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Podcast transcript:

Kyra: Thank you for tuning in to the Pedagogies for Social Justice podcast, brought to you by a student-staff partnership at the University of Westminster. This is a platform for students and educators to exchange knowledge and encourage discussion about the current challenges facing higher education. I'm your host, Kyra, and, for this episode, I'll be in conversation with Lubaba Khaled, who has been involved in numerous projects during her time at Westminster, from being a co-author on the 'What is the Attainment Gap?' report, being a BAME representation officer, and to her current role as Vice-President of Welfare in the Student Union. One thing you'll notice about Lubaba is her inspiring passion for the work that she does and her deep commitment to ensure equity and opportunity for under-represented groups in HE. In this interview, you'll learn a bit more about her background and identity, as well as her journey into becoming the leader, activist, and role-model she is today.

Kyra: Hi Lubaba, thank you so much for joining me on this episode of the podcast. It's so good to see you again, and I've been really looking forward to having this conversation with you.

Lubaba: Thank you for inviting me. Honestly, I'm so excited – thank you so much for giving this platform because I think we're going to be talking about something really, really important.

Kyra: Yes, I agree. So, I thought we could begin with talking a bit more about yourself. So, where are you from?

Lubaba: So, I'm literally like born in London, South London to be exact. However, my parents, my mother is from Palestine, Gaza, and my father is from the Caribbean, Barbados and Trinidad, so yeah!

Kyra: Amazing! And what did you study here at Westminster?

Lubaba: So, I actually did an undergrad in International Relations. Obviously, as you most probably can already guess, because of like my mixed heritage, I literally was born in a very political household and everything, so I thought, okay, let me do International Relations and have a better understanding of the political systems that are built like across the world and things like that, so it was really interesting. And then I did my undergrad dissertation on



social media and how it's affected the Israeli narrative of what's happening in Palestine and Israel, which I feel like is so convenient to what we're talking about, what we're going to be talking about now, so yeah!

Kyra: Literally. No, amazing. What was your favourite thing about IR?

Lubaba: I think what I loved the most about studying IR is how you have that space to develop your own thoughts, develop your own theories, and you're able to really like base everything around your own values as a person, and I think having that space to be able to challenge narratives, challenge lecturers and your curriculum and things like that, is like absolutely phenomenal, and it was very beneficial, especially for me, so that's what I loved like the most about studying IR.

Kyra: I think I have the kind of same experience with Sociology as well, like just being able to question everything just makes it so fulfilling.

Lubaba: Exactly.

Kyra: I agree.

Lubaba: And the fact that like you're questioning it, and that actually gives you brownie points in your essays or in your work – like you're not getting criticised for questioning because that's the nature of the degree. The degree is to challenge the structures which are built around, literally, things such as the World Wars and how that has impacted how we see today's world and, literally, international politics. So, yeah, it's really interesting.

Kyra: Exactly, yeah. So, I wanted to focus on your background of being Trinidadian, Bajan, and Palestinian – and can I just say before anything, like free Palestine always, and I stand in solidarity with all of the Palestinian community against the imperialism, colonialism, and the ethnic cleansing that is taking place as we speak.

Lubaba: Thank you. Thank you very much.

Kyra: I wait for the day that, you know, tragedy stops being normalised in the Middle East.

Lubaba: Yeah, I pray for that.

Kyra: I didn't want to go ahead without acknowledging it here, so I hope that's okay with you.

Lubaba: Thank you.



Kyra: And in terms of your multiraciality, I wanted to kind of find out what was your experience of like growing up in a household with essentially three different cultures? Did you ever feel like you were in touch with one culture more than the others or would you say it was quite an even split?

Lubaba: I would say it was actually quite an even split. So, a bit of background about my family, both my Mum and Dad's side... My mother was born and raised in Gaza. She actually left Gaza after she married my father. So, she was very in tune with everything happening and very close to her family – like my family on my mother's side, all of them are in Gaza. I don't have any like cousins, aunts, uncles – they're all there. So, as a result, it meant that I was very, very close to that side of the family. I speak the language, able to communicate and understand, you know, the history of being a Palestinian refugee, and understanding, you know, celebrating the culture and everything.

