



To cite this podcast:

Maatwk, F., Araneta, K., & Fraser, J. (Hosts). (2022, March 15). Tino Rwodzi: Identity work, Black women in STEM and dismantling racist assumptions in Biomedical Science (No. 24). [Audio Podcast Episode]. In *Pedagogies for Social Justice*. University of Westminster. <https://blog.westminster.ac.uk/psj/tools/podcast/>
DOI <https://doi.org/10.34737/w12v6>

Podcast transcript:

Fatima: Hello everyone, welcome to the Pedagogies for Social Justice podcast. I'm Fatima Maatwk and I'm very happy to be your host today, and I am very happy to welcome Tino Rwodzi with us, who is a Biomedical Sciences student at the University of Westminster, and who also did a Students as Co- Creators project, which we will talk about today as well, and is also a member on the Steering Group for the Pedagogies for Social Justice project. So, welcome, Tino, and thank you so much for your time today.

Tino: Thank you for having me, thank you – I'm excited to be here.

Fatima: Thank you – that's amazing. So, maybe, to start, you can just tell us a bit about yourself, who you are, your journey through higher education, and why Biomedical Sciences...

Tino: Okay. Where to start...? So, I was born in Zimbabwe, in Bulawayo. My parents are both from there, but we moved to the UK I think when I was about two years old, so I'm pretty British in terms of culture [laughing] at this point. I went to school in Buckinghamshire, which isn't too far from London, and I think, for a very long time, I wanted to do Veterinary Medicine – I loved animals. That's kind of the path I was going down, did all the work experience, and then, as what happens a lot during A Levels, you make a really quick change, and I started to find more interest in the human side of healthcare, looking at all the avenues you can have, and, for me, I'm someone that likes to branch into a bit of everything, so Biomed was a great opportunity for that. You study a bit of Virology, a little bit of Genetics, some Ethics as well, so that's what I ventured towards. I ended up at Westminster, and I'm really enjoying the course so far – it's been great. I'm in my third year now, so it's been a real...a learning experience and I've really enjoyed it. So, that's how I kind of got into higher education. I've always known that I've wanted to do this. Both my parents went to university as well, so just kind of following suit and enjoying it!

Fatima: Oh, that's amazing! I can relate a lot to the part of Veterinary Medicine – I think that's a dream maybe many of us had at some point.

Tino: Yeah, for sure, for sure!

Fatima: So, thank you for giving us the overview of how you came to where you are today, really. I'm wondering, did you ever find yourself facing challenges when having to navigate



your racial identity as a student of Biomedical Sciences at a UK university?

Tino: I would say that my experience might be a little bit...different, in the sense that I came from a less diverse area. I've actually moved to somewhere with a lot more diversity. I'm from Buckinghamshire, which I think it's like 86% white. The school I went to was predominantly white and Asian. So, I think there was a handful of Black students at my school, so that's kind of the environment I've navigated for a really long time. So, coming to London, I've actually seen more peers that look like me. I've seen more individuals of authority that are Black, and African as well. So, for me, it was actually a culture shock in the reverse, in a way, which I actually really enjoyed and it was nice to see. And in terms of Westminster, it's quite a diverse university, especially my course, so I hadn't faced challenges in the sense of feeling as [othered] as I might have felt at a younger age, but I think any young person who is Black, or any other minority group, tends to feel that sense of, you know, imposter syndrome every now and then. I'm in an environment that was not always historically filled with Black women, so every now and then, I have to remind myself to overcome those conceptions that I have when I walk into these spaces. So, yeah, other than that, it was okay, I think.

Fatima: That's really interesting, and I can relate to it a bit as well, being half-Egyptian, half-German, and not fitting in either, and then, in the UK, suddenly I felt like I fit somehow, in London at least. I wonder, that moment when you then came to London, went to university, and realised that it's different in terms of the diversity around you, do you recall how that felt like – was it...?

