



Ethnic Minorities  
& Youth Support  
Team Wales

Tîm Cymorth  
Lleiafrifoedd Ethnig  
& Ieuenctid Cymru



## EYST Wales Annual Conference Report

### Race, Anti-Racism and Intersectionality: We Are All Allies

28<sup>th</sup> January 2021, 9am-12pm online

*A joint conference delivered by EYST Wales in partnership with Women's Equality Network Wales, Disability Wales and Stonewall Cymru*












First Minister Mark Drakeford
 Marsha De Cordova MP

# RACE, ANTI-RACISM AND INTERSECTIONALITY: WE ARE ALL ALLIES

**JANUARY 28, 2021 • 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM**

A joint conference delivered by EYST Wales in partnership with Women's Equality Network Wales, Disability Wales and Stonewall Cymru

**FOR TICKETS & INFO VISIT [bit.ly/EYSTIntersec](https://bit.ly/EYSTIntersec)**

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### About EYST Wales

EYST Wales is an award-winning Wales wide charity established since 2005 which aims to support ethnic minority young people, families and individuals living in Wales and help them to contribute, participate and feel a valued part of Wales. It does this through a range of services targeted variously at ethnic minority young people, ethnic minority families, refugees and asylum seekers and also the wider public.

EYST Wales coordinates the All Wales BAME (Black Asian Minority Ethnic) Engagement Programme, a project funded by Welsh Government to gather views and experiences of BAME people living in Wales and improve the evidence base from which to positively influence public policies and services to better reflect the needs of BAME communities. This project is one of seven Welsh Government Equalities and Inclusion Grants.

The conference was produced by the All Wales BAME Engagement programme at EYST Wales. It was held online on 28th January 2021 with 198 participants from across the third sector, academia and community organisations, mainly from Wales.

To find out more about our work visit [www.eyst.org.uk](http://www.eyst.org.uk) or contact [ginger@eyst.org.uk](mailto:ginger@eyst.org.uk)

## 1. Welcome and Opening Remarks – Rocio Cifuentes, EYST Wales CEO

EYST is very pleased to deliver this conference in partnership with three fantastic organizations Stonewall Cymru, Disability Wales and Women's Equality Network. The events of the past year have been pivotal for everyone globally, putting race in a spotlight for many reasons. The pandemic shone a light on the disproportionate impact the virus has had on poorer people and those from ethnic and minority backgrounds and simultaneously the tragic death of George Floyd and the ensuing worldwide uproar brought a resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement. It has been a hugely important and seismic year for everyone and especially for conversations about race. We've been discussing race and equality more than ever before. Rocio hopes this conference will be a safe space to continue these conversations and to hear each other's ideas and experiences and learn from one another. Hopefully by the end of the morning we will all have clearer ideas on the ways in which we can be better allies for each other.

## 2. All Wales BAME Engagement Programme: Reflections & Achievements- Rocio Cifuentes, EYST CEO and Ginger Wiegand, EYST Research & Policy Lead

Through the All Wales BAME Engagement Programme, EYST is funded by the Welsh Government Equality and Inclusion Grant to be the lead body for race in Wales. This strategic programme's aims can be summed up in three words: Engage, Evidence, Influence. Engage Black, Asian and ethnic minority people across Wales. Evidence varied lived experience and issues that are important to people throughout Wales. Influence decision makers and policy makers to remedy institutional racism and implement positive policy changes.

The team consists of a Research and Policy Lead and four Regional Coordinators. Since 2017, they have developed regional networks and local engagement opportunities, reaching 4,000+ people and 170+ organizations across Wales. Early in the project, they identified four priority themes to frame their work: institutional racism and hate Crime, racism in employment, racism in education, and lack of representation of minoritized people in public and political life. In March 2019, with the onset of the Covid 19 pandemic, the team swiftly adapted, hosting a series of 37 near-weekly online forums, a space to share information and make connections as well as to understand and evidence the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic on ethnic minority people and communities in Wales. One online forum attendee said: "The Pan Wales BAME Covid-19 Forums hosted by EYST have been a life-line to many grassroots community groups and organisations, bringing knowledge of services and information in a respected space that would enable and support often overlooked people and groups in Wales."

To disseminate evidence and influence public bodies and wider society, EYST has produced research papers, responded to numerous Welsh Government and Local Authority

consultations, provided evidence in Senedd committee sessions, and provided recommendations to Welsh Government. The team disseminates learning and key advocacy messages through an annual conference, regional seminars, training events and 1-1 meetings. Link to Engagement Programme publications: <http://eyst.org.uk/post.php?s=2020-12-16-all-wales-bame-engagement-programme-update>

One key programme initiative is the BAME Routes into Public Life Mentoring Project, which aims to increase representation of minoritized people in senior decision-making roles in Wales, including Public Appointments and elected office. It draws inspiration from WEN Wales' mentoring programme and consists of a three-part structure: mentoring with a highly influential person, bespoke training and a peer network. To date, 91 mentee-mentor matches have participated in three rounds of the project. Our pool of high calibre mentors includes Ministers and Members of Senedd; local councillors, including council leaders; top civil servants and leaders in the third sector. Evaluation of the programme has shown positive results, and mentee alumni have realised fantastic achievements, including being appointed a member of Careers Wales board, elected as Director of Equalities for Plaid Cymru, selected as regional candidate for the Senedd 2021 election, and many have taken up charity trustee positions and become school governors. Link to evaluation of mentoring programme: [EYST Wales Routes to Public Life Programme - Evaluation Report](#)

The BAME Engagement Programme has also supported the development of Race Alliance Wales (RAW). Our sector engagement found there was an express need for collaboration between organisations wishing to work towards race equality in Wales. Since its conception, RAW has developed into a successful alliance of 44 member organisations and 153 individual members and employs three part time development workers. RAW has produced an Anti-Racist Manifesto for Wales, which was based upon the All Wales BAME Engagement Programme's Interim Recommendations to Welsh Government and will be used to influence political party platforms in the upcoming Wales Senedd elections.

For the future, we aim to be better allies and work better intersectionally, including with our partners for this conference. We will continue to engage and advocate for minoritised people across Wales and work collaboratively with a range of race equality focussed organisations across Wales. We are involved in and supportive of Welsh Government's forthcoming Race Equality Action Plan; We have been calling for Welsh Government to have such a plan for a number of years. EYST will maintain its focus on the four priority themes mentioned above, whilst also developing more focused work and partnership to meet the specific needs of both ethnic minority younger people and older people. Racism is still the reality in Wales, expressed through pervasive racist attitudes, behaviours and structures in society. Intersectional partnership is important in this struggle, as people are multi-faceted, have multiple identities and can be affected by multiple oppressions acting upon them at once.

To conclude, this question: How can we be better allies? We at EYST offer these reflections. Equality is not a competition, and neither is disadvantage. A shared humanity should be at the centre of all our work, as well as exercising empathy and compassion in all we do. We all have the power to make changes at a personal, community, and professional level. So, let us use our power.

