[00:00:21.700] - Talat Yaqoob
Hi, everyone. Welcome to the Pass the Mic podcast takeover of On the Engender. I'm Talat Yaqoob, and today I am hosting a conversation with Shasta, Shubhanna, and Nathalia, three brilliant women who are part of the Pass the Mic Project and Pass the Mic directory online. For those of you who don't know, Pass the Mic started in October 2019. And it is the only directory of women of colour experts from across Scotland, and expertise means professional expertise, learned expertise, lived experience, across a whole range of different backgrounds. The reason Pass the Mic exists is because the gross under representation of women of colour in media, as commentators, as opinion makers, as panellists and speakers at events. Whilst women of colour's expertise are underrepresented, it has consequences for how decisions are made, policy is developed, and services are designed. So Pass the Mic exists to amplify the stories, and the opinions, and expertise of women of colour.

[00:01:22.740] - Talat Yaqoob
In today's podcast we're going to be talking about COVID-19, and the disproportionate impact it has had on women of colour and communities of colour. Covid-19 has touched every aspect of our lives from our jobs, our financial security, our housing, our wellbeing, our care work at home and for some of us, it has been about grief and death. We're going to be talking about all of these things in today's podcast and in a very short space of time talking about a huge range of issues which illustrates just how deep Covid-19 has been felt across Scotland and across the world. And just how much of our lives have been affected. We're going to hear now from Shasta, Shubhanna, and Nathalia and want to ask them to introduce themselves.

[00:02:13.880] - Shubhanna Hussain-Ahmed
Hi, thanks. So yeah, I'm Shubhanna. I work for a national carer organisation in Scotland. I am also, I guess a carer myself and so I guess as well as working with a national carer organisation, I would probably say I'm also a campaigner, and advocate for carers across Scotland, as well as people with social care support needs.

[00:02:43.130] - Talat Yaqoob
Natalia, can you introduce yourself? Hi.

[00:02:45.060] - Nathalia Urban
Hi Talat, thank you. My name is Nathalia. I'm a Latin American woman. I came from Brazil, and I'm a political journalist based in Scotland.

[00:02:55.500] - Talat Yaqoob
Amazing, thank you Nathalia. And Shasta, hi.

[00:02:57.900] - Shasta Ali
Hi, my name is Shasta, and I work in the third sector. I have always worked with communities in and around equalities and specifically with Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities. Currently I'm working in external relations with a focus on community stories and community engagement, with a funder in Scotland. And I am a long term anti-racism campaigner.

[00:03:21.140] - Talat Yaqoob
So you can hear the brilliant expertise we've got chatting to us today. But we're going to be talking about COVID-19, and it's disproportionate impact on women of colour. It's consumed our lives over the last 15 months, it's likely to continue to be a critical part of our lives, even as we do Covid-19 recovery. And what does that mean though, for women of colour? How has that impacted women of colour? And is recovery and the decisions being made by policymakers working for women of colour? So let's give you a little bit of background of what we know so far on COVID-19 and how it has impacted women of colour. Close the Gap have put out a briefing specifically on this, which tells us that especially women of colour and younger women, are more likely to be employed in a sector

which has been shut down or affected by social distancing restrictions. Research by the Women's Budget Group has revealed that 43% of Black, Asian and minority ethnic women said they would struggle to make ends meet over the next three months. And 73% of BAME men and 65% of BAME women said they had work related anxiety, for those who were working outside the home. Nearly half of Black, Asian, minority ethnic women said they were struggling to cope with all the different demands on their time currently, compared to 34.6% of white women. And the Health Services Journal, in a study in the Health Services Journal, found that Black, Asian, minority ethnic individuals and migrants, who were working in health and social care, were dying at disproportionate rates in comparison to their white counterparts. As high as 63% of deaths in one key study.

