

Bookmark Email Actions

Contact Support



23 Jun 20, 06:00

By Fiona McIntyre

Related Articles

Rhodes set to fall as Oriel governors push for removal

f t in

Financial penalties required for 'concrete changes' in equality

Race Equality Charter does not do enough to tackle institutional racism, says academic

Comment on this article

The Race Equality Charter does not address the structural changes needed to challenge racism in higher education, an expert has said as she warned universities must face financial penalties for failing to act.

Deborah Gabriel, founder and director of Black British Academics and a consultant in race, media and educational equity, told Research Professional News that the Race Equality Charter does not do enough to encourage universities to tackle the causes of institutional racism in higher education.

Gabriel, a senior lecturer at Bournemouth University, said she "had more confidence" when the REC was first introduced in 2016, as it prompted universities to start thinking about racism, but found institutions "reward people for raising awareness, but actually not for doing anything".

"The problem is initiatives like the Race Equality Charter are not really set out to dismantle white privilege," she said. "By just doing tokenistic things you are only ever making a tiny difference, which is actually no difference at all."

A spokesperson for Advance HE, which runs the REC, said the group "always welcome[s] constructive discussions about the future of REC to enhance it" and had recently commissioned an impact review of the charter, which they said helps universities "understand their particular issues" and take action.

"The Charter is a really important part of the solution, and it needs to be used in range of programmes and activity to dismantling race inequality, not in isolation," the spokesperson said, adding that Advance HE offers training "which aims to deepen understanding of the barriers to equality, diversity and inclusion that exist in higher education through an examination of how majority group privilege reinforces structural and cultural inequalities".

Gabriel was speaking ahead of the publication on 22 June of *Transforming the Ivory Tower*, a collection of essays edited by Gabriel exploring the work black women and women of colour do to tackle racism and gender inequality in universities.

The collection follows *Inside the Ivory Tower*, which highlighted the barriers black, Asian and minority ethnic women face in their careers at universities. She said *Transforming the Ivory Tower* "isn't about us wanting pity—this is about us showing actually how we do labour more than our white female peers. And we have to, in order to survive".

But Gabriel stressed that fighting race and gender inequality is "very labour-intensive work" and "particularly within a predominately white institution, is very draining". She said the Office for Students should impose financial penalties on institutions that refuse to take race equality seriously.

"With the best will in the world, until the Office for Students starts to impose financial penalties, and taking race equality seriously in the way they take gender equality, we are not going to see concrete changes," she said.

OFS director for fair access and participation Chris Millward said the watchdog was "committed to tackling harassment and discrimination, including race-based prejudice".

Millward added that the attainment gap between black and white students will drop from 22 to 11.2 percentage points if universities meet their five-year access and participation targets, and institutions could be given financial penalties if they fail to make the changes.

Gabriel was commenting as Black Lives Matter protests continue to take place worldwide following the murder of George Floyd in the US. The protests have raised questions around institutional racism in the UK—in Bristol, the statue of slave trader Edward Colston was torn down by protesters, while the University of Oxford's Oriel College has promised to take down a statue of 18th century imperialist Cecil Rhodes after growing calls for it to go.

But on 17 June universities minister Michelle Donelan said the

call for applications for admission to the RESEARCH DOCTORATE PROGRAMS

Application deadline: 30th June 2020

CLICK HERE FOR MORE INFORMATION

campaign to remove the Rhodes statue was "quite short-sighted—because if we cannot rewrite our history, instead what we should do is remember and learn from it".

Gabriel explained that decolonising the curriculum across all subjects and improving education of Britain's history would help change the public's attitude towards racism. "The statues wouldn't have to be toppled if these crimes against humanity were an integral part of the curriculum," she said.

 **Comments**

Add a comment

You are signed in as Fiona McIntyre, Research Professional

Type your message here

Send