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### 3. 'Being an Ally: Moving to Action' - Colin Heyman, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Practitioner

*Colin Heyman reflects on his work as a practitioner in the field of Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion for the past 20 years. His aim is to improve organisations' Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) practice, and to make EDI a topic that is discussable. He also talks us through the vital work that we need to do to understand privilege and how to overcome challenges to becoming anti-racist.*

Issues of allyship have been central to Colin's work, working with men on issues of gender equality and more recently on how White people can be allies to people of colour. He has worked with a wide range of organisations and has a clear strategic view of how organisations can improve EDI practice. He specialises in running groups of EDI champions to support culture change. The Fairplay 30 scheme run at the University of South Wales won the Guardian University Award in the category of 'Advancing Staff Equality' in 2019.

His passion for inclusion and better leadership in our world arises from both his own experience, and from a belief that improving people's leadership and EDI practice are vital to improving our world. Colin situates himself as a White, able-bodied, heterosexual man, joking that his Jewish identity is a marker of diversity but at least on the right side of oppression. He recalled that in his youth, within his family and community, opinions of other races and ethnicities were overwhelmingly disparaging.

Privilege occurs in a myriad of ways. Colin recounted the privilege he experienced when first moving to Wales from England, the privilege of moving to another country with no awareness of its history or sensitivities (in this case Wales' historical relation to England). It is a position of privilege to be able to choose whether to become interested and involved in issues of equality and exclusion. People from less privileged groups have no choice; it is a constant part of their experience. *"For those of us who are white, it's like being a fish in water, we swim in whiteness, it's just how it is, it's invisible."*

Colin uses the term less privileged or under privileged as opposed to “minority”. Women are not a minority and, globally, neither are those of Black and Asian descent. Having privilege brings many material and mental advantages. Colin notes he would rather be on the privileged side of oppression. He does not hold romantic notions about it being better to suffer with the underprivileged. However, his privileged position does take away from his humanity. Liberation from systems of castigation and oppression benefits everyone. The Women’s movement has allowed Colin to be free from toxic ideology about manhood.

For the past 25 years Colin has worked with organisations to run champion networks of allies who work to improve inclusion in that organisation and to influence and challenge their colleagues. Colin shares two of the biggest concerns he sees in his field:

- *Fear of getting it wrong* – There is a danger that acting as a White saviour can replicate oppressive patterns, but we don’t have time to wait to be sure we’re doing the right thing. “As White people, you will get it wrong, but you can learn from your mistakes and move on, acting as an advocate in the ways in which you can. Review and get feedback from people of colour and be open to their advice and criticism.”
- *Guilt* – Getting caught up in the horrors of the past can be paralysing for White allies, but Colin remarks, “Few are guilty, but all are responsible.” We cannot feel guilty for what our ancestors have done but must take responsibility for change and for what is done now.

Colin also breaks down what we can do as both individuals and organisations. Individuals can embark on a journey and do work as allies: unpacking their unconscious bias, understanding their privileged experiences skew perceptions, moving past assumptions, speaking out against racism in action and educating others about the harm of racism. Organisations can appoint advocates for diversity and inclusion, raise the profile of people of colour in the organisation and value their work, practice two-way mentoring and implement positive action in recruitment.

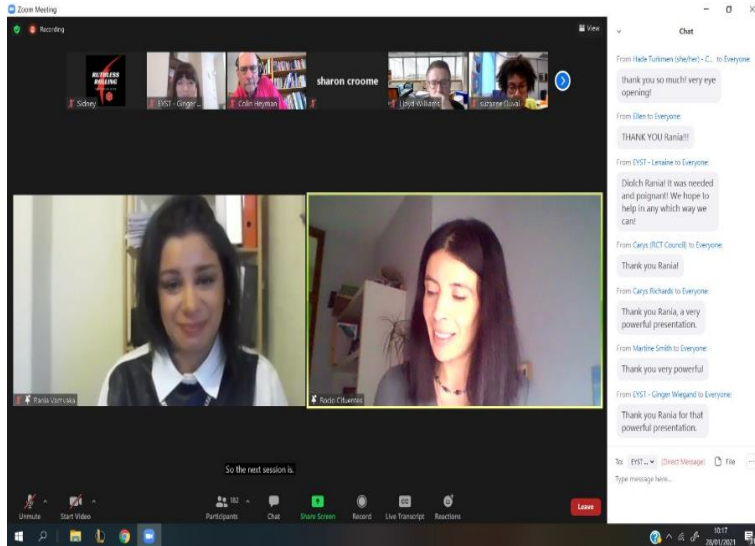
*Video Resources about allyship:*

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wf9QBnPK6Yg&feature=youtu.be>
- <https://www.fairplaytalks.com/2020/12/18/the-art-of-good-allyship-at-work/>
- <https://www.fairplaytalks.com/2020/11/19/how-can-organisations-start-to-address-workplace-race-inequality/>

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#### 4. 'Experiences of arrival and settlement of LGBTQ+ forced migrants in Wales' - Ourania Vamvaka, ESRC Funded PhD Researcher, Cardiff University

*Ourania spoke of her research on experiences of LGBTQ+ people who are seeking asylum in Wales. Ourania is an ESRC-funded Doctoral Researcher in the School of Social Sciences at Cardiff University.*



The intersection Ourania brings is that of sexuality and legal status, which is not often talked about, but has massive implications for policy and how that affects people's lives. Literature and statistics treat forced migrants as collective, a problematic grouping that fails to account for a myriad of internal and external factors and issues. Ourania is the Co-Chair of Glitter Cymru, a grassroots

organisation with many members who are LGBTQ + asylum seekers. The research presented here is down to Glitter Cymru and herself. Many of the findings will be incorporated into Welsh Government's new LGBTQ+ action plan, which she and Glitter Cymru are working on along with Stonewall Cymru. She notes that in Wales, we do have privilege to directly impact people's lives by influencing policy with research.

In 2018, the asylum applications with a sexual orientation component represented 5% of all asylum applications in the UK, a 22% drop compared to 2017. These crucial numbers show that Home Office policy is having a direct impact on how many applications are being logged.

The Home Office operates a hostile environment, designed to make the UK a difficult place to live for people without leave to remain, such as asylum seekers. Asylum seekers are not allowed to work and access to education is limited. They are provided with a weekly allowance of £37.75 and accommodation. Under the Home Office dispersal policy, they have no choice where to live in the UK.

All of Ourania's participants fled their respective home countries to escape violence and persecution relating to their sexuality. They were not given an option as to where they would reside in the UK and instead were involuntarily driven to Wales. She shared some salient points emerging from her research, which will be published in her PhD dissertation. Key points included the following: the damaging isolation inherent in the UK dispersal process, even more pronounced for LGBTQ+ asylum seekers; the lack of accommodation providers'

care for the safety and needs of LGBTQ+ asylum seekers; invasive Home Office interviews in which LGBTQ+ claimants are required to justify the authenticity of their sexuality by narrating details about their sexual lives or experiences of sexual violence; the stigma of HIV in shared accommodation which may send people back into the closet; and the experience of not being fully accepted in safe, White LGBTQ+ spaces such as gay clubs.

