

31 October 2023

# Black Members' Seminar discusses racism, Covid and Black Lives Matter

PCS members met in Birmingham at the weekend for our black members' seminar, the third of four equality seminars this autumn.

Opening the seminar, PCS national president Fran Heathcote urged attendees to encourage members across the UK to get involved in regional black members' networks.

She said "Black women are the architects of our communities - the teachers, doctors, activists and mothers. We must never forget the profound impact and influence of our sisters. So we must increase participation - especially of black members. Together as a union we are stronger and can make a change."

## Working on anti-racism

On the first workshop of the weekend ('TUC Anti-Racism Manifesto and Tracker'), Riz Hussain, the TUC's anti-racism officer, looked back at the creation of the TUC anti-racism taskforce, which ran for two years between 2020 and 2022.

The aim, he told the seminar, was to "create a blueprint" for anti-racism work in the trade union movement, one which would make "diversity and inclusion efforts more meaningful".

This was made more urgent, he added, in the context of the **Black Lives Matter** movement and the disproportionate effects of **Covid-19** on UK ethnic minorities, with both issues highlighting systemic injustices and institutional racism.

The manifesto that emerged from the taskforce is intended as a collective commitment to action in the next five years. "We have to be at the forefront of asking how to find and remedy the poison of racism, not conceal it with policies and politeness," he said.

Attendees noted their concerns over being labelled as aggressive or antagonistic when raising accusations of racism, highlighted the importance of challenging racist stereotypes with zero-tolerance policies and mandatory training, and argued for increasing understanding among young black members of the relevance of the union.

The PCS equality seminars conclude with the [LGBT+ seminar](#) on 25 and 26 November.

Read more about the black members' seminar on our [X \(formerly Twitter\) account](#) and [Facebook page](#).