AS ARTISTS WE SHOULD NEVER
BE BOXED.
WE ARE FREE IN ARTISTIC
EXPRESSION, BUT WE MUST
ALSO BE RESPONSIBLE.

ALRA RACE EQUALITY

AUDIT 2020-21

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Introduction

The callous killing of George Floyd in the USA on May 25 2020 sent unexpected tremors around the world. The vision of a police officer casually pressing his knee upon Floyd's neck for 8 minutes and 46 seconds, casually extinguishing his life, caused moral outrage and indignation to reverberate across the globe. There was no doubt that George Floyd died in this way because he was a black man. Not only were individuals of all ages and races drawn to the streets to protest in demonstrations organised by Black Lives Matter but people silently suffering from racist practices and procedures in private institutions were emboldened to speak out against institutional racism.

ALRA is an example of the latter. George Floyd was the catalyst that gave students of African, Asian, Caribbean and minority ethnic backgrounds (referred to below as 'Global Majority') at this drama school the courage to reveal the racial harassment and subjugation that they had experienced during their years of study at ALRA. Their anguish was impossible to ignore – it appeared across social media and on the television. New stories described the 'normalisation' of institutional racism at ALRA. A group complaint from a large number of former students, published as an Open Letter, set out in detail several accounts of racist abuse experienced on ALRA's campuses in the North and South, from both staff and students. The letter mentioned accused ALRA of accepting systemic racism.

This public shaming brought ALRA to promise action and it became the first – and to date only – drama school to convene a race equality audit into its processes and practices, especially its complaints procedures, its curriculum and teaching, and training. It stated that:

> "To ensure that racism is removed from every aspect of the Academy, the audit panel will publish a report in early 2021 making recommendations and outlining failings."

This Report is the result of the review conducted by the independent audit panel. Although ALRA is the first drama school to conduct such an audit it is to be hoped that it will not be the last. ALRA can act as an example for other drama schools to follow.

Institutional Racism

The concept of institutional racism was first used in 1967 by Carmichael and Hamilton. They explained it thus:

> "Racism is both overt and covert. It takes two, closely related forms: individual whites acting against individual blacks and acts by the total white community against the black community. We call these individual racism and institutional racism. The first consists of overt acts by individuals, which cause death, injury or the violent destruction of property. This type can be recorded by television cameras; it can frequently be observed in the process of commission.
>
> The second type is less overt, far more subtle, less identifiable in terms of specific individuals committing the acts. But it is no less destructive of human life. The second type originates in the operation of established and respected forces in the society, and thus receives far less public condemnation than the first type.

When white terrorists bomb a black church and kill five black children, that is an act of individual racism, widely deplored by most segments of the society. But when in that same city - Birmingham, Alabama - five hundred black babies die each year because of the lack of proper food, shelter and medical facilities, and thousands more are destroyed and maimed physically, emotionally and intellectually because of conditions of poverty and discrimination in the black community, that is a function of institutional racism.

When a black family moves into a home in a white neighborhood and is stoned, burned or routed out, they are victims of an overt act of individual racism which many people will condemn - at least in words. But it is institutional racism that keeps black people locked in dilapidated slum tenements, subject to the daily prey of exploitative slumlords, merchants, loan sharks and discriminatory real estate agents. The society either pretends it does not know of this latter situation, or is in fact incapable of doing anything meaningful about it."[1]

Subsequent to gathering evidence in the Inquiry into the killing of Stephen Lawrence, the MacPherson Report[2] concluded that this idea of institutional racism had played a role and adopted the following definition:

The collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture, or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people. It persists because of the failure of the organisation openly and adequately to recognise and address its existence and causes by policy, example and leadership. Without recognition and action to eliminate such racism it can prevail as part of the ethos or culture of the organisation. It is a corrosive disease."

Institutional racism is also referred to as 'systemic racism' to convey the sense that this goes beyond inter-personal animus and is also perpetrated through norms and values embedded in practices and procedures. Barnor Hesse suggests institutional racism is, "concealed, hidden, disguised, unacknowledged, denied but which is consistent in its impact of strategic effect" (2004: 144).

Discrimination as a Virus
There are similarities between viruses and discrimination: neither can be seen with the naked eye yet victims recognise how they sound and feel – they experience the results of the infection; both are highly infectious and can pass from one person to another rapidly, often without recipients being aware that they have been infected; and both can maim and kill, having the potential to affect the life of a victim every day for a lifetime (Solanke 2017).

The purpose of thinking about discrimination as a virus is to develop a holistic multi-level framework to analyse and design interventions to tackle racism at individual, institutional and

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[1] Black Power: the politics of liberation in America, Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton (New York, Random House, 1967)
[2] https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/277111/4262. pdf , para 6.34

environmental levels. The basis of the framework is the idea used in public health of breaking the chain of infection. There are six key elements in the chain of infection, beginning with identification of the 'infectious agent' – the thing which causes infection and potential death. In the case of COVID-19, this is a virus. The second element is the reservoir, or the place where the infectious agent grows and develops – for COVID-19, the reservoir can be a dirty surface or a person. Third, it is important to identify the 'portal of exit', or the way in which the infectious agent leaves the reservoir for COVID-19. This has been identified as bodily secretions including mucus and sputum. Fourthly, the mode of transmission, or how the agent spreads, must be known. For COVID-19, this is through airborne droplets. The fifth element is the 'portal of entry', or the way in which the infectious agent enters a host – as we know, COVID-19 enters through the respiratory tract. Finally, the chain of infection identifies the 'susceptible host', the traits that individuals have which make them susceptible to infection and illness. In the case of COVID-19, this includes age, gender and possibly race and ethnicity in conjunction with socio-economic status – African-Caribbean and South Asian men have been identified as having the highest rates of infection and death.

Action is designed to address each link in the chain of infection – in relation to COVID, this has involved the development of antibiotics to tackle the virus (infectious agent); greater use of disinfection and sterilization to clean the reservoir (surfaces); increased isolation, personal (hand) hygiene and use of PPE to control the portals of exit and entry, and restrict transmission; and more recently the use of vaccines to reduce susceptibility.

What does this mean in relation to ALRA? At ALRA, the infectious agent appears very simply to be **white privilege**. In 1986, Peggy McIntosh developed the notion of white privilege as a backpack[3], describing it as 'as an invisible package of unearned assets' or '… an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, tools, and blank checks' that she, as a white woman, could 'count on cashing in each day' even if she was unaware of it. Whites, she argued, '... are carefully taught not to recognize white privilege, as males are taught not to recognize male privilege.' Her article, still an insightful read in 2021, sets out 50 daily effects of white privilege, including for example being sure that her 'children will be given curricular materials that testify to the existence of their race'. This idea of white privilege is further developed below with particular reference to ALRA.

What was the reservoir at ALRA, or the place where white privilege was able to fester and evolve? Looking at the complaints, this appears to have been the spaces for teaching and learning – the **classroom and library** where students were subjected to manifestions of white privilege and expressions of the power associated with this. Thoughtlessness on the part of teachers and a Eurocentric curriculum turned spaces for learning that should have been safe into a toxic environment.

What was the portal of exit at ALRA? Sadly, for a teaching institutions, observations suggest that this was the **teaching practices** – one way in which white privilege was spread is through the demeanour of members of staff towards Global Majority students on campus. The curriculum could also be described as a portal of exit - although it is presented in this report as a mode of transmission, the lack of diversity in the materials used in the classroom perpetuated the valorisation of whiteness and supported white privilege.

