
Own your Ethnicity

The 2021 census shows that 18% of the UK population is from an ethnic minority.

However, this is not representative at the senior to board level positions across the FSTE250 and large private companies. Proportionally, these numbers are below the 18% population.

We know that there are number of reasons for this, for instance; unconscious bias still pervades leadership development blocking advancement of ethnic minorities, imposter syndrome can limit high potential individuals from pursuing progression and more a current one, is that people are reluctant to declare their ethnicities for fear of stereotyping and targeting.

Very early on in my career D&I was becoming a buzz topic. As one of the very few south Asian females in my organisation at the time, I was invited to join a training course to develop ethnic leaders. You know, one of those courses that everyone suddenly did to look like they were inclusive. I was put in a room with every nationality of colleague, because of course we are all the same and have the same lived experiences.....

The group could be categorised into two camps, those that were 1st generation immigrants and had moved to the UK for work and those that were 2nd generation immigrants (like me) who had grown up in the UK.

The first group were ecstatic to there as this was an opportunity that they wouldn't get otherwise, they made the most of it from minute one. The second group were a lot more sceptical, questioning why was this the only opportunity to get leadership training and why not in an integrated setting, were we actually going to get anything useful or was this just an exercise so that the nominators could get something ticked in their performance scorecards.

The 2nd group completely derailed the morning of the training and didn't hold back on how we felt the situation was completely unfair and ...and... and.... This ended up being my first proper experience of executive coaching. The facilitators were excellent, although completely surprised by the amount of challenge, the immediately pivoted and got to the reasons why we were worried.

The 2nd group had grown up with inherent racism throughout childhood, education and work life. This group had created and put in place mechanisms and personality traits that hid their ethnicities and tried to "fit in". This group had grown up to hide their roots as much as possible

to get to where they were. The 1st group did not understand this as they had never had to hide who and where they came from.

The quite intense coaching we collectively received, was incredibly positive. They helped us understand that our experiences of the past do not dictate the experiences of the future. How those experiences, ethnic backgrounds and cultural understanding were now becoming hot skills as more and more business was being generated, built and kept in the East as their economies grew. Our ethnicities used to be something that would actively keep us back, now was something we could utilise to our own advantage. Owning our ethnicity was something to be proud of and not hidden.

I wish I could remember the facilitators and coaches names and thank them again for all the help they provided. It was because of them that I felt I was able to start bringing all of me to work. It's worth noting that the facilitators were part of a Black owned and Black run team, and their lived experiences were essential in unlocking how I felt and how to move forward.

Get in touch to find out how LoGho Executive Coaching can help you own your ethnicity.

Own your Brand!