



BME
women in the
mainstream

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Welcome Message



Maureen Bailey
Co-ordinator of WIN



Michaela Young
Research Officer, PROUD

There are 2.3 million Black and Minority Ethnic women (BME) in the UK, making up 7.9% of the UK female population and 13% of the female population in England. Many of these women do not receive the accolades that they deserve for their pioneering spirit and the contributions that they make to the UK.

So it is with pleasure that we present this booklet compiled by Proud (People from Diverse Racial Origins Uniting the Department) and WIN (Women's Issues

Network) as a tribute to these ladies. Our Permanent Secretary, Suma Chakrabarti, has been quoted as saying, "It is the job of leaders to instil more confidence in talented staff that do not fit white or male stereotypes" and we hope that this booklet goes a little way to doing that.

We also hope that you are inspired by the stories of these women and you can use them as your role models to achieve the great things we are all capable of.

"You always have two options in Life. You can think small or you can think BIG. If you're already thinking you may as well think BIG. No matter what your circumstances nobody can stop you from thinking Big. And once you get a taste of thinking big, you'll never want to stop and the rich rewards will come to you!"

Donald Trump

Baroness Scotland QC

Being herself

She has achieved many firsts in her career including the first black female barrister, the youngest Silk in 200 years, and recently Baroness Patricia Scotland became the UK's first black female Attorney General.

The 10th child of Dominican and Antiguan parents, Patricia Scotland believes that it's important that people understand that they may not always know where life will take them, but it is vital that they dedicate themselves to being the best that they can be.

She says: "I never set out to achieve so many firsts. In fact, the only goal I ever set myself was to do everything as well as possible, and make a contribution in life."

As with many successful people Patricia's life has been filled with a number of mentors. "People always seemed to see something in me that I never saw in myself - clerks, pupil-masters and even judges. On occasion after a court hearing I would be asked by a judge to see him in chambers. Before going to see them I'd prepare my defence, but one was never necessary, they actually wanted to compliment me on the handling of the case."

The most inspirational mentors in her life however, have been from her family, in particular her mother and father. "My father was the first feminist that I knew. He taught my sisters and me that we were no different to his sons and that he expected great things from all of us."

Baroness Scotland believes that much

has changed in the UK over the past 20 years for BME people and women - people's expectations of their abilities are no longer so low. Overcoming barriers for her has been a matter of honing her skills and not allowing other people's issues to become her own. "People with prejudicial views need to carry their own burden - do not make it your own burden. If you allow barriers to become your problem then it will be difficult for you. There is no need to carry that weight.

"My parents taught me that 'everyone has a talent and it is your duty to find that talent and use it'. So assess where you are and what you have got. Most importantly remember that we are all role models - who we are, what we are, and the contribution that we make."

TIPS

- Be yourself.
- Have courage.
- Succeeding in life is hard work, but nothing comes easy.
- It will take dedication as no one will give you a free ride.
- When other people's expectations of you start low, it is easier for you to appear to be a genius.
- Surround yourself with people who affirm you and concentrate on your talent.
- Find your talent, accept you have that talent, work hard and excel in it.

"Don't expect life to be easy. Accept what you have to, and change what you can"



Passionate about **WAF**

At 35 years of age Sharon Brown is the youngest Director of the charity "Women's Action Forum", an organisation for which she has worked for 4 years.

Sharon is very passionate about the work of the Women's Action Forum (WAF), and this comes across when she talks about her work.

Born and bred in Moss Side, Manchester, she already had close links to the community before she became involved with the charity.

"Moss Side is usually considered notorious by many, usually by those who have never visited the area, but it's an area where there are many positive role models, especially my mother, who helped me to develop my sense of self."

This is one of the many reasons why the WAF is very important to Sharon.

The organisation was primarily set up to represent and empower minority ethnic women and their families who live in the Moss Side and Hulme areas of Manchester.

But as with many charities they receive little funding and often struggle for survival. "The organisation is important to everyone in this area, not only the women that we help. I gained so much from the people in this area that I want others to have the same opportunity."

Sharon believes it is important to have a

flexible approach to work, because you never know what challenges the day will bring. She says, "Of course I can't take all the credit, I work with a good team who are passionate and committed. And it helps that we are a diverse bunch, which means in difficult times there are a wide range of skills and experiences that I can call upon."

