

WEN Café x Black History Wales: The contribution of Black women to education Wales

27th October 2020

Summary of discussion and outcomes

Chair: Uzo Iwobi OBE

Speakers: Rachel Clarke, Deputy Head, author, trainer and educational consultant.
Granddaughter of Betty Campbell

Gaynor Legall, former Cardiff Councillor and advocate for ethnic minority women across Wales

Humie Webbe, Work-based Learning Strategic Equality and Diversity Lead, National Training Federation for Wales

The event was held in partnership with Race Council Cymru and Black History Wales 365.

- Speakers were asked what they think Betty Campbell would make of where we are today – with Black Lives Matter, and the fact that there has still never been a BAME woman elected to the Senedd. They felt she would support BLM but would not necessarily be out protesting, and that she would be disappointed at the lack of Black headteachers in Wales and the underrepresentation of Black people amongst teachers overall. Betty acted as an inspiration and role model in educational settings and leadership figures such as her continue to be important, but there are not enough.
- For Black women in particular, their voices are often not provided with a platform and they often do not feel listened to. Part of Betty's legacy was that she was not afraid to use her voice.
- One of the speakers (Webbe) wanted to see recognition for institutions and organisations who paved the way for others such as the Butetown History & Arts Centre, Mount Stuart School and Black Voluntary Sector Network Wales rather than individuals. Individuals are recognised, but they are all part of a wider network that should also be recognised.
- In addition to making Black history compulsory in the curriculum, what needs to change in education in Wales?
- One speaker (Legall) wants to stop calling it Black history – it's just history. We need a history that contains Black people rather than ignores them. She believes that calling it Black history is othering. We are expanding on history, not trying to rewrite it. However, others expressed caution at dropping 'Black' history now for fear of Black people being erased.
- In 60s Butetown it was important to see Black people achieving and in positions of authority via the American magazine Ebony. You did not see this in Welsh/UK media at the time.
- Educators need to be educated. On a PGCE course a lecture on diversity was delivered that was racist. When this was raised, the course leader did not see the problem.
- What does an inclusive curriculum look like? What could deliver true equality in education? Recruitment and employment practices across the public sector in Wales need to change. We need more Black people in policy development. The need for change transcends recruitment into retention and progression.

- We need to move to a leadership that is anti-racist, which requires reviews of policies and procedures, and training to be rolled out. Systemic change is needed. You can only do that if you recognize the relationship of whiteness to power and how that is threaded through every single aspect of our society, including education.
- There needs to be a focus on equity rather than equality. Acknowledge that certain members of society are more likely to be in certain positions. Leadership pathways must be put in place to ensure that outcomes for the Black community are improved.
- Being non-racist is passive. Anti-racism requires you to engage. It's an intention, a declaration that is backed up by action.
- Betty Campbell's statue is not the end of the conversation, its establishment does not mean that we no longer need to reflect – it should not be an endpoint, but a starting point and a catalyst for dialogue.