role in any restructure.
- The current model effectively protects (or ring-fences) a certain amount of Black and Asian programming. This ring-fencing is important - there is a mistrust by many BBC journalists of colour to whom I talk, of ‘mainstreaming’ Black programming, a policy which has seen previously protected Black content being subsumed into mainstream content and eventually withering away. This does not mean that the BBC shouldn’t aim for targeted Black programming to reach as large an audience as possible, and staff working on these programmes given career opportunities to work on other output.
- Black regional programming is qualitatively different from, say, 1Xtra’s factual content - they should not be seen as interchangeable. There are concerns across the industry (previously expressed most vocally by David Olusoga) that Black programming is often seen through the lens of ‘youth programming’. To state the obvious, Black people continue to survive and thrive after the age of 30, and local radio programming seems to recognise this fact.
- Black regional programming plays a key industry role as a pipeline for Black talent (not just within the BBC) and we need to nurture this pipeline.
- Black and Asian local programming play a critical role in nurturing both local and regional democracy, highlighting issues specific to our communities often missed on the national stage. This holds local politicians to account, and creates a virtual ‘town hall’, vital for encouraging meaningful debate - the lifeblood of democracy.
- Lastly, even if you think you have never listened to BBC local radio’s Black and Asian shows, you have, almost definitely, benefited from their journalism. The content they create, and the issues they identify, are invariably picked up by larger national shows. Without these shows, the BBC’s content would be noticeably less racially diverse and representative.

In fairness, I believe Chris Burns was sympathetic to all the concerns I raised - although I think BBC senior management would prefer if the changes they eventually implement are judged on ‘quality’, rather than ‘quantity’. I would argue that racial representation in local BBC newsrooms is already so low (as outlined in the Sir Lenny Henry Centre report, mentioned earlier) that it would be difficult to see how local Black and Asian programming could be cut any further and still even partially meet the needs of the UK’s diverse audiences.

Chris Burns did stress that the consultation is still ongoing. I sincerely hope that external partners - such as the Sir Lenny Henry Centre for Media Diversity - can be part of any consultation, and that it is as transparent as possible.

Our local democracy and media diversity literally depend on it.

Marcus Ryder is the Head of External Consultancies at the Sir Lenny Henry Centre for Media Diversity, Chair of RADA, and on the board of Representology

... the fear is that it would disproportionately affect the service provided to local Black and Asian audiences, and the job cuts would also be disproportionately felt by journalists of colour.

Representology takeaways

Local radio can play a critical role in increasing and improving the diversity and inclusion of the UK media industry:

- BBC local radio plays a disproportionately important role as a pipeline for Black and Asian journalists entering the broader media industry
- Black and Asian communities are not homogenous. Local radio is one of the few industries that recognises a British ethnic minority media, though is predominately focused in and around London and a few large cities
- BBC local radio must change with the changing media landscape of podcasts and non-linear listening, but any changes must be judged against total production spend, staffing numbers and broadcast hours





# FALSE DAWN

How the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community gained and lost their broadcasting voice

**Jake Bowers**

**It started with much fanfare on April 6th 2006 - International Romany Day.**

For the first time in its history, the BBC had given British Gypsies, Roma and Travellers a programme of our own. As I opened the fader for BBC Rokker Radio (which means 'talk radio' in Romani) at BBC Three Counties in Luton, I knew that we, as a community, were finally joining other national and ethnic minorities in Britain in having a voice of our own. Like many other shows at Three Counties at that time, we were doing our bit to make our national public service broadcaster that bit more representative of us. Unlike many of those shows, we were also syndicated across the Eastern BBC region, home to the largest concentration of Gypsies, Roma and Travellers in Britain.

The Guardian called it "a small broadcasting revolution." Reviewer Elizabeth Mahoney wrote: "this is tremendous radio: impassioned and educative, campaigning and entertaining. Bowers has a strong sense of connection with callers to the show and a zeal about countering stereotypes. 'There are eight million of us,' he said, 'people have got to deal with us in a humane way.' This show should go some way towards that goal."

The Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community was even more supportive. We did the first ever live broadcasts from Gypsy caravan sites and horse fairs. At a time when most Gypsies, Roma and Travellers could only access analogue radio, we had calls from community members who would drive many miles just to pick up the FM signal.

We used the BBC's amazing network of studios and correspondents to bring the huge Eastern European Roma community into our fold at a time when thousands were migrating to the UK to escape poverty and persecution. We made the widely-accepted racism towards Gypsies, Roma and Travellers controversial and accountable. When a Cambridgeshire councillor joked that if she had terminal cancer, she would blow herself up in the middle of the nearest Gypsy site, we called it out and she resigned.

But it wasn't to last. Our expectation that this was our first step to broadcasting equality became no more than a temporary toe-hold. With a part-time presenter and producer we drove thousands of miles on a shoestring regional radio budget. We attempted to expand the show to other areas with sizeable Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities but were stonewalled. When BBC Nations and Regions broke the bad news that this experiment in broadcasting was to end, we demonstrated outside Broadcasting House and got a brief reprieve. The show limped on until 2008 when it was dropped altogether. Since that time, the British Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community has doubled to 600,000 people but still we have no voice, nor any prospect of one.

So as the BBC considers cutting yet more of its representative output, let this be a cautionary tale for you all. Fight with all of your might to preserve your voice, because once it is gone, it may well be gone forever.

Jake Bowers is a journalist, film maker and producer [www.jakebowers.co.uk](http://www.jakebowers.co.uk)

Mahoney, E. (2006) Radio Review, Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2006/apr/17/radio.broadcasting1>

