

Dual Frequency

ISSUE 2:
EMPOWERING WOMEN

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SEPTEMBER 2020

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BLACK HISTORY

Meet Lavinya from The Black Curriculum. She tells us about empowering ALL children to learn Black History

SUCH GREAT HEIGHTS

Mollie Hughes: youngest woman to scale Everest twice AND reach the South Pole. Proud member of the LGBTQ+ community

GIRLS WHO VOTE

Meet Kavi, an Asian American woman dreaming big for the American voting system



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CLIMBING EVEREST

MEET SOME INCREDIBLE WOMEN DOING AMAZING THINGS

Fancy climbing Everest? Pg. 10

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POSITIVE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN RESOURCE FREE ONLINE WITH THIS ISSUE



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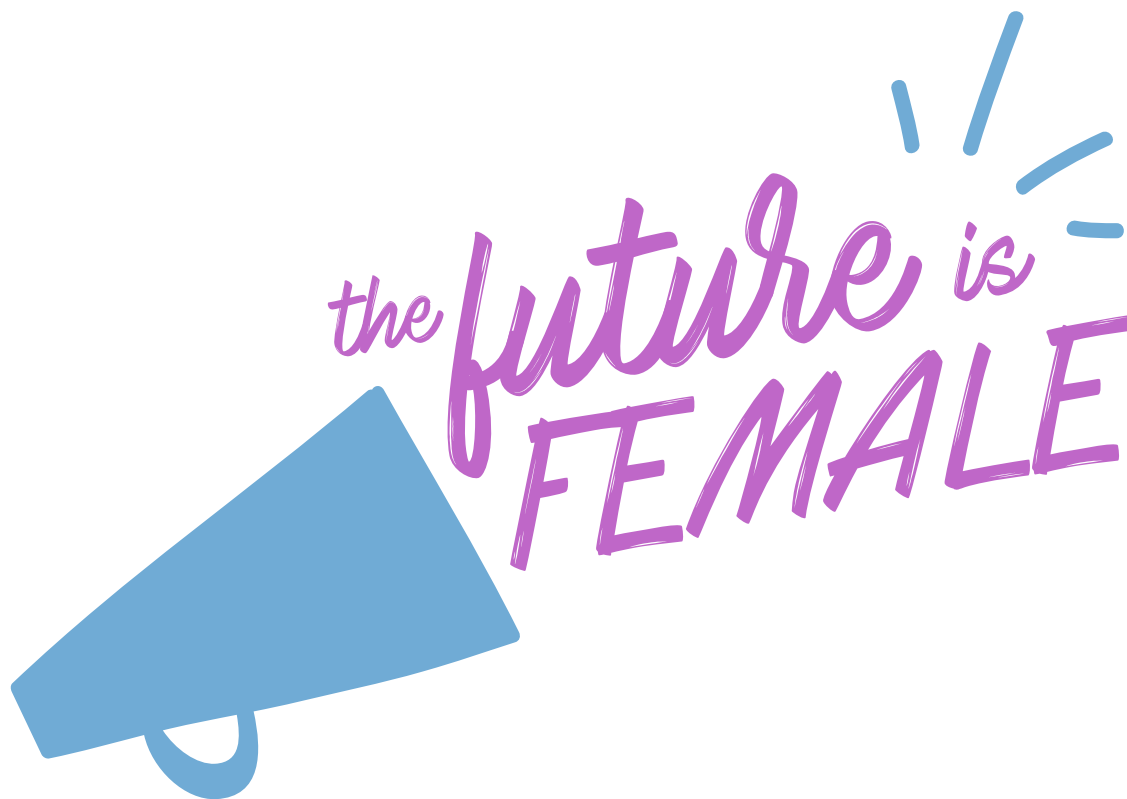
KAVI AMERICAN DREAMS AND VOTING REFORMER

On how together, the American voting system can be fixed. pg.04



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Welcome to the second issue of Dual Frequency magazine. We have been on an incredible journey since the first issue was released in May. We have met and worked with some wonderful people. During lockdown, we've had virtual meetings and worked with amazing people around the world, plus, we've created a whole host of new resources for our website and The Times Education Supplement (TES). We are also so excited to have started recording the Talking Diversity podcast - launching soon, so keep an eye (and ear) out for updates. Our community is growing day by day and this has allowed us to stay true to our commitment of only ever creating resources for diverse groups in consultation with the communities they serve. You can read more over on our [blog](#) page and see some of the incredible

people we have worked with so far. This issue is very much a women's issue. It celebrates some of the unbelievable women out there paving the way for the next generation. We hope that as you read it, you will recognise the positive impact these women have in their own unique ways. You will read about Mollie Hughes, the youngest woman to climb Everest twice and also reach the South Pole solo, you will learn about the Bechdel Test Fest and how founder Corrina Antrobus finds it hard to switch off from the things she is most passionate about, plus so much more from a wonderful range of influential, motivated and diverse women. We are incredibly proud to be able to share these stories with you, and we are so grateful to the women in this issue who are truly paving the way.



