

[00:00:22.710] - Talat Yaqoob

Hello and welcome to the second episode of the Pass the Mic takeover of On The Engender podcast. My name is Talat Yaqoob, I'm the founder of Pass the Mic. And this is a series of four episodes where we are taking over the podcast and hearing from the expertise of women of colour. For those of you who don't know, Pass the Mic was launched in October 2019, and it started off as a directory of women of colour experts for panels, for events and critically, for media, so that their expertise, commentaries and opinions make up media engagement, make up part of the commentariat of Scotland and events, particularly across the third sector and academia. It's grown since then and we have a funded project with 30 writers who've been involved with a set of media partners, and been given paid opportunities to write commentary, pieces and articles across different media platforms.

[00:01:15.720] - Talat Yaqoob

I'm joined by three of the brilliant women who are a part of that project, Melissa Rosario, and Kirn, who are going to introduce themselves just in a moment. And on this episode, we're going to be talking about the impact of underrepresentation and why lived experience expertise matters, both in policy development, services and design and delivery, and in product design and development too. We've seen the impact of not having that lived experience, on decisions that are made in our political sphere, in policy development and in the delivery of the third sector. And often it is communities of colour and specifically women of colour that are most harmed by decisions that are not fit for purpose, often because they are not included in those decision making opportunities in the first place. We're going to talk about a range of different areas and what underrepresentation and a lack of lived experience means there. And why it's particularly important when we talk about Covid-19 recovery, and a Covid-19 recovery that works for everyone, particularly those furthest away from access to opportunity, power and wealth. But before we get started, let's hear from our three amazing women who I've got to know through the Pass the Mic project. And I'm a big fan of all three of them. So if we could start off with Melissa, just saying hello, who you are and your background, and also telling us a little bit about why you wanted to be part of the Pass the Mic project.

[00:02:42.120] - Melissa Espinoza

Thank you for having me. My name is Melissa Espinoza, I am a PhD researcher at Heriot-Watt University and I also work in the housing and homelessness sector. I joined Pass the Mic because I wanted to be part of a collective environment where we take care of each other, where we fight for each other, where we rest, where we heal, and where we celebrate together. I wanted to do this with people who inspire me and who understand me from many aspects of my identity, including being a woman, a daughter of immigrants and a person of colour who works in a profession that is predominantly white. So when I saw Pass the Mic, I knew I had to be part of it.

[00:03:19.290] - Talat Yaqoob

And I'm super glad you're part of it, Melissa, thank you. Rosario, hello!

[00:03:24.480] - Rosario Blue

Hi. My name is Rosario Blue, or PEN NAME. I'm a freelance journalist. I specialise in tech and video games, music and culture. I'm also a Research Fellow with the Centre for Investigative Journalism. I really wanted to get involved because it was - it sounded like it was an opportunity to actually meet other women from various different racial backgrounds and ethnic minorities, also having the opportunity to network and find different opportunities. I've always felt like I haven't known very many people within the literature and journalistic background in Scotland, I actually didn't know anybody. So I was really hoping for a community, meeting like-minded women who are experts in their field, and just to learn and grow and feel like I'm part of the sisterhood, which thankfully that's exactly what it's been so far and just amazing opportunities and growth.

[00:04:32.690] - Talat Yaqoob

Thanks so much, Rosario. And finally, Kirn.

[00:04:35.300] - Kirndeeep Kaur

Thanks, Talat. So my name is Kirn, and I'm a trained solicitor. I have a background in human rights law. I wanted to be part of the Pass the Mic project because firstly, I'd never known anything like this

before. I thought it was a great opportunity to, a bit like what the lady just said, to do with meeting other women who have got so many skills that I could learn from, speak to, and having that community with them. But also, I think from my personal perspective, when I was growing up, I never really saw women that looked like me in any kind of places of power or even in the news as journalists and newspapers as well. So when this opportunity came along, I thought it was great because I was like someone like my niece, I want her to grow up with people that look like her in those spaces. I think that's really, really important to have someone that looks like you in those positions, so they are accessible, and you do see yourself represented there. So I definitely feel like it was time to dust off the assertion that those spaces were only really available for white men. So that's why I thought, why not? What's the worst that could happen?