[00:05:01.280] - Talat Yaqoob
So, we know that COVID-19 has disproportionately impacted Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities, and within that women of colour. We want to know what that means, both in the lived experience of women of colour, and also in what we know in the areas of work, that we have done. So, let's talk about this further. I just want to have an open question for the panel that's with us today, tell us a little bit about what you have experienced, what you have witnessed, where women of colour have been disproportionately impacted either in your working lives, or your personal lives, due to COVID-19.

[00:05:37.420] - Shasta Ali
I think for me personally, on my life experience I think it's gender disparities, I've just realised how much of an impact it's had. Like other women in the pandemic, I found myself really struggling, with the increased physical and mental workload as a mother, as a wife, as an employee. I found myself responsible for the bulk of the child care responsibilities in our household, and I've got three little ones. Full-time educator, a carer, oh gosh - household chores increased with everyone being at home, cooking, cleaning. It's just such an enormous responsibility and also to make sure that a little ones during the pandemic, during lockdown, were healthy and happy, managing all of that along with home schooling and them being away from their family and friends. I just found it - I found it exhausting. I did find it exhausting.

[00:06:31.660] - Shubhanna Hussain-Ahmed
I also think, just to add to Shasta, I've found myself in exactly the same situation, you end up becoming absolutely everything for everybody in your household. But can I just say, I don't think this was specifically a gender thing. Thinking about, reflecting I guess on my own experiences this was, I guess, an interaction between gender and cultural expectations, if that's the right word. Because I think there was something in there about not just the fact that we were doing the bulk of everything in the house, from caring to managing the children to educating the children to basically being the one that was keeping everybody together. But there was a cultural expectation that that was our role. Certainly it felt like that for me. And I think that's certainly been the experience of many of the other women that I've spoken to recently, particularly those who have had a caring role, and the expectation that it was always down to the daughter, the sister, the daughter in law, you know, the mother, to be doing the caring role. And there was never an expectation that the husbands or the brothers or the sons would be doing that.

[00:07:47.040] - Nathalia Urban
Well, my experience was a bit different because I'm an immigrant, so I had the extra emotional load of seeing loved ones getting sick, dying, and I'm being trapped here, and they were there. And also mentally, it was very exhausting about like thinking and about the possibility of getting sick, and having no one to after me. And even to have peaks of depression, because I started to imagine if something happens to me, how my family would be able to, I don't know, even to bring my body back to Brazil you know. So, it might sound too grave to talk about it. But I know for a fact that all the immigrants that I spoke to had the same concerns, especially because we saw how things got bad real fast here. And because we are already in a position of vulnerability, socially speaking, and also health-wise, especially my community, the Latin American community. We are all very afraid of, like getting sick, dying, and have to give our families back home other problems to be concerned. So yeah, it was really difficult.

[00:09:22.780] - Talat Yaqoob
I really feel that, I think that the emotional toll for women, migrant women, women of colour, both in terms of being like Nathalia has said, far away from family, them not being able support you, you're not being able to support them, and having that distance between you. And the cultural expectations, as you have pointed out there, Shubhanna, really has taken a huge toll on women of colour, migrant women's lives. And a lot of, you know, commentary, a lot of researchers said that, they feel like it's taken women back a few decades in terms of equality and how much is expected of them at home. Is that something that you hear? Do you think we've gone back a few decades, in terms of caring responsibility and who does the bulk of the work?

[00:10:14.400] - Shubhanna Hussain-Ahmed
I think there's something in that, Talat, because I think this pandemic was the first time that many of us had experienced a crisis of this level, and in some ways we had no roadmap, I guess, to get a sense of how we were supposed to behave and react. And I think on some levels, some of us reverted to perhaps some really, I don't know how to word this, but you know it's almost like reverting to a way that was - some sort of expectation of us. I probably haven't worded that properly because I can't really articulate that, but I think there was something in there about going back to doing what you felt was your role. Everybody felt that they needed to take on a role. And I think for some of us women, we kind of, in some ways, although it felt heavy and demanding, I think some of us took charge of the roles that we have literally been brought up to do.

[00:11:30.320] - Talat Yaqoob
Yeah, being pulled back into, kind of, society's stereotypes.

