

Black Lives Matter

The brutal murder of George Floyd has forced the world to open their eyes to the profound injustice and systemic racism that exists today in 2020.

These recent events follow hundreds of years of atrocities that have happened across America and beyond. They are manifestations of the deep inequalities that exist not only in America, but also here in the UK.

Body & Soul stands unequivocally alongside Black Lives Matter. Our hearts feel the deep pain of the racial injustices, the structural inequalities and the continuous trauma the BAME community experiences.

Body & Soul's existence is rooted in transforming trauma for a population whose needs are often unheard, marginalised and further exasperated by systemic inequalities. For the last 23 years, we have dedicated 100% of our resources to supporting a predominantly BAME community to transform the life-threatening impact of trauma, past present and intergenerationally.

Every day we are witnesses to the unacceptable health and social inequalities our members face. The pandemic has brought this to greater consciousness and is evidenced in the report from Public Health England where it is highlighted that BAME communities are disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. There may be a number of different reasons why this is the case, but without question a key factor is a result of systemic inequalities and racism.

In most aspects of life, including education, housing and employment, BAME communities experience institutional discrimination, which has an adverse impact on life chances. Health research consistently shows that BAME communities experience worse health outcomes for conditions such as high-blood pressure, diabetes, coronary heart disease, HIV, breast and prostate cancer.

In the UK, the Macpherson Report and the Windrush Lessons Learned Review found institutional racism within government and society. We understand the pain, despair and exhaustion in relation to the many promises that have been made about race and injustice, only to then have hopes crushed by subsequent failures of governments to act.

We recognise the continued prevalence of white privilege and this racism having deep roots in the history of the UK, its colonial past and role in the slave trade. We are acutely aware of the barriers that those we support face in the intentionally constructed '*hostile environment*' they navigate in seeking asylum. It is inhuman and not fit for purpose.

At Body & Soul we feel the pain, trauma, fear and anger in relation to the systemic inequalities our members live with on a daily basis. We feel it in ourselves, for our community & for our brothers and sisters worldwide. Transformation comes from processing this hurt, anger and bewilderment of oppression. This work is personal, professional and organisational.

We have a moment now. A moment to pause and decide we want to create a different world to live in. A world where diverse perspectives are included, respected and valued. Through this pandemic we have seen such incredible acts of care, love and empathy. Our hope is that we make the active step to stand up to say we no longer accept these systems and a world order based on hate, fear and injustice. We can all play our part in creating a world with systems based on kindness, empathy and love.

Being silent is not an option. For me personally, as the Director of Body & Soul, and of mixed heritage, these recent events have woken many years of unspoken racism. For us all at Body & Soul we will not tolerate racism, social injustice or inequality, for injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. Let us be measured by our sustained actions.

“The racial pandemic brings me a heavy heart, knowing that we are still having to fight and protest for justice in 2020. We need change to happen. People can walk in peace, we just have to care enough, implement necessary changes and be intentional in walking it out. Body & Soul continually walk in love, and are attentive to the minor things, which then produce big impacts in individuals, and in turn transformation. Continually advocating for the people in need, those that feel hopeless, those who need assistance amplifying their voice to be heard and the people who need to feel loved and secure. I am so grateful that this charity supports, and advocates for the BAME community with such tenacity and thoughtfulness. They put tools in the hands of the vulnerable to help them navigate through life with confidence and hope.

Being in a society where we are governed by fear and anger is not a society where unity prevails. Our paradigms have to shift so we as a people can look at the issues at hand through a different lens. We will not be able to move forward for the better if we still look through the lens of hate and prejudice. Racial discrimination has been ignored for a long time and it needs to stop, it's time to speak out and address these issues which are causing harm, low self-worth, low self-esteem, and as it stands even deaths. George Floyd's death highlighted the major issues which are still standing strong. As a Black woman I have experienced racial discrimination within the workplace and also within my craft. I also became used to it and ignored it for a while due to believing that it would not be received seriously. But staying silent did more damage than good.

I heard a quote recently which said, ‘Injustice prevails where hopelessness persists’ and I hope for a future where justice, peace, and love prevail.

But while hoping, actions also need to be taken. An action can start from you. It starts from us. The little things we do each day to bring a little more peace and change to a broken society. A society, which corrects oppression, peruses peace and maintains love.

Radical change is necessary. Love is necessary” Marjorie, Trustee, Body & Soul

“As a Black African man, it feels difficult to acknowledge that I have never had a complete sense of comfortability to be myself, express my culture and feel loved as black man growing up in the UK. It is only in the last years through working on myself at Body & Soul that I have come to accept and love myself for my African heritage, for my culture, and for my skin.

I have always been met at Body & Soul with a willingness to listen and connect with no judgement, this has in turn given me hope for a better world and confidence in who I am.

I wish the world outside of Body & Soul was the same. During this time of awakening of Black Lives Matter, it is also important people of all ethnicities stand side by our side to bring change. I have witnessed hope on the streets with protests, but the battle will continue until real, sustained changes to end structural inequalities are met.

I am proud to be a Black man and a Trustee of Body & Soul.

May the power of our love wipe out the hate and racism that exists in our world.” Munyaradzi, Trustee, Body & Soul

