



Alternative spaces

Listening to the voices

Journalist, author and social entrepreneur Deborah Gabriel, recently moved from London to become a first year PhD student in the Department of Music, Media and Performance at the University. Deborah's research will focus on blogging, examining the types of activities that black bloggers in the UK engage in and what impact this has on the journalistic landscape.



Deborah said: "Only 4% of UK journalists are from a black or minority ethnic background, but the blogosphere allows ordinary people, especially those excluded or marginalised from the mainstream media, to become news producers as well as engaging in other activities". People with Voices, Deborah's own news website established as a social enterprise, offers readers perspectives that are often missing from the mainstream media and she has frequently been contacted to participate in radio programmes as a result of views expressed on her website. She added: "We have also been approached by broadcasters like the BBC for contacts so that they can cover story angles used in our articles. This demonstrates how independent media can have an impact on the mainstream".

Addressing the gap, is what Deborah's research aims to do, in an unexplored area of minority media, and laments that whilst the blogosphere is a popular area for researchers, few studies actually examine how black and minority ethnic groups are engaging with this new medium. She continues: "Understanding how black communities are utilising the medium of blogging is important, as there are many

dimensions to blogging; whether it's a way of expressing cultural identity, engaging in political participation and activism, or becoming involved in an alternative form of journalism. All of these dimensions are linked to what happens in the wider society and therefore have an impact on how a multicultural society like the UK evolves. It's simply that people are often unaware of what happens in alternative spaces like the blogosphere."

Deborah previously taught journalism courses as a sessional lecturer at Birkbeck, University of London and in 2009 set up People with Voices as a social enterprise, aimed at widening access to journalism for groups under-represented in the mainstream media. In addition to creating the website, which has been archived by the British Library, she also developed short introductory courses in journalism for both adults and youths.

If you would like to know more about Deborah's research contact her at: d.d.gabriel@edu.salford.ac.uk