[00:05:58.660] - Talat Yaqoob

Thanks so much all. And all three of you have had an opportunity to be published so, a plug for their articles, Melissa, Rosario and Kirn have all written really brilliant articles on their areas of expertise. And I would really recommend you reading it, giving them a re-tweet, just general supportiveness is always welcome. So, we're talking about underrepresentation and lived experience. And Kirn, you've just mentioned, you know, for your niece being able to see women of colour, women who look like her as part of the kind of policymaking, the power and decision-making landscape. Beyond that visibility and kind of relatability, why do you think underrepresentation, or how do you think underrepresentation has kind of illustrated itself when it comes to kind of human rights law and in your background in particular?

[00:06:50.320] - Kirndeeep Kaur

I think underrepresentation has been huge within the legal field. Even if you look at the legal profession itself, you've got sheriffs and judges, I think only roughly about three percent are actually from Black and ethnic minority backgrounds. And that is a really stark statistic when you think about what the role of a sheriff or a judge actually is. And even based on that point, even if you're just looking at day-to-day law firms, you don't see women who are from Black and ethnic minority backgrounds in those high ranking positions of partners. And I think that's something that just has to change. It can't carry on like that at all, I think, because when you look at society in general, I think that you need to have representation within society, because you don't - society isn't one colour, it's not one gender, and you can't make policies, etc. for just one type of person. It needs to represent and it needs to work for all within society. So when you're looking at that from the human rights angle, human rights don't work if you only apply them to one certain sect. It's - human rights in very nature, they're universal. So they do apply to all, and you can't just apply them to only like 50 percent of the population. Not just not, that's not going to work. So if you're trying to have a society which realises human rights, then there has to be representation for all societies, and all communities within the policies that you make. And in order to do that, you need to have those communities at the table when you're making those policies and those decisions.

[00:08:48.990] - Talat Yaqoob

Quite a while ago now, there was a roundtable for Black and minority ethnic women as part of the National Advisory Council on Women and Girls. And I was there, too. And, you know, in that room, I felt a lot of frustration and I shared a lot of frustration. Because you've been talking about this for a long time. We've been saying the same things for a long time. What do you think in terms of the third sector, for example, do you feel like it should be further ahead than it is? Do you feel like the conversations should be further ahead than they are?

[00:09:17.980] - Kirndeeep Kaur

Oh, definitely. I think it's - when I think about a roundtable now, I just feel like a lot of conversations, they go round in circles. There's no - there needs to be better commitment to actually include particularly women from Black and ethnic minority backgrounds into these decisions. And I think that needs to come with a real action rather than there being a lot of talk around it, and a lot oh we need to do this, and we need to do that. And it doesn't actually happen. I mean, you're looking at god, we're in like 2021 now, and we're still fighting for very basic things that we don't have as women of, as women of colour. I mean, even if you're looking at it, I think an employment perspective. We had one of ours, I'm from the Sikh faith, and we had a religious holiday yesterday. And a lot of people at my work were

like oh, I was telling them about it, and they were like, all right okay, and then someone asked me, why shouldn't you have that as a day off when, instead of working? And I was thinking, well, yeah, maybe I should maybe I should be asking for that. But when that actual factor should be more of a, it's kind of accepted that there's lots of different holidays and there's lots of different religions that should be recognised and people should have the opportunity to come forward and have that. But I think sometimes people feel like they don't really have the space to do that, because the employment policies and just general policies, I think haven't really created that space in the first place.

[00:10:57.760] - Talat Yaqoob

Yeah so the policies seem equal on a piece of paper, but aren't in the delivery. When you when you actually have to put them into real life.

