BPI: Anti-racism webinar; *'Let's Talk About Race'.*

This workshop, facilitated and produced by Blue Moon, will provide BPI members with the opportunity to have an open discussion on race and ethnicity. The session proceeds the increased profile of the Black Lives Matter movement. It is in response to the business need to understand and challenge racial inequity in the workplace and to level the playing field for black and brown employees.

The session will cover, but will not be limited to, the following areas of discussion:

- *Understanding 'White privilege' & 'White Fragility.'*
- *How to be 'anti-racist.'*
- *Why is it essential to see colour?*
- *Micro-aggressions; What are they and how do you stop reinforcing them?*
- *Resistance to Black Lives Matter: 'All Lives Matter'*
- *What is an ally, and how can you be one?*
- *Bias: recognising your own and challenging it*
- *Calling out racist policies and recognising anti-racist policies*
- *Sanctioning discriminating behaviour*

Facilitator: Dr Joanna Abeyie MBE. MD and Founder of Blue Moon **(www.createbluemoon.com)**

Date: 17.09.2020 **Duration:** 120 minutes

Participants: BPI Member companies

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Let's Talk About Race Webinar
Anonymised Qualitative Summary

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White Privilege

- The session identified there were some individuals seeking clarity on the meaning of the term
- For those who had heard the name but did not understand it, found it a triggering name.
- White privilege is a term used to reference the advantages experienced by white people in a society where racism is prevalent.
- White privilege is the absence of dealing with racism. The term does not dismiss the hardships, barriers and challenges experienced by white people.

White Fragility

- The term which was unfamiliar to many attendees
- White Fragility is a term, articulately defined by Author Robin DiAngelo: "Anger. Fear. Guilt. Denial. Silence. These are how ordinary white people react when it is pointed out to them that they have done or said something that has - unintentionally - caused racial offence or hurt. But these reactions only serve to silence people of colour, who

cannot give honest feedback to 'liberal' white people lest they provoke a dangerous emotional reaction."

- Participants who understood the term shared their understanding of this with the rest of the participants using analogies and anecdotes.
- The recognition that 'White Fragility' isn't suggesting black is right, and white is wrong and instead refers to denying black and brown individuals the space to share their experiences of inequality and inequity because the white person listening to it feels uncomfortable.

'All Lives Matter'

- Participants understood the phrase to be used as a result of 'white fragility.'
- One contribution suggested that the term was the same as saying to a breast cancer patient, 'all cancer matters'
- We need to redefine what racism is because it's much broader than calling someone a racist term.
- Reducing our racist experiences to 'you're sensitive' or dismissing racism as 'banter.'

'I don't see colour.'

- This was deemed 'wrong' by several white participants.
- Black attendee translates this sentence to mean 'you don't see me, if you don't see my colour.'
- A term used as part of the gas-lighters manual for years and sits in the same camp as 'you've got a chip on your shoulder.'
- Divided opinions on the meaning of this sentence, as other black contributors, felt they would like to be known for who they are, and saw colour as just one part of their identity.
- An observation from a black participant that slavery wasn't just something white people did
- Some attendees dismissed the argument that black people also enslaved other black people, and felt this point deflects from the inequity black people face today. The statement does little to address the inequalities I face day-to-day.
- Reni Eddo-Lodge's book Why I'm No Longer Talking To White People About Race explained why it is essential that we recognise race.
- The author states 'Not seeing Race does little to deconstruct racist structures or the conditions which people of colour are subject to daily. In order to dismantle unjust racist structures, we must see Race. We must see who from their Race, and to whom power and privilege is bestowed upon – earned or not – because of their race, their class, and their gender. Seeing Race is essential to changing the system.'
- 'Seeing colour is essential so that you can acknowledge how my culture and experiences differ, but I don't want to be used as the spokesperson of all black experience, or to be subjected to micro-aggressions and tokenism because you can't see past my colour.'
- Dismisses identity and erases culture
- A, usually, well-meaning term used by white people
- to confirm that a black person's colour is not influencing the way they interact with them.
- It's similar when we hear the phrase 'I don't see gender.'

