My Response to "A memorial to a lie" in LibDem Voice, 3rd Jan 2022

As a Black African Briton, I want to say thanks to Jo Hayes for this opinion piece. She is spot on. Unlike Jo, I don't have to imagine those 7 points – it is the world I live in and have experienced for many years.

I am often the odd one out in majority of the groups I encounter everyday, professionally, personally and politically. I used to be asked a lot where I am from or told "you speak such good English", which I considered an affront until I realised the lack of knowledge that Britons in general have about their "British Empire" past. I remember an occasion when I entered the first-class compartment of a train looking for my seat and a white man entering the same carriage asked if I was there to clean it! I've seen countenances change in surprise or disbelief, and some reluctant respect when the person realises I have a doctorate in Engineering (I was a rarity in the Engineering world in my day) or am in a position of influence and so know what I'm talking about. I have been heckled at a Professional engineering conference in the UK by a White man who took offense at me, something he wouldn't have done to another White person. Yet, at another such conference a couple of years later in Switzerland, I won the award for the best presentation (the only Black presenter).

I've lost count of the times I've been followed around by shop detectives or got the "what-are-you-doing-here" look. I've been passed over for promotions (leading to becoming self-employed since 1996 and an employer thereafter), had to fight for pay rises that my White male colleagues got automatically, had a project I had worked on for over a year taken from me and given to a White male colleague to present to the client because my then bosses felt that the client would not appreciate having a Black woman talking to them about their project (I got my project back and got to present it, but that's another story). Then there's the time I was travelling from Munich to Stansted, a flight steward having gone up and down the plane offering landing cards and got no take up, came to me the only Black person on the flight and asked if I needed one. I had to calm my husband down! You get the jist, so I will stop there. And yet I consider my life journey in the UK a heck of a lot better than many Black people in Britain.

I am very disappointed and saddened by some of the comments on here, but not surprised. I and many like me have come to expect such deflection. It is all the more disappointing in a community that claims to be liberal.

We Blacks have a headwind against us that White people don't see and won't ever feel, and obstacles they will never have to jump over or hoops to jump through because of their skin colour. That is white privilege. It is why Black people have to work doubly hard just to be taken seriously and triply hard to get on. I will simply ask many on here to listen, ask questions, try and understand where we are coming from.

We are not seeking to attack or demonise current generation or blame all White people for atrocities of the past. We are simply asking that Britain comes to a real and correct understanding of its past, accept that harm was done, understand that the harm is continuing in current generations.

Then as a country move forward by removing the legislative and other structural barriers that continue to hold Black people down of which there are many. What we want is equality of opportunities, and for as long as people pretend, ignore or refuse to understand that those racial barriers really do exist or try and conflate it with other barriers, this society will continue to languish in division and misconception of an equal society when it is anything but. The Party also must take action to correct its own failings on this issue.

Black lives must matter in the same way as White lives do. Still unconvinced, I recommend you listen to Jane Elliot the well-known anti-racist educationist here https://bit.ly/JaneElliot-anti-racist

Thank you for reading this!