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New project aims to improve diversity in arts and humanities research

Common Cause – Reflecting Diversity

How universities and black and minority ethnic communities* work together will be the focus of a new UK-wide project announced today [20 Jan 2017]. Common Cause is a new collaborative arts and humanities initiative will map routes to greater inclusion that enable the UK's diverse population to fully participate in research and collaborations.

The project, involving the Universities of Bristol and Liverpool, the Centre for Research in Race and Rights at the University of Nottingham, the Runnymede Trust and Xtend, aims to share good practice and further develop research in the area.

Common Cause will launch with a survey in January 2017 for academics and community organisations working within or originating from black and minority ethnic communities. This aims to map the landscape of current practice, its gaps and strengths. In the summer the project will host a series of workshops bringing together both existing participants in research collaborations and those who might be interested in developing them in the future.

In 2018, the project will work with funders, policy makers and key change makers to identify strategic and policy-level changes needed to ensure partnerships between and within universities and black and minority ethnic communities can flourish.

The project aims to:

1. map collaborations in arts and humanities research including the areas of heritage, community and culture;
2. explore the conditions that encourage such collaborations to be sustained or cause them to fail;
3. engage new communities and networks and build new bridges between universities and black and minority ethnic community partners;
4. unite change makers across university and community sectors to create new networks and identify agendas for future action.

Kerri Facer, Professor of Educational and Social Futures at the University of Bristol and Leadership Fellow for the AHRC/RCUK Connected Communities Programme, said: "The arts and humanities are vital to understanding our society. They shape a society's sense of past, present and its future.

"It is important that arts and humanities research reflects the rich contribution made through the varied interests, histories, cultures and experiences of all in society. However, this research does not embrace or reflect the rich diversity of perspectives that exist.

"This project is an exciting opportunity to really understand and build powerful connections between universities and black and minority ethnic communities – and in doing so, to enrich the landscape of contemporary arts and humanities research."

Dr Omar Khan, Director of the Runnymede Trust, added: "Academic research is only as good as the information that goes in, which is why this Common Cause project is so important. We are delighted to support this innovative project to connect the black and minority ethnic community experience with universities. Our half century of research into race equality has shown not just how wide the gaps are but how much more attention these issues need and deserve."

Karen Salt, Co-Director of the Centre for Research in Race and Rights, said: "This project gives us time and space to understand the challenges to building flourishing partnerships. As I look at the project's range of activities, I am excited to learn from and with others in order to generate useful challenges, opportunities and support for new research."

Charles Forsdick, AHRC Theme Leadership Fellow for 'Translating Cultures' at the University of Liverpool, said: "I am very much looking forward to contributing to this work, which will engage with the forms of diversity – social, cultural and institutional – that are at the very core of 'translating cultures'."

Director of Xtend, David Bryan said: "The under-acknowledged contribution of black and minority ethnic artists from ethnically diverse backgrounds will be greatly enhanced by this research that will highlight good practice, productive joint ventures and expose opportunities for learning and progression."

Professor Facer, Leadership Fellow for the AHRC/RCUK Connected Communities Programme, added: "The project will offer a real opportunity to understand the barriers and opportunities for building rich research collaborations between universities and black and minority ethnic communities. This is an exciting opportunity to really start to map and build powerful connections and to enrich the landscape of contemporary arts and humanities research."

The team views the project as an urgently needed opportunity to work with universities, funders and with black and minority ethnic communities to develop the tools and relationships necessary to build effective community-university collaborations. On completion in spring/summer 2018, the project will lay the foundations for new partnerships and networks that will sustain collaborations into the future.

The Common Cause project developed from the University of Bristol/Arts and Humanities Research Council [Creating Living Knowledge Report](#), which identified the need to actively foster university and black and minority ethnic community collaborations as a key recommendation. The project is funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, as part of the Connected Communities Programme and supported by the Arts Council.

More information about the project and the survey are available on the project website: www.commoncauseresearch.com

*Notes to editors:

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It is acknowledged that the term 'black and minority ethnic' and its acronym 'BME' are widely used but do not refer to a single homogenous group of people. Furthermore, such generic terms can mask differences in experience between the wide range of specific minority ethnic individuals and groups they encompass, and can on occasion serve to perpetuate social inequalities their use seeks to challenge.

The Common Cause project will aim to open up this debate by, in the first instance, understanding and promoting Arts and Humanities research that is co-produced between universities and Black and minority ethnic communities; it will also explore whether and how the terminology used to refer to these communities impacts on such research.

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