Tino: Yes. I'd say it was quite strange. I think because...like I said, there's no one way to be Black, of course, but I think, being in an environment where I was one of two Black girls in my class, I've developed my own personality [from where I'm from]. Coming to London, and people having a conception of how I might speak or how I might act, and I'm actually a little bit different, or feeling like I didn't fit in with a lot of the London culture, was quite a shock for me. Like I said, I'm from Zimbabwe and I have a very big African family, so I'm used to being around people from my Zimbabwean culture, but I think London has its own vibe, which I love, but I think, when I first got here, I felt very...excited but confused because I didn't quite fit the mould of the other Black people around me. And then, obviously, that took a lot of internal work to realise that, of course, we're all going to be different – there's no one set way to be. But it was...strange to realise how much I'd missed, I suppose. It's just different to be in spaces where people are comfortable with large groups of Black people. I hadn't really had that, other than my family. So, yeah, I think, for me, it was kind of like sad, retrospectively, to think about what I didn't have before that I'm only being exposed to now.

Fatima: Yeah. Thank you so much for sharing this – that's very valuable for us to hear. So, then, my next question is kind of relevant to what you already said, but how is it then...or do you feel you had access to good representations of individuals you can relate to?

Tino: I would say, in terms – this is where I think intersectionality becomes a really



important part of it. I've never had a shortage of female role-models, especially in school and in higher education. I have a lot of female lecturers who are amazing, that I really look up to. Some of them, I actually got to work with on my Co-Creators' project. But, in terms of Black female educators, professors, I know there aren't a lot in the whole country, let alone in London universities, and I've not been able to have any as my lecturers, which is unfortunate. I've not seen them in the labs or in the spaces that I might end up working in, which is something that obviously takes progression, but, yeah, I think...certain aspects of me, I've never felt like females can't be in STEM, or women can't be in a position of authority, in that sense, but Black women in STEM, less so.

Fatima: Mm, yeah, absolutely. Thank you for bringing up intersectionality because it's interesting how we then find people we relate to through other things...

Tino: Mm, yeah, I'm sure for you as well, like you were saying, Egyptian and German, they're two very different cultures, so I'm sure it's the same thing, where there's elements of each where you can find yourself in other people, which I guess it's a blessing and sometimes a curse when you can't find someone just like you, I guess.

Fatima: Yeah, yeah, it's exactly that. So, if we think a bit of the discipline, so Biomedical Sciences, what nuances of racism or colonialism do you see in your curriculum?

Tino: So, I think Biomed specifically, it appears more because of the amount of fields within Biomed. Like I said, it ranges from Virology and very clinical, empirical data searching, and it stems into healthcare as well. So, it...it kind of manifests in all aspects. I think what I've seen a lot is, in terms of healthcare we take evidence from our patients of where they're from, their ethnicity or their national history, because there are certain conditions that might affect that, but a lot of these assumptions that we make are based off of very old ideas, coming from the 18th, 17th centuries, that we've not taken the time to look at and assess where they come from.

I think, within Biomed, what we also see is that we produce the data that leads to Public Health, you know – like we collect the data that we use for the World Health Organisation. You've seen that a lot with Covid, recently, kind of more exposed. But what you see is that we take a universal approach to a problem that isn't very universal. The approach we take in Europe to Covid varies a lot from India, for example. We have different resources, our cultural perceptions are different, and I think, unfortunately, in a lot of the papers I read, Biomedical papers will try and overlook the social constructs that affect the science and the pathology and how diseases develop, and I think those are the nuances that are hard to point out when your job is to get hard facts and get lab results, but it does play a really, really important role, and it filters down into our healthcare and into the NHS. So, I think that that's the biggest concern, which is why, within the uni, we've been doing our best to bring light to those issues I think, because it's very easy to not notice them when that's what you do for most of your time.

Fatima: Yeah, absolutely, and I think...because I have absolutely no knowledge when it



comes to Biomedical Sciences, Genetics – that’s not my field, but listening to you and thinking of like as patients, you know... Like I once had blood-tests drawn and the doctor told me, oh, this kind of hormone is too high, and then she went, “Oh, actually, no, you’re Egyptian, so it’s normal for you.” And I’m realising what you were talking about is something that’s then relevant for everyone really...

Tino: Yeah, it really is. And I think that’s...that’s another problem, that, although it’s not always directly with racism, but discrimination in general, there’s a gap between the Science community and the general public, which obviously forges distrust. There sometimes are reasons why they take that kind of information, but, as a patient, we don’t know what these scientists get up to, right? You’re just presented with a form to fill out. And bridging that gap and helping people access the relevant and appropriate science will really help with preventing those kind of issues for patients I think.

