

EDI Reading Newsletter, 17 August 2020

As part of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion team here at the IfA, we're introducing a newsletter to share readings that we've found inspirational and informative. Our hope (and expectation!) is that everyone takes a few minutes to engage with the shared writing. Agree or disagree with what's written, it is valuable to increase our literacy for informed discussions and decisions. We're not demanding a significant amount of time—in particular, this reading is drawn from an excellent set of tweets.

Writer: Benjamin Giblin

What we're thinking about this fortnight: Discrimination faced by Black UK physics students

Why we're thinking about it: The recent #ShutDownSTEM / #Strike4BlackLives events were an opportunity for non-Black STEM researchers to learn about and reflect on the anti-Black racism that exists in their fields. The data supports a picture where Black students experience systematic discrimination channelling them away from higher education and careers in physics.

Consider these findings on the participation of Black students in physics education from GCSE to PhD level compared to white students, collected by the IOP (https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/f15b/72bb4792f7549460d7af22dec732b22f9746.pdf?_ga=2.38881509.790824194.1597751794-1485674041.1597055609).

The loss of talent of Black students from physics is reflected in the BBC's finding that in 2016, there were only 85 Black first-year physics undergraduates in the whole of the UK (1.7% of the total; <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-47612806>).

What you should read:(*In 20 minutes*):

This excellent series of tweets highlighting further information on this subject from physicist / activist Dr Jess Wade: <https://twitter.com/jesswade/status/1270653206213865473>

Discussion question:

How can we change the culture/practices of our field to make it more welcoming to Black students and academics?

Please feel free to discuss in the EDI Teams channel, and we will organise a coffee next week (week of 24 August) to chat further.