Ourania closes by saying that she hopes she succeeded in highlighting why we need a deeper look into the intersection of sexuality and legal status from a policy point of view. Everyone here today has the power to influence and change lives for the better or for the worse. LGBTQ+ refugees and asylum seekers are people, not numbers. They need your support and your recognition and acknowledgement of their experiences.

## 5. Panel Discussion on Intersectional Allyship - Chaired by Rocio Cifuentes with Catherine Fookes, WEN Wales / Iestyn Wyn, Stonewall Cymru / Rhian Davies, Disability Wales

*Rocio opens the session by noting that, like EYST's All Wales BAME Engagement Programme all of these partner organisations have been funded by the Welsh Government Equalities and Inclusion Grant and today's conference would not have been possible without them. We all share that challenge of together trying to make Wales a more equal place. Each panel member will speak briefly about intersectional work in their organisation and also recognise where they are striving to do better. The panel will end with a Q&A.*

**Iestyn Wyn, Policy & Research Manager, Stonewall Cymru** – Stonewall is a UK based LGBTQ+ charity working to further LGBTQ+ rights in the UK. In previous years, the LGBTQ+ community and Stonewall have benefitted from allyship, as support of trans people has increased both within the LGBTQ+ community and amongst external partners and the public. Allyship has a long history in the LGBTQ+ community and Welsh communities, the film *PRIDE* being an example, showing how LGBTQ+ groups supported miners in the 80s. The Black Lives Matter movement has brought together different communities and intersections. Iestyn mentions Black trans lives in particular, alongside Black queer lives as examples of intersecting identities and cross pollination of thought within different communities. Rights within the LGBTQ+ space are hard won and easily rescinded; complacency is not an option. As such, Stonewall Cymru has invested in strong and robust partnerships with other organisations in Wales and broadly across the third sector. Women's charities and cis-women allyship has aided in trans liberation, but the current political arena isn't secure, and a change in executive and government can undo progress and hard-won rights. We are all allies and with allyship comes responsibility. Responsibility to stand up for what is right, to stand together in the face of adversity and inequality, and a responsibility to not be complacent. Work is still needed when the social media campaign is no longer trending. Complacency allows growth in inequality



and u-turns on hard won rights. Iestyn closed his piece by calling to attention that everyone in attendance should be brave enough to stand together and not be complacent and stand up for those within our communities and those outside of our communities. If we intend to be true allies, then we must stand up and do something in Wales.

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**Rhian Davies, Director, Disability Wales** – Disability Wales is the national association of disabled people’s organisations, striving for the rights and inequalities of all disabled people, run and controlled by disabled people. The core role of the organisation is to represent the views and priorities of the members to Government, mainly Welsh Government, and to inform and influence policy. The organisation subscribes to the social model of disability focusing on barriers in society rather than focusing on the impairments and the treatment of specific impairments. Over the last few years, Disability Wales have worked in co-production with the Welsh Government to co-produce the Framework for Action on Disability and the Right to Independent Living. The action plan tackles barriers in transport and employment, access to information and advice, and access to roles in public life. The framework does not address the specific experiences of people from different communities such as BAME and LGBTQ+ communities or the experiences of disabled women compared to disabled men. Rhian notes the need to strengthen the framework with attention to intersectional focus. Disability Wales does, however, recognise that disabled people have different experiences and also varied considerations in what they perceive as their main identity in reference to their protected characteristics. Disability Wales has a way to go in ensuring it is fully reflective of the diverse community of disabled people in Wales. In the past two years, EYST, WEN Wales, and Stonewall Cymru has allowed space for discussion and focus groups to seek to resolve this issue.

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**Catherine Fookes, CEO, WEN Wales** – She begins by noting that White American women got the vote in 1920, whilst African American women got the vote in 1965, 45 years later and only 56 years ago. This spurred her to think about Wales, especially with the appointment of Kamala Harris as Vice President of the United States. Some women in the UK got the vote in 1913, those with property and those over 30. There has never been a woman of colour Prime Minister, First Minister or Deputy Prime Minister in the UK. There has been no woman of colour as the leader of a political party and, in Wales, there has never been a woman of colour elected to the Senedd. When Catherine recently spoke to Sir Woolley of Operation Black Vote, he chastised Wales for not pushing for diversity in public life. Catherine reiterates that is a shame on political parties, the public, and allies, including third sector organisations. The lack of diversity in the Senedd directly impacts the legislation and outcomes of the decisions taken during the pandemic. Catherine argues that if women of colour had been there then perhaps, ‘sisters’ in the NHS and front-line workers could have had the right PPE and the problems they had would have been highlighted sooner. Decisions made and laws passed threatening the rights of those who are disabled could have been averted if the Senedd included people with

lived experiences as disabled people. Diversity leads to better decision making and more diverse leaders are needed in the Senedd. WEN Wales' Diverse 50/50 campaign aims to get women in all intersections into political leadership. The project is done in partnership with EYST, Race Council Cymru, and Electoral Reform Services Cymru and 21 organisations have signed up.

[Catherine@wenwales.org.uk](mailto:Catherine@wenwales.org.uk) / <https://wenwales.org.uk> / <https://wenwales.org.uk/press-release-wen-wales-welcomes-diversity-recommendations-in-senedd-reform-next-steps-report-2/>

### Panel Question and Answer Session

*Question: You have each spoken about your own progress and challenges working towards supporting different groups of people with protected characteristics. What tips do you have for other organisations, small or large, who want to make progress in this space?*

**Iestyn Wyn, Stonewall Cymru** – The earlier example about women's organisations in Wales coming together to release a statement on their trans inclusion stance and commitment to trans inclusion is so heart-warming to the LGBTQ+ community Wales. That came about as a result of partnership working, understanding each other, and trying to learn. Iestyn recognises that Stonewall Cymru needs to do better regarding diversity in the organisation. Stonewall are undertaking a Race Equity project, which is internal and not yet public. The focus is on 'getting the house in order'. The Stonewall team in Wales are not particularly diverse and need to do better in ensuring diversity in staff as well as do better at ensuring their campaigns are diverse and representative. Iestyn is not an expert in gender equality, racial equality, or disability equalities. However, he is ready to learn and possibly make mistakes to learn from.

*Question: 2020 has been a very challenging year. What have you found most challenging in relation to the work of your organisations? What have the silver linings been?*

**Catherine Fookes, WEN Wales** – It has been an extremely challenging year. WEN Wales is a very small organisation. Despite having over 30,000 supporters, just five people work at WEN. Generating passion, enthusiasm, and a good work ethic during a pandemic is difficult. The silver lining for WEN has been the WEN cafés, which have reached a huge network. They shifted from once a week at the early onset of the pandemic to once a month at present. It has been an amazing forum to bring together people with lived experience, expert speakers, MPs, Members of Senedd. Women come together like a family and generate a space where people can feel not alone and also raise their issues and concerns. We have fed the evidence from these forums to Welsh Government to encourage policy change in several key areas. So, the pandemic has allowed for much greater engagement and connectivity and the movement has been able to grow under such circumstances.