Fatima: Mm, absolutely. If we start thinking of decolonisation and anti-racism, what do you think decolonising Biomedical Sciences or Genetics involves?

Tino: For me, I think it’s deconstructing a lot of those ideas that underpin the Science. I’d say a vast majority of scientists, modern scientists now, do their best to assess that racism has a role in Science or that there are...disparities in different social settings due to Medicine. But some of the equations we use, some of the terminology that we’ve used in the past stems from early 18th century, 19th century, Eugenics, from some of the Fathers of Science that made these assumptions off of racial classifications that aren’t...aren’t real. I think the big thing – I know we’ll get onto it, but the big thing with our Co-Creators’ project was talking about the fact that racial groups are not backed by science. They’re a social construct, and of course they have real-life effects on all of us, but in terms of the genetics, they don’t exist. But in terms of decolonising Science, we’re not really taught that properly in school – I think it only really comes into higher education in university. And some of these tools that we use to assess certain pathologies and diseases are based off of the Founding Fathers of Science that we tend to...to gloss over some of their viewpoints, which I think can be a real problem that you only see later down the line. So, for me, I think the main focus is addressing these past behaviours and making sure that we’re critical about how they affect our practices today.

Fatima: Absolutely. This is very relevant to my next set of questions because you mentioned your Co- Creators’ project. So, can you tell us a bit about your Students as Co-Creators’ project, which is about understanding genetics to counter racial discrimination?

Tino: Yeah, of course. So, it’s a project that I’m super-excited for. We...I feel like, when you start this kind of thing, especially with racism, as I’m sure you know, there’s endless information, so we really had to try and hone in on our point of connecting it with genetics. So, what we created is a two-hour lecture- style workshop which would be presented to students who are 2nd year or Level 5 at Westminster, and the whole point is essentially giving them a toolkit to combat racism or pseudo-science that they see during their work as Biomedical students or healthcare professionals later and just in general life.



So, we take them through four spheres in the workshop. You start with “Perceptions and Assumptions”, which is looking at some of these stereotypes that we walk into a room with, that you walk into the lecture with, about race, about our understanding. I think, Science students, we spend a lot of time learning facts, so we think we know a lot, which we don’t [laughing], and so that initial stage is just about releasing some of those defences, getting them to understand that, a lot of these assumptions, we’re not even aware we have. And we have a video of Jane Elliot, who was a professor. She did the “blue eyes/ brown eyes” experiment. I don’t know if you’ve heard of it, but it’s something I’d suggest everyone watch, which really looks at like the prejudice in educational environments and how that affects racial groups as they move on through life. So, we talk through that and we watch a clip of that.

Then, the next sphere is “My Ancestors, Your Ancestors”, which is a bit more of the bulky genetics. We go into complex genetic traits, understanding inheritance. There’s a little video-type skit there with interview – an interview comes in and they ask that question of “Where are you from?” and the person says, “I’m from Wales”, and they’re like, “No, no, no, where are you really from?” which I know so many people have heard before, and it’s something that you don’t realise can be a problem. So, again, we’re just trying to highlight these issues and bring them forward to the students.

The third sphere looks a bit more at genetic variation in terms of skin colour, hair colour, eye colour, those things that we align to race, and how the genes and your DNA actually affect those things – what are the theories behind how they’ve developed and evolved.

And then, finally, in our fourth sphere, we kind of broaden it again back to healthcare and medicine and how...is there actually a use for race in medicine, are there times when it’s beneficial, are there times when it’s detrimental, what can we do, as students of Biomed, to change this or continue to improve it?

So, it is quite intense. I feel like...I’m excited – we’ve not launched it yet. The first...the first [attempt] I think is going to be in this coming September, so I’m really keen to see how students react to this because it’s different from the rest of our course I think, so yeah, I’m excited.

Fatima: It does sound really exciting and I feel like this is something everyone should...like it should exist in every discipline because these constructs are in every discipline. It’s one of my favourite projects, which I probably shouldn’t say [laughing], but it’s close to my heart.

Tino: No, I appreciate that, I do, and I must say as well, the team I worked with has been amazing on it, so that’s why we ended up with such a full project I think.

Fatima: That’s really nice to hear. So, based on what you did in the project and then the workshop design you came up with, could you give us a couple of examples maybe of racial



discrimination based on genetics that you identified throughout the project?

