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One Million Welsh Speakers - Black, Asian, Ethnic Minority and White

Introduction

The past year has seen public debate about racism rise to the top of the political agenda. Through the response to the death of George Floyd in the USA or more recently the death of Mohamud Mohammed Hassan after he spent a night in custody at the police station in Butetown or the particular impact of COVID on Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities, the effects of racism on our society are evident in Wales and beyond. A number of initiatives and campaigns have been established in response to this situation, and one of them – the Privilege Cafe has been an important vehicle to stimulate discussion about the experiences of Welsh speakers. Following a discussion at the Privilege Cafe, there was a discussion panel at the Tafwyl festival and following that a group of Black, Asian and minority ethnic Welsh speakers came together to discuss.

The result of those initial discussions is this manifesto. We emphasise that this is the beginning of a conversation, a conversation that is long overdue for us as Welsh speakers. By building on the experiences of Welsh speakers and suggesting clear actions for Welsh-speaking society and those organisations operating through the medium of Welsh we are proposing a plan that could – if fully and properly implemented – make a significant contribution to ensure that we have a million speakers of all backgrounds by 2050. That goal is hugely significant, to ensure that everyone (can) feel part of the journey of the Welsh language and can contribute fully towards it. However, that does entail conversations and discussions that can be challenging for some.

For Welsh-speaking Society and organisations and bodies operating in Welsh it asks us all to consider our approaches and ask the question whether we are truly inclusive and anti-racist in our activities and attitudes.

One of the first questions we've raised when discussing is how we should describe ourselves. This is a more difficult question than it seems at first sight. In English the abbreviation BAME is established, but many have questioned the suitability of this abbreviation. There are very few references in Welsh to the 'DALIE' community. We do not see that such an abbreviation conveys the wide range of experiences of different individuals and communities. Given the importance of recognising the diversity of experiences of individuals and communities we will use the description Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic in this manifesto – but we will not abbreviate it.

Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Welsh Speakers

What kind of experiences do Welsh speakers report about their lives in Wales?

[Each quote below is translated from the original Welsh]

'When I was at school one of my classmates bit me- saying I looked like chocolate and he liked the taste of chocolate. I was bleeding and I hit him. My parents were very angry ... and the Welsh-medium school decided to suspend me!'

'When I was visiting with my Gran and Grandpa people in the village would always talk to them in Welsh, and then turn to me and speak in English. Every time Gran would explain that I spoke Welsh, but often they would carry on speaking in English.'

'I visited a museum a couple of years ago and asked one of the staff a little more about the history of one of the exhibitions. I spoke Welsh of course. But the staff member replied in English, although she had just been speaking in Welsh with the couple who were in front of us as a family.'

'We didn't understand why our child didn't want to go to the school gate with her Mum. But we then understood that other children are poking fun at her for speaking another language with her Mother. We went to see the Headteacher – but he refused to do anything. Eventually we had to move out of the Welsh school and my child is much happier now.'

'When I answer the 'Welsh' question – 'where do you come from', and say Cardiff, the person asking seems confused and doesn't really think it's a proper answer to the question. What they want to know it seems is 'how am I Black and speak Welsh''

'I only get one type of request to do media interviews – every time they ask me to talk about racism – never about any other element of social policy, my area of expertise.'

'How many times do I hear – you speak Welsh particularly well ... I have a Welsh A level, it would be strange if I didn't speak Welsh well!'

Why we should Act?

Every quote above is based on the personal experience of Welsh speakers, and reflects the racism that people face every day here in Wales. Every one of the experiences set out above are unacceptable. Some of the experiences are absolutely horrific while others highlight an unconscious bias to treat Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people in a slightly different way from white people, with no apparent intention of acting in a racist way.

There are several possible responses to the challenge identified by the 'Black Lives Matter' movement and the debate about racism in our society.

Some argue that there is no problem of racism among Welsh-speaking society. There is plenty of evidence to suggest that this is not correct. We do not comment on whether the

problem is less serious or more serious among Welsh speakers – our simple and powerful proposition is that racism in Welsh speaking Wales is a multi-faceted problem that needs to be tackled.