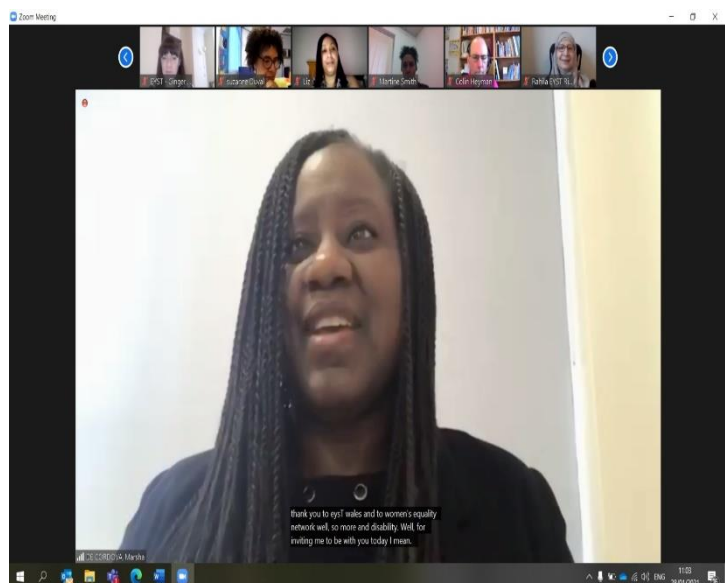
*Question: How hopeful do you feel about the future for equality? How do you see the landscape for equalities in Wales, do you think things will get better or worse from here on in and why?*

**Rhian Davies, Disability Wales** – If the situation is viewed from the perspective of a glass half empty, then the last ten years has been riddled with austerity, cuts to services, cuts to benefits and threats to the human rights act. The pandemic and ensuing lockdown has exposed inequalities which many of us knew existed. On the other hand, because such inequality has been exposed, the impact is reported more widely in today’s media. Death, unemployment, and poverty are not foreign to us now, and there is a sense that we must change. We must build back better. Rhian thinks equality is becoming a high priority. Many in attendance today are in Welsh Government’s Human Rights Stakeholder Group, calling for the incorporation of UN treaties into Welsh legislation. Welsh Government have commissioned Simon Hoffman from Swansea University to undertake a one-year research study into how human rights and equality could be strengthened and advanced in Wales. Events like this conference are all good signs, but one must keep focussed and not be complacent. Innovation such as a Welsh Human Rights Act could be a solution and a trailblazer to make our dreams a reality.

## 6. KEYNOTE SPEECH - Marsha De Cordova MP, Shadow Secretary of State for Women & Equalities

*Marsha De Cordova spoke of the differential impact of Covid on groups of people in the UK, her calls for UK Government to address inequities, the need for better representation at decision making tables and the importance of solidarity and allyship for fighting injustice in this moment.*

She begins by noting this conference comes at a time when solidarity and allyship are important. Marsha has been in parliament for the past 4.5 years and before that worked in the charity sector tackling injustices faced by disabled people. As MP, Marsha has served as Shadow Cabinet Minister for Disabled People, shaping labour’s policies for disabled people and holding the UK Government to account. Now, as Show Secretary of State for Women and Inequalities, her



brief is broad and intersectional, with the aim to tackle economic, social and health injustices and demand better representation and leadership across all sectors.

In the past year we've faced an unprecedented global health pandemic. The UK has the highest number of deaths in Europe and the worst recession. We've passed the grim milestone of 100,000 deaths from Covid. Each of those statistics represents grieving families and loss of loved ones. We need a plan to ensure that not one person nor any community is left behind. Marsha is calling on Government to publish ethnicity statistics in the progression of the vaccine rollout and to produce a comprehensive engagement strategy which reaches into all of our communities and addresses some of the historic impacts of structural racism.

The virus has opened our eyes to existing structural inequalities and has also exacerbated them. We know Covid has disproportionately impacted people of colour, disabled people and those from the LGBTQ+ community. Covid's impact on Black, Asian and ethnic minority communities has been devastating. Black men are three times more likely to die than White men. In the first wave, more than 2,000 South Asian deaths could have been avoided if those communities weren't disproportionately impacted. A June 2020 report from Public Health revealed the extent of racism within the workplace. And last year, as part of the Lawrence review into the unequal impact of Covid, Marsha heard workers' first-hand experiences of blatant occupational discrimination in provision of adequate PPE on the wards. Last week, analysis from TUC showed that ethnic minority employment had plummeted 5% in the past year compared to a drop of 0.2% for White workers. We can already see the devastating impact of Covid.

The ethnicity pay gap persists in double digits. And Black, Asian and ethnic minority communities are overrepresented in low paid jobs and the gig economy. Marsha has called on the UK Government to act on repeated recommendations to introduce mandatory ethnicity pay gap reporting.

The tragic death of George Floyd in America last Summer touched many of us. During Black Lives Matter protests, thousands took to the streets to protest racism, discrimination and injustice. In this movement, people came together - Black, White, young, old disabled, and the LGBTQ plus community. This was a real, authentic show of solidarity. As Angela Davis said, in a racist society, it is not enough to be a non-racist, we must all be anti-racist. The BLM movement showed how important this allyship is early in the pandemic.

Marsha has called on the UK Government to implement a Race Equality Strategy. It is great to see Welsh Government is leading the way on the Race Equality Action Plan, which is being coproduced with members of Black, Asian and ethnic minority communities. She is proud to say when there is a Labour Government in Westminster, it will implement a Race Equality Act to tackle deep rooted, structural racial inequality right across society: education, the ethnicity

pay gap, racism in the workplace, the criminal justice system, representation and leadership in public life.

Marsha also reflected upon the huge impact of Covid on women. Women have borne the brunt of juggling work with other responsibilities. Three quarters of mothers who asked to be furloughed to manage care responsibilities were told no by their employers. Moreover, women are more likely to work in shut down sectors. Many women experiencing such injustices are from Black, Asian and ethnic minority communities or disabled people or both. The UK Government has failed to address these impacts. Marsha has called for the legal right for working parents to request paid flexible furlough. It was also disappointing that the UK Government suspended gender pay gap reporting 10 months ago, when the pandemic began, and they must reinstate it. The gap stands at over 14% and at the present rate of closing, 8.5 million women will not see equal pay in their working life.

There have also been social impacts for women. In lockdown, calls to domestic abuse lines soared. Last year, 2.3 million people faced domestic abuse; two thirds were women, a disproportionate number from the LGBTQ+ community. Refugee women with no recourse to public funds have particularly struggled to access help. Though there have been some recent positive initiatives such as “Ask Annie,” where people can safely ask for help at UK businesses and pharmacies, additional UK Government funding has been too little too late.

Since 2010, disabled people have been hit hardest by the Government’s austerity programmes, resulting in many deaths. Now, disabled people and those with long term health conditions account for three out of five Covid Deaths. Disabled people have seen a significant reduction in the care and support upon which many of them rely. 45% of disabled people who were in work at the start of last year reported no earnings by Summer 2020. Thus, it would be cruel for the Government to implement planned cuts in Universal Credit this March. Nearly two million disabled people in receipt of Jobseeker’s Allowance or Employment Support Allowance did not receive the £20 uplift. That is unacceptable discrimination, and she has continued to call on the Government to extend that £20 uplift to those on legacy social security support.

