

Talk and Transform

Now what?

In this slideshow, we share some insights gained from our candid conversations about race.

I wish I'd known...

... I could inadvertently disadvantage colleagues by being afraid of tackling the problem.

Now that I know...

... I will try to be more open, transparent and brave.

I wish I'd known...

... how prevalent the discomfort around a discussion of race was, because one did not want to say the wrong thing.

Now that I know...

... I will encourage everyone to reflect on why they think they will say the wrong thing and even discuss this with with a trusted peer.

I wish I'd known...

... wish I'd know that I should always listen at the deepest level and I am not there to solve the person's problem.

Now that I know...

...I will listen deeply to support the person to solve their problem.

I wish I'd known...

...everyone does not think like me and there are things going on that I do not know about and might surprise me.

Now that I know...

... find ways to encourage people to feel they can talk to me, including reaching out and being vulnerable myself.

I wish I'd known...

... how scary it is to be vulnerable and share your experiences / true self / identity and the emotional toll it can take.

Now that I know...

... I am more conscious before I have race conversations.

Now what?

We have individually and collectively committed to take action to build a culture at SGUL where all staff and students can have empowering conversations about race.

I wish I'd known...

... how important it is to have race conversations with staff (esp team members).

Now that I know...

... I will have those kinds of conversations in relevant 1-2-1 meetings with my team.

I wish I'd known...

...that appearing anxious makes people feel less authentic.

Now that I know...

...I will work on not being anxious and feeling stronger to have these conversations.

Other thoughts...

I wish I'd known...

... higher education isn't as accepting of everyone as I had thought.

... there were so many different acronyms*, and that they may cause offence.

*terms discussed include White Majority/Minority Ethnic, Black, Asian & Minority Ethnic (BAME), People of Colour (POC), etc.

I wish I'd known...

... conversations can be triggering for some people.

Now that I know...

... I will not assume that all are comfortable sharing their lived experience.

I wish I'd known...

... an open door doesn't always look open to everybody.

Now that I know...

... I will be more conscious about sending "Speak up" signals.

I wish I'd known...

... people from non-white races might be uncomfortable to be asked where they are from.

Now that I know...

... I will avoid that question with them.

I wish I'd known...

... about the value of pre-emptively raising race to ask how people would like the issue to be addressed if it arose

Now that I know...

... I will do this with people (although I will find it uncomfortable - as though it feels like I'm prejudging)

I wish I'd known...

... not everyone wants to talk about themselves or their backgrounds

Now that I know...

... I will approach conversations in a different way depending on what the individual wants to talk about.

I wish I'd known...

...that I can be seen as part of the "structure" and how this can silence others.

Now that I know...

... I will make sure my allyship and advocacy is visible.

I wish I'd known...

... that others can find it difficult to talk about race, too.

Now that I know...

... I will try and instigate a safe space for race conversations within my team.

I wish I'd known...

... the disparities between BAME and white colleagues' experiences of feeling respected at St George's (from the survey results).

Now that I know...

... I will actively instigate conversations about race, working styles, different cultures in 121s and other discussions.

Other thoughts...

...I will engage emotional intelligence before dialogue.

...One of the things I want to try is to be less upset when called out by others if I have made a mistake, but to own and acknowledge my mistake, and learn how to speak/act differently if needs be.

... I will try and listen to what people want to say and do not want to say about themselves/race/ethnicity.

...I will try and encourage safe spaces for us to talk as a team with others and with students.

I wish I'd known...

... raising issues around race inequality is part of all our roles at SGUL, regardless of whether raising an issue could be perceived as challenging to a senior person, or for the institution.

Now that I know...

... when I have a perception of something being wrong, or unequal, I will speak up, even if I appear to be the only one willing to raise what I perceive to be wrong.

I wish I'd known...

... the power and privilege that comes with language.

Now that I know...

... I'll try to be more conscious of language and more responsive to it in my interactions with others.

I wish I'd known...

... can give off a “please don't bother me” vibe, especially when I'm busy, which will put people off telling me about their concerns.

Now that I know...

... I need to remain open when listening to any conversation.

Other thoughts...

... I wish I'd known using the word coloured was considered racist.

... I wish I'd known acknowledging differences in race is not a bad thing, it matters and people are generally open to being asked about how they would like their race acknowledged

I wish I'd known how much just position can be off putting for people to approach you

We are all the determined ones... here because we want to make a difference... those who are not here might be a harder nut to crack

...I have more control than I realised with regard to recruitment of academic staff to my team.

I wish I'd known...

... St George's wasn't doing as well with inclusivity as I thought it was..

Now that I know...

... I will be more sensitive to my own "bubble" and the impact this has on others.

I wish I'd known...

... I wish I'd known that my position makes me scary to some and creates distance.

Now that I know...

...I will be more proactive at creating safe spaces for my team to speak up rather than waiting for them to come to me.

I wish I'd known...

...I wish I'd known about the disparity between BAME and white colleagues' sense of value and respect at St George's.

Now that I know...

...I will actively try to change that disparity.

I wish I'd known...

...we were not so inclusive.

Now that I know...

...I will encourage people to speak up if they feel comfortable to do so.

I wish I'd known...

... people of colour can't dip and out of this conversation in the same way that I can as a white person.

Now that I know...

...I will have a stronger intention to keep reading,
listening, talking, watching.

I wish I'd known...

... the impact of my fear, incoherence about talking about race with my colleagues/team .

Now that I know...

...I intend to be braver, tougher with my own white fragility.

I wish I'd known...

...that racism had affected my life in more ways than I'd ever thought. I think these are feelings I have just ignored my whole life I need to process.

Now that I know...

...I hope to be more of an advocate for race equality at the University.

I wish I'd known...

...too many people find that every day they are hurt or held back because of the colour of their skin.

Now that I know...

...I must be aware that I myself may say things that cause hurt unthinkingly and call out and challenge instances where I see that happen between others.

I wish I'd known...

...it's ok to have these conversations with people who have been directly impacted.

Now that I know...

...I am going to start these conversations with my team and ask them.

I wish I'd known...

...not to shy away from situations and ask questions/challenge.

Now that I know...

...I will encourage people to be as open as they can in 1-2-1s/ conversations and its ok to talk about race.

I wish I'd known...

...not everyone I have discussions with in 1:1 or other meetings is happy to discuss their experiences with race.

Now that I know...

... I will try to become more approachable and that its ok to have these discussions and know that I might not always be able to provide solutions to this.

I wish I'd known...

... how wide the differences are in how supported/unsupported people of different ethnicities feel at SGUL.

Now that I know...

... these conversations need to happen at every level of job progression (starting from one to ones).

I still wish I'd knew...

...how to initiate conversations about obstacles in career progression for people from backgrounds other than white british...

I wish I'd known...

...I can start a conversation on race.

Now that I know...

...I will now be braver to start these
conversations.