



## DEIA in the workplace: A little less conversation

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**Pooja Aggarwal** is Director of Academic and Professional Publishing at **Bloomsbury**

Taking these words from the mouth of **Elvis Presley**, I think what we need in our industry is a little less conversation and a bit more action when it comes to DEIA related progress.

When I started in publishing in 1999, the world was a very different place - we didn't know what WMDs were, tweeting was something birds did, and Bridget Jones was the face of the world of publishing.

There was no-one like me working in publishing and forging the way forward for women of colour. Yes, things have changed for sure, but have they changed enough? I don't think so.

The **Publishing Association** [survey](#) from 2022 states that 'representation of people from ethnic minority groups (excluding White minorities) has increased to 17% from 15% in 2021.' According to the 2021 Census, the total population of England and Wales was 59.6 million, and 81.7% of the population was white. People from Asian ethnic groups made up the second largest percentage of the population (9.3%), followed by black (4.0%), mixed (2.9%) and other (2.1%) ethnic groups, so at a very basic level you could argue that representation in the publishing workforce should be at about 18%. That means we are moving in the right direction.

So much of DEIA is down to personal experience and examining where the changes are happening and where progress is taking place.

It is great that more women are paving the way to senior managerial roles, absolutely, but if those women are all white then where is the diversity? It is great to hear that individual employees are meeting their objectives and doing a great job, but if they are still overlooked for that promotion or know they are being paid less than a male colleague in the same role, where is the equity?

I am a prime example of where having the right support has pushed me to do things I didn't think I could; the irony is that my biggest supporters have been white, middle aged men (sorry **Ray Fidler**, **Richard Charkin** and **Bill Curtis**!!)

My attitude has changed over the years as I have become more senior and moved up the ranks –we didn't really talk about diversity 20 years ago, now it is embedded in everything we do in life. But we still have a lot to do to normalise the conversation. And this is why I am so glad to be part of a company that puts DEIA at the heart of their values and how they want to grow and move forward. I am now in a position to drive the change and to shift the composition, views and commissioning for the company. I am working on a number of initiatives to create channels to reach new audiences and encourage people from under-represented groups to think of publishing both as a viable career pathway, but also as a means of sharing their stories and amplifying their voices – there are a lot of stories that need to be told and a lot of learning to do.

And it isn't just about race or ethnicity, it is about equity, inclusivity, and accessibility at all levels.

I do see more efforts in the industry to be inclusive, for example, recent sessions at the **SSP** and **ALPSP** annual conferences. We just need to pick up the pace as an industry and start to implement shared goals and objectives that cover all of us who work in this amazing industry. We get to decide on publishing works that can literally change the world and light up people's lives in so many ways – what could be more rewarding?

Ultimately, I have always maintained that you want the best person for the job who has the energy and drive to make that role theirs based on pure merit – but if we cast our net wider, if we try to give people a chance, if we provide support and coaching, if we understand the people behind the job titles, then we are opening up a treasure chest of opinions, perspectives, experience and voices that could enhance and enrich everything we do.

### **So, what can we do in reality?**

- If you are organising a conference, panel, workshop or meeting, think about getting more diverse speakers, think about the themes, what your end goal is and who you need around the table. Be brave and address the difficult questions and commit to certain standards and best practices.
- If you are a publisher or society, think about where you advertise your roles, think about equal pay and the ethnicity gender pay gap, think about support for people from underrepresented backgrounds who might need help in establishing themselves and their voices in your organisation – don't assume anything.
- If you are from an underrepresented group and are struggling to find your way in this industry, find a mentor, join an organisation with a support structure, talk to your line manager. Don't accept it and do nothing.

If there are forums that I can be a part of, then I am happy to step up and help drive the discussion and the change. It's taken me a long time to be able to become that role model that I never had. I hope to give back now and bring others up with me. I want to be part of the academic community that quickens the pace and be one of the many voices advocating real and meaningful change.