Tino: Yeah, of course. So, I think I'll choose the ones that stuck out to me because our process was a lot of reading, coming back together, deciding what we thought would hit hardest.

One that I suppose is...it's not funny, but I find it...humorous, in a dark way, to read about was, during Trump's Inauguration in 2016, there were a lot of white supremacists and alt-right supporters who had demonstrations where they chug milk. I don't know if you've seen that – it was on the media – cartons of milk, they'd be drinking that, just on the streets, which at first just seems ridiculous and quite silly, but the point they were making was about the fact that a lot of Black, specifically African-American, in America obviously, and Asian communities are lactose-intolerant or can't correctly digest lactose, so their point was "We, as white people, are superior because we can drink all this milk" right [laughing, which we did a bit of research on because, obviously, lactose-intolerant links to genes. In milk, there's a sugar called lactose, which is broken down by an enzyme that we produce - all people produce it as children - called lactase. For the majority of people, as you become an adult, you stop producing lactase, and therefore you get a sore stomach when you drink milk or dairy products. And what these alt-right supporters had done is they'd taken genetic papers, where scientists had looked up where this comes from. They'd discovered that, I think 3,000 years ago or so, a population of Northern Europeans, during a time with like very little food, had had to develop an ability to continue producing lactase to drink the milk from the animals they herded because there was fewer food sources at the time, and because, to survive, they had that trait, it proliferated and then was inherited by the Northern European communities and is seen a lot in descendants of that group now. So, again, white supremacists have said, you know, "We come from this area and...you know, we're better." The thing they don't talk about is that that same mutation of being able to continue to produce lactase is seen in an Eastern African population around the same time, who also herded cattle, and also still have that mutation that lets them digest lactase. So, it has nothing to do with race. It's to do with geography. It's to do with environment at the time, how well those traits are inherited. So, I think that was a key one, just because you can clearly see how that links to very insidious racist behaviour.

And then, I'm trying to think, another one would be we all talk about...we've heard about the Arian race, I'm sure - there's very few people that haven't heard about that in the context of Nazi Germany, and this idea that blonde hair and blue eyes are the ideal. When you look up the genes that compound together – there's a lot of genes that compound together to make skin colour. I feel like, when you learn genetics in school, it's "I inherit some from dad, some from mum, and then I'm blonde because mum's blonde and dad's blond." It's a bit more complex than that, in the sense that there are some genes that will knock off or knock on other genes. There's a lot of interlinking to get your final result. But we assume that the majority of people who are blonde are white or have derived from Europe. What we see in a small population in the Solomon Islands are individuals with really dark skin, with naturally blonde hair, like bright blonde hair. So, again, this concept of an Arian race and that blonde is part of the ideal race that's only seen in white individuals



doesn't really make sense because there's a gene mutation in the Solomon Islands that – it's novel as well, which means it's not because a European ancestor moved over thousands of years ago and put it into the gene-pool. It's come up on its own. So, I think that's another thing where, when you look deep enough, a lot of the science is taken from...a lot of these concepts are taken from real science, and then skewed or played around with to get the result that people look for.

So, yeah, those are some of the genetics that we – we talk about all of that in the project as well, and go into a bit more detail.

Fatima: That is really, really amazing, and I think it's...part of why these examples are so excellent is because people talk about hard sciences and numbers and like, you know, the cells or the genes, and then there's this positivist approach of, well, this is a fact and you cannot counter-argue a fact, but I think what you said sheds a lot of light on...that even facts are created by people, and if these people happen to be white supremacists, well, that's what comes out of it. So, thank you for the examples – I really love them.

Tino: That's okay.

Fatima: So, perhaps a more difficult question then: how can we begin to counter these arguments and these very deeply rooted assumptions?

Tino: I think it's...yeah, it's a big question, definitely bigger than me, as a third-year undergraduate scientist, but I think it's also important that we all put in our little bit because that accumulates to fix the problem. I think, like I said before, it starts with these initial concepts and with accepting the responsibility some of our favourite scientific heroes have in creating these problems. I think they always say that that's the first step, to remove denial from the situation.