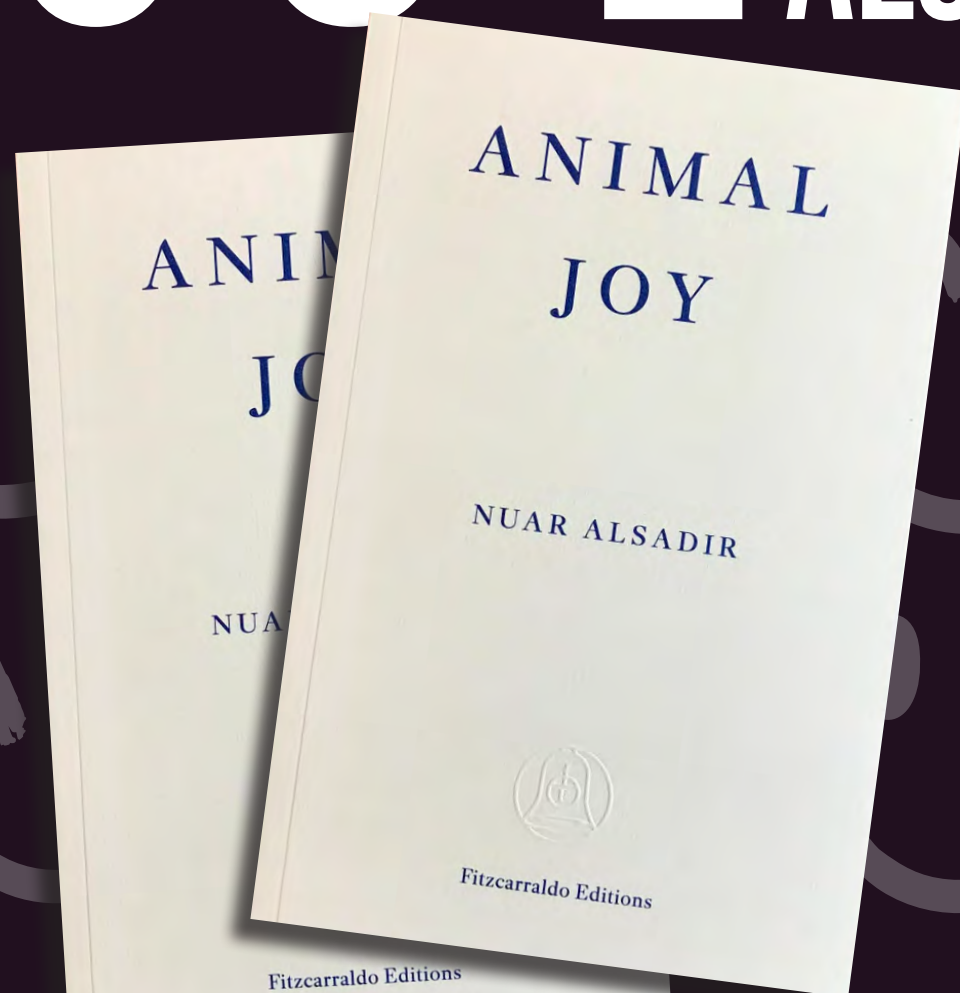
Accessed: November 21st 2022

**When a Cambridgeshire councillor joked that if she had terminal cancer, she would blow herself up in the middle of the nearest Gypsy site, we called it out and she resigned.**



# ANIMAL JOY

BY NUAR ALSADIR



## Review by Juliet Jacques

**Subtitled ‘A Book of Laughter and Resuscitation’, Nuar Alsadir’s *Animal Joy*, published by Fitzcarraldo Editions, ‘seeks to recover the sensation of feeling alive and embodied’.**

Alsadir cuts across a wide range of experiences, from enrolling in clown school to training as a psychoanalyst, drawing on culture from Tolstoy’s *Anna Karenina* to Eddie Murphy’s fraught discussion about racism and the N-word with Dick Cavett on *Letterman* in 1985. She also assesses political developments from the War on Terror to the end of the Trump presidency, with her freewheeling analysis of what makes people laugh, and why, anchored in frequent anecdotes about her relationship with her daughters.

With a poet’s eye, Alsadir often finds a beautiful, succinct way of phrasing her observations: ‘Attempts at suppressing laughter are kindling to its fire’, she notes when recounting a story about her slip getting tangled in her skirt as a child, embarrassing her in front of her friends. Her analysis of different versions of *Candid Camera* in different countries is acute. Noting that the US producer, Allen Funt, described the show’s aim as “Catching people in the act of being themselves”, Alsadir explores an Iraqi version, *Put Him in Bucca*, aired in 2010. With its title referencing the US detention camp opened after the war began in 2003,

one episode had a well-known comedian being stopped by soldiers at a fake checkpoint, similar to those set up after the invasion. Told by a soldier that a bomb under his car is about to explode, and accused of being a terrorist, the comedian runs away: Alsadir says that as an American, despite her Iraqi heritage, she cannot find it funny. ‘Unlike laughter’, which often springs unconsciously from a simple stimulus, the more complicated humour ‘rarely crosses cultural borders’: an intriguing distinction, like the one she sets up between clowns (to be laughed at) and stand-up comedians (to be laughed with), which are perfectly articulated.

Understandably, given her background, her location in New York and her interests in power, psychoanalysis and humour, Alsadir often returns to the Trump presidency. Trump’s peculiar brand of egomania attempted not to allow antagonists a second without thinking about him, often successfully. A passage on Trump’s ripostes to Colin Powell, after Powell called him a liar and he responded by calling Powell a ‘real stiff’ who launched the Iraq war on false pretences, is well judged. Unlike some US liberals, she does not forget how brutal the Bush government was – more so than Trump’s, and no more the ‘winner’ of the 2000 election than Trump was the winner in 2020 – and recognises the nature of the system: ‘When a liar whose lies determine our present calls out another liar whose lies determined our past for calling him a liar, the joke is on us.’

