

October 2020

Black History Month - This year is no different, but at the same time it is

Black History Month, celebrated throughout October in the UK, is an annual recognition, celebration and remembrance of black people who came before us to fight for equality and the right to excel. This year is no different, but at the same time it is.

Over the past few months, we have seen growing tension and violence aimed at the black community which sparked the Black Lives Matter (BLM) demonstrations across the globe. As LGBTQ+ people we understand the importance of protest; we have always stood with our black community across the globe and will continue to do so. Black lives matter yesterday, today, tomorrow – everyday.

As an organisation which champions equality, diversity and inclusion in all its forms, we want to stand up to racial injustice and to challenge systemic racism.

We decided not to release a statement at the height of demonstrations, for the simple reason that we took the advice provided to us by the black community. Instead we read, we researched, we listened, we learned, and we read again.

We looked internally at Building Equality itself and saw how underrepresented the Black community, as well as other Minority Ethnic communities, are within our own organisation, and how this is not only a reflection of our member organisations but also our wider industry.

We set ourselves a challenge and started asking ourselves questions, questions that we had already considered from the perspective of the LGBTQ+ community in construction, engineering and the built environment:

- WHY is Queer, Trans, Intersex People of Colour (QTIPOC) representation in construction so low?
- WHY are there so few individuals from QTIPOC backgrounds coming up through the ranks?
- WHY aren't people from QTIPOC backgrounds applying for roles in our industry?
- WHAT is it about our industry that fails to attract/provide an inclusive environment (or at least provides the preconception) for QTIPOC individuals that is not felt in other leading sectors?

As an alliance, we are actively looking at how we can change and grow to better represent, support and enable QTIPOC working in the construction, engineering and built environment sector.

What is our approach?

We will continue to learn and gain a greater understanding of the BLM movement. We will take advice from our QTIPOC members on how we can work to make our own organisation more representative of the community we represent. We will partake and collaborate in upskilling workshops, knowledge shares and similar events with industry organisations. We will gain a greater understanding of how we can better represent the intersectionality of our members, colleagues and community. We will be better allies and support the needs of queer, trans, intersex people of colour in our industry.

Actively pushing the BLM cause, we are working with our individual organisations, supporting their internal Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) networks and pushing for them to deliver targeted training and working with HR teams to review recruitment procedures.

To facilitate change, we are building on our ongoing work to improve LGBTQ+ inclusion by urging and encouraging our members and their organisations to think about their role as allies for all underrepresented groups. We want our sector to be a visible, loud and proud ally, we want the industry to amplify the voices of black people, and when they share their stories, we need to really listen.

In the spirit of Black History Months of the past, we are determined this year to use our platform to recognise, celebrate and amplify the voices of the QTIPOC community as well as make a statement in support of the BLM movement. Throughout October, we are showcasing a selection of the UK's incredible community organisations for queer, trans, intersex people of colour, as well as the awe-inspiring activists that are behind these groups and progressing intersectional inclusion in the LGBTQ+ community.

Our commitments – Our calls to action to ensure that QTIPOC individuals are represented at all levels in Building Equality:

1. We commit to zero tolerance of racial harassment and/or bullying at all levels of Building Equality – Regional, Steering and Executive Committees.
2. We commit to showcasing the intersectionality of our QTIPOC members and amplifying their voices, through increased representation at our events, panels, webinars and social media campaigns.
3. We commit to developing anti-racist and QTIPOC initiatives such as webinars, educational resources and celebrating key calendar events to both educate and empower our members.
4. We commit to supporting and collaborating with industry networks and groups such as BAME in Property, Black Professionals in Construction, Association for Black and Minority Ethnic Engineers.
5. We commit to working alongside and sponsoring grassroots community groups such as UK Black Pride and Rainbow Noir.
6. We commit to lobbying our member organisations, to develop and deliver targeted training and review recruitment and policy materials.
7. We commit to offering transparency surrounding these commitments and highlighting our progress against them.

To our QTIPOC members; colleagues, family and friends - we stand with you and support you, we are learning, and we are listening.

Building Equality Executive Committee, October 2020

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