In all this, the UK Government is still not consistently producing accessible Covid public health information. In the same way, they have failed to properly communicate with ethnic minority and LGBTQ+ communities. She complemented the Welsh Government leading by example, including with signed interpretation at press conferences.

We clearly need more diversity in decision making. Lack of diversity can lead to poor decisions. Without a progressive and inclusive path to recovery from this crisis, inequality will only deepen. Radical action is required. Marsha closes by saying, “All of this makes me more determined to continue our fight for equality, working together to hold those in power to account. Working together as allies in our fight for justice. We each have a vital role to play.

As Martin Luther King says, ‘Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.’ So, your activism, my activism, our activism is essential. Because together we can achieve a more just, fair and equal society. So now really is a time for us to come together. We must keep demanding justice, so that we can truly bring about an end to inequality. Coronavirus has provided us with an opportunity to be able to start to do that.”

### **Question and Answer Session with Marsha De Cordova MP**

*Question: How have you been inspired by the election of Vice President Kamala Harris and do you think it can ever happen here? And how have you navigated your experience as a Black and disabled woman in public life?*

Marsha is very excited about the election of Vice President Harris, not only the first woman, but the first Black woman elected to that office. The election of Obama inspired Marsha to step out, shake off all the fears and think about entering public life. She is also inspired by so many other women that were part of last November’s historic election and also the recent election of two senators, a Black man and a Jewish man, representing Georgia. Their election is due to the amazing work of Stacey Abrams and her organisation Fair Fight. Stacey is hugely inspiring in getting people politically engaged, politically active and registered to vote. Voting gives us each of us an opportunity to bring about change. That whole election and seeing Kamala in the White House now should be inspiring to us all. Marsha would say to any woman here today who is considering standing for public office and thinking “I probably can’t do it,” please shake off that fear and do it anyway.

Marsha’s journey as a Black and disabled woman in public life has not been easy. She has faced considerable barriers, which she has previously written and spoken about. Marsha is severely sight impaired. Going into the House of Commons, an old building which is not fully accessible and not fully inclusive, Marsha had to push to make sure they took all the necessary steps to ensure her workplace was accessible for her to be able to participate in the same way as her other MP colleagues. Getting the right support structures in place wasn’t easy, but it is happening. Marsha would encourage people to have mentors, as she has had through her professional and political careers. She really thinks women need to be around the decision-making table. And she wants to see more Black and disabled people in public life. Marsha will face those barriers and challenges to ensure that anyone coming behind her won’t also experience them. Hopefully, they will be broken down.

*Question: Is the Equality Act 2010 delivering for people? What is the future of the single equalities agenda? Is it positive in recognising intersections or diluting and making our work less impactful?*

That is a really good question. The fact we are talking about intersectionality is so important. “I am a Black woman and also have disability. I intersect with all equality strands.” The

Equalities Act came into effect in 2010 and unfortunately Labour left office so were not able to implement many aspects, such as the Socioeconomic Duty and requirements to report on gender and ethnicity statistics in public life. The next general election isn't until 2024, but we have seen with Covid and Black Lives Matter that structural racism, institutional racism, discrimination and injustice are still alive and kicking. We must do all we can to root them out and one remedy would be an additional piece of race equality legislation which builds on the Equalities Act. "I don't see that we will water down the other strands; they are all important." But race and class are big problems, so we need a piece of legislation to get at the root causes. Of crucial importance, representation at senior and executive levels in the workplace isn't great. Representation in parliament is better than previously, but can absolutely be better. The key is to keep striving and do better. She is inspired by the Biden-Harris administration, which has placed race equity as a core priority.

*Question: Wales Senedd elections take place in a few months with 16- and 17-year olds allowed to vote for the first time. How can politicians engage young people, particularly BAME young people, particularly some of their comments around Black Lives Matter?*

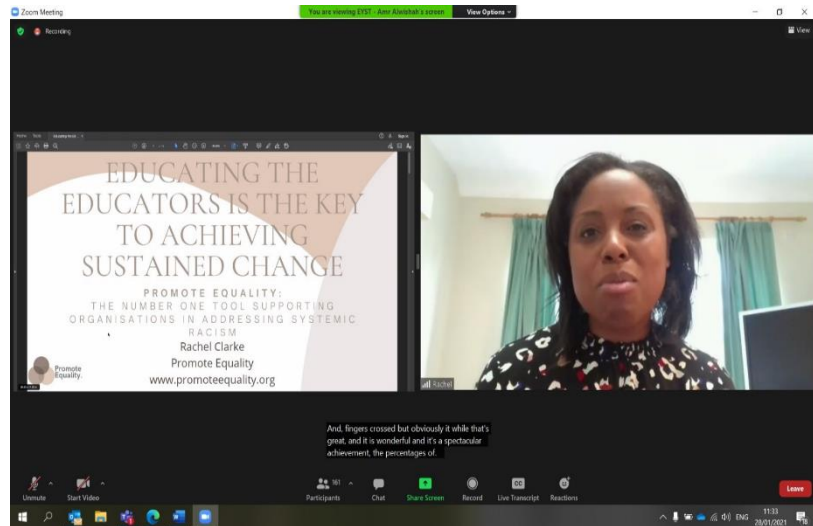
It is great that 16-17-year olds will be voting in Wales and Marsha wants to see that UK wide. It is so important to let young people know they have a stake in society. Her key priority in Battersea is increasing registration of young people. Politicians need to go where young people are at. Young people don't get news from BBC Wales. They get it from alternative outlets and politicians need to be there. Politicians also need to personally engage with and talk to young people. "It's really simple to do, that's what we all need to do, and I do it myself in my own constituency. I go to where young people are at, and I talk to them about their issues." Marsha recently did a mini documentary spending time with young Black men and women, talking to them about experiences of anti-Black racism and the impact had on their lives. "For me it was such a revealing moment because obviously they look like me and we've all had very similar backgrounds and experiences. For them to have an opportunity to speak to a politician who was actually on that level and listening to them, meant so much." Politicians need to be where young people are, access their spaces and engage with them, because they need to know you are listening to them. No one can make excuses as now we have the virtual workspaces such as Instagram and Zoom.

[marsha.decordova.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:marsha.decordova.mp@parliament.uk)

## 7. Educating the Educators: The Key to Sustained Change - Rachel Clark, Founder, Promote Equality

*Rachel focusses on the importance of education in conveying messages about intersectionality, racial equity, solidarity and allyship.*

We need to fundamentally change the way we present anti-racism in the curriculum in order to achieve sustained change. Rachel is the granddaughter of Betty Campbell, the first black headteacher in Wales and a local councillor. A statue will be erected in her honour in Cardiff this year. Whilst that is a great achievement, the statistics on Black teachers



in Wales (and the wider UK) are still poor and there has been no black headteacher in Wales since. There is still such a long way to go to make things equal and fair for everybody.

Last summer, Rachel and a couple of friends created a resource for organisations to address systemic racism. They were driven by the reflections the country was going through, the Black Lives Matter movement and their own previous experience in schools as educators.