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[3]	http://codeofgoodpractice.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Mcintosh-White-Privilege-Unpacking-the-Invisible-Knapsack.pdf

What was the mode of transmission? Teaching practices might fall into this category. Another mode of transmission is the **curriculum, casting practices** and the **ineffective procedures for tackling complaints** of race and racism – this in effect embedded white privilege and allowed perpetrators to parade their sense of superiority with impunity, leaving the Global Majority students unprotected. Complaints procedures were not used as they should have been, namely to protect Global Majority students from harm.

The portal of entry, or the way in which white privilege with its traumatising consequences entered the life-world of the Global Majority students was multiple and cumulative: it was through **sight** - the lack of Global Majority teaching staff and the lack of a critical mass of Global Majority students and through **speech** acts, which together often left the Global Majority students silenced, creating an **emotional environment** which they found humiliating, hostile and exclusive.

Who then are the susceptible agents in ALRA? Who was susceptible to infection by white privilege? Sadly, the staff, management and trustees at ALRA were susceptible perhaps due to a lack of understanding and reflection on race and racism. They oversaw racist behaviour, allowed this with impunity, transgressed ALRAs complaints policies and made no effort to avail themselves of equality training.

Lack of respect for equality policies and limited engagement with equality training makes individuals and institutions susceptible to racism. It is important to appreciate that although the Global Majority students were the targets of white privilege, the whole of the ALRA community is affected by it. If ALRA is to effectively tackle racism in all its forms and at all levels, the whole of its community will need to work together to remove the susceptibility to white privilege. A multi-level approach is required to effectively tackle and bring to an end racism at ALRA. The ALRA community will need to work together to create an anti-racist drama school.

Table 1: Tackling Discrimination at ALRA as a virus

	COVID 19		ALRA	
		Action to break link		**Action to break link**
Infectious agent	Virus	Antibiotics	White privilege	Effective training & appraisal
Reservoir	Surfaces, bodies	cleaning, disinfectation, sterilization;	Teaching and learning spaces (classrooms and library)	'Decolonised' curriculum
Portal of exit	Wounds, body fluids	hand hygiene, PPE, control of splatter	Teaching practices, curriculum	'Decolonised' practices
Mode of transmission	Inhalation, contact with surfaces	hand hygiene, PPE, cleaning/ disinfection/ sterilization, isolation	Curriculum, Casting, ineffective policies & procedures eg complaints, outreach	Effective organisational procedures
Portal of entry	nose, mouth	Hand hygiene, PPE	Racially homogenous faculty, speech acts	Faculty diversity, training
Susceptible host	Any person	Vaccine	Staff and students	Training, development of diversity literacy

A key part of the antidote to institutional racism is collaboration. Sustainable change becomes embedded when members of an organisation work together as a team to entrench the continuous work and responsibility needed to keep up to date with current anti-racist teaching practices as a collective body. It is insufficient for this work to fall on just one person – this is a recipe for failure.

Summary of Recommendations

Diversity & Outreach

a. ALRA should consider creating bursaries for Global Majority students.

b. The configuration of the Outreach Officer role and Outreach activities needs more focus.

c. The Outreach strategy should be reformed to target schools in areas with different socio-economic groups.

d. ALRA needs to urgently hire more Global Majority staff on a long term and secure basis, in order to remove the disproportionality racial heterogeneity between the staff and student bodies. ALRA must move away from tokenistic hiring of staff and move towards a diverse and equitable staff body.

e. Positive action provisions in the Equality Act 2010 can be used to inform hiring staff from the Global Majority.

The Environment

f. An on-going and collaborative dialogue must be established between staff and students to ensure that anti-racism is embedded at both the interpersonal and institutional level.

g. ALRA management and trustees need to improve support of its few members of Global Majority staff and recognise that they may be targeted by other members of staff with race related issues.

Spaces for teaching and learning

h. ALRA must be more transparent and communicate clearly the work it is doing to dismantle racism in the school.

i. Staff must be supported to initiate and lead discussions concerning race in texts.

j. All staff should be given regular training on appropriate language and allyship in the classroom.

k. Racial trigger warnings should be introduced to facilitate "safe space" when dealing with difficult texts that may be triggering.

l. A "Zero tolerance of racism at ALRA" policy to be instituted as well as a specific race equality mission statement or policy. ALRA must display these procedures online and on campus.

m. A clear, effective and transparent "complaints and consequence procedure" to be created.

n. A regular forum on anti-racist practice and anti-racist theatre practice to be created.

o. Staff to be supported or mentored by members of the Global Majority theatre industry.

p. Measures must be introduced to make the Library a safe space.

Complaints

q. ALRA should seek to achieve a greater representation of Global Majority individuals on the board of trustees.

r. An equality and diversity officer must be appointed.

s. Clear and updated information on options for complainants must be provided.

t. The complaints policy must be annually reviewed and amended where necessary

u. ALRA must create clear policies on penalties/disciplinary action for breach of complaints procedures. Staff must be trained on the procedures.

v. ALRA must institute use of a review template to log and document all complaints.

w. ALRA must create greater resources and better support for those dealing with complaints.

Student and staff training
x. Diversity and Inclusion training on classroom practice to be mandatory for all staff, including freelancers using the suggestions in the existing strategic plan.
y. ALRA to commit to hiring a permanent D&I specialist to be based within the school.
z. All staff to be given ongoing training in EDI and anti-racist practices once a term with a view to refresh, review and reframe perspectives on equity.
aa. Online resources and learning modules on anti-racist practices need to be created for staff and students.
bb. Training to include discussion and learning experiences with leading Global Majority practitioners in all aspects of theatrical work.
cc. Regular empirical surveys of staff and students should be conducted to monitor progression, receive feedback and promote transparency.

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The ALRA Race Equality Audit

The main purpose of the review into practices and procedures at ALRA was to tackle racism and its impact on Global Majority students, those currently enrolled in its programmes as well as graduates. While other forms of discrimination are no less important, the trigger for the Inquiry was clearly issues relating to institutionalised racism, and that remained our focus throughout.

We were asked to look at three specific areas:

1. Complaints:
   - a) To engage in an examination of the policy and procedure for live complaints of racial discrimination by current students against ALRA staff;
   - b) To develop policy recommendations for addressing historic complaints of racial discrimination brought by graduate students against ALRA staff.
2. Curriculum & Teaching:
   - c) To conduct a review of racial equality and inclusion in the curriculum and teaching practices at ALRA.
3. Training:
   - d) To advise on long term structures for training around racial diversity and racially inclusive practice at ALRA.

Methodology

The Inquiry was conducted in accordance with the various lockdowns that were in place during 2020 to manage the COVID 19 pandemic. The methodology was adapted to conform to the various national government restrictions put in place to control the spread of the virus.

A key tool to hear from students was the 'Town Hall' style meeting where all ALRA members were able to come and share their views. Given COVID 19 restrictions, this had to be conducted online. Two Town Hall meetings were held in July: the first was an opportunity to introduce the Inquiry, its aims and objectives. The second was a Student Forum, intended to create a safe space for students to talk about their experiences and expectations. It was also an opportunity to explain the empirical survey and ask some initial questions. Both were very well attended. A third Forum was envisaged for staff but abandoned due to low participation in the empirical survey.

Information gathered at the Town Hall Meetings was used to design the second tool, an empirical survey, which was administered online during August 2020. This survey covered a wide range of themes and was designed to provide insights into the general atmosphere at ALRA.

A further tool used to gather relevant data was written testimonies – members of ALRA were encouraged to set out their own experiences on paper where this was the preferred mode of communication.

Observations were used to gain insights into ALRA's processes, especially the way in which complaints were handled as well as teaching sessions. From September to November, a curriculum review was undertaken to investigate ALRA educational materials and pedagogy.

Finally, from September to December training sessions were organised with ALRA students and staff.