Above
Kavi Vu

KAVI VU

ATLIEN AND AMERICAN
DREAMER

By mid-November this year, millions of Americans will have voted for who they want to be the President of the U.S. for the next four years. At the same time, many Americans from minority backgrounds won't even have registered to vote.

Dual Frequency wanted to learn more about how this can happen, so we spoke to Kavi Vu, content creator, self-proclaimed ATLien (from the city of Atlanta and a term coined by musicians Outkast) and voting reformer.

Kavi co-founded the not-for-profit organisation, Wake Up Atlanta, to target and educate Asian American and Pacific Islander millennials, to increase turnout and representation in historically under-represented communities.

"I myself didn't become a naturalised American until I was 17," Kavi, who is Vietnamese-American, begins, when DF asks her why she started Wake Up Atlanta. "So it's very personal for me. I know what it feels like not to grow up

in a country you live in and didn't originally speak the language, and have to relearn so many things including how the government works. A lot of Asian Americans I know don't have knowledge of how a bill (a law) is passed."

Though Kavi thinks that language may be one of the barriers, it's not the only one harming the Asian American vote today in the States: "[Even if you do speak and read English] A lot of the bills and amendments are written in such a way it's too hard to understand. On purpose."

And for a country that is known for being culturally diverse, Kavi says it is anything but welcoming to the average immigrant voter. "Up until last year, our state (Georgia) had a law that states that your voter registration has to exactly match the identifier for you on their database; your driving license for example. On paper this sounds really straight-forward, but what they don't tell you is that even if you have a missing hyphen or a space, your name doesn't match and your voter registration is tossed out. This affects the Asian American community massively: a lot of our names are monosyllabic, so every character is a different word." These errors, of course, can happen frequently as paper forms are prone to human error especially when the humans typing in the names are only used to typing 'American' names.

Kavi says this rule means as many as 200,000 citizens were purged from the voter rolls. "I remember working for years straight to help register voters under our fiscal sponsor, Asian Americans Advancing Justice. We managed to get thousands of voters registered from our community, then they turned around and told us that they'd just purged hundreds of thousands of voters. We were like 'Oh. All our hard work.'"

These laws are particularly harmful to people of colour, explains Kavi, because they are less likely to have the time and resources available to them that white citizens in Georgia



Above
Atlanta, USA

traditionally have. "My mom didn't pay attention to what our elected officials were doing when I was growing up. These are the people who we end up voting in to be our governors, our sheriffs, the ones making the billion dollar decisions."

Another major barrier to capturing the Asian American vote is the Census, explains Kavi. "The Census here is every ten years. It's hugely important to getting voting access and information to people who live in the U.S. It counts every person in each state for the whole country, but in the last Census conducted back in 2010, studies found that Asian Americans were undercounted because they didn't complete it."

State district lines are drawn based on the results of the Census, Kavi explains. Appearing in the Census gives every individual a fighting chance of being counted and taken into consideration when the federal funding is being divvied up for state-by-state funding. It's critical to the day of the vote as well; if a community declares it has

enough Spanish or Korean speakers, it dictates that ballot papers have to be produced in that language too. "The Korean language could potentially appear on the ballot for our county, but unfortunately not enough Korean Americans have filled out the Census for this to be required by law. The crazy thing is that we know there are enough Koreans, but the hard part is proving it using the Census."

"Wake Up Atlanta has had to work three times as hard to explain to prospective voters that they don't need to declare their citizenship even in conversations we're having right now," says Kavi. "The immigrant and refugee Census completion rate in Georgia is ridiculously low - we're at about 40%, whereas some other states are at about 70%. It's really sad because if you aren't on the Census, there is no way to account for you in the distribution of federal spending."

We spoke to Kavi during the week of her birthday (Dual Frequency's contributor did some Instagram-snooping before our interview.) When we tell her she is a great example of a positive role-model in the community, her eyes light up. "I've just spent my birthday rewatching The Parent Trap. I used to LOVE that film growing up! To me, the only role model I had growing up was Lindsay Lohan. Isn't that mad?" Today she says, Asian Americans have way more representation in the movies, music and media industries.

FACT CHECK



WHAT IS THE CENSUS AND WHY DOES IT MATTER SO MUCH IN THE U.S.?