Rachel's salient point: *Educating the educators is the key to realising sustained change.* A lot of work has been done around equity in education, but poor outcomes for ethnic minority people remain the same for years and decades. There have been many previous reports about race relations in education in the UK but they haven't had an impact in making changes to date. The problem: we have been expecting change, whilst using the same approaches to anti-racist education for eons. Rachel explains that whilst there has been meaningful work around challenging behaviours in schools, that is just the iceberg. Below the surface, we need to challenge beliefs held by wide parts of society.

Black and ethnic minority educators are underrepresented at all levels of the education workforce and the majority of educators are White British. In order to change their mindsets and behaviours, White British educators need to develop an understanding of race relations and the experiences of minoritised children. Then in turn, they can frame the mindsets and behaviours of the next generation.



Why is change needed? Ethnic minority people in the UK have made great contributions to society but we don't get to hear about them. And the outcomes for minorities, particularly people from Black backgrounds are incredibly poor. Black children are three times more likely to be permanently excluded. We must engage in hard thinking about how school leaders make the decision to exclude, what bias and racism has gone unchallenged in those decisions, and how to create checkpoints to have challenging conversations that feed into policy and practice.

Decisions are made by people who look the same, have the same experiences, are the same age band and possibly same gender. When will we have a situation where board rooms and leadership teams look like the people they represent or manage? Here, intersectionality is key. We need to have varied experiences in order to champion success and change for all. Currently, across all sectors, ethnic minority people and workers feel their voice will only be heard so far, if it is heard at all.

In classrooms, there are feelings of who belongs and who doesn't belong. Currently, who do we have procedures in place to support in classrooms? And who do we stand back from? Children should be able to walk into class with confidence in all their individualisms. Right now, on the whole, minoritized children do not have that confidence to be the "only one" in the classroom. Educators have a responsibility and a duty of care to ensure that the education is well suited for all.

The tool Rachel and her colleagues have created is a long term approach with different suites of training for school leaders and all staff, with attention to intersectionality, with a plan for forming steering groups and focus groups so that voice is heard in organisations. It has already started to do some great work in some schools and organisations that have taken it up.

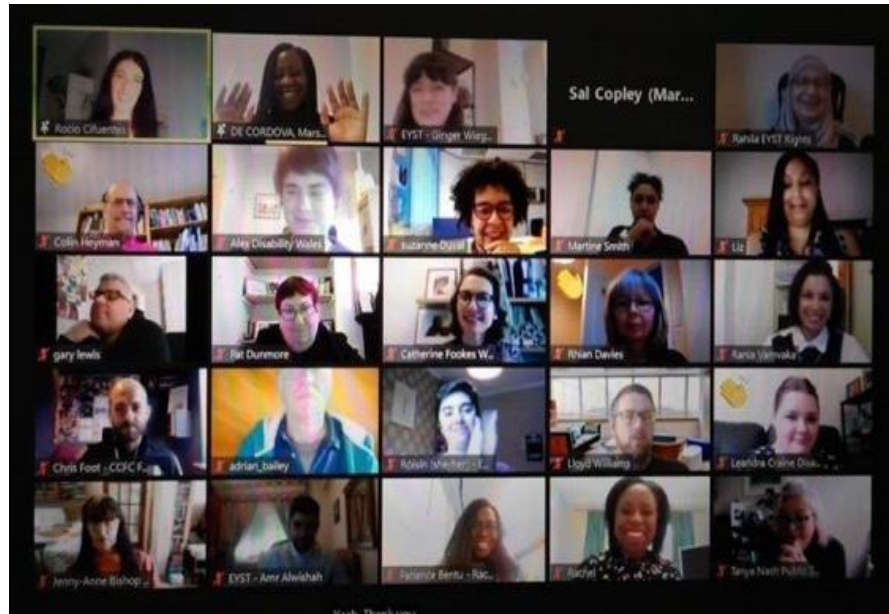
[Rachel@promoteequality.org](mailto:Rachel@promoteequality.org) / [www.promoteequality.org](http://www.promoteequality.org)

## 8. Moving to Action as Allies: What Can We Do? - Members of All Wales BAME Engagement Team

*Lenaine Foster-Bennett, Youth Policy & Participation Officer* – Lenaine situates herself as a Black woman of Jamaican heritage, born of immigrant parents. She grew up working-class and benefitted from getting an education at a Russell Group university; she has been awarded opportunities that her parents only ever dreamed of. Yet she understands there are many ways in which she is overtly, and obviously, privileged in being able bodied, being neurotypical, and being able to access resources based on the colour of her skin. Lenaine is relatively light skinned in comparison to her family and recognises there are a plethora of ways in which she personally benefits from systems that oppress people who have the exact

same background as her. So, moving forward from this meeting, Lenaine pledges to put her support behind amplifying the voices of those who are gender non-conforming, those who are asylum seekers and refugees, for those who may not look like her - who may have facial disfigurements, and those who have not been afforded the opportunities and access that she has. She pledges to put her support and platform behind them, to amplify their voices and create a place where they feel as though they're being heard and understood. [lenaie@eyst.org.uk](mailto:lenaie@eyst.org.uk)

*Amr Alwishah, Youth Policy & Participation Officer* – Amr is an engineer by training but is doing social work because fighting for social justice is his passion. He resonates with the messages of the other speakers today. He resonates with Colin Heyman's message about the need to be allies. Amr acknowledges his



privilege as a man and as a White-passing man. He acknowledges that in certain situations, he will have privilege over many other individuals, but also recognizes the importance of intersectionality in his life. As a person of faith, and reflecting upon how that shapes his life, it is important to acknowledge that, Islamophobia is rooted within racism, so some people will be racist towards anything that looks or sounds Muslim. It's important to recognize that other people have those intersectionalities. Marsha acknowledged how being a Black woman and a person with disabilities has shaped her life. Essentially, Amr wants to resonate with everything that has been said and take his pledge today to acknowledge his privilege and stand up for what is right. If he is in a meeting and sees a Black woman being treated unfairly, he will say, "You are treating that person unfairly," because at that moment they are not going to have the privilege, he will and so needs to use that. And hopefully someone will resonate with that and pledge to do the same in the future. [amr@eyst.org.uk](mailto:amr@eyst.org.uk)