Report Structure

The report begins with discussion of the environmental level, in particular the atmosphere at ALRA. This discussion focuses on the findings of a small online survey conducted in August 2020 to understand the environment and culture at ALRA. This section includes details of diversity amongst ALRA's student and staff body.

The report then shifts to the organisational level and considers ALRA's reservoir (the classroom and library), the portals of exit (teaching practices), the methods of transmission (the curriculum, casting practices and complaints procedures) and portals of entry (lack of diversity and speech acts).

Recommendations on how to 'break the chain' of infection of white privilege are made at the end of each section.

1. Understanding the environment at ALRA

Basic organization data provides a profile of racial diversity at ALRA. In order to gain a general understanding of the environment, in August 2020 a survey was circulated online to students and staff at ALRA (North and South). This was also designed to gain insights into the experiences of racism at ALRA and the overall culture of the institution.

Admissions Data

One source of insight into the environment at ALRA is its data on the racial heterogeneity of staff and students. Results from ALRA's Admission Report show a very slow change towards intake of Global Majority students over the past 3 years:

September 2018: 12% Global Majority, 88% White students
September 2019: 16% Global Majority, 84% White students
September 2020: 22% Global Majority, 78% White students

The latest school admission report states, "a high increase in ethnic diversity for 2019/20 intake" and that whole school intake results were as follows:

271 White students
20   Mixed students
20   Black students
9   Asian students
2   Other

Students from the Global Majority working group have requested "more staff that look like me so I can feel understood in the classroom." ALRA has recognised the need to support under-represented groups in performing arts, both in the industry and at the school. This is mentioned in its "Widening Access and Participation Policy:" this policy claims to have a strong emphasis on outreach and retention. It is unclear if the above percentages illustrate this.

Conversations with staff suggest two challenges for Global Majority intake: first, student fees are very high; second, too little time is allocated for outreach and the current role does not focus on this task.

Recommendations:
   a. ALRA should consider creating bursaries for Global Majority students.
   b. The configuration of the Outreach Officer role and Outreach activities should be revised to be more focused.
   c. The Outreach strategy should be reformed to target schools in areas of different socio-economic groups.

Faculty Diversity

ALRA has a low number of Global Majority members of staff. Since June 2020, an effort has been made to raise numbers, however observations in Autumn/ Winter 2020 suggested only two[4] Global Majority members of staff employed at ALRA. This indicates an overwhelmingly white majority teaching faculty, which undermines the student experience for all, but especially for Global Majority students. Students from the global majority have a desire to be mentored

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[4] Subsequently confirmed that at the time of the Audit five Global Majority members of staff were employed at ALRA.

not just by white teachers, but by teachers who can identify with their experiences. provide support, encouragement and understanding in relation to issues which might be beyond the realm of the life-world of white staff. This is a systemic problem that needs to be addressed quickly.

Recommendation:
   d. ALRA needs to urgently hire more Global Majority staff on a long term and secure basis, in order to remove the disproportionality racial heterogeneity between the staff and student bodies. In absence of a sector benchmark, the national census could be used to guide determination of proportionate representation.

The Survey

The survey was sent to all students (247) and staff (47) at the beginning of August 2020. It was completed by just 75 students and 23 members of staff. One reason for the low turnout could be timing: the survey was completed during the summer when the whole of British society was grappling with COVID 19. However, these numbers might also suggest that long-standing failure to take student complaints seriously has undermined their trust in ALRA. The even lower staff numbers might also be due to timing, but could also be an indication that staff are disinclined to engage with issues of critical relevance to the well-being of their students of colour.

While the response rate was lower than expected, there was nonetheless a considerable amount of data generated to highlight a number of key themes and issues. One key theme that became visible is a clear barrier between staff and students at ALRA, where each have diametrically opposed views on the institutional culture and the incidence and experience of racism at ALRA.

The survey suggests areas for immediate action: representation of Global Majority groups, staff training on equality and diversity, diversity in the curriculum and perhaps most crucial of all, provision of support for Global Majority students. There was some overlap here with the staff survey: responses from staff members also indicate that ALRA needs to urgently address provision of Global Majority role models, staff training on race and diversity as well as improve staff confidence to have discussions on race.

Overview of Key Findings
   i. Disconnect/ Denial of Racism

Overall, the survey responses demonstrate a clear disconnect between staff and student experiences. While staff appear to overwhelmingly believe that ALRA is an inclusive place to work and free from racism, students reported much higher rates of dissatisfaction and feelings of ingrained, systemic racism. The statistics are revealing in demonstrating these opposing views, for example, 82.6% of staff felt that ALRA is an inclusive place to work, this compared to just 47.3% of students reporting that ALRA is an inclusive place to study. It is noteworthy that 42.7% of students reported that they have faced discrimination while at ALRA, although 46.7% of students felt that there is no culture of racism at ALRA.

   ii.   Student Support & Reporting Racism

Similarly while 63.6% of staff felt that Global Majority students were well supported, an alarming 79.7% of students felt that support was inadequate for Global Majority groups. In terms of the mechanisms in place for reporting racism, 81% of staff were satisfied with the existing protocols, with 56.5% reporting that they were well equipped to deal with racism.

However, 61.3% of students did not feel confident reporting racism to members of staff, with 48% stating that staff are not comfortable in managing discussions on race.

iii. ALRA's Race Equality Policy
81.8% of staff were satisfied with ALRA's race equality policy with 73.9% agreeing that ALRA is doing enough to tackle racism. Once again the student responses illustrate a contrasting experience with 49.3% reporting that ALRA is not doing enough to tackle racism, and a further 52% stating that staff are not sensitive to issues of race and ethnicity.

iv. Training on Equality and Diversity
Interestingly 47.8% of staff have not been trained on diversity and equality, this appears to chime with the student response whereby 75.7% felt that staff had not been appropriately trained on diversity and equality.

v. Representation
Almost three quarters of students (72%) went on to report that Global Majority groups were not represented at ALRA; while over half of staff (54.5%) felt that there was enough Global Majority representation.

vi. Teaching and Curriculum: In terms of teaching, 52.4% of staff felt that the curriculum at ALRA reflects diversity - this again differs significantly from the student experience with 77% of respondents reporting that they were not satisfied with the diversity of the curriculum.

vii. Culture of Racism
Finally 82.6% of staff felt that overall there is not a culture of racism at ALRA, while 40% of students felt that there was.

The environmental survey delivers some positive messages from the students: students are satisfied that ALRA does not have a **strong** culture of racism but report that ALRA is only a **somewhat** inclusive place to study. It is also good to see that ALRA provides access to Global Majority tutors and provides them with the tools required to enter the theatrical profession.

Yet, the overall picture indicates a clear disparity between student and staff experiences of racism at ALRA. While staff respondents display an overwhelmingly positive image of the institution, student respondents report more negative experiences.

In addition, it was noticeable that participating staff members were often unwilling or unable to voice an opinion and regularly chose the 'prefer not to say' option. This could be interpreted as further evidence of a reluctance from staff to engage and may point to a wider sense of denial and unwillingness to acknowledge and identify institutional racism.

This lack of engagement supports student claims that racism is not heard or acknowledged, which is symptomatic of broader issues around colourblindness/post-racial logics, reputational damage, and white privilege/fragility. These concepts will be discussed further below, and illustrated using comments from the environmental survey.

Denying Racism: Colourblindness and Post-Racial Logics
In recent years the post-racial imaginary has come to characterise contemporary western societies. The idea of the post-racial is constituted by the belief that racism has been expelled from the public domain (Sian, Law and Sayyid, 2013: 12). Such a claim asserts that racism is

no longer a significant feature in society; this dangerous notion that we are 'over race' has been increasingly institutionalised leading to a denial of racism and discrimination across different spaces (Sian 2019; Ahmed 2012 182–183; Goldberg 2013: 15–18). The post-racial goes hand in hand with discourses of colour-blindness which suggest that race is not an important element of individual identity, and thus should not have much significance attached to it (Coleman, Chapman and Wang 2002: 488; Bonilla-Silva, 2002). Taken together, this has furnished the notion that racism is irrelevant and trivial. This myth has a number of problematic consequences; not only does it mask the everyday realities of racism, but also the structural effects of racism are ignored (Sian 2019).