Alsadir’s associative approach produces inventive juxtapositions. She uses Schopenhauer’s idea that incongruity between the abstract and the concrete – things are as they should be, and things are as they are – to explain why a face pulled in the film *Pee-Wee’s Big Adventure* and Sacha Baron Cohen amuses her older daughter, old enough to find it funny, but not her younger one, who found it frightening. There are numerous references here to pop culture, especially comedy, with analyses of Sasha Baron Cohen and Dave Chappelle, as well as to literature, drawing on Russian Formalist critic Viktor Shklovsky and Samuel Beckett’s absurdist humour. The post-structural French theorists make regular interjections, with psychoanalytic thinkers, particularly Freud and Jacques Lacan, being used as her base. Slavoj Žižek is often cited, but not Alenka Zupančič, whose 2008 book *The Odd One In* was a rigid and effective dissection of what makes people laugh in neoliberal societies that connect feeling good, and happy, with being perceived as a good person. This seems a strange omission, as more exploration of what becomes funny when you see a society as irreparable or irredeemable might have added more to the Trump discussions, in particular.

Ultimately, *Animal Joy* might have worked better as a collection of essays, with an introduction setting up its key themes and the through-line of the mother-daughter relationships, than in this fragmentary style. The book is separated into three sections by quotes from Chekhov, Shirley Jackson and Nietzsche, but sharper

focus on recurrent topics, be they Trump or Tolstoy, would have provided greater direction. As Houman Barekat put it in an essay for *Gawker*, which was published earlier this year, the hybrid memoir has recently become over-familiar, with conventions that are veering towards being clichéd. Barekat talks specifically about illness memoirs, mental or physical, which combine personal recollections with ‘nuggets of cultural history or literary criticism’ in ‘relatively short, non-sequential paragraphs’, aiming to capture the ‘associative and disordered thought processes of an unsettled mind’. Alsadir does something different but analogous, taking a psychoanalyst’s approach to a client, being prepared to jump from one topic to another if a point worth pursuing is raised. When this works, it’s surprising, and often humorous, but the overall effect is a book that feels as though it is meandering, and that is too long, at 340 pages. Nonetheless, *Animal Joy* frequently asks difficult questions of its readers, even if its style means those questions don’t always hit as hard as they might. Alsadir’s evolution as a writer and thinker will be fascinating to follow.

Juliet Jacques is a writer and filmmaker - her latest book *Front Lines: Trans Journalism 2007-2021* is out on Cipher Press





The Oxford Samuel Beckett Theatre Trust Award Winner 2022, HighRise Entertainment, The UK Drill Project, image credit Tristan Bejawn





**TJ - THAT BOY DEAD OR IN JAIL  
IF I SNITCH ON THE GANG I'M FUCKED  
I MIGHT AS WELL BE OUT HERE DEADING MYSELF  
I DIDN'T KNOW WHEN I RAPPEB BOUT MURDER  
I WAS TAKING THE CREDIT MYSELF  
I DIDN'T KNOW WHEN I RAPPEB BOUT MURDER**

**'TJ' - Monthly Madting** (in the style of a Daily Duppy)  
From HighRise Entertainment's **The UK Drill Project**  
Track lyrics written and performed by **Nilez**

# PART 1

They wanna see you drillin  
They wanna see you in the back of the ride with a big dot dot  
Wanna hear that I'm killing  
They love me as the villain

There's a part of the story missing  
I don't wanna rap bout chinging  
But if I don't then the fans won't listen  
Why they listen like

Back then on the block I'm chillin  
PC wanna send me to prison  
Why they wanna see TJ missing ?  
Feds told me TJ start snitching

But it's my life I'm risking  
Truth be told the time is ticking  
I can feel the pressure thicken  
Why's it me that the feds try nicking

TJ - that boy dead or in jail  
If I snitch on the gang I'm fucked  
I might as well be out here deading myself  
I didn't know when I rapped bout murder  
I was taking the credit myself  
I didn't know when I rap bout trapping  
I might as well be selling it myself  
Feel bad I regret it myself

Use to tell gyal 079 me  
Now days I don't know 079  
Use to think that I need olders  
Now days I think I'm fine