[00:11:04.820] - Kirndeeep Kaur

Yeah, the practicalities of it. Yeah, I think that just they don't seem to work.

[00:11:09.920] - Talat Yaqoob

Melissa, from the perspective of housing and homelessness, when you were talking about underrepresentation, we can be talking about communities of colour, but we're also talking about the lived experience of homelessness in itself. Is that an underrepresentation issue and a lived experience issue you've found within housing and homelessness, and the research that you do?

[00:11:28.870] - Melissa Espinoza

I will say that I have found that there's more and more research now, especially within the homelessness sector, that understands that the people with the lived experience are the experts. We are not. We are the researchers and we put all that aside and we put it together for them. But they know what the obstacles are, especially in a system that, it isn't easy to navigate. So I am seeing more of a push for, even funding for research that requires that people with lived experience be a part of it. And I'm seeing even more specific, which I like to see is not in a tokenistic way, but in a way that says you know, they're there when you draft for funding, they're there. To give insight and the tools that you use, how you ask questions. And often times there's some great work, for example, like Groundswell in England that they are the ones who conduct the research themselves. So they're trained in how to use certain software and stuff. But the research comes from people who lived experience, by people who lived experience. And I think that's incredibly important. However, like you said, not only is it important to have lived experience represented, but it's also important to have different types of lived experience represented. So we can't just have white people with lived experience because how we experience different programmes, different policies, is very different. For example, for someone who has no recourse to public funds but is also experiencing homelessness, that experience is going to be very different in many ways. Of course, there's intersectionalities of where it's similar. However, there will be things that they won't be able to access based on their immigration status or, you know, racism exists within those different housing programmes. And so it's also just saying that different groups within homelessness have to be represented. So it's not enough to just have people with lived experience, but an active choice to make sure that different groups within people who are going through homelessness are represented. Because, like I said, we all experience things differently, even though we connect in one experience like homelessness.

[00:13:53.050] - Talat Yaqoob

And I think your point about lived experience not being that kind of token gesture is so well-made because, you know, along with explaining intersectionality, explaining lived experience and how to use it, I think if I have to do that one more time, I may have to just retire because I'm - it's becoming more of an angry explanation every time I do it. But the reality is, is that we've seen a lot of the rhetoric around lived experience actually being nothing more than a case study, but calling it lived experience or calling it experts by experience. But actually it is just asking somebody to relive their trauma, at the end of a project to sense-check whether they've done the right thing. But what you're talking about there is actually academic study, which insists on people with experience of homelessness actually being part of the design of the project in the first place, which is the whole point of how lived experience should work.

[00:14:53.500] - Melissa Espinoza

Correct. Yes. So looking at how lived experience is, it's not a monolith how people move through homelessness. It is required to go a step further and see who's being represented in our policies or in our research and realising not everyone experiences one type of disadvantage the same way.

[00:15:16.000] - Talat Yaqoob

Absolutely. Absolutely. And know I'm really encouraged to hear that there might be - there's research funding and grant funding that has embedded in it the expectation of lived experience in design. I hadn't appreciated that. I hadn't realised that was happening. And if more of that can happen, I think it forces the hand, particularly within academia and in research. So I'm really glad to hear that's happening. Rosario, so you know, your background, your expertise in tech and in gaming, well, oof! There is no shortage of examples of where that goes wrong, in not having women of colour lived experience around the table. Tell us more about that.