And then, my father's side, again, a bit of background information on my father's side. Obviously, my grandmother, she came to the UK in her early-twenties and she married my granddad. My grandfather went to university. He went to actually LSE and, obviously, this is now in the 1980s or 1970s, 1980s, so you can imagine – actually, no, sorry, have I got the dates wrong? I think it was the 1960s – I think I've got the dates wrong in my head. But you can imagine that kind of lifestyle of going to university where Black people in the UK, at the time anyways, was just not common, you know, because the Caribbean, being Caribbean, being one of the first to migrate to the UK. I'm using the academic terminologies but of course we know that Black people did exist in the UK before the Windrush generation. However, at the time, it was just a massive influx of that. And so, understanding that experience from my grandfather's side...

But then my grandparents split, and my grandmother, she had three boys and a girl in South London. She couldn't raise her boys here anymore and her daughter, so she went back to Barbados. So, my Dad did secondary school in Barbados, and then came here for university, because of – I'm sure you know about the National Front and the rise of racism, and also understanding the racism within schools and education, and my grandmother, she recognised that, if she wanted her children to prosper, especially her boys, in London, it was not going to happen in a South London school, and therefore went back to Barbados so that my Dad and my uncles and my aunt finished their education there, and then they came back here for university. So, yeah, in terms of – so that's just a bit of background in terms of like... So, when it comes to now and me and my family, we were always told you're Palestinian but you're also Black, like you are both, and we made sure, my Dad made sure, we got to Barbados as often as we could. Obviously, life is expensive, but as much as we could in terms of that. And then, before the blockade of Gaza, we used to go to Gaza a lot as well, before we saw the blockade, so we used to do that and we used to go often, but obviously, now, with the current condition in Gaza, it's been quite difficult to go back.



I have Palestinian ID, I have citizenship in Palestine as well. I don't have Bajan or Trinidadian ID or citizenship, but obviously I do visit there quite often. So, yeah, so my experience is in terms of being a Black person of Caribbean heritage here in the UK, but also being Palestinian, with a Palestinian ID, and understanding...understanding that as well is something that I have full understanding of, and my parents made sure that we spoke both languages. So, obviously, we speak English, but we also speak Arabic in the household. My father, you know, he learnt Arabic as well to make sure that we were able to speak our mother's tongue as well. So, yeah, so that's a bit of like... So, we were evenly split, I would say, with the two cultures, and yeah!

Kyra: No, that's amazing, and like, honestly, like I was so happy to hear that because I've kind of had the opposite experience, and I feel like, you know, like you kind of expressed, I feel like being sure of your racial identity at a young age is...not solely dependent but I feel like it's heavily dependent on how race is seen and treated in your household.

Lubaba: Definitely.

Kyra: Like, for me, I have a Filipino Mum and a Zambian Dad, and I can say now that I had a relatively colour-blind kind of upbringing, and I think that the reason for that was because my parents also kind of always associated teaching me about race with teaching me about like inequality, oppression, colonialism, slavery, and they've actually openly kind of expressed that. They didn't see the importance in teaching me about racial issues, I guess to kind of like prolong my innocence, but I mean, I can appreciate the intention, but I feel like... not learning a thing about the countries that I'm from placed a huge strain on like my sense of identity and ability to kind of situate myself, especially when I don't look Filipino or Zambian. So, because people didn't automatically kind of place me, I found it hard to place myself.

Lubaba: I can completely 100% relate to that because, obviously, I'm mixed race but I am... not like...I am obviously not like...I don't look Palestinian in any way or form. And also, being Muslim, I think Muslim played as massive a part of that than being Caribbean, like telling people I'm from the Caribbean. People would be like, "Are you sure – are you 100%? Barbados and Trinidad, are you sure? You're Muslim though." And so then it's actually...like kind of navigating those two...like those three identities actually, as a Black person, as a Palestinian, but also being Muslim as well has played such a massive role in trying to navigate, and I feel like that's complicated my situation because I feel like, if I wasn't Muslim, and I say, yeah, I'm half-Caribbean, then no one would question it, and I feel like, because I'm a hijab-wearing woman, I feel like that's when people start questioning my Caribbean side and be like, "Oh, but are you really Black though?" So, then, yeah...