There are several levels of possible responses to the challenge of tackling racism as a society. The simplest response is to make a statement that we are against racism, and carry on as we did before. It is possible to respond a little more meaningfully by making a symbolic change e.g. recruiting a black person to sit on the body's management board. While these two potential responses are steps forward, we suggest that there needs to be a much more meaningful and deep response to the challenge of ensuring that we act in an anti-racist way and tackle any processes and policies and plans that exclude people from black, Asian or ethnic minority communities.

In doing so it is necessary to recognise and understand that difficult discussions will be required at times. As individuals and organisations dedicated to restoring a minority language over decades, we believe that we are outward-looking and inclusive. Facing reality that white Welsh speakers have acted in a racist way is challenging and uncomfortable. Facing a reality that organisations operating in Welsh have not succeeded in involving all Welsh speakers offers a challenge. But while it offers a challenge it also offers an opportunity to include in a much more meaningful way than ever before Welsh speakers from black, Asian and ethnic minority communities.

How many Welsh Speakers are from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds

For the 2011 census no data was published on the number of Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic Welsh speakers.

Some years later the Office for National Statistics has prepared a disaggregation of the figures by local authority and there are several interesting figures from the data. It is important to note that there has been significant population change since 2011 and therefore we would expect to see a significant increase in the number of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people in the 2021 census and many Welsh speakers amongst them.

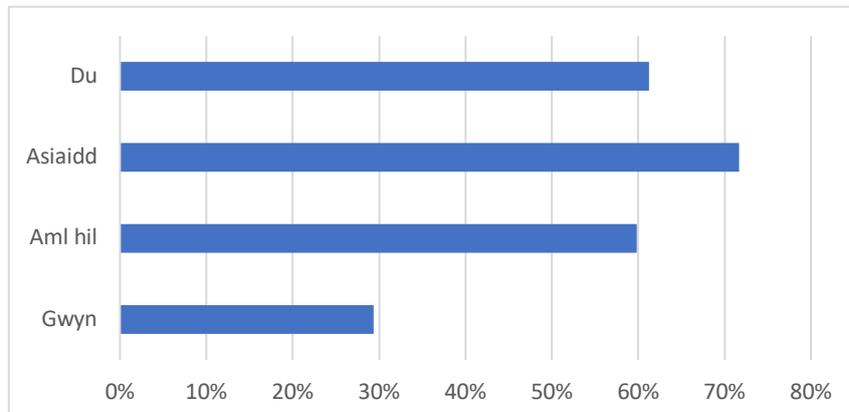
In 2011 4.8% of the population of Wales were from a Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic background, while only 2% of Welsh speakers were from such a background.

There are over 10,000 Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Welsh speakers. Of these over 5,000 are from mixed race backgrounds, over 4,000 are Asian and almost 1,000 are Black.

There is a different geographical pattern to the distribution of Welsh speaking Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people. In the 'Fro Gymraeg' there is a much lower percentage of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people speak Welsh compared to white people. For example in Ynys Mon, 57% of white people speak Welsh, as do 47% of people from a mixed ethnic background, but only 15% of Asian people and 15% of black people. On the other hand in

Newport 9% of white people speak Welsh, over 16% of mixed race people, 8% of Asian people and almost 7% of black people do so.

Figure 1: Percentage of Welsh Speakers under 16 in each ethnic group



The figure above suggests a bit of hope for the future. In scrutinising the data the majority of Welsh speakers from Black, Asian or Multi-Racial ethnicities are under 16 – that is a much higher percentage of black Welsh speakers are children and young people than compared with white Welsh speakers. This data therefore suggests that there is a significant opportunity within the education system – IF the education system is supportive, to raise a new generation of Welsh speakers from all backgrounds.

What is to be done?

The first parts of this manifesto have outlined some of the experiences of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Welsh speakers, and have looked at the census data on the number of Welsh speakers. We trust that sufficient information has been presented to persuade the reader that there is considerable work to be done.