[00:11:34.220] - Shubhanna Hussain-Ahmed
Yeah, I think norms and the expectations of us - sorry Talat, I cut you off there.

[00:11:39.660] - Talat Yaqoob
Absolutely. The norms and expectations. I think what it does is illustrate just how stubborn and deep rooted those things are, because of how quickly we fell back into those roles, even though for a lot of us, for many of us, I certainly have pushed back against those roles, but found myself in no other position then to take on more of that. Even though in my mind it's not what I wanted to do.

[00:12:04.800] - Shubhanna Hussain-Ahmed
Me also. And I think it also made us realise that society, infrastructure, policies, are not designed for almost like for men to take on our share. If that makes sense. I think we saw that, if you think about even in terms of parental responsibility, the reason many of us women took on the role of home education and home learning and managing the kids during that pandemic, was because we had - you know we had a little bit more flexibility, some of us. Even in terms of when you think about you know, maternity leave etc. as an example. There's always a bias - there's always far more bias and flexibility around the woman taking on that role, and not so much the men or the fathers.

[00:12:55.760] - Talat Yaqoob
Yeah, absolutely. I see that, and you're right in terms of policy and systems, Shubhanna. And I guess, you know just as an overall question, do you think if we talk about those systems, we talk about the infrastructure that is created around us, in the COVID-19 response and in the conversations we're now having about COVID-19 recovery, do you see women of colour being adequately included and considered in what has happened so far, and the planning of what's to come? Shasta, what do you think?

[00:13:29.460] - Shasta Ali
In a really short answer, no. Because I think if you even look back to the beginning of the pandemic and lockdown, what Shubhanna has said, the impact of it has just - of what we've had to do at home has just been huge. There's so many women like us that we've taken in all these additional responsibilities as well as still maintaining our career, as well as still doing our day job. We've suddenly adapted to home life, we've done the home schooling, we've had the millions of emails, we set our children up there, everything has been on top of it. But do policymakers and folk out there, do

really know the impact that it's had? I've got a wonderful, hands-on husband who has helped enormously through the pandemic, but he's also in a job where he couldn't work from home. So like other Black, Asian, minority ethnic men, he has an employment, he has had a job that does not allow him to work from home. So he was out doing 12 hour shifts, and then coming back and picking up bits, but by then like we've had a whole day, of trying to do everything. And again, a bit of what Shubhanna had touched on, as a woman of colour we also have all these additional roles, where we're looking after, we've got caring responsibilities for our extended families. And whilst everybody went into lockdown and we have these bubbles. Our bubbles included our families. We couldn't just leave and work in our own homes. I was out doing shopping and food. I don't see that reflected in policy responses. I don't see that reflected in when we talk about build back better, built forward better, because I don't think people realise the impact that that has on just one person at home doing everything. And like I said, this is on top of you then still having your career, and managing your day job.

[00:15:20.560] - Talat Yaqoob
I can feel your anger, and that's an important thing to be able to hear and give space to. And I think Nathalia, certainly as - do you think migrant women have been adequately considered in COVID-19 response? I mean even thinking about how people have talked about travel in such a dismissive way and not really thinking about the fact that for some people travel means family. It means connection. It means a critical part of their lives.

[00:15:54.340] - Nathalia Urban
If there's something, I don't want to say positive, but something that came that is less horrible from the situation, was that now a more into - like a campaign even harder for the recognition of Latin America as an ethnic minority group, because according to a report made by the Indo-American refugee migrant organisation, the impact on my community were devastating. We had already a very invisible, yet very vulnerable, and living in precarity community. No one knows Latin America as a group that is attached to a history of money and success. And even like stability in United Kingdom. So, when we are talking about the impact, we are talking about like families starving and not having any access to even food for food banks because they cannot request any public sort of support. We are seeing women trapped into abusive relationships. We have seen people there were sick and weren't able to have health care because, not because they don't have rights, but because they don't have the knowledge of the language or they don't know where they can go. They don't know how to reach out to their counsellors, their MPs. So, it was really devastating. And yes, when you talk about travelling, I have had friends from other countries in Europe, and in England as well, who had family, like dying in Brazil or in other countries in Latin America and weren't able to go there. Many of us are religious people, and we of course, we wanted to attend funerals and religious ceremonies and we weren't able because the UK government put us in a red list, and not everybody has a 1000 pounds to make a quarantine, even though we live in the country. So, the whole system was very elitist, and also made for white British people, if you know what I mean.