I think, when you look at some of the Founding Fathers, like Galton, who is the Father of Eugenicism – Eugenicism, also, just to clarify, is that concept that you can arrange reproduction in a human population to get your most desirable traits, which... I think that's the definition used in the Oxford Dictionary, which sounds pretty decent, like obviously we all want desirable traits, but when you look deeper, that stems into a lot of ableism, racism... It's the basis of a lot of the Nazi regime scientific movements. It's what's caused forced sterilisation, which was the homicide of Jewish people in Nazi Germany, and many other homicides, and that came from someone who has been a name of a lot of scientific buildings in and around London. Obviously, this has been addressed by the universities now, but, for a long time, I don't think people were willing to criticise the likes of him, or Darwin, who also believed that white people had an affinity for more intelligence and that they were the superior race.

Carl Linnaeus as well – I will come back to your point – but I think it's really interesting to note, which I found insidious when we were doing our research, he was one of the first



individuals, I think in the 1700s, to make racial categories, kind of the five races we use now, where we say there's whites and there's Blacks and there's Asians and there's Native Americans. He created a taxonomy where he had a racial group and then he associated traits with that racial group, and if you look at them when you research, I think he says that the Asian community are...are greedy with their money, that they're very severe and lack emotion. He writes that the...Europeanus is I think the Latin term that he made up for it, that they are governed by intellect and laws are very intuitive, that the African racial group is capricious, that their women have no morals or are very sly, quite prone to violence. These are the traits that he made in the 1700s, and we see them, literally direct replications, in the racial stereotypes we use now. To me, it was crazy to look at that because I'd never seen his work before, but I've seen those stereotypes walking around the streets in 2022. So, it's really important in Science to hold each other accountable because Carl Linnaeus wrote that in the 1700s and it could have been written today, which I think is a huge problem, and, again, we're doing the same thing now when we create these papers, when we write these research articles, when we give information to all of these public health organisations – that's going to be used for a number of years after we're gone, so it's really important that we address the problems that are historical, like the Founding Fathers of Science had, and we can make sure that we're not making those same mistakes. I think that's the first step to countering it. And I'm sure you'd agree that's the same in most disciplines. I think there's a lot of work that needs to be done there.

Fatima: Yeah, absolutely, absolutely, and it's...although there is no surprise in anything you said, it's still shocking to hear.

Tino: Mm, yeah, it was quite... I think...I remember, during the project, our...the senior members of staff who were on our team would constantly tell us to make sure we take breaks because it can be heavy. I think anyone who's in a research field or doing an undergraduate degree, sometimes you look up information that you forget it can directly affect you – it's not just an academic exercise, it has real consequences.

And just another point, I think, in terms of countering that I just thought of would be... making sure our spaces are multidisciplinary and diverse is really key. Obviously, in the last few years, there are many more women in Science, in STEM, and there are people of all different origins and beliefs and cultural backgrounds, and that needs to continue and improve. I think, yes, we're doing well, but it needs to be much better because this information in these papers that are released, there's a bias of the person observing that they can't...you can't always be aware of, and it really affects the outcome of the available medical care that we have for people globally. I think the scientific community needs to reflect the people that they're trying to help, and I'm not sure if we're quite there yet – or I know we're not quite there yet. So, I think that's a really, really key point, to make sure that we keep up that drive, have more women, more Black people, more brown people, in these spaces to make sure that, when we create these protocols, they help everyone.

Fatima: Yeah, absolutely, and I think it's also important how we create these spaces because, if STEM, whether as an educational field or a professional field, we need to be



really thoughtful about how we create spaces and it's not those with a lot of power allowing someone who's a bit different to be in this space but to generally transform the overall system really...

Tino: Yeah, definitely.

Fatima: ...which maybe one day will be happening, we don't know...

Tino: We hope so [laughing]!

Fatima: And about the project that you did, I'm wondering what doing the project in a partnership between students and staff meant to you...

