

Letter to Students and Alumni – 12th June 2020

Dear all,

Thank you for your letter dated 8th June. All four of us, on behalf of the Board of Governors, Academic Board, management and staff, would like to start by thanking you for your constructive approach and for your support.

The world has recently seen an outpouring of grief, anger and unrest at news of the murder of George Floyd at the hands of the police in the US state of Minnesota. This awful event, following the murder of Breonna Taylor and countless others before her, has sparked a worldwide movement calling for equality and the end to racism from institutions and organisations.

The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama is among those organisations that will change.

Central has been complicit in systemic and institutional racism and we are deeply sorry for the lack of effective change and leadership on this matter. Central as an organisation has not been good enough, and we personally have not done enough to ensure it has been as good as it can be. However, saying sorry is not enough. We must act. We cannot turn back the clock, but we can and will effect real and meaningful change at Central.

Professor Gavin Henderson unequivocally apologises for statements he made at Dear White Central in 2018. In standing down as Principal, Professor Henderson has today made the following statement:

"I apologise unreservedly for the lived experiences of students of colour during my time as Principal of Central. Our systems failed and I must take ultimate responsibility for that. The comments I made at the Dear White Central event in 2018 have undermined the credibility of Central and the action plan made after that event, and caused lasting pain and damage to the community. I accept that they were racist, and this I will regret forever. I do not expect forgiveness or understanding but I apologize from the bottom of my heart."

We also accept, however, that we have not fully recognised the scale of this issue and we apologise for not acknowledging these problems and taking action sooner. We also acknowledge that none of the above is enough. Transformational change is needed and will be enacted.

The Governors' Diversity and Inclusion Committee met on 10th June to endorse the following actions. The Committee will hold the owners of actions to account to ensure they are delivered.

Complaints

- Central is setting up and publishing a clear, easy to use, formalised system through which students, ex-students and alumni can directly report real-time and historic lived experiences and accounts (Director of Operations and Academic Registrar/Director of Academic Services, June 2020)
- Central will publish a complaints framework to set out how every specific complaint will be investigated and responded to (Director of Operations and Academic Registrar/Director of Academic Services, June 2020)
- Central will investigate every single complaint of racism we have received, including those in recent days. These are lived experiences. We hear them and believe them. We will undertake this swiftly and take the strongest possible action in all cases where necessary. (Director of Operations and Academic Registrar/Director of Academic Services, triage and communicate investigation process within 7 working days and undertake complete investigations within two months)
- We will do this in a way that is sensitive to the fact that revisiting traumatic experiences can be re-traumatising for those involved.

Staff Training

- Central will continue to deliver regular mandatory anti-racist training (Director of Operations, all staff to have undertaken initial training by April 2021)
- Central will commit to delivering unconscious bias and sensitivity training for all staff, visiting lecturers and Board members on a regular basis (Director of Operations, August 2020)
- Central will deliver unconscious bias and sensitivity training for all students as part of their induction (Academic Registrar/Director of Academic Services and Director of Learning and Teaching, Annual, phase one, October 2020)

Curriculum

- Central will de-colonise and repair our curriculum across all courses. On 10th June 2020 the Learning Teaching and Student Experience Committee approved '*Repairing the Curriculum: Anti-Racism and Pedagogical Change*', which sets out a timescale and process for building concrete institutional change and embedding anti-racism into all Learning and Teaching at Central (Director of Learning and Teaching, Phase 1: Data Analysis June-July 2020, Phase 2: Review of Courses July-Nov 2020, Phase 3: Report and Recommendations to the Community Dec 2020-Jan 2021, Phase 4: Transformative Change Feb-Jun 2021)
- Central will establish an Advisory Board including external Industry Professionals and Academics of colour to feed into the Repairing the Curriculum project. Members serving on the Advisory Board Committee will be paid a fee for services (Director of Learning and Teaching, appointed by 1st October 2020)

Representation

- Central will cultivate a workforce of more diverse academic staff (Director of Learning and Teaching, Director of Research, Director of Operations, ongoing)

- Central will ensure access to counsellors who have a lived experience of the Black identity (Director of Operations and Academic Registrar/Director of Academic Services, ongoing)
- Central will set up a network where students of colour can seek advice and support from alumni of colour (Director of Learning and Teaching, Director of Engagement and Enterprise Autumn 2020)

Accountability

- Central will display its Anti-Racist Statement and Action Plan on the homepage of the website (Director of Engagement and Enterprise, June 2020)
- Central will publish regular reports on progress (Executive Management Group, ongoing, updates minimum quarterly)
- Central will make more prominent the profile of its Board members (Director of Engagement and Enterprise, August 2020)
- Central will continue to include more people of colour on the Board (Nominations Committee, ongoing)

See details on [the Anti-racism At Central page](#).

We want to acknowledge the work in driving significant change since 2018, particularly by our staff and students of colour, but the last week has also shown us how much remains to be done. We know that the school has a long road to travel. We are truly committed to creating real and lasting change and look forward to working with all those in the Central community to address this vitally important issue.

Thank you again.

John Willis, Chair of Governors

Anne Mensah, Chair of Diversity and Inclusion Committee

Professor Ross Brown and Debbie Scully, Interim Co-Principals