[00:18:31.740] - Talat Yaqoob
Yeah I do, I do know what you mean. And one of the things that I've certainly noticed in, kind of, commentary and some of the work that I've been doing in other places, is how euro-centric the learning has been, and the comparisons that we've made. The furthest we've gone in terms of comparisons of who's done well or who can be learned from has been New Zealand. You know, looking at other white majority countries. If we're talking about what's happening, we're talking in positive terms. I certainly felt positive terms about white majority countries who have done well. And we are hearing very little about countries in the Global South, who have actually responded well and have managed to do better, in fact, than the UK in curtailing the impact of COVID-19. Nathalia, as a journalist, is that something that you felt? Where is the emphasis, and who's being talked about? What news are we hearing?

[00:19:36.640] - Nathalia Urban
Definitely. We had many countries in Africa that were doing great with almost no support, like medical support, like medicine in general. We had Vietnam who was like, they did great. They did wonderfully. And no one talks about Vietnam because, I don't know, it's an Asian country, it's not a white country.

Yes, New Zealand went well, but why we are ignoring those countries, why we are not like giving them the recognition, the praise they need. And also there's are several issues of, that showing that the British media is not just not ready to have professionals of colour, but also they are not ready to give acknowledge to countries that are not white majority countries. And it's really painful. And also it shows not just like a euro-centric perspective, but a racist perspective. Because how dare those people who are not white, to have a better strategy than my white majority government or my white majority country.

[00:21:00.020] - Talat Yaqoob
Shubhanna, we've seen - thank you Nathalia. Shubhanna, we've seen a huge number - increase in the number of unpaid carers. I'm right in thinking that we've reached 1 million unpaid carers? And that was a number that we didn't think we'd reached until 2030 in Scotland, and, you know, a lot of them are feeling exhausted, frustrated, ignored, during COVID-19. What has that looked like for women of colour and Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities?

[00:21:29.460] - Shubhanna Hussain-Ahmed
Yeah, you're absolutely right, Talat. So, during the pandemic it's estimated that around 1.1 million people across Scotland now undertake a caring role for a relative or a friend. And you're absolutely right, that effectively is one in five of us currently providing that type of role. What does that mean for people of colour or people of colour with caring responsibilities? Do you know what, we don't actually know. And that's the ridiculous thing. We do not have any accurate data or stats, which actually tell us how many people across those communities are providing care. And there's, I guess there's a number of reasons for that. Two key reasons are, firstly we, in this country, are ridiculously rubbish at collecting data about ethnicity and actually making some meaningful sense out of it. But secondly, we also have a whole range of communities in this country who firstly, just do not recognise that what they are actually doing, or what they're effectively doing is providing care, is providing unpaid care, for somebody. And for you know, as I said, for various cultural reasons perhaps, they see what they do as their role, as their duty, because that is what they have been led to believe.

[00:23:01.110] - Shubhanna Hussain-Ahmed
And the biggest fallout from that actually, is that we have got a whole a bunch of people out there, mainly women, you know, which goes without saying I guess, but mainly women who are undertaking, you know, not just during the pandemic, but probably before the pandemic. But I think as Shasta highlighted, the pandemic in some ways made that caring role just that little bit more difficult because you were also now weighing up how it was going to impact you in terms of, you know, either carrying the virus into other people's homes, into the homes of your parents or your in laws or whoever that relative might be. So yes, so I guess there were, again two things going on there. Firstly, our social care system is just not, in fact was never, designed to meet the diverse needs of its communities. And secondly, what that's done is it's made communities not recognise that what they are doing is a caring role. And that in itself, it's not just that in itself, it's also meant that those people don't know that they now actually also have legal rights to access information, advice and support because of that caring role.