[00:15:53.620] - Rosario Blue

Oh, goodness. I mean, I'll start by saying the gaming - gaming and tech, actually gaming specifically has definitely come a long way. So actually today is the last day of E3, which is, it's basically run by the Entertainment Software Association. And it's basically a time for different game publishers, tech companies, developers to come and essentially say, here, hi, this is our game, this is what we've been working on. This is our new products that are coming out. Usually it's overwhelmingly white, and there's been a lot of issues with a lot of non-white and non-binary, you know, basically different types of people who are consumers of games who feel underrepresented. Games have been definitely trying to make a move to be more representative of everyone that actually plays, but even the tech world aside separately is, I mean, it's terrible like - but this year I will give it to them. There's been a lot more representation, a lot more. There's I mean, a genuine, surprising amount of different characters and not just Black characters, Asian characters, LGBTQ+ characters, but the reaction, the reaction is what really says it all. So there's a new game called Red Fall, which was part of the announcements. It's got one Black female character in it. And the backlash was just - it's not shocking for us. It's not shocking. But I think with so many eyes from the industry being able to see, I think they're going to start to realise that it's not just people talking for the sake of it. They're not just complaining for the sake of it. There is a real deep issue with racism and sexism and misogyny within the gaming community. When you have things like Dead or Alive, which is an old school game now, I mean, it's a continuous series, but it started quite some time ago. When you have things about jiggle mechanics, which is about how women's boobs move up and down, like in games and stuff like that, you know, there's obviously quite a long way to go. But even Horizon Forbidden West, is a new title that's the newest in its franchise, is coming out. And one of, well the main protagonist, she was considered to not be attractive enough, which was very bizarre. She was a pretty normal looking woman. And even then she didn't meet the aesthetic that a lot of male gamers wanted to see.

[00:19:01.720] - Rosario Blue

So I don't know, like there's one thing for tech companies - especially since last - so with the Black Lives Matter movement gaining so much traction last year after George Floyd was brutally murdered, a lot of companies, several companies came out, giving their statements about how they're going to make a proper, concerted effort to represent more people of colour, particularly Black women who are usually the most underrepresented. A lot of - it's performative in a lot of cases. Like I mean, we - they said all these things and very little changed. And even very recently, there was some issues of cosmetics wanting to come into the gaming industry, because gaming is lucrative. I mean, before it was seen as just the nerds, the nerds' forum part of the world, if you want to say. And now more and more companies are getting involved in gaming because they see how much money it's making, Elf decided to come into a space which has a community, a very strong community already, but didn't bother to actually do any of the work to look at what we as gamers want to see. And they even put out a tweet asking for people to put forward who they think would be great ambassadors to represent them and stream on their channel, on Twitch. And they didn't actually listen to anybody, which was very bizarre. In fact, one of the women who was the highest, who had the highest engagements, they just totally ignored. She was a Black woman, and everybody that was presented were all white women. There wasn't even anyone from the LGBTQ community. I mean, so it's it was very - they dropped the ball. I mean, they really dropped the ball. And so, yeah, it's there's a long way to go. And

things like this happen because there aren't enough people of colour in these spaces. And even if you say they put in more characters or more developers, when we look at the higher-ups, there are no Black people in executive positions. So the same things continue to happen and continue to happen and really you are speaking to someone that doesn't really understand. They're just doing it because, well, it's now the thing to do.

[00:21:30.120] - Talat Yaqoob

And there was no shortage of, you know, whether it's from the finance sector, retail sector, gaming and tech to third sector, there's no shortage of statements of support last summer, during the resurgence of the Black Lives Matter protests. But action, is what I'm interested in. And a year on, I think you're quite right. It was it was just a statement support on social media and not much else. But I think you raise a really good point, about the backlash when there is any kind of progress. And it's the same kind of backlash we find when a representation begins to exist, whether that is representation in gaming as characters, or whether that is Diane Abbott as the first Black woman to be elected to Westminster. The level of abuse that is hurled at seemingly some kind of progress, to try and curtail that progress is extraordinary. And I wonder if that puts people of colour off from, women of colour particularly, off from participating in tech because of what they have experienced and wondering whether they should bother putting themselves in harm's way.