Tino: It meant a lot. I think...I've had instances where I can work with senior staff at school, but this was really different because we came onto the project as academic equals. Any point I felt that was relevant, any critiques that I wanted to make, I could make. And, in my project, I was working with my actual lecturers, modules that happened to be my favourite, although I enjoyed all my modules, I have to say, but for me, it was really intriguing to see how staff members who've been doing this for a long time, in research for a long time, how they prioritise their work, how they go through that process, and I think... It's something I wish every student could do because you feel that love for research and understanding. It feels like university in the sense that you find a topic you love and you get all the information you can and you talk about it and you chew it over to produce something you're proud of, and I'm so glad I had that opportunity because there are a lot of times that I think...any undergraduate position, it can be a bit tiring and you can lose motivation, but it did not feel like that once with this project. It was my favourite thing to do during the week. And I think it also helped me to have confidence about my voice being heard. I don't feel like I would walk into a space and have to quieten myself down because I've been provided a platform where, any points that I make, if they are valid, they will be put forward, and that was celebrated. So, I think, as I walk into scientific spaces now, I can say, "No, I definitely know about genetics and race", like I can talk about this and feel confident, so I think that was really beneficial and I will use it a lot as I carry on my career.

Fatima: That's amazing. You mentioned now also a lot about the lecturers you worked with on this project, and I wonder, what do you think lectures of Biomedical Sciences can do to really approach deconstructing racist or colonial curricula or like what is something you would wish to see them do and practise in the classroom or in their curriculum?

Tino: I think I got...with Dr Tinworth and Dr Volpi, who are the two lecturers that I worked with on this project, with the other students, they are kind of...they are kind of like prime examples of something you can do because they...they wrote the title for this project and then reached out to students, and I saw it and I loved it. That kind of mindset towards your curriculum and saying, "There's a huge gap here in what we're teaching that needs to be filled up by a project or a lecture or a module" – it depends on the course – having that



mindset is so beneficial to students. It's why I'm so excited to see it taught to second-year students because I wish I'd had it on my...on my course, my run of the course. I would have spoken about it in endless essays.

I really want to see...I will say that I think the majority of lecturers do this quite well, that, in learning about pathologies or disease, they will have a section that talks about how this might affect different disadvantaged communities or minority communities, and how it changes globally, how the disease might be affected or how quick treatment is globally. I think that's so key. And you need to...it can't always just be one lecture about race, so students walking in feel like they're just being told off and walk out – like it has to be normalised and run through the entire curriculum. So, I really want to see my lecturers, and lecturers in the future, make sure that, when they finish their lectures or their syllabus, that they take a second to think of "How can I trickle in the real-world effects of what I'm talking about into my work?" I think that would be great to see more of.

Fatima: Yeah, that's really nice. I'm glad to hear that a lot of the lecturers you've dealt with in your journey do this, in a way, so that's really nice. Now I have a couple of questions about your wishes to see in the world really... So, tell us maybe, what is something you would like to see improve or happen in healthcare? Since this is your future and your field, what's something you wish for in the next years?

Tino: That's a big question. It's a long list [laughing]!

Fatima: Go ahead, tell us everything!

Tino: I'm really keen, in terms of the UK, I'm really keen to see this push that we've seen in the last two years continue. I think, due to tragic circumstances, like George Floyd, unfortunately, that's what's given more of an institutional push to address racism and discrimination within our society, and I don't want to see that fizzle off. I really feel like we need to keep pushing the initiatives we have.

Those attempts that certain healthcare workers have made to address disparities, I want to see that continue. I know that there have been so many papers and news talk of how Covid has much worse effects on Black and brown bodies. The number of people that are dying in those communities is...is awful, but I want to see people look into why, because it's not that we just like have a greater affinity for all of these diseases and heart failure. There's a reason why, and I feel it's only now that we're starting to look into that and how to fix that problem.

I think that, as information is much more accessible on the internet, scientists have to have a lot more responsibility about how they present their information.

And that's another thing, I think, just as a student, I have had to read a lot of papers and journals, and sometimes, academics in general will...will sacrifice making their work



understandable for the sake of, I don't know, for getting their points across, but it needs to be able to be understood. It needs to be something that a lot of people can reach into and get something from because, if you don't, you have these situations when white supremacists are drinking milk on the street and you have racists who are spewing facts to impressionable minds, which is what we don't want. So, it's really, really key, and I think it's something I'm going to have to keep reminding myself through my own career now, even on a platform like this, that, when I do speak about science or I say I'm coming to you with facts, that I'm careful about what I put into the world, which is...which is...I suppose it's the same for everything.