[00:24:21.600] - Talat Yaqoob
Hugely, hugely important. Actually, it speaks to what to Nathalia was saying as well. Right across the board it's this - whether it's not collecting data and not analysing that data, not engaging with the community, communities of colour, and not telling their stories. So whether we're talking about learning from other Black, Asian or ethnic majority communities and countries, whether it's collecting data about those communities here in Scotland, it is the invisibility that's created, well, the proactive invisibility, it's the active ignoring of communities both across the world and who we're hearing from, and the communities that are here in Scotland. Which means that we're not part of the commentary, we're not part of the analysis, and we don't learn from them either.

[00:25:18.040] - Shubhanna Hussain-Ahmed
Can I just had one more thing around the data collection. So in some ways there is data being collected. But I guess my issue is the quality of that data and how that data is being used. So, for example, we know, under the Equality Act legislation for example, people, local authorities etc., public

bodies, that need to be collecting data around people who use our services. And yes, that's absolutely happening to some extent. But they then not using that data to actually reflect or make changes to their services, or tailor their services in any other way.

[00:26:00.020] - Shubhanna Hussain-Ahmed
Just to give you an example, during the pandemic, we had a number of services and agencies get in touch with us, because I have a disabled child. I also have a husband who has a disability and obviously has his care needs. We obviously have a lot of organisations who are involved around supporting us. So during the pandemic, we were inundated with well-being packages, you know, of nice little bags with candles and all the other nice stuff and food items, and what not. Every single agency that currently supports us know that we are a Muslim family. They know that because they've asked us numerous times on these ethnic monitoring forms, and yet almost all of these well being baskets and bags and what not, had pork products in them. And I know that sounds like a little thing, but actually it annoyed me to a great extent shall we say, because it showed that any data that they're collecting on us, was really just to say that we have X amount of people from X communities. They did nothing with that data. That data was meaningless because they did not use that to then actually think about, well, what does this mean for a Muslim family? How could we alter or support to meet their needs? And it meant that I became the cruel mum, because whenever these packages were arriving in our house, I would confiscate all the sweets and the gelatine products. And my kids were just like, oh mum, can we not just eat these they're marshmallows! And I'm like yeah, but they're not vegetarian marshmallows.

[00:27:43.770] - Talat Yaqoob
I'm going to keep in the fact that you're pissed off [Laughter]. Because actually that's legitimate, right, it's totally legitimate. And the reason it's legitimate and it matters is because when that care package arrives, it reminds you that you're not part of the standard that they are working to, and that's the problem. Right? That's the problem. And it might sound small, but it's an illustration of a wider issue within the system.

[00:28:09.220] - Shasta Ali
I think that's a really, really important point though, because I think it brings it back to every single anti-racism campaign that's out there. Is the fact that it's not - data collection can't just be a tick box exercise when you're just finding out the communities that are using your services, are accessing it, and that's it. But the whole point of meaningful data collection is that you then shape your services. And you're right, Shubhanna, because you might be in a slightly privileged position where you weren't relying on those ham slices that you got for your children. But there's families out there, and I've worked with those families, where that food package that comes through the door is their lifeline. That's all the food that they're going to get. So if organisations and services are collecting data on families, on us, and we're continuously filling in, they're asking about religion and they're asking about your faith and they're asking about your background, then shape solutions. This is where structural racism comes in. It's the fact that we don't change anything, even when we collect data, solutions and services should be shaped on the information that they're collating or not collating. And that's where the disparities lie. And it does just frustrate me.

[00:29:23.340] - Talat Yaqoob
Shasta, given the fact that you've worked on hate crime reporting before, during Covid-19, do you think there have been, you know, widening of divisions and racial inequality? Obviously we've talked about that and we've seen clear disparities and disproportionate impact for communities of colour, from loss of income, loss of jobs, through to higher death rates. Have you seen other indicators of racial inequality during this last of 14-15 month period?