Use to be TJ too bad for school  
Now it's TJ going back to chill  
Now I'm in a cell can't breathe at all  
All because I wanna play the fool



# PART 2

Why do I always hate the films when the good guy wins  
Is it because I'm surrounded by the crooks and the guys who sin  
I know bad guys turned bad over minor things, fell in love with  
drug money, women and the finer things

The Bad guys have always got a story though  
When the son of a Tory see blue story the stories known  
Plus you never know the good guy could be a prick tonight  
That's why you need a superman and you need kryptonite

My sister told me TJ you're delusional  
Like TJ don't be fooled by how they treating you  
The hood don't love you them people using you  
Tried in the fire and the streets finna season you

You see my mug shots but still won't get the picture  
It ain't hard to figure I ain't had no father figure  
Dreams of going hard and chasing larger figures  
cold nights cold yard and some burning liquor

I use to have dreams of being industry  
Wake up from my dream and still in the street  
My sister done her best it's just meant to be  
I never chose this life the hood chose me

Why rap the drills if you don't do the drills  
But this kinda real rap ain't what's gonna pay the bills  
Ain't gonna get me out the hood where the n-s kill  
A hood of fakes fight over who is real

I know a girl who works in the club but she is not a stripper  
Like how I hang with the thugs but I am not a killer  
You know I'm making sense but you would beg to differ  
They needed bodies in their jail and the place filler

You didn't see me then but do you see me now  
I was sitting in my cell and I was crying out  
I was crying so many tears my eyes drying out  
The hood made me a soldier I'm Private Ryan now

Don't remember how I got like I was in a coma  
I been here a few weeks but I feel years older  
Took a poet of pain and turned me to a soldier  
Took the pen out my hand and turn it to revolver

Not literally  
If I die inside this hood, don't sing for me  
I don't want your fucking tears or your fake misery  
I don't want your fucking compassion or your sympathy

My sister cried so many tears I'll need Noah's ark  
In the hood, you either play your part or you'll get pulled apart  
This lifestyle's very dark  
Look at what my options are  
They bird me for my work of art  
I'll burn you with my burning heart

They threw me in the jungle like my name is Mowgli  
They threw me in a cell now my friends don't even know me  
They probably find some young g and fucking clone me  
That's why I listened to my sister when she fucking told me

You can listen to this track and others from The UK Drill Project here:  
<https://open.spotify.com/album/3zaB7rVwjD4t43Bvt3JiOW>



# REPRESENTOLOGY RECOMMENDS



**Jonathan Nunn**  
is the founder of Vittles  
- his book **'London Feeds  
Itself'** is out now on  
Open City.

## Read

Annie Ernaux  
Getting Lost

This new translation from Nobel-winningmakers Fitzcarraldo retraces a story that Ernaux told with Simple Passion - of what it's like to fall obsessively in love with the most mediocre man imaginable - except this time through Ernaux's unedited diary entries from her affair. Truthful in the most excruciating way.

Yara Rodrigues Fowler  
there are more things...

Two entwined love stories across time and space in London and Brazil, told in fugitive snapshots, fragments, and poetry, all bound together with a political urgency. A friend described this as the best book he's read on what it was like to rent a room in London during the early 2010s. He is correct.

Jonathan Meades  
Pedro and Ricky  
Come Again

A collection of Jonathan Meades's writing taken from the last 34 years, about the size of the Torah, and filled with elite-level player-hating (Boris Johnson a 'provenly mendacious mayor', Terence Conran a 'dotard shopkeeper', Thomas Heatherwick a 'cute salesman for himself' - and that's just one sentence).

Philippa Snow  
Which As You Know  
Means Violence

A slim piece of bravura criticism looking at - inexplicably, brilliantly - the poetics of Jackass and Johnny Knoxville, and their echoes in those martyrs who self-abase and self-harm in the name of artistic endeavour. Treating low-culture like it's high can often be a cheap joke, but Snow is too good to fall into this trap.