Many institutions and organizations have conveniently internalised this approach, which perpetuates a fantasy that there are no issues around racial inequality and that everyone has access to equal opportunities – in this reading the politics of (anti)racism become replaced with the language of diversity (Ahmed 2012; Sian 2019). As Sara Ahmed explains, the discourse on diversity is a "mode of celebration" (2012: 68), or a "feel good politics" (Ibid: 69), as such, "the enjoyment of diversity is narrated as that which can take us beyond racism" (Ibid). In this context there is often a sense of surprise and disbelief when complaints of racism are brought forward. Indeed this has been reflected in the staff responses at ALRA, who for the most part fail to recognize racism, focusing instead on the perceived diversity of the institution. For example, staff members stated:

"I see more Global Majority students at this Drama school than I did anywhere else I have taught. It was one of the reasons I wanted to go Full Time here, its inclusivity and diversity"

"Over the last year there has been some brilliant work on making the support system strong and the curriculum diverse"

"All the people of a different background to me seem to be lovely people in fact all students are lovely"

The following responses reinforce the inability to acknowledge a problem with racism:

"I personally have not experienced any reactions or passing comments that were in any way racist. I have neither seen or heard anyone being offensive towards staff or students alike. I was extremely surprised when we had meetings and memo's concerning racism at ALRA"

And:

"I was unaware of the issues surrounding racial inequality as I had never had any student make any form of complaint whilst I have been in a full time post"

The desire from staff to represent ALRA as a positive place for Global Majority students was further echoed in the next response:

"There have been many Global Majority students during my time at ALRA. Some of which have done very well since leaving."

The failure to accept and recognize issues of racial inequality are clear in the above statements, instead (and perhaps unsurprisingly) a happy, positive image of the institution has been

portrayed. Indeed as Ahmed points out, "diversity provides a positive, shiny image of the organization that allows inequality to be concealed and thus reproduced" (2012: 72).

The narratives presented by staff reinforce post-racial and colourblind discourses, and through the desire to push a positive image of ALRA's supposed diversity and inclusivity is the failure to hear the voices and experiences of students affected by racism. Under the guise of inclusivity and diversity, the staff responses indicate a denial of racism at ALRA.

Student comments present a starkly different image of ALRA to that imagined by staff:

> *"I cannot draw on a single instance during my time at ALRA where there was any positivity surrounding race"*

> *"My issue regarding racism within ALRA is that it is so ingrained that it can just come in the form of very small things. The most uncomfortable I feel is with my white peers, who often make passing comments and/or remarks. I always want to speak out against what they say but I know that I will be gas lighted by them with them saying that 'it was a joke', 'it wasn't serious'"*

> *"ALRA is a majority white school, physically and through what appears to be very 'traditional English' training"*

> *"In my last two years of ALRA every single one of my tutors, directors etc were white"*

> *"There is definitely not enough diversity at ALRA. From student intake to teaching materials to staff. I feel like a lot of stuff that certain teachers have said regarding race/gender/sexual orientation has been swept under the rug and not addressed. I feel as students we are very disconnected to our staff and I only feel comfortable to speak about challenging subjects to 1 or 2 staff members"*

> *"I do believe that the general culture of the institution does not provide equal opportunities or promote diversity. I feel that ALRA does not create a safe space in which to discuss racism (or sexism or LGBT+ discrimination) within the staff and student body"*

These testimonies expose a range of concerning student experiences around racism and inequality at ALRA. What these students describe is a toxic environment structured by whiteness, exclusion and denial. Interestingly the student responses focus on systemic issues including the curriculum, lack of diversity, and structural disadvantage. In comparison, the staff responses – as seen above - tended to focus more upon individual or superficial matters.

Common to the student voices is the notion that ALRA has disregarded and discounted issues around racism. This neglect is symptomatic of the larger post-racial/colourblind culture operating at ALRA which has subsequently resulted in a series of negative experiences for students of colour.

Keeping Up Appearances: Reputation Before Race Equality

Accusations of racism directed towards any large organization are often met with a response that prioritizes 'damage control', to ensure that the reputation of the institution is not harmed. As Ahmed states:

Racism is heard as an accusation that threatens the organization's reputation…Racism is heard as potentially injurious to the organization. In other words, institutional racism becomes an institutional injury…Those who speak about racism become the blow, the cause of injury" (2012: 146).

This sentiment was certainly evident in responses from the students. For example, one individual, who felt that on the whole senior management at ALRA were more concerned with their reputation rather than the welfare of their students, commented:

"Reporting incidents needs to be taken seriously, and not taken as a personal offence by the teacher we tell, or an attempt to ruin ALRA's reputation"

The notion that ALRA is more concerned with its reputation rather than systemic change was repeatedly reinforced in the student responses:

"Currently, ALRA feels very performative. It also seems as though they are very quick to push issues/complaints 'under the rug'"

"Ultimately, I feel that ALRA care more about their reputation and they are so scared about it being tarnished that they fail to hold themselves fully accountable. Many graduates who came forward with their trauma and their past experiences have not been contacted or apologised to. Whilst some teachers are sensitive to topics of race and ethnicity, a large amount seem to either brush issues under the carpet or try to discuss but end up being politically incorrect in how they speak about it"

"Reports on racist behaviour have consistently not been followed through adequately by the principal, and the lack of diversity generally in the staff and the plays we study is something that urgently needs addressing. I also think some teachers need to be more willing to accept the harm they might have done (consciously or otherwise) if any positive change is going to be made - earning the trust of the students is what's important right now, not making excuses or prioritising making the school/staff 'look good'"

The perception that ALRA is seen to be putting its reputation before student wellbeing is telling, and further demonstrates that students do not feel that they are a priority, nor supported or protected by the institution. There is a sense that ALRA is more concerned with brushing aside the incidents to maintain an unblemished reputation, which has resulted in denials, delays and inconsistencies from senior management. The lack of support and action taken by staff and management has resulted in student voices being consistently silenced and grievances ignored:

"ALRA unfortunately is not the warmest place to be when reporting something negative about the school."

"The system needs to be reformed, people are silenced and not listened to when they come forward"

The student responses are clearly calling for systemic change and understandably they demand a genuine, rather than a tokenistic, recognition of racism at ALRA. The changes that ALRA makes in the future must therefore be structural rather than simply cosmetic. In addition to this, the wellbeing of its students must come before its reputation, and race equality must go beyond

mere lip service, that is, strategies must be fully implemented at the institutional level to demonstrate an on-going commitment to stamping out racism and creating a safe and inclusive environment for students. Only when ALRA is prepared to confront racism head on, can effective measures be developed to eliminate it.