The U.S. Census, one of the few in the world left that still counts every resident, was established by the Constitution. It has played a major role in the country's democracy since its founding. Conducted every ten years, it provides detailed data on the U.S. population—the world's third largest—that is used to distribute political power and direct nearly \$1trillion in federal spending. It has also been at the centre of national controversies around slavery, immigration, congressional redistricting, and racial discrimination. (<https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/why-does-census-matter>)

FAKE NEWS

In 2019, 45th President, Donald Trump, threatened to include a citizenship question in the 2020 census, which would require voters to declare whether they have citizenship or not. His executive order was taken to court – and the Supreme Court blocked the question. Sadly, the damage was done: Trump's threats had hit the headlines and had the effect the Republican party had wanted all along. Critics claim the threat was enough to prevent some voters from filling out the Census before the deadline of 31st October. Census Bureau research has long shown that adding a citizenship question often leads people in households with immigrants – including those who are U.S. citizens – to simply not fill out the census form. That could result in an undercount that is not only substantial but uneven, according to Census Bureau experts, and it hits mainly in urban areas where immigrant groups live, while leaving rural, mainly white areas largely unaffected.

WAIT. DON'T YOU HAVE TO BE A CITIZEN TO VOTE IN THE U.S.?

Some local municipalities allow legal resident voting, however to vote for your President at what Americans call 'federal level' you must be a citizen. (Resources: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-48890233>; <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2019/jul/11/trump-census-citizenship-question-supreme-court>; <https://www.npr.org/2019/06/27/717635291/supreme-court-leaves-citizenship-question-blocked-from-2020-census>)



Above
Unfazed: "We're not stopping," says Kavi

KAVI'S NOTES ON BEING A GOOD ALLY FOR THE BLACK LIVES MATTER MOVEMENT

Why should I post the #BlackOutTuesday post? I'm not donating any money and I've never posted about the movement before?

Kavi: It doesn't matter as long as you continue to be a good ally from today! A few of my clients were also confused about the protests. Start as you mean to go on.

Why should I support a movement which condones looting and violence?

Kavi: Black Americans are the largest racial minority in Atlanta: they would never want to hurt their community like this. There has been evidence that shows most of the looting is from people out of town wanting to make violence a headline during the protests to give it a bad name. Saying you support Black Lives does not mean you're saying you support looting.

I'm one person/we're one business. How can we help a whole movement?

Kavi: Fill out the Census, register to vote and remember to vote in November. Don't let these feelings be for naught.

Being a mover and shaker in the voting world didn't come easily to Kavi for anyone curious to follow in her footsteps. "Traditionally, I grew up respecting my elders, like a lot of people in the Vietnamese-American community do. You're not meant to challenge them, it's rooted in our culture. I remember this one time I went to a candidate meet-and-greet, a real liberal candidate who talked about wanting to fight for Asian Americans in a room full of Asian Americans. When he said this, my friend next to me boldly asked, 'But what are your plans specifically to help our community though?' I was mortified! When I asked my friend why he did that, he just said to me, 'He should have an answer - if he doesn't, he doesn't deserve my vote.' It was that simple. It's scary to go against everything that you are but it's important."

The 2020 census deadline has been extended to 31st October this year because of the COVID-19 pandemic - just three days before the date of the general election. The original deadline pre-pandemic had been 1st of April, which would have meant Kavi and her co-founder would be in the thick of registering people to vote right now.

But she's not fazed. "We have to have way more conversations by Zoom, but we're not stopping." What does Kavi have to say to people who want to get involved in making a difference in their communities like her? "Do it. Find your superpower, whatever it is that you're passionate about, writing, vlogging, creating - and use it to support other people!"

"Wake Up Atlanta is my side hustle. My main job is looking after social media for some brands based in Atlanta. The first step to being a good ally is correcting misinformation."

OH

HAPPY

DANI



On art, allyship and what keeps her motivated!

When we first spoke with Atlanta based artist and social justice advocate Dani Coke, she had approximately 14,000 followers on Instagram (the platform she uses to primarily showcase her incredible artwork). Almost overnight she gained a huge following, now over 471,000, as people began to take notice of her gorgeous, justice-related prints. Since we spoke, Dani has set up a fundraising initiative dedicated to getting anti-racism artwork into schools across America. You can find out more about this, and shop Dani's prints [here](http://www.ohhappydani.com).

www.ohhappydani.com

WHAT MOTIVATES YOU WHEN YOU ARE CREATING?

The goal of my art is to make complex issues more digestible and easier to understand. When I hear about how something I've made helped someone else to understand something more clearly, it really fuels me and motivates me to keep going!

WE REALLY LIKE YOUR ANATOMY OF AN ALLY PRINT FROM THE ALLY COLLECTION – WHY IS IT IMPORTANT THAT YOUNG PEOPLE UNDERSTAND THE IMPORTANCE OF ALLYSHIP?

Allyship can mean so many different things, but to me, it means actively supporting and advocating for marginalized or underrepresented groups. It's not passive – it's an ongoing process that requires dedication and commitment. We all have a part to play in the bigger picture, and everyone's voices matters!

WHAT'S NEXT ON YOUR JOURNEY?

I want to keep creating, and hopefully be able to provide more resources through different mediums soon! I'm also finalising prints, which is exciting!