Anti-racism

- Speaks of the act of working against racial structures, policies and behaviours
- Actively being anti-racist is as essential when you are in the presence of an ethnic minority as it is when they are not present.
- It's not only the responsibility of the person who is in the minority to speak up, but it is also the responsibility of those who are against racist structures.
- Participants remarked that although we are a multicultural society, unfortunately, we have a large number of covert racists or those who don't have the self-awareness to know that their comments are racist. Black and brown people have to have the added pressure of learning how to manage situations where they are experiencing racism.
- Black people are subject to racism day-to-day in the workplace, and it's very hard to address or call out if you are at the more junior part of your career.
- Organisations should ensure that inclusive values underpin all behaviours in the workplace so that employees are unable to hide behind 'I didn't realise that was racist.'
- Challenge the acronym BAME as many feel this term doesn't represent their identity
- The Term BAME groups people so much that it can assume the challenges of one ethnic group are those of all ethnic groups. Black, Brown and others from ethnic minority backgrounds are considered homogenous.
- Businesses should provide anonymous process to allow for people to raise issues.
- Businesses must have someone external to the company to be able to run impartial investigations.
- Non-black people see racism as; 'not my problem', if they are not racist. Seeing racism as 'the black or brown person's problem.'

Microaggressions

- A reminder to all that there is not just one 'black' experience
- We might need to redefine this term because for me, it's just racism and the racist behaviours are identifiable on a scale.
- Urgency to redefine racism with clarity on what it looks and sounds like
- 'Asking things/making comments that are solely influenced by the colour of my skin is draining, and it happens all day.'
- Microaggressions are a result of people being uneducated and ignorant to other's experiences.

How can the music industry be an ally for black and brown people?

- Should celebrate the diversity of our artists and stand against racist practices and policies
- How can we engage the predominantly white leaders of our industry?
- Be a force for positive change.
- Ensure the right anti-racist behaviours are being profiled and publicised rather than images of Black Lives Matter (BLM) protestors looking like vigilantes when discussing the movement
- Find a way to speak to stakeholders about inclusion in an engaging way to prevent them from switching off.

- BLM followed by Black History Month isn't something I'm looking forward to – I feel like it 'other's' me. I've felt the burden of being the minority at work and in my community.

- The industry could celebrate all diversity more authentically rather than focusing on one month.
- For the older generation, Black History Month and Black Lives Matter is a recent part of the curriculum and workplace, so these are both welcome things.
- Black Lives Matter provides a topic of discussion at the very least, and this alongside months like Black History Month should continue to allow for education and the debate of racial inequity.
- The industry should be listening now, actively listening to what their black and brown employees are saying.
- Involve black people/employees in campaigns that are meant to represent the black and brown experience
- Stop reinforcing the racist stereotypes when we benefit financially from the diverse cultures and experiences that make up our industry.
- Provide black and brown people with the relevant support and protection so they can call out racism without the fear of losing their job or being side-lined for promotion and development opportunities or being labelled the 'trouble-maker.'
- Stop 'push back' when trying to hire black or brown talent for work that isn't strictly about 'black or brown topics'
- Staff handbooks should detail organisational accountability and succession planning.
- Encourage businesses not to hide away from diversity and, to not be intimidated by the spotlight their lack of diversity might present

Calling out racist policies and recognising anti-racist policies and sanctioning discriminating behaviour

- Embrace those with racist attitudes and educate them
- If we alienate non-black colleagues, we aid the racism.
- Provide spaces for conversations like this. The fact that we can discuss this in 2020 is progress, slow, but progress.
- Hold people to account for their words and actions.
- Involve leaders in these conversations so they can listen first-hand to the experiences of their black staff
- Create an external advisory board for organisations dealing with racism and racial inequity
- Move beyond posting black squares on twitter and social media.
- Empower white leaders to know how to lead this list inclusively because often these discussions are preaching to the converted
- Not rely on black staff to lead the racial inequity journey.
- Provide resources for white colleagues so they can access experts on matters of representation they are not familiar with
- Use and access external consultants who are experts in this matter.

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Summary of General Themes

1) Lack of understanding of the historical context influencing today's black and brown community
2) Emphasised need to create an anonymous function that enables black and brown employees the opportunity to share real-time experiences and report racism
3) Senior sponsors to be present and actively involved in conversations about race.
4) Achieve a zero-tolerance for undermining individual experience
5) Remove the burden from black and brown people to educate white leaders on the inequity and misrepresentation of black and brown people.
6) Use the power of the industry to change the rhetoric and challenge stereotypes rather than perpetuate them.
7) Get specific about what racism looks and sounds like
8) Use external consultants to dismantle systemic racism within organisations.
9) Empower teams without any black and brown colleagues to gain education to ensure accurate representation for cultures alien to them
10) Provide clear direction on what anti-racism means and looks like

ENDS