There was a sense amongst the students that ALRA's current work around race equality was superficial, rather than demonstrating a deep commitment structural change. This was raised by a member of staff who stated:

"I do sometimes feel the actions taken may be tokenistic or done for PR reasons rather than genuinely wanting to systemically change the culture here. As staff I don't believe we are supported enough to tackle the issues and I don't feel like leadership from some of the top is sufficient in these matters"

Whiteness, White Privilege & White Fragility

Given the racial and ethnic composition of British society, it is inevitable that black and minority ethnic workers will find themselves working and/or studying in majority white institutions. Like the majority of institutions in the UK, ALRA is structured by hegemonic forms of whiteness. Whiteness refers to, "a social positioning that is both structurally and racially privileged, benefitting those belonging to its category economically, socially, culturally, and politically" (Sian 2017: 7). In such a context, because whiteness is the norm, there is a collective failure to understand, reflect upon, or acknowledge the sense of exclusion, isolation and marginalization so often experienced by people of colour. As we saw in the first section, responding students complained of a lack of diversity, while members of staff, i.e. those perpetuating institutional norms (whiteness) – were satisfied with the diversity they believed to be present at ALRA. The denial of institutional racism by those in positions of power therefore becomes a means of 'protecting whiteness' (Ahmed, 2012: 147), however when racism can no longer be denied (i.e. high profile complaints) – denial often turns into defensiveness and disbelieving, in other words, "white fragility" (DiAngelo 2018). This was evident in the staff responses from the survey with one member of staff stating:

"I have seen the senior leadership work hard to investigate any information of racism that has been brought to their attention."

In a similar vein another staff member commented:
"I believe now that the staff in the North are an inclusive, educated group and therefore I feel we are much more equipped to deal with any issues arising"

Furthermore, another respondent said:

"I have had many Students come and talk to me about issues around race that they have experienced at ALRA and believe that it was positive that they felt able to come and talk to me about it."

We can see in these responses a strong sense of what Ahmed describes as, *organizational pride,* which is often activated as a means to defend both the organization and its reputation in times of controversy, that is, "the moment of complaint becomes an occasion for promoting the value of the organization. Organizational pride thus prevents the message about racism from getting through" (2012: 144-145). The above responses certainly echo this sense of defensiveness which appear to suggest that any problems of racism at ALRA have now been fixed, has now

been fixed. This is of course problematic as demonstrates an unwillingness to accept the systemic issues of racism at ALRA.

In another response, there was the sense that the problems around racism at ALRA were due to the actions of a handful of individuals who deserved another chance, and could be reformed through training:

"We need to help individuals understand why their behaviour is problematic and give them chance to learn, apologise and develop, rather than potentially kick them out/fire them without them ever understanding why/having the opportunity to change"

While indeed training is of significant importance, the problem with this argument is that it appears to be more sympathetic to the offenders rather than the victims, and furthermore, the focus on individual reform overlooks the urgent need for institutional change.

Racism at ALRA can no longer be dismissed as an individual aberration, but rather, it must be understood as that which is deeply embedded within the culture and structures of the institution itself. To implement meaningful change at ALRA, those in positions of power must reflect upon the ways in which whiteness is perpetuated and maintained, this requires a critical understanding of privilege, fragility and stigmatisation.

<u>Recommendations</u>

a. ALRA can no longer dismiss practices of racism. An on-going and collaborative dialogue must be established between staff and students to ensure that anti-racism is embedded at both the interpersonal and institutional level.
b. ALRA must move away from tokenistic hiring of staff and move towards a diverse and equitable staff body.
c. There is a need for ALRA management and trustees to support its few members of global majority staff and recognise the weight and immense responsibility that these teachers will feel towards their student needs, as well being made targets by other members of staff with race related issues.
d. Positive action must be taken towards of hiring staff / guest and commissioned staff from the global majority.

2. The classroom and library: spaces for teaching and learning at ALRA (the 'reservoir')

We were asked to conduct a review of racial equality and inclusion in the curriculum and teaching practices at ALRA. If the spaces for teaching and learning are the 'reservoir' of white privilege, teaching practices can be described as both the *portal of exit* – the way in which white privilege leaves the reservoir and the *portal of entry* – the way in which white privilege 'enters' the susceptible host. The information in this section should be borne in mind when reading the section below on the modes of transmission (curriculum content and complaints procedures).

Observation was used to understand practices in the classroom. Observation of teaching practice in lessons was conducted both online and onsite at ALRA North and ALRA South campuses. In addition, individual meetings were held with the majority of staff members post-observation. The goal was to identify how inclusive teaching spaces and practices are at ALRA, with regards to race and equality. Discussions were held with both staff and students.

Observations showed that there is a lack of effective communication in the classroom between student and staff. In particular there is a lack of awareness about the use of appropriate language. This has created a power struggle between the students and the teachers in the classroom - at times the balance feels strained, and the students in the working groups or who are in support of the working groups say they are constantly raising concerns and barriers they have faced with teachers.

'Trigger' or 'trauma' warnings and safe set up of the classroom also need improvement. Most staff understand the importance of this; students are extremely vulnerable with their craft and reducing trauma, for example by increasing trigger warnings, will ensure students are able to choose to step away should they need to. This has been demonstrated in some lessons and done well.

With regards to race all staff mentioned the need for stronger diversity and inclusion related communication. All spoke of a need for conversations on strategic planning with resources and training to be improved. There is a notable desire from all staff to empower their students and allow creative freedom, but the lack of resources, lack of faculty diversity, racial bias and the use of highly inappropriate language has led to emotional harm and has clearly left some students feeling disempowered and very hurt.

For both staff and students, the question of "activism" and "art" and "where the two met" within the boundaries of a drama school institution constantly raises the question about the freedom to be open and free to be political with creativity. The school does not tolerate extremism, and this is written into policy, but the question of whether "all art political and evocative within identity" is not being addressed. This is creating confusion, resistance and at times harm.

In relation to speaking up and out, some staff lack knowledge and confidence on how to approach and respond to race-related issues arising in a classroom setting. This was expressed by various staff and students during training sessions and private conversations. Deeper listening is required by staff at both campus sites, for example four students including one

Global Majority student reported to have felt "dismissed" when expressing the need for trigger warnings.

One student shared her loneliness as the only Black student in her class, stating that this was affecting her mental health and ability to concentrate in the classroom.

Two Global Majority students expressed the need for more staff that they could relate to in relation to race and racism; for them the absence of this is a big problem.

Six students from the Global Majority mentioned the need for the library in South campus to be fixed, and for books and the space to be made a priority. One student from the Global Majority in the North Campus said they don't feel the library is well equipped and that it does not feel like a studious environment that is a safe space to learn – this affects their ability to choose good texts and therefore their ability to be confident in the classroom.

Twelve white students expressed in a private session the need for an equitable place of learning and highlighted that the "barriers" are so tough, and staff dismissive to needs, that liberation for them as artists, is not possible.

Discussions were held with teaching staff from both campuses on safety, confidence and responsibility when it came to the discussion on race. All staff agreed that safety began with listening and understanding the student perspective and all felt that they listened to the needs of students. However, some differences of perspectives were shared:

- One member of staff expressed the view that racism did not exist in the school.
- Four members of staff stated they lacked confidence to discuss race.
- Six members of staff said they lacked resources when it came to global majority playwrights and practitioners.
- One member of staff said they felt uncomfortable having to constantly ask the newly appointed (and one of the few) members of staff who is Black all questions on racism.
- Two members of staff mentioned the need to rethink "pure" and "neutral mask" as a form of movement practice as this can cause body shaming, and unethical / impossible tasks for students to practice and can cause harm to Global Majority students.