Riaz Phillips  
West Winds

An overdue look at the diversity of Caribbean food, from the food writer Riaz Phillips, told with the nuance of how the cuisines operate both within the Caribbean and in the diaspora.

More than just recipes, Phillips contextualises them with stories of other aspects of Caribbean culture, particularly music, politics and religion.

## Watch

BBC iPlayer  
The London  
Collection

A Simon Jenkins-curated dip through the BBC archives focusing on films about London, from the changing fortunes of Billingsgate Market, to critical, contemporary looks at the falseness of 'The Swinging Sixties'. Of special note is 'To The World's End', which movingly profiles Londoners of different stripes along the 31 bus route.

David Lynch  
Wild at Heart

A ludicrous, fever-dream of a film starring Nicholas Cage at his most crazed, and a perfect, gum-chewing Laura Dern (as well as scene-stealing cameos by Willem Dafoe and Isabella Rossellini). A big 'exhibit A' for the idea that lots of what people find 'surreal' about Lynch is him just being exceptionally funny.

Joel Blackledge  
Feast Your Eyes

Joel Blackledge's YouTube channel 'Feast Your Eyes' looks at how food acts as a plot device in films, including many that don't get mentioned in the canonical list of food films: yes, Chungking Express is a food film, but so are The Matrix, Leon: The Professional, and every Italian gangster film in existence.

## Listen

Chris Morris  
and Peter Cook  
Why Bother?

One of the last things Peter Cook did before he died, this short series of conversations with Chris Morris in proto-The Day Today mode, and Cook as his character Sir Arthur Streeb-Greebling, represents a passing of the torch between two comic titans. It's

also one of the best things either have done, with Morris goading Cook into improvised brilliance.

Lucy Dearlove  
Lecker

Lucy Dearlove's Lecker is the best food podcast in the UK, and shows how interesting food 'writing' can be if it is done while playing to audio's strengths. Of particular note is the Kitchens mini-series, which looks at how the design of British kitchens has changed over the years, thus affecting and reflecting the way we cook.

The Economist  
The Prince

A long overdue deep dive into Xi Jinping, arguably the strongest candidate for being the single most powerful person in the world, and yet one of the most poorly understood. This eight-part podcast goes into various aspects of Xi's life and beliefs, and elucidates China's direction over the last decade, and the significance of Xi's third term.

RTÉ  
Ulysses

Originally released on 'Bloomsday' in 1982, this is a bridge between radio plays and audiobooks, with 33 RTÉ figures narrating and performing the entire text of Ulysses verbatim over 30 hours. Audiobooks can be a secondary experience, but this adaptation makes the text come alive - it feels as if it were always meant to be performed.

Pharaoh Sanders and  
Floating Points  
Promises

This 2021 collaboration between the jazz musician, Pharaoh Sanders, and the electronic musician, Floating Points, has taken on added significance with Sanders's death this year, making this his last album. Built around the bare bones of seven notes composed by Floating Points, Sanders fleshes the coda out until a trickle becomes a swell, before receding again.



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Image page 10 -  
artist MyDogSighs,  
photograph Barry  
Diamond

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

**Representology** is a hybrid journal at the intersection of industry practices, academic research and policy making.

We welcome both non-academic and academic authors who would like to contribute thoughts, perspectives, analyses and research findings that help to foster diversity in the media and strengthen the media in diversity.

All ideas, abstracts and full manuscripts should be sent to **Representology@bcu.ac.uk**

The journal accepts contributions in two strands: journalistic and academic, each with a different review and decision-making process. Please understand the differences between the two strands when preparing and submitting your pitches, abstracts and manuscripts.

Journalistic articles

Journalistic articles should be between 1,000 and 3,000 words, and can take one of the following forms

- feature stories
- reflective essays
- issue reviews/analyses
- commentaries
- expert Q&As
- multimedia artefacts (for online publishing only).

Potential contributors must pitch their ideas to the journal in the first instance. Please include a two-line biography, including relevant links to past published work.

