**ILPA BAME Working Group**

**Date: 8th March 2021**

**Time: 5.00-6.00pm**

**Venue: Virtual Zoom meeting**

Attending:

Chair: Andrea Als

Co-convenors: Noemie Adam, Duduzile Moyo, Unkha Banda

Secretariat: Esme Kemp, Amira Rady, Nicole Francis, Nicolette Busuttil

Members: Amna Ashraf, Grace Brown, Victoria Welsh, Shupikai Chiwanza, Neha Tarabadkar, Tema Nwulu, Justine Rodney, Deepa Chadha, Malini Skandachanmugarasan, Hazar El-Chamaa.

1. **ILPA’s Investigation into Home Office Decision Making Questionnaire Reminder**
2. Members were reminded to complete the questionnaire looking into the Home Office’s decision-making and encourage their teams and colleagues to do so. It was noted that, given the very limited number of responses (two), there was insufficient data at that point with which to confront the Home Office. It was clarified that it was possible to submit the questionnaire without completing all the fields, such as exact dates of application.

1. Members were asked for feedback on the content and format of the questionnaire, to consider what would encourage additional submissions. They were asked to consider whether there was room to change the format and adopt a more qualitative approach, which would see data collected through semi-structured interviews or focus groups.
2. Members noted others might be concerned around putting in names and additional identifying details at this initial stage of data-gathering. They suggested alternative formats which could include open-ended questions asking members about their experiences which could help identify trends. They noted that providing names and place of work could be included as optional rather than mandatory fields.
3. Members highlighted that open-ended questions could facilitate data-gathering relating to certain points. A key issue related to perceived racism within the Home Office and decision-makers e.g., through the differential treatment of visa applications according to nationality, yet this feedback was not easily translated into questionnaire responses. It was noted that the questions had not been designed as open-ended questions to facilitate identification of trends and data analysis, in view of an anticipated high number of submissions.
4. Members were asked to consider whether the project needed to be shelved for the time being, with the focus shifted to the Wendy Williams review and its implementation, or whether it should be adapted into a format where members continued to contribute their experiences in a different manner which was better suited to highlighting how racism permeated immigration decision-making. Members suggested that alternative formats could ask respondents to provide excerpts from refusal letters which betray racist decision-making.
5. Members suggested working in partnership with ILPA’s academic members who might be interested in collaborating to identify the project’s research question, define its conceptual basis and the different manifestations of racism, then design the appropriate research methods accordingly. Members agreed this could help structure practitioners’ evidence and could result in a report with greater visibility and legitimacy when raised with the Home Office.

*Home Office Windrush Lessons Learned Review – Wendy Williams Report:*

1. Members discussed that since the [Wendy Williams report](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/874022/6.5577_HO_Windrush_Lessons_Learned_Review_WEB_v2.pdf) outlines time-based recommendations, the Working Group could use these to hold the Home Office to account e.g., publishing a [comprehensive improvement plan](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/windrush-lessons-learned-review-response-comprehensive-improvement-plan) within six months of the report, establishing an overarching strategic race advisory board with external experts.
2. Members noted that the Home Office’s [initial response](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/922981/CCS001_CCS0820050750-001_Resp_to_Windrush_Lessons_CP_293_Proof_v0.6.pdf) to the review identified different steps to be taken, including the implementation of a training programme for Home Office staff on UK history and its relationship with the rest of the world. Members further noted the government had set up a [Windrush Cross-Government Working Group](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/windrush-cross-government-working-group) which included civil society representatives.
3. Members discussed areas and recommendations which ILPA could contribute to and influence and identified the Home Office’s suggestions for training on immigration as a key area, as well as on policy development and implementation. They noted the need to complement the Home Office’s work and feed into it rather than duplicate it. To that end, members agreed on the need to go through the report, recommendations, and Home Office’s commitments for the purpose of holding them to account and as the basis for future work.
4. Members suggested highlighting specific issues and themes within the Immigration Rules which raise issues of racism and then advocating with the Home Office accordingly. One example was the TB test and the interrogation of whether this was embedded in racial discrimination.
5. **‘Red List’ Travel Ban and ILPA Response** 
   1. In response to the publication of the ‘Red List’ travel ban, ILPA was looking into the travel ban to interrogate its racist underpinnings. Esme was leading the work and examining the rationale for inclusion in the list given that those with similar, and higher, rates of infection were excluded from the same list.
   2. ILPA planned to submit a Freedom of Information Request to obtain the data and reasoning behind it. Nicole and Esme emailed George Shirley to ask for a discussion. He responded to say that the list is published by the Department for Transport and that ILPA’s concerns were being forwarded to the relevant colleagues.
   3. It was noted that this approach was aligned with homing in on specific aspects of Home Office policy and practice. It was noted that the list could hardly have been drawn up without Home Office input and so the FOI should be submitted to multiple departments.
6. **Black Minds Matter: Mental Health and Well-Being resources**
7. Members were reminded that a well-being session focusing on mental health and wellbeing for black practitioners and other practitioners of colour was planned for the 22nd March Members were provided with an overview of the session and the speakers’ profiles and were asked for feedback on any aspects that they would like the speakers to address.
8. Members discussed the title and whether presentation of the event as ‘Black Minds Matter’ implied that it was reserved to black practitioners. It was clarified that the event was open to all members, was part of the Black Lives Matter series, and was not meant to be exclusionary. It was noted that this could be emphasised further in the blurb which accompanied the event listing. Simultaneously, it was noted that the event was meant to speak to a specific experience and to address the erasure of the black experience from mental health services and conversations, so the event was also designed to address that and create space.
9. **Name Change of Working Group**
10. Members noted the need to change the name of the Working Group from BAME. It was recalled that the Working Group was born out of the murder of George Floyd and the need to act and harness the anti-racism momentum that followed it.
11. Members discussed that the BAME reference was inadequate and that the collapsing of all experiences by different groups contributes to a homogenisation of experience which prevents addressing the very specific issues which affect different groups. Members noted that potential names would need to come from a position of strength rather than victimhood. They also pointed out that the group’s current name did not make it clear that the group was not only for practitioners of colour. Others noted that while there were issues with the use of BAME, it was easily identifiable, helped portray the Working Group’s main focus and could improve visibility.
12. In view of the discussion around the Working Group’s name change, members agreed that it would be useful to revisit the Working Group’s purpose at the following meeting to ensure that the group met members’ needs and expectations.

**Decision and Action Point: It was agreed that members would feed in suggestions in advance of the meeting on the 26th April. Secretariat would circulate a brief survey to collate suggestions which would be discussed at the next meeting.**