Recommendations:

a. ALRA must be more transparent in the work it is doing to dismantle racism in the school. It is important that this is communicated to students (perhaps via a central online hub, newsletter etc). Deans, board members, trustees and top end staff must also be visible and committed to supporting the needs of both student and staff in the forthcoming progressive culture change; regular meetings and other means of communication must take place. Regular reports and updates on anti-racist work to be transparent and actioned.
b. Staff need to be given support with discussions of race and text. Training is required to ensure staff are familiar with ways to do this.
c. Training and learning is needed for all staff on "accessible language" and current appropriate language.

d. Training is also needed on "Anti-racist teaching practice and allyship in the classroom" to take place once a term with a view to reframe, refresh and review individual teaching practice and content.

e. Racial trigger warnings to be discussed pre-class as a staff body to highlight and target potential triggers and harmful content in all mediums. Setting up "safe space" with triggering text is highly recommended.

f. A "Zero tolerance of racism at ALRA" policy to be put in place in support of students and staff, clearly outlining the laws, regulations and outlines, and the consequences of breaking the policy.

g. Currently ALRA does not have a specific race equality mission statement or policy included in the 'Prevention Duty' section in its policy, nor in the 'Policies, Reports and Plans' sections of website – there is a broad sentence perhaps thank can be linked in section 4 stating that "the school will continue to make clear its commitment to respect for all, academic and artistic freedom, equality and an active opposition to extremism wherever it is located." There is a written code under the section "freedom of speech and code of practice" that states that any activity or event that creates "fear, harassment, intimidation, verbal abuse or violence" linked to race (and other protected characteristics) is likely to be unlawful, and that breach of this code will be dealt with under ALRA disciplinary procedures. ALRA must display these procedures online and on campus.

h. A clear, effective and transparent "complaints and consequence procedure" to be created.

i. Regular meetings and communication amongst staff led by ALRA team leaders promoting anti-racist practice and sharing information on current discussion within the industry about Anti-racist theatre practice.

j. Staff to be supported or mentored by members of the Global Majority theatre industry and to be pro-active in refreshing their knowledge of leading industry pioneers with a view to bring the knowledge and authenticity into the classroom.

k. Measures must be introduced to make the Library a safe space, with a view to refresh and bring in current text and other media by global majority writers and practitioners.

3. Modes of Transmission

The Curriculum

We were asked to conduct a review of racial equality and inclusion in the curriculum and teaching practices at ALRA. A desk-based review of all curriculum content was conducted. Three days were spent reviewing online resources and modules, as well has have meetings and conversation with staff Year Heads and Course Leaders. Evidence for the review was taken from:

- Class module content (online via ALRA website portal);
- Conversations with year heads and course leaders (focusing on outreach, decolonising curriculum and teaching strategies);
- Conversation with students.

Although other aspects of discrimination were discussed, in line with our terms of reference the curriculum review focuses on race specific evidence. It must however be stressed that intersectional discrimination (Crenshaw 1989; Solanke 2009) can lead to barriers / trauma for students and their ability to learn.

The review illustrated a lack of resources for students with regard to a variety of current and new writing texts. Many students reported the recommended online resources lacked representation from Global Majority writers. Currently course modules, reading lists and teaching pedagogy is deeply rooted in a classical, Westernised lens, and white European or American culture, with very little exploration of text, movement and voice from other cultures. Other barriers/concerns discussed:

- Over reliance on historical and 'classical' texts / arts forms.
- Reform of assessment and marking is needed.
- Planning and communication amongst staff body need improvement i.e., Choosing text as a team and what to do when barriers arise / identifying potential problems.
- Lack commission of new writers.
- Safety of students when they are free to choose own texts.

ALRA has been attempting to decolonise its curriculum since 2018. Many discussions have been held at curriculum team meetings over the years, but with very little evidence to support any changes.

Having had no training in this, most white teachers at ALRA lack confidence on how to choose and introduce plays / scripts by Global Majority authors into the creative space. As the ratio of Global Majority students/staff to white students/staff is very poor, there is a question on how to confidently use stories from other cultures within the school.

ALRA has recognised the lack of progress on decolonising the school curriculum and is currently in the process of making changes. There is now a target to have changes in the curriculum to be set and in place by September 2021.

Full commitment from all staff, board members and trustees is needed to transform the current curriculum into a curriculum that is current with the industry in 2021 and that is useful to all

students, including those in the Global Majority. It is important for Global Majority students to have texts that reflect them, their worlds and their lived experiences.

Casting

With regards to casting, students from the Global Majority stated there is an absence of texts that are representative of their background, and that the casting process itself is very much governed by the teacher and with very little consultation. Students also expressed the need for a fairer system with casting – white students tend to play more leads.

ALRA needs to support further reflection around casting, especially with regards to white students playing characters that are Global Majority. There is a need for training and in-depth communication / conversation amongst the staff body on how to facilitate conversation around race respectfully when it comes to racial casting and text work in general.

In particular, staff expressed the need for support with how to facilitate conversation with students when it came to racial bias and microaggression within the casting process, both in school and in the industry. Staff recognized that agents seem to target Global Majority students for their looks rather than white students - which adds further to the feelings of tokenism and trauma endured by Global Majority students.

Other barriers/concerns discussed:

- More clarity and training is needed for all ALRA staff on the casting process, including colour-blind casting.
- Assessment and marking reform.
- Reflection is needed on "Pure Movement" and "Neutral Mask" and the restrictions (including racial) of the practice.
- The lack of representation in voice teachers.
- Knowledge of Global Majority tensions within voice/ body / how this may present and how to approach in the classroom.
- Trigger warnings.

Recommendations

    a. ALRA has already made positive changes with regards to accent and voice work; 'received pronunciation' is no longer the baseline or ideal, and the approach to declassing voice is inspiring. Students are encouraged to keep their own accents and understand the benefits of such. Authenticity with voice is encouraged.

    b. Diversity and Inclusion training on classroom practice to be mandatory for all staff, including freelancers. Staff in ALRA North and South (Vice Principal Curriculum; South Assistant Dean; and Dean) have created a detailed and strategic plan to reform the structure of the school curriculum. Their plan is useful and contains many suggestions currently not in place in the ALRA curriculum:

- Students to work with more current and global texts and reading list to be updated.
- R&D work with new writers and encouraging writers from the global majority.
- Learning outcomes for students to include cultural research.
- Module aims to develop and appreciate the complexities of human nature.

- Year 2 – encourage cross art form and collaboration and to focus on a wider variety of arts forms / contemporary and global arts forms with a larger cultural lens.
- Year 3 - socially engaged practice – to see read and discuss plays written by or and focussing on global majority playwrights and to formulate cultural convention in art making.
- To explore the function of performance in modern day society.

The Complaints Procedures

We were asked to examine the policy and procedure for live complaints of racial discrimination by current students against ALRA staff; and to develop policy recommendations for addressing historic complaints of racial discrimination brought by graduate students against ALRA staff.

Analysis of ALRA's complaints procedure was carried out by conducting a critical examination of student complaints and ALRA's complaints policy documentation, as well as a series of observations with the Board of Trustees and their handling of complaints.

Student complaints to ALRA span several years. They took 3 forms:
1. An open letter/Group complaint
2. Anonymous portal
3. Complaints from alumni

The testimonies examined exposed a range of student concerns around racism at ALRA. They indicate that the issues do not revolve around just a few isolated incidents of racism, but rather a series of repeated events that appear to follow a similar and worrying pattern. Taken together, the body of complaints expose long-term racism at ALRA, facilitated by a permissive management culture and a lack of accountability.

ALRA has instituted procedures for dealing with complaints but students are, for the most part, uninformed and unclear about the complaints processes at ALRA. Staff at ALRA have failed to communicate key information on procedures and outcomes in a timely and consistent manner. It would appear that over the years, when complaints are raised, ALRA management have 'turned a blind eye' to racism, and instead of taking action have been complicit in perpetuating structures that disadvantage students of colour with a tendency to dismiss or downplay the complaints.

Implementation has therefore been patchy and this has created a dangerous situation in which staff are empowered to discriminate with impunity and students are left feeling unsupported. This has unsurprisingly had an impact on student wellbeing: there has been a high personal toll for those students who have come forward. Many students report experiencing trauma and an adverse impact on their mental health.