[00:29:57.120] - Shasta Ali
Yeah, thanks Talat. Yeah, we have. Just even when the pandemic started, I mean Covid-19 has shown us the disproportionate affect it's had on Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities. These communities were in a higher risk of contracting the virus, and as early figures show actually not even surviving it. And the reasons if you really look down into it, it's the structural inequalities that have been going on for decades. This research that we've had about poverty, about racism, about hate

crime. We've had it for years and years and years, but all Covid-19 has done has exacerbated it. It's thrown it into the spotlight for more people to see. I mean, we've got a Black, Asian, minority ethnic communities, they're in over-represented public-facing industries. So you've got the care workers, you've got the NHS, you've got people in food industries, restaurants, takeaway. And then they're over-represented in low-paid precarious work. So again, public facing: bus, public hire drivers, security guards. So in a sense, BAME communities are over-represented and under-protected as key workers, because when the pandemic started, and the whole world shut down, and we worked from home, they were all represented in the communities that were out there front facing. They didn't have that opportunity to work from home.

[00:31:10.670] - Shasta Ali
And even personally, I saw that even within my own household, I got to work from home, my kids got to stay at home. But my husband is out there, right in the face of it. BAME communities are more likely to be living in multigenerational households, where social isolation is really tough. Like sometimes it's actually impossible if you've staying in a family of seven, eight people in a two to three bedroom house where a lot of our communities that are, because of poverty, it's really hard to then social isolate. So you've got overcrowding, and again it is the women that are doing the majority of the caring responsibilities. So looking after extended family, looking after in-laws, looking after children in their homes. So it's these racial disparities that are driving inequality, but when we talk about hate crime, I mean, it's really, really disheartening that in amongst a global pandemic and a national lockdown that crime has actually increased. I find that really hard to swallow, but in amongst all of that it's increased. In Scotland, two thirds of the hate crime reported is race related. Two thirds. It has gone up six percent over the last year. So according to CRER Scotland, on average someone in Scotland last year was charged with a racist hate crime every 2.6 hours over the past year, and that - we know under-reporting is rife.

[00:32:30.330] - Shasta Ali
I've worked with those communities where they just brush it under the carpet, it has happened too many times, they've seen no action, and then they don't report. So yeah, I mean, I think all of this is just the whole system constantly driving inequality. I mean just one example that I would like to share is that it's really important how like the media and politicians and everybody speak about racism and racist inequality, because back in 2018, I was working with Scottish Muslim women at the time, when our current PM had referred to Muslim women, veiled Muslim women as letterboxes and bank robbers. Now, I worked with a group of women at that point who were at the park with their really small children, and they were called letterboxes in front of the children. Now this is the impact, it is felt across racialised communities. It happens, just because he does a throwaway comment in the media. But his comments alone led to a 375 percent spike in anti-Muslim hate crime. And like I said, that it felt, and it felt by the women that he was talking about. And that's a real life impact of normalising hatred.

[00:33:42.520] - Talat Yaqoob
Yeah, and it's everything that Boris Johnson had said, legitimised. It legitimised the hate, it legitimised the racism. And it is extraordinary to me that whilst we were going through a global pandemic, UK government released the race report denying the absence of institutionalised racism - extraordinary.

[00:34:05.370] - Shasta Ali
Yeah, in amongst all of that they produce a report to say, oh yeah, racism exists, it exists in society, but it doesn't exist in institutions. And I will always say that if it exists in society, how does it not exist in the structural institutions holding society together? Like, how can I pick and choose?

[00:34:21.620] - Talat Yaqoob
Absolutely. Abdication of responsibility, that's what that was. Yeah Nathalia, come in.

