



# Parliamentary and Scientific Committee



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## Racial Inequality in the UK Science Community

Does it shock you to learn that out of 20,000 the professors the UK and only 45 are black women? This is just one of the many statistics that were highlighted by our guest speakers at the discussion meeting: 'Racial Inequality in the UK Science Community'. Professor Ijeoma Uchegbu, Professor Rachel Oliver and Professor Dawn Edge's presentations resulted one of our most thought-provoking discussions and leaving much to consider moving forward.

Despite the majority of all children being academically level when reaching the end of Primary School, an attainment gap develops at later stages in the education system and only 9% of students receiving PhD funding from UKRI are BAME. The schooling system has many deficits which are causing disadvantage towards those in the BAME community that need to be addressed. One these issues, as highlighted by Professor Rachel Oliver, is the system favouring towards those who can afford to take part in unpaid work experience placements and opportunities, such as the Undergraduate Research Opportunities Programme. Many BAME students come from backgrounds in which they may not be able to afford to complete

unpaid work, resulting in possible disadvantage.

Within Science there are a whole range of issues and shortfalls, from bias in peer review to unfair teaching and administrative workload applications to BAME staff, which are affecting BAME scientists across the globe. Professor Uchegbu and Professor Edge both were in support of bringing affirmative action to the UK to help tackle this inequality, however emphasised that this is not the total answer. This action is currently illegal in the UK; however, companies and academic establishments should be encouraged to display positive action as the first step towards racial equality.

All three speakers made strong arguments for data collection being of the utmost importance, however the work doesn't stop once data has been acquired. Institutions must use the information to help implement strategies and targets to combat racial inequality within their workforce or student population. A particular area of concern is the 'BAME' label within data and the need for this to be unpacked. The overarching 'BAME' category could negatively impact certain

racism or ethnicities, possibly causing more disadvantage.

Accountability is key in the drive against racial inequality. Industries must work hard to meet their set targets and continue to follow the strategies put in place, and those who do so should be rewarded. An example of this could be to offer extra funding to universities and companies who meet and uphold their equality goals. It was suggested that an overarching body could be created in order to enforce this, they would also be responsible for providing education and guidance surrounding racial inequality.

Racial inequality within science and academia is a very important issue that needs to be addressed with urgency. However, our guest speakers' closing statements reminded us that the problems of racism and discrimination go much further than the scientific community. The fight against inequality is not an impossible task, but it is one that we are all responsible for. We must both challenge the larger, failing systems and industries, and additionally our role as individuals to combat racial inequality.

*Charlotte Hall  
P&SC Discussion Meeting, 'Racial  
Inequality in the UK Science Community',  
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