YOU DEMONSTRATE A REAL CONNECTION WITH FAITH ON YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA, WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT TO YOU?

My faith fuels the joy I have and really empowers me to truly love my neighbour as I love myself. It's a source of inspiration and hope for me, and it enables me to keep going in this work when things get difficult.

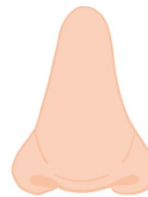
YOU HAVE RECENTLY GAINED A SIGNIFICANT FOLLOWING ON SOCIAL MEDIA WHICH CAN AMOUNT TO A LOT OF PRESSURE. WHAT DO YOU DO TO LOOK AFTER YOUR OWN MENTAL WELL-BEING?

I've become very protective of my morning time. I love sitting outside with a cup of tea before starting my day, and I listen to certain playlists to make sure that I'm at peace before I jump into work or art.

ANATOMY OF AN ALLY



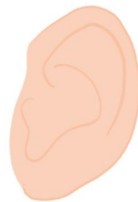
A MOUTH TO
SPEAK OUT
AGAINST
INJUSTICE



A NOSE TO
SNIFF OUT
IMPLICIT BIAS



EYES TO
IDENTIFY
PRIVILEGE



EARS TO
LISTEN TO
THE POC
EXPERIENCE



A HEART TO
CULTIVATE
EMPATHY FOR
THE OPPRESSED



HANDS TO
TAKE ACTION
AND MAKE
A CHANGE

@ohhappydani



@ohhappydani



Above
Anatomy of an ally artwork created
by Danielle. Go follow her on
Instagram for more amazing pieces
of work.

CLIMBING EVEREST AND RIDING SOLO TO THE SOUTH POLE

Mollie Hughes

ON...

WHERE IT ALL BEGAN

GROWING UP

LEARNING TO SHARE
STORIES

BEING A ROLE MODEL





"I'm the only person who sees these amazing sunrises, and the only one who gets to experience Antarctica, but sharing my story to [inspire the next generation] is what I want to do. Especially young women - because I felt I really needed to see a female mountaineer before I could be one."

Very few people can say they've summited Everest once, much less twice. Even fewer people can say they've trekked to the South Pole. Solo. So Dual Frequency was absolutely delighted when we had the chance to catch up with the breaker of two World Records, Mollie Hughes, who has accomplished all of these things (she is the youngest woman to summit Everest from both the North and South sides, and the youngest person to reach Antarctica solo). She shares what motivates her and why it's important for her to share her story with as many people as possible.

On where it all began

"My interest in expeditions began during my final year at university, studying Psychology. I'm dyslexic, so when it came to doing a 10,000 word dissertation I knew it had to be on a subject I'd be really interested in. I love mountaineering so when I thought about the biggest psychological mountains to climb, Everest sprang to mind."

"Then, I stumbled across a woman called Bonita Norris. Bonita broke the World Record for being the youngest woman to summit Everest at 22, and as I read more about her, the similarities became apparent and deep down inside of me I saw that it was something I could do, and soon."