In this part of the manifesto we outline a series of actions that should be adopted by bodies that operate, or intend to act in an anti-racist way. Some of the actions apply to all bodies, others more suited to certain bodies in particular. Some of the action points presented are essential to enable progress, others are ideas that can be adopted as appropriate to the context of the body concerned. This document is of course the start of a discussion – but from the implementation of the programme proposed as the basis for an inclusive million speakers, we are convinced that they will make a real difference.

We are convinced that by implementing this programme of action we could make a significant difference and embrace an inclusive vision of a million Welsh speakers.

Starting at our feet – Audit of the current situation

As a starting point each body should undertake a diversity and equality audit of its current position. There are two reasons (at least) why this is key. Such an audit can provide a clear and accurate picture of the body's current position with regard to the participation of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people. Further more the audit can act as a basis for reporting progress in future years as the situation improves.

Such an audit may include but is not limited to:

- How many of the organisation's Staff are Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic
- How many of the organisation's Management are Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic
- How many members of the organisation's committee members are Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic
- How many members / customers / learners / students of the organisation are Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic
- How do the organisation's communication activities reflect the diversity of the Association?
- How many staff have received Diversity and Equality training?

Action: *A common template should be developed for an audit that could be used by bodies and organisations operating in Welsh.*

Action: *All suitable Welsh-language bodies should conduct such an audit within 12 months – by the 1st of March, 2022.*

Action: *Each Welsh language body should set out and publish an action plan to respond to any under-representation identified within 18 months.*

TRAINING AND MENTORING

Staff Training

The majority of examples cited of experiences by black Welsh speakers when dealing with Welsh-speaking bodies do not relate to deliberate / intended racism; but rather assumptions made - what we know as unconscious bias (unconscious bias). It is therefore crucial that staff are appropriately trained in dealing with people from different backgrounds and initial diversity and equality training sessions are a key step in creating a positive and inclusive culture.

Action: *Organisations should organise diversity and equality training sessions for their staff – delivered by individuals from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities. We hope that this point is unnecessary but we note that the training should be paid for at a rate similar to that paid for any other type of training. This training needs to be part of an organisation's training programme i.e. to be delivered to new members of staff and to be developed from time to time*

Volunteer Training

Welsh-speaking organisations rely very heavily on volunteers in different contexts – from members of national Boards to an individual who helps people park in a field for an event, they all represent the organisation. There is therefore a need to ensure that they work appropriately as volunteers.

Action: *An online equality and diversity training package should be commissioned for volunteers. We recommend that such training should be mandatory as volunteers are prepared for voluntary work. Consideration needs to be given to how this pattern could be expanded by providing face-to-face training.*

Mentoring Programme

Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Welsh speakers often report feelings of isolation and questions about belonging to Welsh-speaking society. Many report that discussing their experiences with other Welsh speakers from a similar background is beneficial, and the informal advice they receive is appreciated.

Action: *A career development mentoring programme aimed at Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Welsh speakers should be developed to support them to develop their career successfully and to apply successfully for posts where Welsh is essential to the post.*

Work Experience

Evidence suggests that periods of work experience provide an excellent opportunity for individuals to find out more about potential employers and in due course to make successful applications to join the staff of those employers. We know that there is under-representation of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people in a number of organisations and bodies operating in Welsh, and therefore a (paid) experience programme would be an effective medium-term part of addressing this situation.

Action: *A work experience programme should be delivered to Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people by Welsh speaking organisations, carefully designed to ensure effective and valuable experiences for the young people who will benefit from the programme.*

VISUAL REPRESENTATION

Visual Representation

Organisations should ensure that they include Welsh speakers from all backgrounds as part of their day-to-day activities. Such an attempt needs to be proportionate – for example not all conference discussion panels would be expected to be speakers from a Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic background – but if there were to be a whole conference without any such Welsh speakers it would be necessary to consider whether sufficient effort has been made

to ensure a range of speakers. It is also important to note the need to attract black people to talk about their area of expertise – not in a tokenistic way so that they are invited to talk about race, religion, diversity or equality!