But I also would like to see... I said before, being multidisciplinary, for me, I think it's a huge part. I try to add a bit of everything into what I do, and sometimes, in Science, there's a... we're quite hesitant with that because we want to make sure that the facts are presented, but you can't make a paper on Covid or on cystic fibrosis, on sickle cell, without addressing some of the socioeconomic factors. Any information you release, I think there should – if I could have it my way, there would be paragraphs within a scientific paper about, you know, the effects that diversity has on these conditions. So, I really want to see scientific teams working more with Social Sciences, with politicians and historians, and making sure that we understand how all these concepts are interlinked, and we use that to our benefit.

So, I think those are some of the things I'd love to see. I'd also love to see, in terms of the media... which we've seen more in Covid, we kind of had to, because this is the first time in a while that we've had a global pandemic, and everyone, absolutely everyone, is affected. So, that push to make science digestible on the news, and you see your infographics in the morning, which I've always loved infographics because they just look nice, that's the kind of thing I want to see for a lot more conditions – make everything accessible and understandable so that we can continue to improve people's lives I think.

And just keeping that open mind. What I don't like to see is when you go on – I don't know if you've been on the online NHS service, and if you look up symptoms, there'll be a picture of, okay, there's this rash, and it's on white skin, so, for me, that's really not helpful because I have no clue what that looks like on me. Those are the small things that need to be looked at and addressed and fixed if we want to keep progressing.

Fatima: Absolutely – I couldn't agree more with everything you said, and especially engaging also with the Social Sciences, with socioeconomic factors, history, really - like the example with the milk-drinking, if you would add the historical lens, you would realise that 3,000 years ago, there was a bunch of white people who had to drink milk to survive, so it's... And this is exactly what we hope to also see one day. And maybe one final question, so specifically about higher education: what is something you would like to see develop there maybe within the next 10 years?

Tino: I think the first thing on my list would be seeing more Black professors, Black female professors. There's just simply not enough, and I can't get my head around it because I have Black female peers who excel in their work. And I don't know much about the



progression into senior academic staff and how that works, but I would be...I would be hesitant to think that there aren't more Black women who could fill those roles, and I'm...I can't understand why they aren't there yet, considering how long Black women have been allowed into education. So, that's really key because, as an undergraduate student, your favourite lecturer is usually the one you can relate to most. So, I think, in the next few years, in 10 years, I'd want to be able to come back into a uni and see that a lot more. I want to see that championed.

Higher education in general, I think there's been a push to try and make it more accessible to communities that haven't had access. There's a drive, in the UK, I know that, to make sure people who have parents that haven't been to university get that opportunity, and it feels like it's something they can reach, because I think we'd all know that, if you go to a grammar school or a private school – and I have to say, I went to a grammar school, so I was pushed to understand the importance of higher education, and there were certain advantages that I got because all my teachers, and all my friends' parents, and my parents, all went to university, and the school geared me to filling in that personal statement to get in. Not everyone has that opportunity and we need to make sure that we make sure...we need to make sure that everyone does get that opportunity because there are a lot of minds out there that can give insight that we can't get if we keep producing echo-chambers.

So, yeah, I think those are the two things that I really, really want to be able to see by the time 10 years have passed or when I'm putting my own kids into higher education I think, yeah.

Fatima: That is amazing! I will keep fingers crossed. This is one of my favourite questions to our guests on the podcasts because, for all of these wishes, I'm like yes!

Tino: Hopefully, hopefully!

Fatima: Thank you so much, Tino. It was amazing to speak to you today. I've learnt so much and you've really helped me to have some answers when people ask me why is something colonial or racist, so this is really wonderful, so thank you.

Tino: Thank you, yeah, and I would just say, to anyone that has more questions about this, because obviously this Co-Creators' project is just for the people in the uni, there's so many texts out there – the problem is that we're not given them. I think there's a couple of quick Google searches you can do and you will just find so much information and you can dive into it, so I really hope that, in some ways, that that starts to happen more and helps a lot more people have the tools they need to fight a lot of this stuff, yeah.

Fatima: Yes, absolutely. Thank you, Tino.

University of Westminster - Pedagogies for Social Justice Podcast

Episode 24: Tino Rwodzi

Transcribed by www.premiertyping.com



*To find out more information, access our tools, or get in touch, visit us at [https://
blog.westminster.ac.uk/psj](https://blog.westminster.ac.uk/psj)*