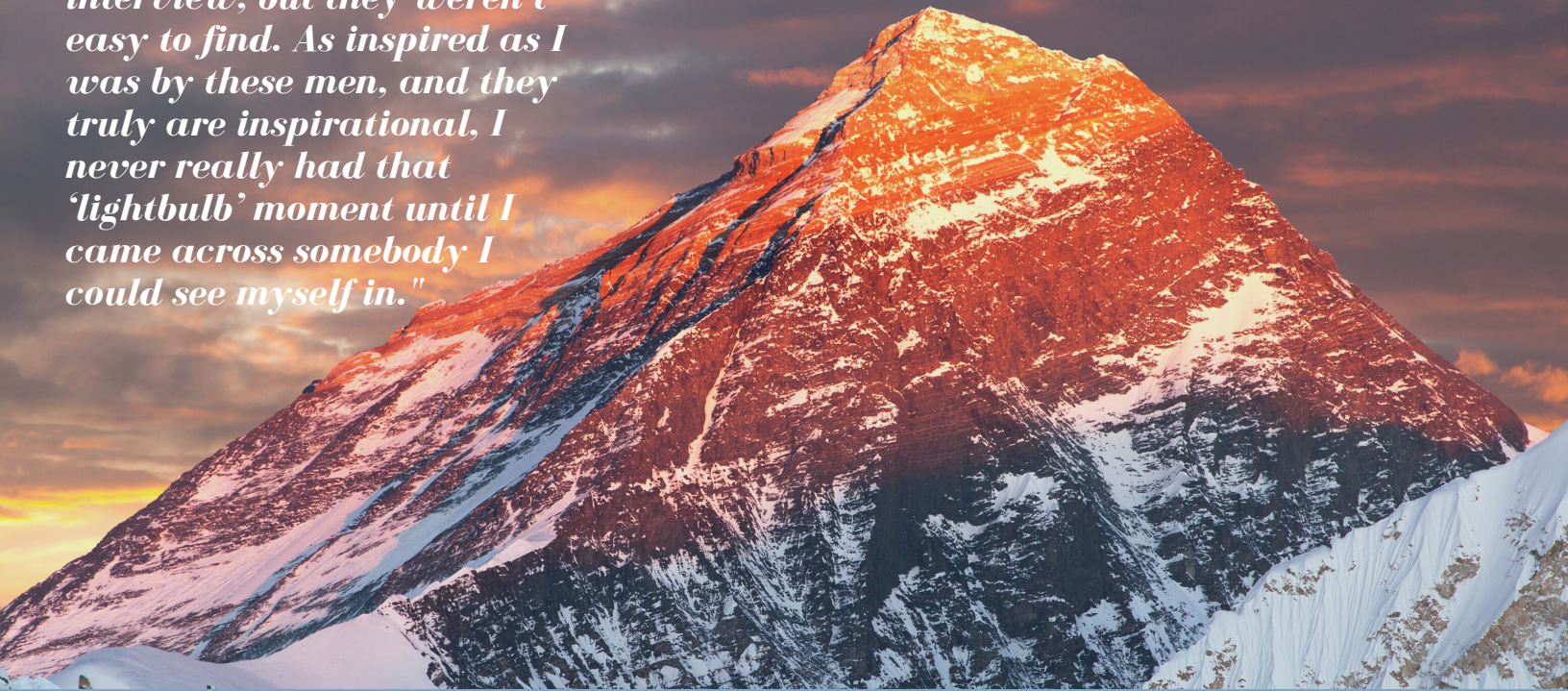
58 days or 650 hours

That's how long it took Mollie Hughes to break her second World Record and reach the geographic South Pole on 10th January 2020.

- 45 degrees

The temperature it reached on Mollie's solo ski to the South Pole, during storm force winds.

"I interviewed seven men who'd all summited Everest for the dissertation and I was looking for women to interview, but they weren't easy to find. As inspired as I was by these men, and they truly are inspirational, I never really had that 'lightbulb' moment until I came across somebody I could see myself in."



On growing up

"I was shy as a teen and in my early twenties. I had anxiety about putting myself out there too much and worried about what people would think when I talked about my accomplishments. It's been a learning process over the last nine years to see that I can use my personal stories to inspire other people. It's happened a few ways, by doing motivational speaking after Everest and sharing that story, helped me grow my confidence. You need to talk to people who have accomplished great things before you, and I never felt that more than prior to my trip to Antarctica. It was so unknown to me for so many years, and the best way to do it was by talking to people, research and to meet people first hand who have been there."

On learning to share stories

"On the expeditions you are so far removed from other people, in your own bubble. I never felt that more than in Antarctica. An amazing part of the last nine years is hearing from people that have been inspired by my expeditions, through social media. It has become the main focus of everything I do - all these trips I do are relatively selfish."

To raise funds for her second Everest climb, Mollie auctioned off a part of her skin as art space to help her reach her total: her right bum cheek! "It was one month until my expedition and I needed a killer prize to reach my goal. My dad bid against my friends so I wouldn't need to get it. In the end it went for a grand, so helped me reach my goal. But it does mean I have a tattoo of two kissing chickens for life now."

On overcoming

"Doubts are always there in the back of your mind but I've never felt I couldn't finish any of the expeditions. You spend years training for this one trip, and fundraising (which in itself is a full time job). By the time I reached Antarctica I was so grateful to be there, even when I was hit by a whiteout storm for two weeks, I knew one day the sun would come out and I'd reach the South Pole."

“Those moments of calm help you access creativity, reduce anxiety, and open up your imagination. And you need imagination to achieve any kind of ambition.”

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The age Mollie was when she broke her first World Record for climbing Everest twice, as the youngest woman to ever do so.



6 weeks

The time it took Mollie and her team (Sherpa Lhakpa Wongchu, Mollie's friend and British mountain guide Jon Gupta, plus Lila Tamang) to acclimatise to the altitude on Mount Everest and wait for a window of clear weather to embark on their summit attempt.

"The difference between self belief and self confidence is key. Self belief is when deep down you know you can do something, whereas confidence is the outer perception of you. Growing up I didn't have much self confidence but deep down I knew I had self belief. I draw on that for my expeditions. You have to. I use that to block out negativity when I don't know if I can finish. It takes a lot of practise."

"People aren't born adventurers, they aren't born brave and courageous: you have to practise it and push yourself and learn about yourself along the way."

"Controlling fear is also a really important part of expeditions. I actually have a fear of heights, and on Everest especially, you have to pass these crevasses and huge glacial holes; you just have metal ladders and crampons to get you across these 50m drops. I had to learn that fear is just an emotion and it's there to look after you, to protect you. When you realise this you can overcome it."