Action: *A database of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Welsh speakers should be developed along with their specialisms for the use of Welsh language organisations organising events.*

Welsh Books

There are few characters, particularly main characters, from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds presented in Welsh books. That is particularly evident in children's books, and there are a few examples of a Black or Asian character presented in a stereotypical way. Alongside the lack of representation of characters from different backgrounds in Welsh literature for children, there is a clear lack of authors from diverse backgrounds.

Action: *Publishers should be encouraged to ensure that authors reflect the diversity of Wales in their books.*

Action: *A specific project should be considered to support and encourage authors who wish to write in Welsh from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds*

Media

As Welsh literature does not necessarily fully reflect the diversity of Wales, neither does the media. While there has been some progress very recently for example on Radio Cymru the number of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic voices appearing on the media remains low. Few characters from diverse backgrounds appear in children's programmes, as a result children may not be able to identify with the programmes.

Action: *The media should monitor the number of individuals from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds appearing on television and radio and take purposeful action to increase these numbers as necessary.*

Action: *Consideration should be given to any activities, productions or songs from previous decades involving racist images.*

The Education System

Education Workforce & Teacher Recruitment of colour

There is some evidence at present that there is not a large cohort of Welsh-speaking educators from Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic backgrounds. Data should be collected in the first instance on the number of Welsh-speaking Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic educators. In building on this data work consideration should be given to specific schemes to support

pupils and students from diverse backgrounds wishing to enter the teaching profession – whether from Nursery to University level.

Action: The Education Workforce Council should prepare data on the number of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic teachers able to speak Welsh, and include elements about the Welsh language in any programmes being developed to promote *career learning among diverse communities*

Action: *Teacher training should specifically address inclusive educational practice in the training of future teachers.*

Action: *Consideration should be given to a pilot scheme to support Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic pupils to apply successfully for courses to qualify as education practitioners.*

Curriculum

A number of discussions are currently developing about the new curriculum for Wales. As it stands there are very few 'essential' elements in the curriculum, and there is a great deal of freedom in the hands of schools and teachers to define the subjects being addressed. The history of black people in Wales is a key part of our history as a country and it should be ensured that that history is reflected appropriately in high-quality teaching materials.

Action: *A multimedia teaching pack / packs on the history of the people of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people in Wales should be commissioned as part of curriculum preparation. It should be ensured that due regard is given to the use of the Welsh language as part of that history. The recommendations of the group led by Professor Charlotte Williams on the new curriculum should be implemented in full.*

Inclusive Youth Work

One of the obvious places where children and young people socialise is in youth activities – through the school, through organisations such as the Urdd or locally. There is a need to ensure that such activities are inclusive and that the youth workers are appropriately trained to undertake inclusive activities and to tackle racism should housing arise. Suitable youth activities need to be considered when making the transition from different phases of education e.g. from primary to secondary school and from the end of GCSE to A level or College.

Action: *Youth workers should receive appropriate training to run inclusive activities as an integral part of a youth work programme.*

Anti-Racist Terminology

Recent discussions have highlighted the fact that some of the vocabulary we use to discuss issues of race and racism through the medium of Welsh is not suitable for the present era. The development of suitable and appropriate vocabulary would be a step forward. One

aspect of this challenge was illuminate with the discussion of the term BAME / DALIE at the beginning of this manifesto.

Action: *A suitable body in close consultation with Welsh speakers from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds should develop a suitable and appropriate Welsh vocabulary for use when discussing race and racism issues.*

Conclusion

We have a historic opportunity in the next few years to secure a million Welsh speakers – a million speakers of all backgrounds. But that potential will only be realised through deliberate action within Welsh-speaking Society and in particular by organisations and bodies operating through the medium of Welsh.

The first step is to recognise that Welsh-speaking bodies and organisations need to do much more to ensure that their activities are inclusive and reflect Wales today. It is not enough to declare an anti-racist policy – it has to be implemented purposefully and strategically. In doing so it will be possible to build organisations and bodies that are more inclusive and thereby make a notable contribution to securing a million Welsh speakers – including thousands of Welsh speakers who are Black, Asian and from ethnic minorities – by 2050.