



19 June 2020

The EA and anti-racism

The English Association commits to being an anti-racist organisation and stands against any type of racism and racist activity. This means that we recognise that, as an organisation, and as individuals who make up that organisation, we are part of a society in which racial inequality is systemic and institutional, and any action we take is determined by this fact.

We have a responsibility to address issues of racism directly, as advocates for a discipline that engages with a linguistic and literary cultural history which has been profoundly shaped, both explicitly and implicitly, by racism. We pledge to make all our decisions with this responsibility in mind.

The study of English language, linguistics, literature, and creative writing provides an opportunity for engaging with the experiences of others in ways that should be open to all, and for recognising, analysing and opposing racial injustice. We will not tolerate those who promote ideologies that seek to exclude or disparage specific groups or types of people: such ideologies have no place in the discipline as we understand it.

What are we doing?

- In a review undertaken in November 2019, we found that our Board needed to be more diverse. We have committed to this change and, as a result, we have changed our recruitment processes and we place adverts on a wide range of not-for-profit volunteering sites. We will continue to monitor and review our progress regularly in order to ensure that we are an inclusive and equality-based organisation.
- Our flagship journal, *English*, will continue to welcome and highlight work on global approaches to the discipline of English.
- We are partners with the University of East Anglia (UEA), Goldsmiths University of London, the Postcolonial Studies Association, the Institute for English Studies, and University English on [Decolonising the Discipline](#), a project which will develop platforms for discipline-wide conversations that can foster and support collaborative efforts to decolonise our discipline, including curricula, pedagogies, and resources, as well as wider institutional practices across the education sectors.
- We are actively working on an Action Plan designed to help the EA learn more about social justice issues and make positive change. We'll share this plan with you very soon.
- We will be reviewing our existing Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy to identify and challenge discriminatory practices and systemic disadvantages in terms of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, age, (dis-)ability, and other forms of prejudice and discrimination such as anti-semitism within the EA and in the subject community at large.

What can our members do?

- Ask your Senior Leadership Team what your school/college/university is doing to work towards institutional change, and hold them to account. If there is little or nothing happening, start your own initiatives, networks, and campaigns, and

reach out to your colleagues in other disciplines to make your collective voice louder.

- Be part of the [Decolonising the Discipline](#) project: we invite you to submit case studies describing your experience of a specific project or piece of good practice that you would be willing to share - or of barriers and obstacles to progress you have encountered.
- Seek out resources to educate yourself about ally-ship. For example, our colleagues at UEA have crowd-sourced a [bibliography of resources](#) for university staff and students, and you can find many others online (for example, this [decolonising learning and teaching toolkit](#) from SOAS).
- Broaden your reading choices, at home and in the classroom. We recommend you explore the Centre for Literacy in Primary Education's report, [Reflecting Realities - Survey of Ethnic Diversity in UK Children's Books](#) for recent research on the representation of diverse characters in children's books. The [English 4-11 Picture Book Awards](#) often include brilliant books about and by diverse people (e.g. *Rebel Women*; *The Undefeated*; *Rise Up*). If you're preparing to teach, ask yourself: how and why did I choose the texts on my syllabus? How will people with different lived experiences engage with them? Whose perspectives are represented and whose aren't?
- If you have responsibility for HR tasks (probation, promotion, performance reviews and management, recruitment, etc.), challenge any practices or behaviours that prevent BIPOC from working on equal terms to White colleagues.

What can we do better?

We won't get everything right straight away, or all the time. But we will keep on listening and learning, and we will never assume that things are good enough. If you have any suggestions of your own which will help us to continue to move forward, we encourage you to get in touch.

This statement is being published in response to the media coverage of the murder of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and other racially subordinated people(s) in the UK, US, and beyond. This statement has been shaped by consultation with the EA's Board, sub-committees, and Fellows, and was drafted by a diverse group of EA members.