[00:34:28.840] - Nathalia Urban
I would just like to speak about like how the authorities here, seem like super hostile towards immigrants, even for those who are documented, even those who are not concerned. The authorities are terrible. The authorities judge us on our accent. I have been in a situation where I had to phone the

police and I felt that the phone operator was judging me on my accent and it was terrible. So I was like, I speak English. But how about those who don't speak English and they have to have sometimes a life or death interaction with the authority? We are seeing a disproportional amount of people, especially from migrant communities now, suffering for various reasons because of the pandemic, including domestic violence. So how those people will have the courage to phone the authorities if we have authorities who are not trained to deal with people from all backgrounds, including those who have English as a second or even third language? Why we don't have a school planning for people who have parents, for students who don't have parents who can help them, because sometimes the parents don't speak English.

[00:36:01.550] - Nathalia Urban
This was a huge thing among Latinos. I had to support a friend of a friend whose child needed help with an essay. And the parents' English was very basic, because they worked in an area that did not need them to speak much, so they were like can you support, can you help the child? We know you write so. And we live in a country or a Kingdom, whatever that is not thinking about this type of things like, we have the means to think about everybody here. It's not an impoverished country. They have money to spend and lots of things they should be spending. Why they are not thinking about tax paying citizens, if we want to use the not humanitarian terms, why we are not thinking about tax paying citizens who are not like everyone else and they need more support from the authorities than the rest.

[00:37:15.460] - Talat Yaqoob
Yeah, I hear you Nathalia, and I think it comes back to Shubhanna's point of our systems, our infrastructure, our services being made for a white male standard, rather than migrant communities, migrant women, women of colour, and therefore it's not created with them in mind, and it's not created to welcome them. Which is why having a report that says institutionalised racism doesn't exist is not just unevidenced and not just ridiculous, but actually damaging to any kind of progress we're looking to make. Nathalia, I want to stay with you for a second, and as somebody who's working in media and as a journalist, we've seen a shift to using, you know, calling it the Alpha variant or the Delta variant, to prevent it being called the China variant or India variant, so that we don't have the kind of focus on countries in a hope to prevent blame culture, or blame instigation of further racial tensions through media. Do you think that's working and do you think media has taken that seriously in how it has to portrayed Covid-19 over the last kind of year and a half.

[00:38:31.240] - Nathalia Urban
I think that the movement of not using countries to designate the variant did not come from the media, this came from the World Health Organisation. Especially because of the outbursts of hatred and especially if we see most of the people suffering from those - being victims of hate crime. They were not from a white background. They were Latinos, they were Asian, and we don't see even though we had a variant that came from England, we wouldn't see, like news of an English person was hospitalised in whatever country they were for being English, different from what people from Asian backgrounds or even like Brazilians, were in the rest of the world. Especially rich countries, rich white majority countries, of course.

[00:39:43.640] - Talat Yaqoob
And this is only one podcast, and we don't have very long to go through everything. But just in the short space of time, we've seen so many different examples of the ways in which, the complex ways in which Covid-19 has impacted women of colour, and communities of colour. We've talked about hate crime and racial tensions. We've talked about services not being fit for purpose. We've talked about the impact of institutionalised racism. We've talked about the impact of not hearing from the recovery stories, the response stories, from non-white majority countries. And all of those things having an impact upon communities of colour, and particularly women of colour, within Scotland. What I'd like to finish with is asking you all, what do you want to see happen, when we were talking about Covid-19 recovery? What do you want to see in that Covid-19 recovery, that would mean that it worked for women of colour? Shubhanna, can I come to you first.

[00:40:48.580] - Shubhanna Hussain-Ahmed

It's really hard to pinpoint exactly what needs to happen because the things that need to happen should have already happened. You know, there's already legislation and policy there in place, which should have ensured that the voices of women, people of colour were heard and included in all the decisions that were made around what services and support could and should look like. The fact that that hasn't happened is obviously a failing in the system, but it also points to the fact that there is also no accountability in the system. And I think made this point earlier on as well, the fact that we have something like the equality legislation, which means that people's voices should have been included in these decisions that we made around supporting people during the pandemic, but it didn't happen and not a single local authority or government was held to account for that. So it makes you wonder what is the point of this legislation? What's the point of any legislation if there's never going to be any accountability?