On finding headspace

"I'm still learning new things about myself. I completed my solo expedition to the South Pole in January. When you spend 58 and a half days on your own in Antarctica, with nothing around you just blankets of white as far as the eye can see, you learn how to harness those moments of silence and discover headspace you didn't know you had. That level of isolation meant my head was somewhere else and it opened up memories I didn't realise I had; I refound childhood memories like a school sports day! Pre-lockdown, many of us were constantly on our phones, we never had moments of silence or calm and clarity. We need to find that headspace."

WATCH MOLLIE'S TED TALK IN GLASGOW ABOUT RESILIENCE, TEAMWORK AND PERSISTENCE

702

The number of miles Mollie skied on her own to reach the Geographical South Pole.

On being a role model

"I would love to talk more about my achievements as a member of the LGBTQ+ community. There is always more I could say and do, I hope, to resonate not just as a woman who has achieved these things, but as a gay woman who has achieved these things. I have consciously in the last year or so talked about being a gay woman at public events more, particularly with youth audiences because it is a part of who I am. It comes up naturally [when I'm storytelling] as I'll say, 'When I rang home from the South Pole, I called my girlfriend, Tegan'. It helps the audience get to know me better. When I was younger I spoke less about being gay, because it was newer to me: I came out when I was 21/22. Tegan has inspired me to talk more openly about it."

8,848m

Mount Everest is the tallest point on Earth, a staggering 8,848m above sea level.

"My advice to anyone who wants to go on an expedition? Just do it. It's so important to take the first step. The trips I've completed have felt obscure and so big before I embarked on them. I'd only been climbing for four years before I summited Everest the first time. Also, realise it's not easy to get there and you need to take small, planned steps. Eventually you do get to achieve your goals. Have a vision and believe you can do it. We can do anything we put our minds to if we can work along the steps we need to take to get there."

"As for role models - I actually got to meet Bonita. At Everest Base Camp! She'd been climbing another mountain nearby".

Mollie was born in Devon and now lives in Edinburgh with Tegan. Follow Mollie on Instagram / Twitter and read more about her at molliehughes.co.uk



LEFT

Lavinya Stennett, founder of The Black Curriculum

LAVINYA STENNETT



THE *Black* CURRICULUM

DF caught up with Lavinya Stennett, CEO of The Black Curriculum, in the middle of lockdown to talk about campaigns, the need for positive representation and the vital role of teachers in a year that has seen many really start to take notice of the importance of Black British History. When we spoke, The Black Curriculum was eagerly awaiting a reply from Gavin Williamson, Secretary of State for Education, in response to their #TBH365 campaign – Teach Black History/ To Be Honest. This campaign aims to see Black British History valued in the national curriculum and to celebrate the contributions of Black British people. In order to do this effectively, the folks over at The Black Curriculum believe that the first step is being honest about the current curriculum and the fact it is limiting; it simply doesn't reflect multi-ethnic Britain. Lavinya tells us this is a "public issue" and the volume of emails to MPs is very much a reflection that the public want this issue to be addressed. The Black Curriculum is certainly doing their part, here's what Lavinya had to say...

CAN YOU TELL US A BIT MORE ABOUT THE SPRINGBOARD PROGRAMME?

It's essentially ways of bridging together education with another art skill that they can actually take into other arenas of life. This is about the passion to connect young people with Black history, but also take something else from that. What we found is that people really enjoyed what they learnt but wanted to be able to show other people what they had done - it was as if they wanted something they could use on their CVs or take it to another space. In January we worked with Microsoft to provide a session on boycotts and robots which was basically coding skills. They took all the information that they learnt from us and put it into the robots through the coding.

"AT SCHOOL THERE'S SO MUCH EMPHASIS ON STRUCTURE, THERE'S A CERTAIN WAY TO SIT, A CERTAIN WAY TO ACT, YOU HAVE TO PUT YOUR HAND UP AND WHAT WE'RE LOOKING FOR IS YOUNG PEOPLE TO FEEL FREE AND COMFORTABLE IN THEMSELVES, AND WE CAN PROVIDE THAT SPACE AND SO WE DO. WE'RE NOT TRYING TO STIFLE THEM OR TAKE AWAY FROM THEIR CREATIVITY BECAUSE ULTIMATELY THAT IS WHAT'S GOING TO GET THEM FAR IN LIFE, NOT FOLLOWING RULES."

DO YOU EVER HAVE ANY SPECIFIC OR SURPRISING REACTIONS FROM THE YOUNG PEOPLE WHO TAKE PART IN THE WORKSHOP?

I think I would say surprise mainly. There's a sort of nervousness because they've never really had the opportunity to grapple with this information before. It's a bit like 'why don't I already know this'? So it starts initially as apprehension that turns into curiosity of the information they are being presented with, because if you haven't seen this kind of thing before then you might be reluctant to dive straight in, some people might, but the majority of students proceed with caution. By the end they're completely sold.

