

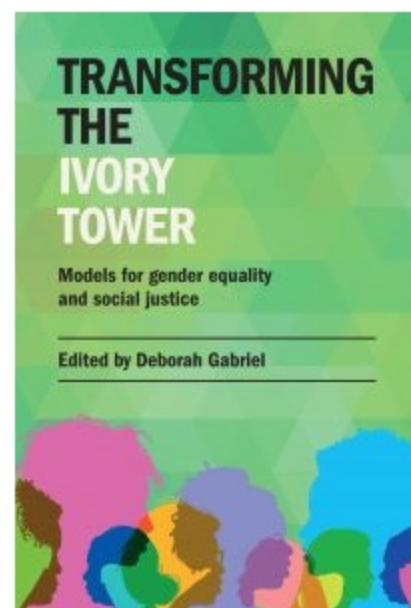
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Transforming the Ivory Tower: critical reflections of resistance from the front line

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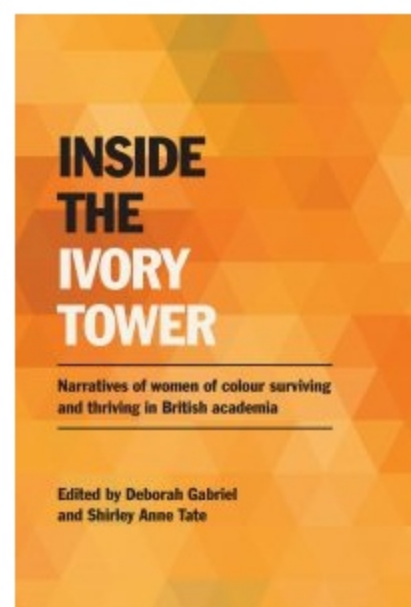
By Deborah Gabriel



We are living in unprecedented times at a juncture in history when the world is focused on the persistence of racism and White privilege, illuminated by the disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on Black and Brown people, and the public killing of George Floyd in the US by a White police officer, sparking global protests.

Activism in the name of [Black Lives Matter](#) has recently been the focus of intense media coverage, though much of this has been centred on the highly visible protests such as marches, demonstrations and the toppling of statues around the world.

Behind the scenes, routine, strategic and labour-intensive work that does not make the headlines has been undertaken — in homes, churches, community centres, public and private sector organisations and in academia – by Black and Brown women while they simultaneously deal with everyday raced and gendered discrimination, as highlighted in [Inside the Ivory Tower](#).



That volume gives voice to and critically analyses the experiences of women of colour through 10 autoethnographic chapters where whiteness and White privilege emerge as the common denominator.

This research is borne of and represents the intellectual, social, and cultural capital of the Black British Academics community. Though careful to emphasise how we thrive, not just survive, as a collective, I felt there was a danger of women of colour being viewed as passive recipients of raced and gendered discrimination rather than as the active agents of change that we are.

We therefore decided after several meetings to develop a second volume, to share case studies of our everyday resistance to racism in academia from the front line. These timely, analytical reflections from a Black feminist and critical race standpoint demonstrate that we are not victims.

Like our predecessors in the ongoing struggle for racial equality – from slaves who revolted, to the Black Power Movement, Civil Rights Movement, and our contemporaries such as Black Lives Matter; we build on these foundations, developing innovative, creative and community-oriented approaches to effect social transformation, punching above our weight and our assigned roles within our institutions.

[Transforming the Ivory Tower](#) also aims to show Black and Brown women in or aspiring to academic roles, how to navigate spaces that often marginalise, under-value and fail to reward our contributions, and how to work towards a social justice agenda while swimming against the tide.

The critical reflections on the impact of undertaking this collective research shared by the contributors to this volume demonstrate the empowerment derived from the research process. This is important, since too often within the HE sector, there is a narrow focus on the outcomes of research measured by Key Performance Indicators rather than its value to marginalised, communities.

The Ivory Tower project is, of necessity a political mission and one that emphasises the importance of transforming ourselves in the process of driving change in our institutional academic roles. In so doing, we maintain the tradition of Black feminism to provide inspiration, sisterhood and solidarity for those who follow in our footsteps.

Deborah Gabriel is Academic/Consultant in race, media and educational equity and Founder of [Black British Academics](#).

More by this author: [BLOG: Addressing anti-Black, gendered racism requires critical leaders.](#)

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