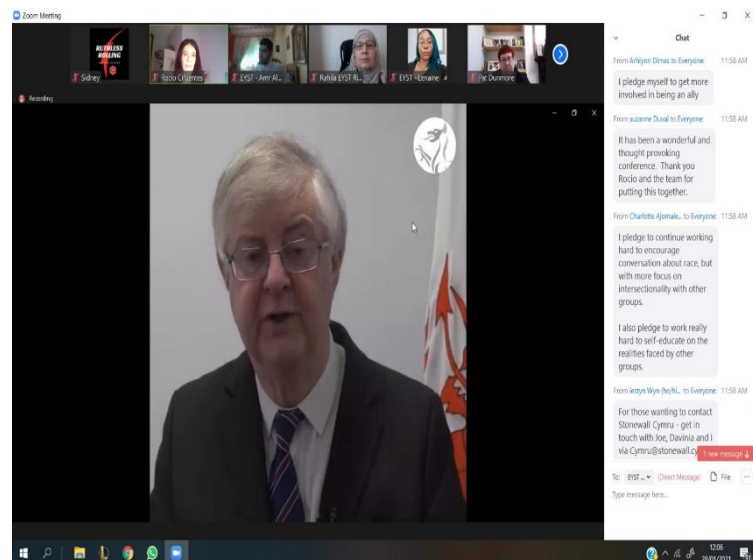
*Rahila Hamid, Gwent Regional Coordinator* – Rahila is a Newport resident for 40 years, a Muslim woman who landed in Wales about 39 years ago to get married. She has been a carer for 35 years and is a mother and a grandmother. She wishes she had been with EYST years ago, as in this environment she has developed in confidence to challenge people's attitudes, whilst addressing her own prejudices at the same time. Sometimes we don't realise they are there. Rahila reflects upon working with majority White British organisations or entering

meeting spaces with few minority faces or voices. Especially with her traditional dress and with her particular way of speaking English, some people may “look [her] up and down.” Over the years, Rahila has grown in confidence and feels proud to be Muslim and proud to be Welsh as this is her home. So Rahila’s pledge is to face challenges and adversity in her personal and professional life in these very challenging times with this pandemic. Rahila pledges to find her strength and be resilient, acknowledge and learn from mistakes, and to work together with all of you. [rahila@eyst.org.uk](mailto:rahila@eyst.org.uk)

## 9. Closing Remarks - Right Honourable Mark Drakeford, First Minister of Wales

*The First Minister was originally scheduled to open the conference, but due to technical difficulties at the opening, he recorded this message, which was played to close the conference.*

The First Minister was keen to take this invitation both because it came from EYST and because of the theme of intersectionality. Intersectionality is a very clumsy word for a topic that is complex and so important. Building alliances and a platform of solidarity is important to advancement in Wales. He will speak on this topic in two facets: 1) the current crisis we face in this pandemic and 2) the broader canvas.



Many will have seen the sobering figures published earlier this week about the number of Covid deaths across UK. In interviews, journalists often ask the First Minister why Covid has had such a terrible impact in UK, usually framing those questions around what went wrong. Why were decisions badly made? The First Minister thinks the explanation for our experience of the pandemic here is different. One, we are a small and crowded island. Two, Covid hit after a decade of austerity, when we were at a low ebb. The UK is the most unequal country in Europe and inequality explains much of the impact of Covid in the UK.

We know there are parts of Wales where Covid has layered upon disadvantages people already face and we certainly know this of Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities. In Wales, early in the pandemic, BAME leaders raised the flag about the differential impact and that’s why the Welsh Government was rapidly able to put a group of people together, chaired

by Judge Ray Singh, and directly advised by people with lived experience of Coronavirus in those communities. That led to Professor Kesh Singhal's work devising a risk assessment tool to help people from those communities keep safe in the workplace – a tool that has been used in the health service and other public services, including outside of Wales.

The work goes on to ensure that Corona does not fall unequally on different communities. It goes on in the vaccination programme that is currently rolling out. There are communities which are more vulnerable to messages from the far right of the political spectrum claiming that the vaccine is unsafe, ineffective or is a conspiracy by public services. The First Minister is extremely grateful to community health workers who are in communities explaining and trying to persuade people to take advantage of the protection that the vaccine will bring. That's often led by a brilliant group of GPs from the BAME community talking directly to community members about the clinical evidence. The First Minister is also hugely grateful to those faith leaders in Wales who are providing materials that can be read out at Friday prayers explaining that vaccination and the Muslim faith are not in conflict with one another and that it is safe from both a faith and clinical perspective to come forward for vaccination. That struggle continues, and we shouldn't be surprised because no progressive cause was ever won without a struggle.

That leads to the second part of the First Minister's reflections, that broader canvas. The group of people that got together around Judge Ray Singh didn't want only to look at causes of Coronavirus relating to the health and social care sector. They wanted to look at underlying socioeconomic causes of disadvantage here in Wales. That work was led by Professor Emmanuel Ogbonna and will contribute to the Race Equality Plan that the Welsh Government will publish. The First Minister is determined to publish that plan in these last weeks of the Senedd term, so that it is there ready and waiting after the election for an incoming Government to pick up and turn into action. To do that successfully, intersectionality must lie at the heart of those efforts.

We are each a bundle of identities – shaped by our class, ethnicity, sexuality, all those things that jostle around inside everyone of us every day. They make a difference to the sort of people we are and make a difference to the paths we are able to go down in our lives. Those identities matter more in some contexts than others, matter more at certain parts of our lives than others, but they are all part of who we are.

When we regard those different aspects of our identity as complementary and not in competition with one another, then we create a platform from which we can make the progress we want. That is absolutely true in today's conference and why it is so important and so exciting. Because this conference's themes of creating alliances is how we prevent ourselves from being drawn into false debates where we think that one form of identity trumps another. All the forms of identity discussed in today's conference matter. Every one of them has a struggle to make sure it is taken seriously and responded to as it needs to be

here in Wales. But those struggles are complementary. They reinforce and strengthen one another. They don't undermine and should never be allowed to undermine the efforts of others who also need to make struggles. Because we are all a bundle of all those identities, all those different possibilities, we have a common cause in making sure that in Wales, we pool our resources, share our efforts, and display the solidarity at the heart of what this conference is all about and what the Race Equality Action Plan must be about.

The First Minister closes by thanking attendees for the efforts they make, for their contributions and for the work they will do together today and in the future. The Welsh Government will be alongside on that journey.

*Rocio Cifuentes closes with thanks for the BAME Engagement team, the partners who made suggestions for speakers, the speakers who have bowled us over with powerful speeches. She pledges that the four partner organisations for this conference aim to continue to work together intersectionally. Thanks everyone so much.*

## Appendix 1 - Speaker Biographies

**Colin Heyman, Diversity & Inclusion Specialist, Main-stream** - Colin Heyman is a Diversity and Inclusion expert, having worked in the field for over 20 years. His aim is to improve organisations' Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) practice, and to make EDI discussable. Issues of allyship have long been central to his work, from working with men on issues of gender equality, to more recently working on how white people can be allies to people of colour. He has a clear strategic view of how organisations can improve practice and extensive experience of working with a wide range of organisations, to successfully improve EDI practice. He specialises in running groups of EDI champions, people from across an organisation who support EDI by taking action in their own area, to support culture change. The scheme run at the University of South Wales, Fairplay 30, won the Guardian University Award in the category of 'Advancing Staff Equality' in 2019. His passion for inclusion and better leadership in our world arises from both his own experience, and from a belief that improving people's leadership and EDI practice are vital to improving our world. [colin@maine-stream.co.uk](mailto:colin@maine-stream.co.uk)