The observation made clear that where ALRA did eventually act, it failed to follow its own complaints procedures. In the cases investigated by the Board there was a strong degree of inconsistency and a lack of both clarity and knowledge about existing measures and protocols. Furthermore, there was a failure to document Board findings and outcomes from the investigations. This undermined transparency and trust amongst the student body. In addition to this, there is a clear barrier between staff and students at ALRA, which further undermined student confidence and trust in staff to deal with complaints appropriately.

The nature of the student complaints reported to ALRA centred around the notion that there was systemic racism at ALRA, whereby students of colour felt that they had been subjected to a series of racist and discriminatory practices over a long period of time. These practices took the form of racial stereotyping, typecasting, racist jokes and microaggressions, and were either direct or indirect. From blatant forms of racism including insults and offensive language, to the more discreet and underhanded forms of exoticizing culture and heritage, complainants felt targeted and profiled. This in turn led to them reporting experiences of trauma, low self-esteem and feeling devalued by the institution as a result of the racism that they had suffered.

Within the body of complaints, there was also a strong feeling that the under-representation of students and staff of colour, meant that the tools to deal with racism were wholly inadequate. That is, the whiteness entrenched within the very structures of ALRA only reaffirmed racial hierarchies, subsequently, the systematic exclusion of voices of colour created an environment in which racism was able to flourish, and for the most part, left unchallenged by members of staff. This is evidenced by the fact that the complaints received had spanned several years, and all seemed to be similar in nature with no resolve, indicating that there are very few mechanisms in place to appropriately address, or take seriously, issues of racism. In this sense, rather than tackling racism, ALRA appears to have been complicit in perpetuating it. As such, the trivialization of racism by members of staff only intensified its presence at ALRA.

The lack of support for students of colour was a common issue raised in the complaints, which conveyed the sentiment that the institution and its staff members were dismissive of their experiences, often ignoring their voices and neglecting their well-being. The complainants expressed that they felt failed by ALRA and that racist incidents had been continuously brushed aside or swept under the carpet, with members of staff remaining unaccountable for their actions over the course of many years. Many of the complainants recalled incidents in which they were often left humiliated and intimidated by members of staff, and at the same time they were silenced as there were no appropriate channels for them to turn to for support at the institution. It would appear then, that the duty of care received had been unsatisfactory.

The racism endured by the complainants appeared to have, in many cases, taken a toll on their mental health. The continuous manifestations of racism, combined with ALRA's disregard and reluctance to take their experiences into full consideration, led to long-term distress and psychological damage leaving them feeling marginalized, alienated and exhausted.

The student testimonies provide insight into what can be described as a toxic, dehumanising and stigmatising space for students of colour at ALRA. It would appear that students of colour have been systematically devalued and dismissed through everyday practices even where policies exist to prevent this.

From a catalogue of daily racist incidents to microaggressions to poor mechanisms to deal with cases of racism, ALRA has failed students of colour, especially in relation to the complaints procedures. When individuals have come forward to report incidents of racism, procedures have not been followed thus leaving the aggrieved feeling dissatisfied, let down and without a safe place to turn to. The partial, faulty and slow application of these procedures both helped to support racist behaviour and furthermore protect those perpetuating this behaviour. Such ineffective procedures provided a route whereby white privilege could leave the reservoir at ALRA.

The problems of racism at ALRA are clearly systemic raising concerns around institutional racism. As previously discussed, institutional racism can be described as the covert processes

that impact the prospects of people of colour (Patel, 2017: 126; Sian 2019). It includes hidden forms of racism that are embedded within the values, protocols, and customs that establish the norms of organizations (Ibid). The tendency to downplay complaints, as well as the length of time taken to act and the unsatisfactory outcomes, points to a lack of accountability and an unwillingness to change resulting in enduring incompetence and institutionalized racism.

However, it must be acknowledged that when the high profile complaints came to light, ALRA did act swiftly to implement some key changes in regards to its current complaints procedures.[5] In addition to this external audit, other initiatives are listed below:

- The board of trustees created an Equality and Diversity sub-committee to track work being done by senior leadership on an ongoing basis. A key task within this committee is to work with Senior Leadership to create a clearer complaints process on completion of the audit;
- A graduate steering group focusing on Anti-Racism was formed and will advise the board's sub-committee acting as another voice for the ALRA students, they will be part of the induction process;
- An anonymous complaints portal was created and complaints entered are sent to the board every week allowing direct action to be taken if/when required;
- The Global Majority Working Group was established to represents students of colour and is chaired by an external artist who reports directly to the board;
- An acting tutor of colour who will provide pastoral support (which includes issues relating to race) was appointed on a part time basis;
- A therapist of colour who specialises in issues around race and identity was appointed on a freelance basis;
- A HR manager with oversight of complaints procedures was appointed;
- An external company was hired to support and advise the HR manager with complaints procedures and complaints training;
- An 'open safe space' was established for staff to meet with the HR manager and discuss any questions or concerns they have regarding complaints and/or dealing with sensitive issues.

These are the beginnings of some positive steps in the right direction and demonstrate that action is now being taken by ALRA to address racial discrimination. They are important changes to help ensure that good practice is followed in the future and that students are provided with a greater sense of support and clarity.

In addition to this, there is a greater sense of a collective effort in dealing with complaints more effectively at ALRA, this can be seen with the development of a new governance structure. This development was led by the Vice Principal Curriculum. Staff training on complaints was undertaken in Sept 2020 (see below), and there are further plans to hold future training sessions on complaints for members of the board of trustees, as well as mediation training for members of staff, training for senior members of staff on complaints investigations, and induction training for new members of staff covering issues around complaints and good practice. This will ensure that those who are expected to conduct complaints investigations are equipped with the appropriate training and skills.

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[5] However, it must also be noted that this intensive labour largely fell on the shoulders of one individual staff member who has been central in organising and managing steps forward, with very little resource and support from wider management.

A resource pack for staff on complaints policy and procedures is also currently being developed by the HR manager. Following the systematic failure at ALRA to document complaints investigations adequately, a new template for complaints reports has been developed to ensure that all complaints are recorded and formalised appropriately (see Annex 2).

Recommendations: addressing historic complaints
In relation to historic complaints, in addition to these actions listed above, we also recommend the following:
a. Greater representation of Global Majority individuals on the board of trustees
b. Appoint an equality and diversity officer to provide advice, guidance and support on equality and diversity issues
c. Provide clear and updated information on options for complainants
d. Board to annually review and amend complaints policy where necessary
e. Clear policy on penalties/disciplinary action for those who fail to adhere to complaints procedures
f. Compulsory staff training on the procedures to deal with a complaint regarding discrimination
g. All incidents must be logged and documented using the new complaints review template
h. Greater resources and support for those dealing with complaints – i.e. collective action and responsibility

4. Strengthening the 'susceptible hosts' – student and staff training

We were asked to advise on long term structures for training around racial diversity and racially inclusive practice at ALRA. To prepare such advice, sessions on training in anti-racist practice were conducted for all ALRA staff and students at both campuses by Tanya Loretta Dee.[6] Two rounds of training occurred at different times during the Winter term 2020/21. Each session was 1.5 hours in length per group. Trustees and Board members also were invited to attend training, as well as freelance staff and human resources personnel.

Staff and student groups were created with a slightly different focus: student training was more focused on Liberation as an artist, staff more on Equity. Both sets of training included the following aspects:
- Setting up of safe space.
- The social and moral aspects of D&I training at an institution.
- A conversation on inclusivity within the acting industry.
- Exploration of the protected characteristics in the Equality Act 2010 and discussion on how discrimination happens
- Deliberation on the differences between equity and equality.
- Microaggressions in the classroom.
- How to say "Sorry" in a classroom setting.