[00:22:52.020] - Rosario Blue

100 percent. I actually wrote a long-form piece for TechRadar last year, just towards the end - actually possibly the beginning of this year. Because there was a - every year, well, every so many years new consoles will come out and Xbox and, or Microsoft and Sony were releasing their new Xbox and PlayStation consoles. Usually a bunch of review units are sent out to streamers or gamers to review. And there wasn't - there were none sent out to any Black women or other women of colour within the space. In fact, there was maybe one or two Black men. But even that, you know, there was barely any. And, you know, when we talk about racial diversity, we're not just talking about Black folk. There's also Asian people and Indigenous people. And none of them were reached out to. So, two activist streamers within the space, they put out some tweets and the vitriol, I mean, it was from my perspective as a journalist researching and investigating and having to go undercover into one of the Discord groups of the main culprits of people abusing these women. It was so - I mean, I had to take some time out. That's how much racist, disgusting language these people are saying. But if you imagine what they were going through as the ones receiving it, there was one thing for me to be reading it, but for the ones that were receiving it, I mean, it got to the point where they were trying to hack their personal accounts to get into their accounts, to do God knows what. I mean, they received so much abuse because they actually were successful, in their tweets to Microsoft and Sony, and they ended up receiving consoles. And a lot of these guys felt like, well, you just got it because of your race. You just used the race card, just used the race card. Totally missing the point of what they were saying.

[00:25:05.900] - Rosario Blue

If you think about gaming in general, not everybody, this doesn't apply to everyone, but a lot of people use gaming as escapism. Especially last year with everything going on with Black Lives Matter movement and also the pandemic. It was an escape for so many people. Going into this space, as a woman of colour, you already know that there's going to be some pushback. There's going to be some, you know, some levels of abuse, but you use it as an escape. And a lot of people have, quite a few people anyway, have mental health issues. So if you imagine you're going into this space to escape that and to feel better in whatever way that you can, but then you're worried that, oh my gosh, I'm going to get a whole bunch of abuse, it heightens anxiety, it can cause PTSD. In fact, a lot of the women who had received a lot of the abuse have actually just shut off, they stopped streaming for a while. Some actually haven't come back because they said that they needed time to recoup because it was just so damaging. So there's a lot of work to be done. But as a Black person or really anyone of colour, you either have to choose to just exist as a gamer and not complain, or you say something and try to stand for something, and be almost certain that you're going to get a bucket load of abuse. And it doesn't stop as well. Once you are tarred with that brush. That's it. You will always get it.

[00:26:36.420] - Talat Yaqoob

I think you make some really important points there. And it's what does tech do? How does how does the tech industry or the gaming industry actually make itself competently aware of and able to intervene to create tech that is not creating platforms where racism and sexism can go unchecked? Where it - how does it get that lived experience around the table? Not in a tick box way. But actually to be able to create tech that prevents racial abuse and sexism and misogyny rather than amplifies it, which is the space that we're in. And I do often wonder if these tech platforms were created, with that in mind from the beginning, would we have such traumatic and divisive experiences online as well? I want to move on to the question about whether you have seen things that have actually been competent, good things we could learn from, where representation has been taken seriously. Inclusion in design and delivery and lived experience has been taken seriously and done well. Melissa gave the example of actually writing in those expectations into funding requirements in academia. And I wonder, Kirn, have you come across whether it's in law, whether it's in your community activism, whether it's in human rights, where lived experience, engagement of diverse representation has actually been done well?

[00:28:06.720] - Kirndeeep Kaur

I'm involved in this charity called Sikh Sanjog, which is a women's rights charity, which particularly for women from the Sikh community in Scotland. And an example of good representation in terms of policymaking, was when we were asked to put in a consultation and the people that had asked us to do it they kind of gave us the space, to go out there and try and find out information, but find it out the way that we wanted to do it. I feel like in a lot of consultations to do with policy, the set up of it is very - it's very archaic in that they might ask some like the usual suspects that they have on a list to come around a table at about 11 o'clock in the morning, on a Wednesday morning. When you're thinking, well, who's going to be available on a Wednesday at 11 o'clock during the week? You don't - people do work. So I think they did - that seemed to have been recognised so they did give us the resources, and kind of helped us to put on different events after - at different times, after work. So I think that's a really good example because it does recognise that you can't just have that tokenistic attitude of yes, we asked this one organisation who happened to be involved with Sikh women, and we asked them to come and meet us at 11 o'clock on a Wednesday. But instead it was, can you tell us how does your community work? How do you get people involved? And then worked with us like that.