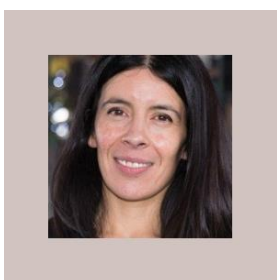
**Ourania Vamvaka, Cardiff University** – Rania is an ESRC-funded Doctoral Researcher in the School of Social Sciences at Cardiff University; my research focuses on experiences of LGBTQ+ people seeking asylum in Wales. Rania previously worked as Service Delivery Advisor (Develop) for the City of Cardiff Council Academy, a role in which she was awarded the Cooperative Councils Innovation Network Award for her original idea to create a Culture School Cardiff within the Academy to assist newly arrived Syrian Refugees to make Wales their new home. Originally from Athens, Greece, Rania moved to the UK to pursue her MRes in Educational Research and her MSc in Educational Policy. Rania was a member of the European Youth Parliament and sat in the Committee of Employment and Social Affairs. In her free time she likes to take long hikes around Wales, read crime fiction, bake (and eat) lots of cakes. [raniavamv@gmail.com](mailto:raniavamv@gmail.com) / [glittercymru@gmail.com](mailto:glittercymru@gmail.com) / [Vamvaka-Tatsi01@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:Vamvaka-Tatsi01@cardiff.ac.uk) / Twitter: @raniavmk



**Rachel Clarke, CEO & Co-founder Promote Equality** – As a mother, a Deputy Head, the grand daughter of the first Black Headteacher in Wales, Betty Campbell, and the daughter of a Headteacher in London, Rachel has an inherent understanding of education. She has developed strategies to implement positive change, ensuring racial equity is embedded throughout schools. Working with many leaders to improve schools, Rachel is a "passionate, dedicated and inspirational educator, who strives for success with students and educators". She is motivated and driven by her refusal to leave the world in the same way she found it. [rachel@promoteequality.org](mailto:rachel@promoteequality.org) / [www.promoteequality.org](http://www.promoteequality.org)

**Ginger Wiegand, Research & Policy Lead, All Wales BAME Engagement Programme**

Ginger has 10 years' experience managing voluntary sector projects in Wales, having previously worked at Displaced People in Action and East Cardiff Communities First. She trained in cultural anthropology at University of Washington (Seattle) and Syracuse University, where she received a Fulbright-Hays Fellowship to study the commercialisation of folk dance in Accra, Ghana. On the All Wales Engagement team, Ginger has produced research reports on the state of racial equity in Wales, including "Racism, Race and Schools in Wales" and "Experiences of Belonging and Living in Wales." She has also led the development and delivery of EYST's "Routes to Public Life" mentoring programme. Since lockdown began in March, Ginger led the team in establishing an online forum series investigating the impact of Covid 19 on ethnic minority people and communities in Wales and communicating that impact to Welsh Government and other public bodies. She is a trustee for Cardiff Third Sector Council and a Governor at Cathays High School. [ginger@eyst.org.uk](mailto:ginger@eyst.org.uk) / [www.eyst.org.uk](http://www.eyst.org.uk)



**Rocio Cifuentes, CEO, EYST** - Rocio is an experienced, committed and values-driven third sector professional with over 20 years' experience specifically in the BME Third Sector in Wales. Rocio has led and developed EYST Wales since its inception in 2005, giving her specific knowledge of the BME Third sector in Wales and its specific strengths and challenges. EYST is also currently Welsh Government's appointed Lead Body for Race in Wales. Rocio is the daughter of political refugees from Chile, who came to Wales with her as a baby and settled in Swansea. Brought up in Swansea, Rocio went on to attend Cambridge University, where she read Social and Political Science. Since 2017 she has been a Wales committee member of the Equality and Human Rights Commission. Rocio is also Chair of the Welsh Refugee Coalition, a successful network of over 40 organisations working to strengthen the voice of refugees and asylum

seekers in Wales. Rocio is a school governor and a board member of WCVA, of Mixtup and of Friends of Cardiff Sickle Cell and Thalassaemia. [rocio@eyst.org.uk](mailto:rocio@eyst.org.uk) / [www.eyst.org.uk](http://www.eyst.org.uk)

**Catherine Fookes, Director, Women’s Equality Network** - Catherine joined WEN Wales as Director in 2018. Catherine is responsible for the overall strategic direction of WEN Wales and pushing forward WEN’s vision of a transformed Wales, free from gender discrimination. Her previous role was Campaign Director at the Organic Trade Board where she helped treble the size of the organisation and raised funding of £10m for the organic industry. She has also worked as a Campaigner at ActionAid the Soil Association and Sustain and has sat on various Government boards. Catherine is passionate about gender equality and has tried to ensure this is at the heart of everything she does both in work and outside of work as a school governor, as a trustee and as an active local campaigner.



**Rhian Davies, CEO, Disability Wales** - Rhian Davies, Chief Executive of Disability Wales since 2001 is a longstanding advocate for disability rights and equality. In 2017 she gave evidence at the UN in Geneva to the Committee on the Rights of Disabled People during its review of the UK Government’s implementation of the Convention. Rhian chairs the Welsh Government’s Framework for Action on Independent Living National Steering Group. From 2013 – 2016 she was Disability member on Welsh Government’s Tackling Poverty External Advisory Group and is a former member of the EHRC’s Statutory Wales Committee (2007-2012). Rhian is responsible for the management and development of Disability Wales, including implementing work programmes, managing the staff and financial and material resources of the organisation, and ensuring that Disability Wales meets its legal obligations. Rhian represents the organisation in various partnerships and supports the Directors to fulfil their roles and responsibilities.

**Iestyn Wynn, Campaigns, Policy and Research Manager, Stonewall Cymru** – Iestyn is an experienced public affairs manager and campaigner and has worked in both the third and public sectors. His background is in campaigning, public engagement and communications. Iestyn is an eager individual with a passion for advancing the rights of LGBT people, mental health awareness, human rights and political engagement. He continues to lead Stonewall Cymru’s campaigning and policy work in Wales with his focus recently being on securing trans rights and the development of an LGBT inclusive Curriculum for Wales among other key projects such as working with the Welsh Government to establish Wales’s first LGBT Action Plan.





## Appendix 2 – Conference Agenda



Ethnic Minorities  
& Youth Support  
Team Wales

Tim Cymorth  
Lleiafrifoedd Ethnig  
& Ieuenctid Cymru



# EYST Wales presents 'Race, Racism and Intersectionality: We Are All Allies'

A joint online conference in partnership with  
**WEN Wales, Stonewall Cymru and Disability Wales**

28<sup>th</sup> January 2021, 9am-12pm

### Agenda

9.00	Rocio Cifuentes, EYST CEO - Welcome and Aims
9.05	First Minister of Wales, Mark Drakeford, Opening remarks
9.15	EYST Presentation – All Wales BAME Engagement Programme - Achievements of Three Years Rocio Cifuentes & Ginger Wiegand
9.35	Colin Heyman – 'Being an Ally: Moving to Action'
9.50	Ourania Vamvaka – 'Experiences of arrival and settlement of LGBTQ+ forced migrants in Wales'
10.05	Panel discussion on 'Intersectional Allyship' – Catherine Fookes, WEN Wales Iestyn Wyn, Stonewall Cymru Rhian Davies, Disability Wales Rocio Cifuentes, EYST Wales
10.50	Break
11.00	Marsha De Cordova MP – Keynote Address & Q&A
11:30	Rachel Clarke – 'Educating the educators: the key to sustained change'
11.40	All Wales BAME Engagement Team - Moving to Action as Allies: What can we do?
11:55	Closing Remarks