As a mother of a seven year old boy, Sharon often has to balance conflicting priorities. "My job can be very demanding at times, but I cannot let this have an impact my son. If I am having a difficult and challenging time at work, it can sometimes manifest itself in my home life," she admits. "Whenever that happens I have to stop whatever I am doing so that it does not influence how I am with my son."

When she reflects on both her work and personal life she always thinks that there is more that she could be doing. Once she has achieved a goal she does not stand still to recognise her success as she is already thinking about and striving for the next challenge.

"I am where I am today because I have studied hard, recognised opportunities and showed what I was capable of at every level."



"You may be disappointed if you fail, but you are doomed if you don't try!"

Imagine the glass ceiling... ...then break it

As with many great entrepreneurs Dr Helen Lee who is head of the Diagnostic Development Unit at the University of Cambridge and who was presented with the Lord Lloyd of Kilgerran Award for her pioneering work to develop low-cost and innovative diagnostic testing kits, acknowledges that her achievements would not have been possible without others, particularly the dedicated team that she is working with.

She also acknowledges that while she may have worked hard to get to where she is, it would not have been possible without her parents. They taught her that failure was not an option and she believes that innovation is just an ability to deal with failure.

"My mother was a trail-blazer in her own

"Don't pay attention to glass ceilings real or imagined."

right," says Dr Lee. "She was the first female CPA in China and one of very few Chinese ladies that left China to study abroad." Professor CH Lee lived to over 100 and her insatiable appetite for learning was one of the cornerstones of her personality.

Born in China Dr Helen Lee moved to the United States to attend Graduate School and obtained her PhD from Cornell University.

She has worked for a number of years in private industry and move to Cambridge University to head up the Diagnostic Development Unit (DDU).

The Unit, which targets infectious diseases such as Chlamydia, HIV and hepatitis that affect millions of people around the world, particularly in developing countries was set up in 1996 to develop and produce high quality, simple to use, low cost and rapid diagnostic tests for the detection of infectious agents that cause serious health problems for millions living in resource poor settings.

The patented technologies that have resulted in the new generation of rapid tests created the need for Dr Lee and to establish a spin out company - Diagnostics for the Real World Ltd (DRW) located in California.

"Dr Rosemary Biggs, headed the Research Unit at Churchill Hospital, Oxford where I began my career. She instilled in me the importance of the phrase 'be useful' and the values contained in these two simple words have guided my career."



Entrepreneur of the Year



who received an award was Sharon Kaur, founder of Sahara Homes. She was named Entrepreneur of the Year.

Ms Kaur founded her company Sahara Homes Ltd in 1998 to provide residential care for women with learning disabilities in Britain.

Over the last nine years the company has grown to incorporate three residential homes across London, with a fourth home under construction.

Sharon employs locally trained staff in order to give her care homes a community feel. Once the fourth home has been completed, Sharon will employ a total of 90 people from local areas. Her most recent project has been to set up a dedicated foundation for local entrepreneurs, gifted children and young people with special needs.

Last year several women of Asian heritage were honoured at the eighth Asian Women of Achievement Awards, at the London Hilton, Park Lane.

The event was attended by a host of inspirational celebrity guests and one of those

Damini Kumar:

The solution finder

Damini Kumar created something that ranks alongside these great engineering feats - a solution to teapot dribble.

Her work disproved years of scientific research into the ubiquitous problem of the dripping teapot. Damini's innovative spout design can be used to stop dripping with any pouring technology, from petrol pumps to watering cans. And if the application of her engineering skills seems odd, it's rooted in the fact that since the age of five she has been actively designing solutions to problems that she has encountered.

This engineer of everyday life believes that the recipe for good design engineering is one-part ingenuity and invention, and one-part creativity and imagination.



Ayesha Hazarika:

A serious laugh

Ayesha Hazarika works as chief business co-ordinator to the chairman and CEO of EMI Group, handling government, media and investor relations, boardroom issues, charity, the environmental agenda and global music piracy.

Winner of the Young Achiever Award at the 'Asian Women of Achievement Awards in 2005, she is a second-generation Indian immigrant, brought up in Scotland who went on to be spin doctor (press officer) for Patricia Hewitt when she was Trade Secretary.

However, by night Ayesha is a stand-up comedienne. She started performing stand-up comedy in 2002 using the juxtaposition of two cultures for some good laughs and making plenty of her childhood identity crisis as the only Asian in the village – well, the posh end of



Glasgow.