[00:29:53.220] - Talat Yaqoob

I think that's really impressive. And I think what's really important about that is that they actually resourced you to do it. Far too often, you know, we've seen this, that you - the communities of colour, are contacted when something is required. But these are the kind of lowest funding or no funding organisations at the grassroots level. So for that to come with a little bit of investment makes such a difference.

[00:30:16.290] - Kirndeeep Kaur

Oh, yeah, definitely. And I think more people are willing to engage and they actually know that this is something that the people do, the policymakers do want to include because they are putting - their basically putting their money where their mouth is, really.

[00:30:29.610] - Talat Yaqoob

Absolutely. And I think consultations are really good example of, well, the consultations in the way that, you know, Scottish Government or local authorities usually, traditionally do them, is a really good example of how not to do lived experience input, how not to ensure represented voice are included. In fact, it just cements in the very inequalities that we're trying to get rid of. So I think that's a really good example. Melissa, is there any other examples that you have where it's actually been done well? Where inclusion has been done in a way that you would commend, particularly around lived experience?

[00:31:06.720] - Melissa Espinoza

Well I've been very lucky to be involved, or even have the choice to be involved, in things that I believe in. And I believe that people with lived experience are the experts and the people we need to be listening to if we want to change anything for the better, especially in the housing sector. I would say that was - that has been my most favourite part of my research, but one thing I did want to go back to

real quickly is why, the first question you had asked, which is why does representation, community voice matter in decision making? And specifically in academia, I think it's really important to have people in decision-making positions that come from underrepresented backgrounds because academia is often used to inform, to justify, and disprove, different policies our government implements. But academia is not free from perpetuating harm towards underrepresented groups. If anything, conducting research in underrepresented groups is seen as a novelty and really important. But for some reason, retaining and hiring people from underrepresented groups isn't. If only academia pushed for inclusiveness of underrepresented groups in decision-making the way they do for people to do research on underrepresented groups, then we would have a far better environment for research with higher impact. I think it's forgotten that academia is more than just our universities. It's an entire field of research and publications. It should be strongly linked to practise, however, it often isn't. The current conditions favour people who have supplemental incomes and can do free publishing and work on research for free.

[00:32:46.320] - Melissa Espinoza

I wanted to add that even just the way we talk about certain underrepresented groups in academia can also be harmful. So when we talk about who's vulnerable to homelessness, factors like poverty and weak social networks are true. However, they'll use other demographic factors, such as being a woman, or being Black, also increases the chances of - becoming homeless. Well, women are often - Black people are often overrepresented in homelessness experience. It's not actually that being a woman that makes you susceptible, and it's not actually being Black that makes you more susceptible to homelessness. It's patriarchy and it's white supremacy that makes being a woman or Black more likely to experience homelessness in our current systems. So, yeah, just to reinforce, like, why it's so important to have a variety of decision makers from different backgrounds, because if we don't have that, then it's easy for someone who doesn't come from these backgrounds to not challenge the messaging. And that's why it's so important to not only have researchers, but lecturers, students, and editors, and journal article reviewers from these different backgrounds. They help determine who becomes publishable and treated as scholarly and what's essentially accessible information.

