

Home Festival: Dr. Deborah Gabriel discusses racial equality in British academia

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By Hayley Targett

Dr Deborah Gabriel brought her knowledge in media and equality politics to the Home Festival at Manchester Metropolitan University to deliver a discussion on equality – and lack thereof – within academia.

As a Senior Lecturer in Marketing Communications at Bournemouth University, Dr Gabriel's work allows her access to information regarding research inequalities within the media. She believes that "public visibility is very important as long-term change depends on social mobility".

She spoke of her and her associates' work to develop the [3D Pedagogy](#), an ongoing project built around a trio of concepts: democratising, diversifying and decolonising. These elements, combined and implemented, would, Dr Gabriel believes, have the potential to increase awareness around racial inequality within academia. Her investment in her research and her cause was reflected in her speech: "It's about my work, it's about my art. For me, there's nothing more inspiring than seeing student's being educated in this. Politics in general helps to perpetuate inequalities outside education. Students need to be taught how to harness intellectual and social capabilities."



The danger of media framing was highlighted as Dr Gabriel spoke of news sources manipulating context to misrepresent political angles, causing confusion and a misunderstanding of speakers like herself who work to lessen discrimination and inequality. Within the workplace and academia, she explained, “there is still injustice”.

Members of the audience engaged with the talk, relating various personal experiences of social inequality which concerned students and lecturers alike being inadequately equipped regarding background knowledge of inequality ingrained within our society’s learned perspective.

The discussion led to thinking about flaws within a learned framework, bringing up a concern that British academics are often not adequately equipped in contextual knowledge, to recognise and intercept the roots and patterns of social injustice as and when they appear.

Dr Gabriel explained that, working in the position she holds, for her there is “nothing more inspiring” than the way in which she can educate students and faculty members around her: “My students tell me about discussions they’ve ended up having with their housemates, and their parents. That’s how word spreads.”

She added, “The early education of the younger generation, and the reminding of the current and older generations as a result.” This posed the question: ‘Who is fit to teach?’ – a statement which holds a lot of weight, yet addressed the issue with precision.



Dr Gabriel believes that social mobility and accessibility to academia is one of the key elements required in order to alter the thought process around social inequality, and a discussion of *Inside the Ivory Tower: Narratives of Women of Colour Surviving and Thriving in British Academia*, a body of work curated by Dr. Gabriel alongside other academics, focusing on the experiences of woman of colour within academia, brought the talk to a close. The audience were then given the opportunity to ask questions and to discuss their own experiences.

As Dr Gabriel reiterated throughout the event, to effectively instigate change requires a collective of accurately educated people, and, as she aptly explained, “applying principles to the current design and teaching from the bottom, upwards”.

You can buy *Inside the Ivory Tower* [here](#).