What first started out as a hobby became a big part of her life, culminating in performances at the Edinburgh festival, and on BBC 2, ITV and BBC 4's Women's Hour.

Together with Lynn Parker, they staged the first International Women's Day on the 8 March, 2004, raising £5,000 for victims of domestic violence.

Wersha Bharadwa:

A Cosmopolitan Lady

Having gained a first in her journalism degree, Wersha became the first British Indian in-house staff writer for Cosmopolitan magazine (UK) in 2004.

Wersha, who co-hosted a slot with Adil Ray on the BBC Asian Network in 2006 now freelances for national newspapers and top women's magazines including The Guardian, Glamour, Eve and New Woman and also for online portal, Handbag.com.

As well as freelancing, she is



working on her first novel and is a guest lecturer at the University of Central England, Birmingham.

She is regularly asked to give comment and opinion on radio and TV and has also been interviewed by Richard and Judy and Krishnan Guru-Murthy.

Her style? She offers a witty, hard-hitting, sometimes wacky and yet informative style of journalism.

Challenge the Status Quo



When she was young Baroness Valerie Amos "wanted to change the world". She applied to university..... 5 different courses at 5 different universities, wanting to do something interesting, but at the time did not know what. Well, for someone who did not know what she wanted, she's done very well.

After attending Warwick University Guyana [2] born Baroness Valerie Amos went on to Birmingham to do an MA in Cultural Studies.

She began her career in local government from 1981 to 1989 then went on to become Chief Executive of the Equal Opportunities Commission. She then became one of the founding directors of Amos Fraser Bernard, a consultancy working in South Africa.

In 2003 (she) became the first BME cabinet minister in the UK and the first BME woman to be the Leader of the House of Lords. Here, Baroness Amos, who remains grounded by her family,(needs space here) speaks of her 'humble' beginnings and the strength of her parents, who were not afraid to strive for the best for their children.

MIGRATION & MENTORS

"When I first came to this country my sister and I were both put in the bottom class. They just assumed that we could not cope. My mother was in the school the next day asking why we had not been tested first. My mother was a great mentor and Stuart Hall was another," says Baroness Amos whose mother was a teacher in Guyana and was very well known. She was a brave woman and was not afraid to challenge anyone.

VIEWS ON BLACK HERITAGE

The Baroness believes black people should not underestimate their place in history. "We have been a people enslaved and suppressed but we have still survived. That says a lot about how strong we are."

She also thinks we can do a lot more to support our young people and that we must not be afraid to upset the status quo and challenge something which is wrong. "Be confident in who you are ", and develop a strong sense of self and identity. Our heritage is one we should be proud of. Some people believe we can't look back with pride, but I don't feel that way. The fact that we have been able to come through the traumatic experience of slavery says a lot about our character as a people."

When asked about overcoming setbacks Baroness Amos reveals that she has encountered many different kinds of racism both covert and overt, including being spat at in the street and attacked whilst at University. However, she has always been determined that she will not to allow other people's prejudices to determine her path in life. "For example not everyone gets the job they go for," she

"If you're in a position where you are not yourself, you're in the wrong role!"

remarks. The important thing is to learn from negative experiences. In terms of covert prejudice she mentions the look she sometimes receives when people talk about her success and ask: "how did you get here?" Or the surprise that is sometimes expressed at her ability to communicate.

TOP TIPS FROM BARONESS AMOS

- Don't just be good at what you do - Be better.
- Focus on what you do i.e. focus on the task in hand and doing it well. Be the best you can.
- Have people you can talk to when things are going crazy.
- Get as much training as you can.
- Look for feedback, including from the people who are very critical of you.
- Be critical of yourself " I am fiercely critical of myself".
- Look at your organisation and think about its culture. For example "are they treating everyone the same?" Sometimes it's about personality not about race, "some people just don't get on".
- Enjoy the moment and celebrate your achievements.
- Stand up for yourself. Don't be afraid to challenge and speak out.
- Use clear facts to back up your case.
- Be passionate
- Enjoy yourself have fun

A woman in the media

From terrorism to Islamic radicals and crime, Samira Ahmed has covered a range of issues as both field reporter and presenter, including *Islam Unveiled* - a documentary on the status of Muslim women around the world.