[00:34:07.540] - Talat Yaqoob

Such a good point, in fact so many good points. But there's two that I want to pick up on there - one, absolutely right about retaining, progressing the talent of the people who are funded to do the research, not just what is being researched. And you know what is the decision-making that gets you to say, three white male middle class researchers, researching the so-called vulnerable group and doing research that might be equalities focussed, but where are the women of colour? Where's the Black researchers? Where is the disabled and Black minority ethnic researcher involved in that? Where are they in being hired for their expertise, as well, not just the topic that's being researched. So I think that's critical, and really important. And the other point that you just made there about language, the language that's used and the not calling it misogyny, patriarchy, racism and white supremacy. Not actually calling it that and instead calling it the vulnerability of being a minority group. The vulnerability of being from the Black or Brown community, I think is so well made. But it feels like it's very far away from academia. I see people, grassroots communities, service delivery on the ground, third sector, although not as well as it should, but many in the third sector able to call that what it is. But it feels like it's a much further journey for academia to go.

[00:35:46.820] - Melissa Espinoza

I agree, I think that we want to be seen as unbiased in academia and that informed by our evidence, by what we research, but if our - how can we be informed by it if the people who are experiencing it aren't involved? And of course, everything we do is biased in academia as well, too. We come up with the hypothesis where we studied all of that, changes the way we interpret data. So I know that academia wants to be seen as possibly the field with the least amount of bias or can be proven where the bias is. But there is such a long way to go. And unfortunately, it does usually fall on women of colour and people of colour as lecturers to fight for this. And to constantly be that voice and to constantly be pushing, on top of being a researcher, on top of lecturing, on top of all that, you're often hired to be in these diversity and inclusion roles. It's like, here's this mess - fix us, fix it! Be less - help us be less racist. That isn't my job as a diversity inclusion person, but I feel that women of colour, especially that are higher in these positions, are given these expectations to do so much with so little

and so little time.

[00:37:02.180] - Talat Yaqoob

And of course, asked to do all the emotional labour for free on top of that. Really good points, well made. I'm aware of time. I could talk to you three for the whole day, but I'm not sure how many people are going to sit and listen to a 24 hour podcast, but we could give it a try. But I wanted to finish off by asking, what do you think needs to change? So in your respective fields, or in Scotland as a whole, in media. When it comes to lived experience, expertise, tackling underrepresentation in these critical decision-making spaces that you will occupy, what one or two things do you think need to change? And just kind of a quick insight into what you think. Rosario, I'll start with you.

[00:37:48.530] - Rosario Blue

Well, one of the best places to start is having more things like Pass the Mic, I mean, I can't stress how much it has enriched my life. We need to - it's always the same thing, oh we don't know where to find them, or we don't know where, you know, they don't come forward. Well, actually, there's so many organisations that are doing stuff to put people of colour, women of colour, disabled people, you know, in the forefront. We're here. And it's about having some kind of way in. You know, if we tap into these organisations, you know, use their resources, get in contact with the people, in fact, just look on - go on social media, they can find people easily. You can usually tell what a person is about from seeing their posts, things that they share, things that they re-tweet. But that's a start. You know, we have to have more opportunities as well. And it shouldn't be a thing of, oh, you know, it's performative or you only got it because of this. No, there are fully, expertly skilled people of colour, women of colour that are out there. And it's also not as simple as just saying, hey, like you know, we're going to take you on, or we want you to work in our company, or speak for your people. It's about changing the culture from within, because in a lot of cases, especially, for example, the tech industry, they say, OK, come in, we want more people of colour to come in. And then women of colour come in and then they have to deal with a toxic culture when they get there. If that culture doesn't change, then you're not going to get many of them that stay. Or if they do, they end up leaving or going through a lot of emotional and psychological damage. So it's not as simple as saying, hey, let's get them in. Yes, definitely get us in, but make sure that you're actually changing the culture, that is so important.

