

LSST students: reject society's systemic anti-Black racism



eting/Nasir Bashir

**As we are placed between the existing pandemic of COVID-19 and the enduring pandemic of systemic anti-Black racism, we ask some members of the LSST student community to offer insights on the sense of hurt from George Floyd's murder and the ongoing global protests.**

'Black Lives Matter is an inflection point statement that must not be politicised or overlooked,' said Irina Barariu, LSST's Student Union President. 'But a month after George Floyd's senseless and tragic murder, most people are thinking about what Black Lives Matter means rather than why it is being said in the first place, indicating a substantial issue!'

'After 400 years of race relations history, protests and movements, we are sloganeering Black Lives Matter because Black lives still don't matter enough,' advocated Kamil Sahin, Student Union Vice President, Birmingham campus. 'The movement is not a mere moment. Everyone is needed as partners - not passengers - to make a meaningful difference.'

Emphasising Dr Martin Luther King's **aspirations for harmonic race relations**, Kiran Khan, Health and Social Science degree student, said: 'Racism can not be stopped by one race alone so, amid so much hurt, it is inspiring to see people from everywhere speaking up, coming together and initiating constructive change.'

Kiran added: 'Fortunately, mobile phone technology captured, and social media communicated George Floyd's murder - albeit this fortune does not apply to many other similar incidences. The world is witnessing how Black people are purposely targeted and how this is detriment to society and the world we live in.'

'As a Black person, my reactions and grievances to George Floyd's murder were not based on a singular event,' purported Ibrahima Diarrassouba, Business degree student. 'I have always felt that being a Black person is a daily struggle in the UK. I am saddened that the world in 2020 needs to defend Black lives somewhat. We must ask why we are in this dire situation as nothing good can come from racism?'



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## Protests during a pandemic

'Racism is a public health crisis. We need to ask why there is a substantial disproportion of Black and Asian people infected by - and, worse, dying from - coronavirus,' queried Royo Wallen, Student Union Vice President, Luton campus. 'Racism - just like the coronavirus - is a deadly contagion spreading catastrophically from nation to nation that needs an urgent cure.'

Sheree Parkinson, Health and Social Science degree student, added: 'Across the world, as everyone is mostly at home, there has been more time to sit down and reflect on what happened to George Floyd. If there was no lockdown, there would not be the same level of reaction, momentum and focus.'

## Racism devalues life

'Some people are more offended at being called racist than being racist,' delineated John Kumalo, Health and Social Science degree student. 'I've been a victim of racism and have witnessed a sudden surge in far-right groups post-George Floyd. I pity them as racism is a heavy burden that has a cost for everyone. It is senseless and it devalues life. It is on the other side of God.'

'In this historical struggle for social justice, we need to change the way we think and talk about racism. We perceive each other through intermediaries, and this seems to be what we think is perfectly right,' asserted Ayan Dualeh, Health and Social Science degree student. 'The more the Black community can move away from the negative public image influenced by the media, the more we can define our true identities.'

Sheree Parkinson, Health and Social Science degree student, added: 'We need to change the way we recognise racism. We perceive each other through intermediaries. People watch a BBC documentary about Africa and think they now understand people in every country across Africa. They're just interpreting reality through someone else's interpretation of it.'

In response to the riots and protests against police misconduct, Ayan Dualeh, Health and Social Science degree student, outlined: 'Whenever people are mistreated, an uprising ensues. It becomes instinct. Dr King's statement about riots being the *language of the unheard* has never been more true.'



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## Racial injustice anchorites

Sabia Bi, Health and Social Science degree student, said: 'My faith teaches me to put our neighbours first and to shun racism. This teaching has helped me manage my work and family life'. Sharing her frustrations with racial justice, Sabia added: 'I find it repugnant that while many global public figures and large brands have been exposed by the media for being racist against the Black community, they have faced little to no reprimand.'

'I'm very conscious that many business leaders have only now decided to speak up against social injustice. Many have yet to indicate how long this will stay at the top of their agenda,' added Sheree Parkinson, Health and Social Science degree student. 'Many businesses are now publicly denouncing their past owners' participation in the transatlantic slave trade. However, their inaction to speak up until now has been just as indefensibly wrong.'

Irina Barariu, LSST's Student Union President, summated, 'We are still trying to prevent racism, rather than cure it. There is still a long journey ahead. While the ongoing demonstrations are important, we must all ask how best to convert this energy into meaningful and lasting change. We must all stand in solidarity to drive urgent and systemic changes to phase out racism.'

Editor's note:

Opinions and quotes belong to, and represent, respective contributors. A social media post called for views on the murder of George Floyd from any LSST student, regardless of racial identity. Within a narrow timeframe, every endeavour was made to offer a fair and diverse viewpoint from LSST's entire student community. Our Public Relations Office co-worked with LSST's Student Union, and this article was student peer-reviewed before publication.