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My fight against racism at HMRC

As part of our focus on why racism is a trade union issue, a PCS member shares her experience of racism and fighting discrimination in HMRC

Being innately optimistic, I always believed I would be treated the way I treat others. I have found, however, that it doesn't matter how kind, capable, professional I am, HMRC's environment means that I would suffer daily subtle micro-aggressions and at times, overt racism.

When considering my previous positive experiences since arriving in the UK, these past few years in HMRC are incomparable and have helped draw attention to the devastating plight of BAME colleagues all over the country. My story is one of struggling to thrive in an undeniably biased and prejudiced environment.

By taking a stand, I believe I have helped HMRC to recognise that its treatment towards me was inhumane and unfair. Despite the hurdles and with support from my PCS, I won my battle. I was duly compensated, but more than this, grounds were laid for many changes happening within the organisation today.

Achievements include:

- Legally challenging and overturning a detrimental decision based on unfairness and prejudice.
- Challenging HMRC grievance and appeal procedure and process which neglected the heavy burden it placed on BAME colleagues to prove discrimination and racism, failed to provide real support, heavily sided with management and was religiously and unnecessarily lengthy and detrimental.
- Challenging HR practices that included overzealously and unfairly pressurising decision makers and appeal managers to make poor and unjust decisions.
- Challenging unfair and discriminatory HR practices which included a 'dismissing in such cases' policy that failed to contextualise and handle transgressions on a case by case basis.

- Challenging failed management strategies which included looking the other way because 'he/she is also a manager' or 'one of our own.'
- A national review of cases containing unfair and biased grievance outcomes where racism and discrimination were not properly addressed.

My experience shows the true value of being part of a trade union. I am very proud of the stance I took and together with PCS we have brought real improvements for BAME colleagues. I would encourage all black workers [to join](#) and be active within our union. Together we are stronger.