



# General Assembly

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## Human Rights Council

### Forty-fifth session

14 September–2 October 2020

Agenda item 9

**Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance, follow-up and implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action**

## **Written statement\* submitted by The Next Century Foundation, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[19 August 2020]

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\* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.

GE.20-12716(E)



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## **The need for measures to address racial discrimination facing black graduates in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland**

The Next Century Foundation is concerned about racial discrimination facing black graduates in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (UK), and the failure of employers and universities to adequately address occupational disadvantages which remain stratified by ethnic origin.

Figures published by the Higher Education Statistics Agency show that black students in the UK are less likely to be in full time employment than their white peers (53% of black graduates are in full time occupations compared to 62% of white graduates). There are also clear disparities in the makeup of professions in the UK, with black employees underrepresented in senior roles. For instance, only 1.5% of those in senior roles in the private sector are black.

Pay gaps between ethnic groups in the UK also remain wide. According to data from the Office for National Statistics, UK-born black employees earn 7.7% less than white British workers. Poignantly, this is similar to the gender pay gap which stands at 8.9% and it is clear that employment discrimination remains for both groups.

The ‘Black Lives Matter’ movement which is gaining significant momentum is also a reminder that measures that advantage black graduates are needed. The Next Century Foundation strongly urges universities to offer continued support for black students after graduation. This equitable approach would be a prudent step towards greater representation in the workplace. Universities have a duty to equip students who are likely to face discrimination with the skills and knowledge that will allow them to pursue their desired careers.

Additionally, developing initiatives to widen the access to degrees at prestigious universities, which often have lower percentages of black students than other universities, would greatly improve the graduate prospects of black students. Funding for institutions who do not adopt these measures should be lowered.

For example, in 2019 only 3.2% of students at the University of Oxford and 3.4% of students at the University of Cambridge were black. Black students within these institutions are therefore underrepresented, whereas black 18-24-year olds make up 4% of the population in England and Wales, according to the 2011 census (with data unavailable for the whole of the UK). These are some of the UK’s most prestigious institutions, yet they are failing to represent black students more than most other universities in the country. Both universities have been questioned about their lack of black representation in their student and staff makeup, and despite their widening participation programmes, it is clear that more must be done.

Black students also face a considerable attainment gap at university: research from the Equality Challenge Unit revealed that 61.7% of black and minority ethnic achieved a first or 2.1 compared with 77.1% of white students in 2017.

The Next Century Foundation would also like to add its concern about the failure of employers to enable the occupational advantages of black graduates and suggests that they be scrutinised to improve representation and ensure that hiring practices do not involve racial discrimination.

While we support the adoption of reforms to encourage greater inclusion of black students at Oxford and Cambridge, identifying what enables existing occupational advantage is also important. Understanding forces of advantage, i.e. how ethnic origin can act in graduates favour has important implications for accelerating representation. This could involve research into the formal and informal ways in which non-black graduates are advantaged in ways that black graduates are not.

We would also like to point to the experience of black communities during the current COVID-19 outbreak, who have been hit the hardest in many ways. It is likely that the combination of the pandemic and ongoing racial discrimination will threaten the job

prospects of black students to a significant degree, and measures must be adopted quickly. It is important that we account for the history of racial exploitation, but also take responsibility for the work that still has to be done.

The Next Century Foundation therefore asks that these issues be addressed by the special rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, E.Tendayi Achiume.

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