DO YOU THINK TEACHERS SHOULD EDUCATE THEMSELVES AND ADVOCATE FOR CHANGE IN THEIR OWN SETTINGS?

Absolutely, I feel like it's the duty of teachers to do something like what we're doing at the moment. And I do understand that's on a much larger scale, but I think it's 100% essential that everyone takes this on.

WHAT DO YOU DO TO ENCOURAGE YOUNG PEOPLE TO HAVE A MORE POSITIVE RELATIONSHIP WITH THEIR IDENTITY?

I think really it's just that we're honest with them and we let them be honest with us. At school there's so much emphasis on structure, there's a certain way to sit, a certain way to act, you have to put your hand up and what we're looking for is young people to feel free and comfortable in themselves, and we can provide that space and so we do. We're not trying to stifle them or take away from their creativity because ultimately that is what's going to get them far in life, not following rules.

WILL THIS [CORONAVIRUS] CHANGE THE WAY YOU WORK?

I think so. There's a lot of uncertainty and the safety of people is really important, so for the time being we need to make more of an online presence without negating the fact that if we can meet up, we should. It's so different when you can actually see somebody take on that information, it's amazing.

HOW IMPORTANT IS IT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE TO SEE PEOPLE LIKE THEMSELVES IN JOBS AND ROLES THEY MIGHT BE INTERESTED IN?

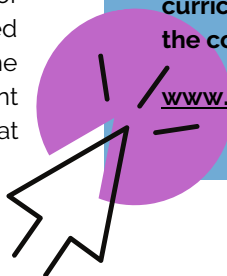
If you see somebody that looks like you then you're more able to have that idea of what it is you can do and also I think it's just really encouraging to have that visual representation in different areas. I think lots of people find it quite hard to comprehend that this is actually my business because they haven't really seen that a lot and that's why I think it's so important that there are different kinds of Black people present in the world in which they live so they can see that opportunities are actually limitless. It's just that the current structure reinforces that you have to be a white male to succeed in life and that's just not true.

WHAT'S NEXT FOR THE BLACK CURRICULUM?

We've recently had the BBC and Guardian feature The Black Curriculum, which has been really exciting because that means we're really on the radar. Also we had so much lined up in schools but because of Coronavirus we were unable to do that, which has been really upsetting. We've had to take everything online. I feel excited at the prospect of bringing more teachers into this so that it's not just going to be us carrying the weight of this duty - teachers need to be at the centre of this too. So we will be creating more resources for teachers and parents as well - we will be continuing to do as much as we can online.

Unfortunately, on the 23rd June, the government responded with a statement rejecting the request of The Black Curriculum to meet and instead stated that they felt the national curriculum was broad, balanced and flexible whilst allowing schools to teach Black history. However, not enough is being done to encourage and support schools and teachers to actually teach Black histories and make sure this is embedded into the curriculum. You can find out more, and support the continued campaign [here](https://www.theblackcurriculum.com/campaign-tbh365).

www.theblackcurriculum.com/campaign-tbh365



HAVE YOU HEARD OF THE BECHDEL TEST?



We spoke to Corrina Antrobus, founder of the Bechdel Test Fest (amongst many other impressive accolades) to find out why passing the test is important to cinema and the progression of female representation.

Lockdown. April. May. June. What were you doing? Chances are, you would have watched a film or two. Was it on Netflix? Maybe Disney+? Sky? Of those films, how many do you think passed the Bechdel Test?

To pass the Bechdel Test a film must do three things...

1. Feature two or more named female characters
2. Talking to each other
3. About a subject other than men.

Sounds easy. Right...? Not quite.

FACT: In 2018, only approximately 60% of Hollywood films passed the test.

"It's the lowest bar you can possibly get," explains Corrina Antrobus, who Dual Frequency catches up with during lockdown to find out more about some of the work she does to raise awareness of the lack of fair female representation in cinema. "Do I think the Bechdel Test is the answer to feminism bias in film? No. But is it our job now to work our way up to what else needs to be explored? Who else is missing from the screen? Definitely."

Corrina is so passionate about film and the exploration of representation in cinema, she founded the Bechdel Test Fest on its 30th anniversary. Originally only intended to run for one year, the film festival has received so much support and interest it's now in its seventh year of curation. The festival itself has screened films under themes called Don't Touch My Hair, about the relationship Black and Brown women have with their hair; Horror Heroines; and Masculinity in the Movies.

"WE WERE ALWAYS SHOWN THAT ARTISTIC EXPRESSION WAS REALLY IMPORTANT AND AN AVENUE FOR US TO EXPLORE OUR IDENTITY."

Today, Corrina is Arts & Culture Communications Officer for Hackney, (a culturally diverse borough in east London), a Channel 4 Sunday Brunch film presenter, and any of her time in between is spent seeing her friends, her family, and working on the festival. Oh, and did we mention she's also a winner of the Women in Hollywood Trailblazer award?