[00:42:12.920] - Talat Yaqoob
I think accountability and scrutiny is going to be a critical part of Covid-19 recovery and kind of regaining trust in post Covid-19, especially with some of the actions of government. Shasta, what are your thoughts, what do you want to see happen next?

[00:42:31.460] - Shasta Ali
Yeah, I think following on from Shubhanna. I think we've already in this country in the UK, we've already got protective legislation in place. Going by our legislation like the Race Relations Act, the Equality Act, all the acts that we've got, we should already not be having the inequality stats that we've got. The people that are being affected. So I think along with accountability, which is what's needed. I think we need investment, we need funding and money and resources because you have just listened to three women of colour today and we've got our experiences highlighted throughout the whole system that we're talking about. But the voices are missing, the voices of women, and the voices of people of colour are missing. If we're not hearing from people, and how our life is shaped like during the pandemic, the issues that we faced, the mental health impact of that, we're not feeding into anywhere. As far as I could see, those voices are completely missing. And if they're missing and they're not being heard, then the solutions are not being shaped. We're not building forward better with our communities at the heart of it, with women at the heart of it. We've got report after report telling us the impact that it's had on women at home, and the caring responsibilities, and the mental health impact. But now what? We've only heard from a tiny wee selection people. So I think investment needs to go alongside accountability.

[00:43:59.720] - Talat Yaqoob
Thanks so much Shasta. Nathalia, what do you think? What do you want to see happen next? What do you think needs to fundamentally change to make Covid-19 recovery work for women of colour?

[00:44:09.980] - Nathalia Urban
I can talk of my own community perspective. The first thing I would like to see is the official recognition of Latin America as an ethnic minority group, because it would include the category Latin America in our monitoring, especially the public health monitoring. To monitor the access to the Covid-19 vaccines among ethnic minority groups. It would be like, in a huge important issue to ensure the community is being taken care of, and to provide official health information in community languages. In light of the ongoing health crisis, it is crucial that public health information is provided in a range of languages, particularly for my community, Spanish and Portuguese, to reach those who do not have English as their first language. This was a a huge problem, not just in health-wise but also in the governmental department wise. Many people were extremely scared with the British bureaucracy not being inclusive to those who don't have like, English as the first language. And also to ensure adequate referral pathways and partnerships to tackle food insecurity because like we all say here, the BAME communities they were like very affected. We are more vulnerable. We have - we were key workers, which means that we were like besides risking ourselves out there. We were many times like risking ourselves for minimum wage salary, so it would be vital to have the Government looking at us and supporting us in a difficult moment, and all moments, but especially the difficult ones.

[00:46:18.900] - Talat Yaqoob

Hugely helpful, Nathalia. Thank you so much for that. And like I said, this is just one podcast, but it's so much to unpick as to how deeply felt Covid-19 has been in every aspect of women of colour and people of colour's lives. A huge thank you to Shasta, Shubhanna, and Nathalia. Really appreciate you giving your time for the podcast today and your expertise and being part of Pass the Mic project. And we do have one more episode still to go where you'll be hearing from more of the Pass the Mic participants.

[00:46:52.640] - Talat Yaqoob
If you are women of colour, no matter what your expertise, we want to hear from you. So please join the Pass the Mic list so that media, event organisers, people from across different sectors, can get in touch with you to engage your expertise and your opinions about Scotland and beyond in their work. And if you are somebody who is working in media, if you're somebody who is organising a panel, event, or speakers, use that list. Because we need to hear from the stories like the ones you have heard from before, because they are what give us the tools, the information and the expertise to create systems, services and policies that are fit for purpose and fit for the diverse range of Scotland's population. So thank you so much to Shasta, Shubhanna, and Nathalia, and we'll see you - well we'll talk to you - in the last episode coming up soon.

[00:47:47.800]
[jingle plays out]