In addition, each group considered:

Student	Staff
- Reflection on the idea of artistic empowerment as a student at ALRA. - A group task focusing on "What does a liberated ALRA look like as a students and what barriers may arise? Discuss".	- Artistic responsibility (see quote on cover page) - A group task - What does a liberated ALRA look like as a staff and what barriers may arise? Discuss. - Trigger Warnings. - Allyship in a classroom setting and allyship.

Time was provided for questions to be asked.

Student turn-out was very good across both campuses. Two students from the global majority and from different sites said that microaggressions mostly occurred in classroom in relation to casting and text work. Two Global Majority students from different sites both commented that "there are so many barriers at ALRA, how are we supposed to feel liberated?" Most groups mentioned lack of resources including a library space as hinderance to learning. Two students from the North campus from the global majority said having a library would be a safe space to learn for them. One student mentioned training as celebration, rather than feeling "othered." Three students (two white and one from Global Majority) mentioned that Sonia Watson Fowler made them feel safer, but knowing she is temporary makes them wonder if training is just "lip service". Many students from both campuses stayed behind to ask questions about "microaggressions in the classroom" and "how to call out racism without being judged by teachers and peers."

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[6] At the same time, some training was conducted by the then D&I specialist Sonia Watson who worked on a temporary contract at ALRA until January 2021.

Staff turnout was also generally good and included some freelance teachers, trustees and working group board members. Attendees came from both campuses. They were actively engaged with discussions and activities, listening as well as contributing. Seven members of staff requested further individual conversations after the sessions. Three members of staff benefitted from a subsequent one to one training on diversity and inclusion.

It became clear that most staff did not understand the meaning of "Equity" and therefore what this would look like at ALRA – many staff reported they found this useful to learn in understanding how to achieve equality, or even liberation in their own drama school.

A post-session group discussion with staff highlighted the following barriers to learning:

- The need for a more diverse student body and outreach to be improved.
- Confusion with casting process at ALRA – what is appropriate to say to students from the Global Majority if the student feels they have been positively discriminated against because of race? The same applied to white students.
- Confusion around colour blind casting and lived experience / process and appropriateness during casting.
- Lack of diverse text and access to diverse array of writers including from the global majority.
- One member of staff mentioned in a one-to-one session the lack of enthusiasm for positive change in the North campus / wanted more support as a white member of staff to form allyship with other members of staff who want to promote culture change at ALRA.

In order for the culture of ALRA to change and for systemic racism to be dismantled it is very clear that diversity and inclusion needs to be firmly rooted at the core of the drama school. At the moment, it is not. Training must continue, especially for staff from both sites, as well as for students. ALRA has in the past had D&I training, but it is not being managed by appointed person, or by a specialist. Currently Sonia Watson Fowler is in a temporary position, however in order for consistency and to save cost on future failings, a permanent position should be put in place.

Staff must take individual responsibility for further learning and current conversation when it comes to dismantling racism and being a good ally to students, and how this looks within the arts. This establishment is aiming for a change in culture and dismantle racism; artistically and politically what is acceptable in the theatre industry has changed. More training on accessible language, the current casting process with regards to diversity and inclusion and firming up of policy and practice must improve, for both staff and students.

The global majority working group expressed that "Black History Month" was an afterthought. Celebrating "Black History Month" as well as other LGQBT+ days could be integrated into training, intended as a celebration but also as an educational tool for staff and students, and raising awareness for said liberation group.

In order to give staff confidence, and tools they need to ensure they are able to set clear boundaries for themselves with pedagogy and racial discrimination policies, it is vital that further and continuous training is put into place, this includes training for freelancers and guest teachers / practitioners who have slipped though the net when it comes to training. Freelancers

have been notable to microaggressions more so, and would benefit from one-to-one training, immediately and post interview stage on acceptance of job.

One of the main conversations and barriers for both staff and students during training was linked to the question of responsibility and freedom of expression; how responsibility changes and differs as a student and a staff member.

With regards to racism, setting clear boundaries with clear policies in place will help both student and staff to understand expectations, and keeping communication and conversation open with regards to barriers and issues, with the intent to overcome them as a school, and with staff leading the supporting. Training, good communication and conversation must continue. Ultimately, ALRA must find a way to create a visible presence of culture change, celebrate and share promotion of anti-racist practice in and around the ALRA campus.

Recommendations:
a. ALRA must commit to hiring a permanent D&I specialist to be based within the school in order to oversee and conduct training, build partnerships and help support staff and student and work closely with HR department, as well as ALRA Deans.
b. Staff must have ongoing D&I training once a term with a view to refresh, review and reframe perspectives on equity, and feel supported and pro-active in dismantling racist structures within the school. Each D&I workshop should be focused on a particular topic, determined in collaboration with the Global Majority working group.
c. All staff and pre-employed staff, including freelancers and guest staff, must receive mandatory anti-racist training including microaggressions, sensitivity, and accessible language.
d. One-to-One training to take place for staff and student as and when needed.
e. Online resources and learning modules on anti-racist practices need to be created for staff and students.
f. Training for students and staff must include discussion and learning experiences with leading Global Majority practitioners in acting, voice, movement as well as those involved in the casting process, including casting directors and theatre directors.
g. Regular empirical surveys of staff and students should be introduced to monitor progression and receive feedback. These can also be used to promote transparency as ALRA changes.

Conclusion

Many months have passed since ALRA students turned to social media to vent their pain and frustration with the institution. This audit embodies an intention at ALRA to create a new environment that secures its future as a leading institution in the training of actors; achieving this requires a long-term strategy, embedding commitment to ongoing reform and uncomfortable conversations on race and racism throughout ALRA, at both North and South campuses.

It is encouraging that ALRA has already taken steps to ensure future generations of its students of colour have a more positive experience. By the time of the publication of this Report, the staff profile at ALRA has already changed significantly. This was due to re-structuring following redundancies. ALRA will have a revised organizational structure, which will include a Director of Culture and Creativity. Together with the creation of an EDI Cohesion Lead and the increase in full time Global Majority faculty (to four), ALRA are taking steps to address institutional racism.

These are encouraging developments that need to be continued. ALRA must keep working towards developing a new holistic vision, wherein ongoing communication and engagement between staff and students is embedded. This will hopefully enable dialogue and inclusivity, resulting in an environment that nurtures creativity and - as stated in the quote[7] at the front of this report – nurtures actors who are free in artistic expression but who are also responsible.

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[7] The quote is from Tanya Loretta Dee and printed with permission.

Annex 1   Selected References

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Useful websites:
http://www.takethespace.com/

https://www.gaylenegould.com/

https://www.barbyasante.com/about

Turney, Law and Phillips have developed useful a set of key indicators on harassment, bullying and dignity at work. ALRA can use this checklist as a way to gauge what it is already doing and what still needs to be done in this and other fields.

Harassment, Bullying & Dignity @ Work: Indicators	Yes	No
Do you have a harassment, bullying or dignity at work policy?		
If yes, please specify		
Are staff and students in your institution aware of the policy?		
If yes, please indicate how the policy is communicated:		
Is there training available for staff regarding what harassment is and the procedures to deal with a complaint?		
If yes, please indicate how:		
Are the procedures for dealing with complaints clear?		
If yes, please describe process:		
Do the procedures for dealing with harassment, etc, offer a sensitive, fair and timely consideration of the issues?		
If yes, please describe:		
Does your institution have harassment advisors the identity of whom is clearly communicated to staff and students?		
If yes, please indicate how:		

ALRA Complaint Report Template

[insert name of complainant and respondent]

Complaint
[record the initial complaint and who investigated it]

Conduct of Review
[insert what you did]

Review Findings
[detail what you found; was the investigation conducted fairly and proportionately, did you agree with the findings

Recommendations:
It is recommended that consideration be given to:
[insert as required]

Addendum:
[if required]