But the Bechdel Test Fest wasn't born out of a typical success story.

"I come from a very bohemian family and when I found out I'd done quite well at college, which I thought I'd failed, I thought, 'I want to move out'. University became an interesting option for life experience and getting out of Hackney which at the time was quite rough. I took a year out, saved up and I met my 'family' there effectively."

After graduating, Corrina took three jobs to pay off her student loans. "I worked as a Receptionist Monday to Friday, Gap on the weekends and a bar in Chelsea on Saturday nights." Corrina steadily worked her way into her "dream job" from Receptionist to Movie Editor at Virgin Media over the course of nine years, attending film festivals and marketing indie films when a restructure forced her to reset. And had it not been for the company restructure, the Bechdel Test Fest may never have been founded. Not someone who can sit still for long and with her insight and knowledge of the film industry being so "disproportionately male" she told herself, "Now is the time to do something about it."

So Corrina took some of her redundancy money, flew to Sweden and arranged to meet the founder of the 'A' rating in the Swedish film industry that lets viewers know a film has passed the Bechdel Test: Ellen Tejle. It was the Bechdel Test's 30th anniversary that year. Having developed a passion for indie films and seeing the lack of progressive depictions of women, when she returned to London, Corrina sprang into action and recruited one of her best friends who had studied PR to write a press release for a free film screening; the Bechdel Test Fest was born. Time Out magazine and BBC World Service covered the launch.

"Nobody can have these conversations on their own: it needs to be shared. There was a lot of love in the industry for what we were doing and we loved the other

groups that were doing the same thing. And there was this assumption, especially because we were women [representing women in cinema] that you're going to be fighting [over the same space]. Actually we were bigging each other up, being on each other's panels and cross-promoting each other's work."

Corrina insists she had "no idea" what she was doing and made it up as she went along. Dual Frequency thinks otherwise. Corrina is warm, intelligent, passionate and doesn't shy away from a gruelling schedule or an opportunity to use a platform for good.

Nowadays in her role as a film reviewer on Channel 4's Sunday Brunch show Corrina sees an opportunity to gently "signpost people to watching films that make a difference" and have better representation for minorities.

With such a busy schedule, Corrina does admit it's hard to switch off from her passions but tells herself it's important for her mental wellbeing. "It's difficult, especially if

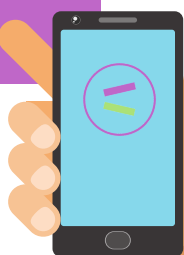
you're in a marginalised group, taking up space. You feel that you're meant to be 'grateful' and should work harder, as opposed to [feeling like] you deserve to be there. I ask myself do I need it financially or spiritually? If it doesn't fit either of those categories I tell myself, 'Just don't do it. Schedule a day of doing nothing in your diary'."

With such a dynamic career behind and ahead of her, we close the interview with Corrina asking her what her proudest achievement to date is. "When Bechdel Test Fest put on the London premiere for Gina Prince-Bythewood's film *Beyond the Lights*. We knew the film would have gone straight to DVD and we knew Gina wanted the film showcased in a cinema, with surround sound. If you want to unpick it... it was a 'Black story' made by a 'Black woman' the industry didn't know what to do with it and saw it as a risk. We put it on and it sold out. That was our biggest moment starting out."

Her parting advice to someone who wants to succeed? "At the start of any project, big, or small, write down your base values. Write down what it is that if and when your idea sprawls into something else, you can go back to that one word, one sentence, to remind yourself why you're doing this. It's your mission statement and will help anchor you."

"MY ROLE MODELS GROWING UP WERE WRITERS, ANDREA LEVY, ALICE WALKER AND ZADIE SMITH. MY MUM WAS VERY GOOD AT GIVING ME BOOKS BY BLACK WOMEN - ESPECIALLY AS SHE WAS MINDFUL OF MY EXPERIENCE AS A BROWN PERSON. EVEN NOW HER HOUSE IS LIKE A LIBRARY! SHE WANTED TO MAKE SURE I WAS ENGROSSED IN THE MINDSETS OF WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES WHICH SHE COULDN'T GIVE ME AS A WHITE WOMAN."

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE BECHDEL TEST, DOWNLOAD OUR POSITIVE FEMALE REPRESENTATION RESOURCE FOR FREE FROM OUR WEBSITE





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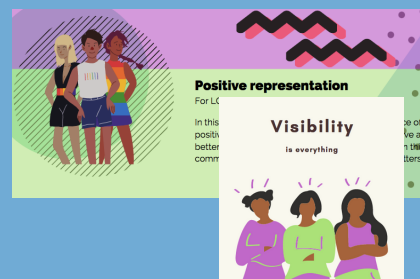
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Head on over to dualfrequency.co.uk and click resources. Alongside this issue we have released a resource promoting positive representation of women and girls.



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