[00:39:58.260] - Rosario Blue

And it's not as simple as going to these training sessions, because in a lot of cases, a lot of organisations run them. But I think, again, they don't usually have the right people doing it. So people like Gillian Katungi, who actually came to do a talk in Pass the Mic, sort of teaching us about how to handle workplace racism and prejudice. She's a great person. Great example. There are people out there and also we shouldn't - when we are brought in, it shouldn't always be to talk about our pain. You know, if you're saying you're taking us on as experts, then let us do our job. But understand that every time you ask us to talk about something that we don't do, we're not the ones actuating the racism, we're not the one being prejudiced towards someone because of being a woman. You know, the people who are doing it, who are enacting this, they should be the ones teaching it, and they should be the ones learning about it. Let us just exist and do what we do, because we're more than just that. I mean, we're definitely that and we're amazing for it. But it's changing the culture and it's also going out there and doing the work to find people, because we're here.

[00:41:17.100] - Talat Yaqoob

I didn't even have to prep Rosario to do that Pass the Mic plug. She did it all by herself. That was perfection [Laughter]. I'll pay you later, thanks. [Laughter]. Kirn, what do you think needs to happen next to tackle the issue, the stubborn issue of underrepresentation, and bring in genuine lived experience, expertise and respect that in Scotland?

[00:41:46.270] - Kirndeeep Kaur

I think there's two words really Talat, just real change. I'm not talking about change of, you know, setting up working groups which seem to produce reports that say institutional racism or racism at all doesn't exist in the UK. I'm talking about some policies coming out there, and representation in different fields, so like quotas as well. I think quotas are really, really important in terms of bringing representation into different sectors, and into different fields, because it's not a case of oh, there's



people from, let's say, Asian backgrounds. There isn't enough smart people in that community, that's wrong, that's ludicrous. It's because they're not given the opportunity to actually get there in the first place. And in order to do that, companies, professions, they need to be forced to do that. And that's where I think quotas are really, really important. And they should be enforced and it should become a legal requirement because we can't just keep on having this same talk of, how do we - of asking the individuals who are being oppressed - how do we stop oppressing you? That doesn't work like that. So I think that's what really, really needs to change. And totally, what Rosario was saying as well about having these communities through Pass the Mic. I think it's really, really important that you have these platforms, so that people can tap into it and then connect and gain opportunities that way as well. Because I feel like both of those, the quotas and the communities like Pass the Mic, that's where you'll get real, real change.

[00:43:40.840] - Talat Yaqoob

And Melissa, what do you think if there's one thing that can be implemented, that you think would make a genuine change?

[00:43:49.860] - Melissa Espinoza

Yeah to bounce off the themes of Rosario and Kirn, is I would say, I want to see Scotland actually be the place it so proudly and loudly wants to be, a very kind and welcoming place. The thing about being nice and being kind is, they're very different things. Being nice doesn't require you to be honest, but being kind is being honest in a way that brings light, non-judgement, progress and is able to move you forward. It's being honest with what isn't kind here and owning and challenging the things that take away from people being welcomed. I think it's completely possible for Scotland to be that place where kindness is always delivered with great humour, it's just going to take some work, by also really owning what needs to be worked on.

[00:44:34.800] - Talat Yaqoob

Thank you so much. It's been such a pleasure talking to all three of you. And I hope those of you who are listening have had an opportunity to be able to take a chance to reflect, think about what's being said here and really engage and have enjoyed it as well. Thank you so much to Melissa, Rosario and Kirn, all making such important points. And I hope that you listening have also enjoyed it as much as I have. Remember that all three of their articles are on the Pass the Mic website. Please read them, share them. I will be back in episodes three and four that are left, and I hope you will also listen to those. But in the meantime, please use the Pass the Mic list. If you're a woman of colour who is not on that list, please submit your expertise and your interest, if you're organising an event, if you're working in media, please use the list. We want to see everybody take a role of responsibility in changing the face of opinion making, policy making, decision making, in Scotland. So thank you so much and I hope you're here with us in the last two episodes.

[00:45:34.360]

[Jingle plays out]