Samira Ahmed always knew she wanted to be a journalist. She loved writing and the idea of travelling the world. She learned to create newspapers from scratch and record her own radio programmes. This creative dream, along with the fact that her mother was a broadcaster working at BBC World Service, fuelled her imagination further.

"I used to spend a lot of time in the offices of the Hindi section, while she (mum) was doing recordings and listening to journalists and producers discussing politics and current affairs. It was a fascinating world."

Samira had a warm and happy childhood. Her parents put education first, but she recalls a great social life as her parents used to organise fabulous music parties with their Indian ex-pat friends. "I just enjoyed myself, and read a lot and watched a lot of TV! We also travelled a lot, to the subcontinent and the US."

Having studied at an all-girl school before going up to Oxford, Samira remembers being surrounded by strong role models who challenged the status quo.

"My English teacher, Mrs Kirman, inspired me to apply to Oxford to read English," she says, "and while I never got round to reading *The Second Sex* by Simone de Beauvoir, it was good to see it in the school library. My mother and many of her female friends defied some of the dodgier attitudes in their Asian communities. It's interesting how all their daughters have grown up to be strong and independent."

On completing her postgraduate studies at

City University, Samira Ahmed went on to the BBC Graduate News Trainee Scheme, which soon led to a job as a Network news reporter.

She has presented for News 24, BBC World and Deutsche Welle TV in Berlin, reporting extensively on crime, terrorism and, for a rest, the arts. She was the BBC Los Angeles correspondent from 1996 to 1997 and covered the civil trial of OJ Simpson.

When asked whether there are strong representations of women in broadcasting, Samira does not hesitate to state: "There are plenty of women on TV; I think every one of them must have been ambitious and strong to get where they did. But there are not many in positions of editorial power. That's a bigger problem. And a lot of print reporting about broadcasting is quite sexist. There's still a shocking amount of nepotism and discrimination in appointments throughout journalism."

She believes that, as an individual, all you can do is get on with doing your job well. "All the best reporters, like Lindsey Hilsum, Lyse Doucet and Eleanor Goodman, have stayed away from show business and articles about their wardrobes and got on with being great journalists."

On her plans for the future, Samira says she's happy with her position at Channel Four. "I work for the best news programme around."

"You quickly realise that there are always new worries"





All about the skin

Beauty entrepreneur:

Yana Johnson

When the owner of Yana Johnson Cosmetics and Beauty Spa recognised that the BME women in the UK did not have any beauty products that were suited to their needs, particularly their skin, the need for her company was evident.

While we all have complained about this at some time or another, Yana actually did something about it. What started as one lady doing makeovers in a hair salon has turned into an international beauty company that caters to women of all shades in the UK and USA.

Despite limited resources and a limited knowledge about BME products in Britain Yana launched Yana Cosmetics, opened a Beauty Spa and is now launching her mail order service. As a dedicated Christian, her spirituality has kept her balanced and pointed in the right direction. It has also led her to the right people at the right time.

The Yana Beauty spa is based at Bromley

Cross and Yana's expertly trained team specialise in giving their clients, from the lightest skin tones to the darkest, that celebrity makeover in a relaxed and professional atmosphere. Clients who visit the spa are provided with individual expert advice so that they leave the Spa feeling loved and cared for, as well as looking beautiful, not to mention also being able to apply their own make-up.

"I believe that presentation is important especially for those important occasions such as meetings, presentations or social occasions and the way you use make up can make all the difference," says Yana.

She has turned her passion for training staff to deliver excellent customer service and empowering women into an international business that can only go from strength to strength.

"For where treasure is, there will your heart be also"

Passionate about places

Seema Manchanda is British Indian and has a degree in Land Economy and a post graduate degree in Planning. She has over 15 years of experience in regeneration and planning across public, private and voluntary sectors.

She is currently the Head of Physical Regeneration & Development for the London Borough of Newham. She is responsible for 130 staff delivering planning, building control, land charges and regeneration in the busiest regeneration area in Europe.

During her education she had many inspiring Professors and was privileged to have been taught by Pete Tyler, Malcolm Grant and Sir Peter Hall, to name but a few.

"I am passionate about improving places for the people that live in them, whether by supporting individuals to access to jobs and employment or ensuring quality building through planning. I get very excited when I see the outcome of projects that I have worked on. You have to be patient in this game because things can take years to come to fruition."

She believes that while Asian women have



made huge progress, they still need to work twice as hard and be twice as good to make it to the top.