Commission decisions will be based on evaluation by the editor in consultation with the editorial board.

If we are interested in your pitch, we will contact to commission your piece. As our editorial team is small, it may take you up to a month to receive a reply.

Full articles will then be assessed by members of the editorial board. All articles will be read on the understanding that they are solely submitted to **Representology**, and published articles will receive a modest honorarium.

Academic papers

Academic articles can take one of the following forms:

- research notes of around 3,000-4,000 words (discussion notes that seek to advance a new idea, concept, theory or method)
- research perspectives of around 3,000-4,000 words (short research-based analyses that aim to provide new, unique viewpoints on established issues)
- reviews and commentaries of around 2,000 words on recent research publications
- full-length studies of around 6,000-7,000 words.

The lengths specified above are inclusive of everything (abstracts, texts and references).

All academic submissions will go through a two-stage submission process:

In the first instance, please send us an abstract of no more than 500 words, outlining the topic, its background, rationale, theoretical and methodological approaches and key findings.

The abstract should make clear which of the above academic paper forms the article belongs to.

Abstracts should be sent, together with biographies of no more than 100 words per author, to **Representology@bcu.ac.uk**

Our academic editors will consider whether your intended paper falls within the remit of the journal. We will respond to you within a month of submission.

All full manuscripts developed from accepted abstracts will go through a rigorous peer review process by at least two relevant experts in the field.

Final acceptance or rejection will be made by the editors in consideration of peer reviewers' recommendations.

For transparency purposes, each peer-reviewed article will be published with meta data regarding the peer-review process and editorial decision (e.g. date of submission, date of revision if any, and date of acceptance) at the foot, to help readers distinguish them from non peer-reviewed pieces.

All articles will be read on the understanding that they are solely submitted to **Representology**, and published articles will receive a modest honorarium.

Five Guiding Principles For Contributions

1. **Clear language**  
Making content as widely accessible as possible, writing should be clear, concise and engaging.
2. **Expertise**  
Contributors are expected to write on subjects for which they have proven expertise.
3. **Evidence**  
Articles should be supported by verifiable facts and research findings.
4. **Refresh debate**  
Submissions should seek to enrich current debates or create new ones.
5. **Diversity of perspectives**  
Preference will be given to writers seeking to widen representation and outline new perspectives.



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**PRESENT**  
**OLOGY**

Sir Lenny Henry, Leah Cowan, David Olusoga, Marverine Duffy,  
Charlene White, Kimberly McIntosh, Professor Stuart Hall,  
Kesewa Hennessy, Will Norman, Emma Butt, Dr David Dunkley Gyimah,  
Dr Erica Gillingham, Dr Peter Block, Suchandrika Chakrabarti

Sir Lenny Henry, Amma Asante, Afua Hirsch,  
Kurt Barling, Chi Thai and Delphine Lievens,  
Nina Robinson, David Hevey, Melanie Gray,  
Debbie Christie, Gary Younge, Adrian Lester,  
So Mayer, Siobhán McGuirk,  
Selina Nwulu, Ciaran Thapar

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Summer 2021

[https://www.bcu.ac.uk/media/research/  
sir-lenny-henry-centre-for-media-diversity/  
representology-journal](https://www.bcu.ac.uk/media/research/sir-lenny-henry-centre-for-media-diversity/representology-journal)

Lenny Henry talks to MOBO awards founder  
Kanya King; Young Vic Artistic Director Kwame  
Kwei-Armah on 'colour blind casting'; Nadine  
White's newspaper reporting of Coronavirus,  
the Sewell Report, Harry, Meghan & Oprah;  
Sound Special featuring Dane Baptiste,  
Marcus Ryder & Judi Lee-Headman; Exclusive  
Investigation into the Entertainment Unions by  
Riaz Meer & Jack Newsinger; Samir  
Jeraj on media reparations to  
communities of colour; plus cultural  
highlights from BFI Flare Festival &  
New Beacon Books

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**Issue 03**  
Spring 2022