"If you want to make it to the top in industry then pick something that you feel passionate about because the energy you get from your enthusiasm will get you all the way. Without passion it can be very hard to overcome hurdles which all careers and jobs have at times."

"Only one man in a thousand is a leader of men - the other 999 follow women"



Know who you are and what you want

One of the first BME Financial Services Ombudsmen, Juliana Campbell is an independent reviewer of complaints. She decided to go into this area of work as she constantly seeks new challenges in different areas.

Her modest disposition of not being a straight 'A' grade student at school, but then winning an award at University for being the top student explains a lot about Juliana Campbell's character.

A practising Christian, Juliana's career choices have largely been due to a desire to be challenged, but yet maintain a good work/life balance.

Juliana is a Financial Ombudsman; a quasi judicial role. The Financial Ombudsman Service investigates complaints about firms providing financial services. Juliana reviews cases which cannot be resolved by junior team members, holds hearings and makes final decisions based on law and complex financial regulations.

She studied law, received the Sweet and Maxwell Award and passed her professional law exams with distinction. She qualified as a solicitor in 1995 and was an active member of a black lawyers group acting as a speaker and representative.

Juliana practiced law for three years, specializing in commercial/corporate litigation. She then joined the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants as its Senior Legal Officer. She was promoted to Head of Professional Conduct overseeing the disciplinary process. She moved to her senior role at The Financial Ombudsman Service in 2005.

She also coaches young black students offering practical careers advice and support.

HER VIEWS ON NETWORKING

"There is a need for BME women and men to network in the early stages of their career. There are lots of 'old boy' networks out there and BME women need to work effectively within our own networks and also within established networks."

She was an active member of the African Caribbean and Asian Lawyers Network as a student/ young lawyer. She credits her involvement within the group as being a catalyst for many opportunities. The network gave her confidence to excel in her career. She said, "it exposed me to successful black lawyers

and showed me how to move forward. It also opened up opportunities for me to develop my skills and career."

Juliana experienced problems obtaining funding for her professional exams. She subsequently made use of a family contact within a major bank to give advice and to obtain funding and to help other BME students experiencing the same problems.

HOW TO BREAK THROUGH BARRIERS

"There is no such word as can't." One of ten children Juliana's father has always encouraged her to believe that with hard work and perseverance you can achieve anything. It is not about luck, but about "opportunity meeting preparation".

IT IS ABOUT CONFIDENCE IN YOURSELF AND YOUR ABILITIES.

"We do not always work in areas, which naturally reflect who we are. Being a woman and from an ethnic background means we may stand out. We have to be confident that we are entitled to our role within society based on abilities and potential."

KNOW AT AN EARLY STAGE WHAT SKILLS YOU HAVE AND HOW YOU WANT TO USE THEM.

"I currently know and work informally with a very bright 11 year old who wants to be a judge. I believe he needs to work now on developing his natural skills and to know what may be required of him in order to achieve his ambition."

Juliana sees success as being relational. "It's about relationships and the depth of your relationships with other people. Success is not about the material trappings of life or being defined by what you do. For me it is about the way I interact with others and the spirit I bring to whatever I am involved with."

"It is not about luck, but about opportunity meeting preparation"

Still I Rise

You may write me down in history
With your bitter, twisted lies,
You may trod me in the very dirt
But still, like dust, I'll rise.

Does my sassiness upset you?
Why are you beset with gloom?
'Cause I walk like I've got oil wells
Pumping in my living room.

Just like moons and like suns,
With the certainty of tides,
Just like hopes springing high,
Still I'll rise.

Did you want to see me broken?
Bowed head and lowered eyes?
Shoulders falling down like teardrops.
Weakened by my soulful cries.

Does my haughtiness offend you?
Don't you take it awful hard
'Cause I laugh like I've got gold mines
Diggin' in my own back yard.

You may shoot me with your words,
You may cut me with your eyes,
You may kill me with your hatefulness,
But still, like air, I'll rise.

Does my sexiness upset you?
Does it come as a surprise
That I dance like I've got diamonds
At the meeting of my thighs?

Out of the huts of history's shame
I rise
Up from a past that's rooted in pain
I rise
I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,
Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.
Leaving behind nights of terror and fear
I rise
Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear
I rise
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,
I am the dream and the hope of the slave.
I rise
I rise
I rise.

Maya Angelou