Kyra: No, honestly, and I feel like, you know, we spend like basically a lot of our teenage years kind of like navigating and negotiating, and then, for me, I felt like an add-on to that was kind of like catching up to kind of like understand where I'm from, and like I'm doing all



of this racial identity work essentially, on top of the identity work that comes with like being a teenage girl – like I’m also the eldest sibling, and then I’m the first person in my family to go to university, and I was just like...yeah, it was a lot! And I think I would have benefited from like having like a head-start of like knowing who I am and knowing where I’m from, from my parents, but, I don’t know, part of me also feels like, at the same time, that...I feel like doing all of that and kind of discovering where I’m from and my sense of self on my own was kind of what triggered my passion for Sociology. So, I guess I can look back now and kind of think like it was supposed to be that way, but em...

Lubaba: Yeah.

Kyra: What was your kind of experience like in primary and secondary school – like did the behaviour of other kids ever make you question your racial identity? I know you’ve talked a bit about kind of the fact that you’re hijabi and then Palestinian and then obviously Caribbean and how that kind of... Did you ever feel like you had to negotiate-?

Lubaba: Yeah. I think...so I feel like yeah. I feel like, in primary school, I don’t think...now, I’m starting to realise, actually, you know, I was a victim of some form of racism when I was in primary school, but obviously [I wasn’t in a hijabi] then, and so, em, I felt like, okay, so obviously they’ll just see me as a Black woman, or a Black child, in that sense. I think...like bringing...but then coming into secondary school... So, a bit of context, I wasn’t raised here in the UK. I actually...I was born here. I did until Year 4 here, but then I did Year 5 and Year 6 in Saudi Arabia, and then I did...until...yeah...sorry, yeah, Year 4 and Year 5 in Saudi Arabia, and then I did Year 6 until Year 10 in Qatar. So, I feel like...that was a bit different. And, obviously, when going to places like Qatar, for example, just to give a bit of context, pretty much everybody that’s from like the UK and stuff would be, you know, they would go to the same school. So, I went to a British school, and obviously I was surrounded by white British people, and I remember having to constantly tell them, no, I do have a British passport, I am British, I was born in the UK, and being constantly challenged by that. So, it got to the point where I no longer told people I was British. I just said, “Yeah, my Dad’s from the Caribbean, my mother is from Palestine,” and I just said it that way, and I never said that I had a British passport, until come...and then, that way, I don’t get as many questions, until come like Year 10 when I had to come back to the UK. People were like, “Oh, why are going to the UK? Are you sure you’re allowed to go there?” and I was like, “No, I’m actually British – I do have a British passport.” And I think...that’s when they were like, “Oh, you never said!” I was like, “Yeah, because you guys will always constantly challenge that because of the colour of my skin,” because the way British people are seen in Qatar, and other places, are the British expats, who are pretty much all white. So, they don’t recognise that actually there are non-white British people as well. But, em, that was fine, and then obviously I came here to the UK and... I think it was...I think navigating...it was hard, like I can’t lie to myself, like it was hard navigating the two cultures. It was hard to...also like to constantly prove my Britishness, as a result, and I think that’s where...that’s...when I came here, back to the UK, I think that was where...yeah, it was a bit of a challenge to have to navigate Britishness and explain to



people, no, I am actually British, with, you know, in all ways and forms – I was born here, I did like some primary school here and stuff, and then obviously I came back to do my last year of GCSEs and my A Levels. So, yeah, it was...it was interesting. So, now, thinking back on it, yeah definitely, it was...it was a challenge navigating that. I don't even know if I answered the question!

Kyra: No, you did! No, absolutely, and I feel like...like I'm sorry because that even just sounds like such a painful kind of thing to even go through, and I think, at the time, like when you're a child, you don't even really clock onto these things until like later on in life.

Lubaba: Exactly.

Kyra: And you're like...I was actually going through that and it was like difficult...

Lubaba: Yeah.

Kyra: And you just don't...like you just don't know.

Lubaba: Exactly.

Kyra: And I think, I've said this before, like I think people always assume that people who are kind of racialised as mixed are kind of like rainbows and it's like we're free to be this, free to be that, but I feel like it gives more people kind of the agency to actually put us in a category and kind of make us something and put us in a box – like people want to be able to do that, and it's just like... I should be allowed to kind of identify with multiple boxes because that is who I am, and I think, for one thing, when I was in school, I think one thing for me I always remember – and at the time like I think was even like an emotional trigger for me, really, was like racial checkboxes on school forms. Like I used to hate when we had to fill out those things and like...especially like in class, in front of everyone, because I always had to tick "Other" and I remember like-

Lubaba: Same! Same [laughing]! I think only once, I think only once, I filled up a form where they had Black Caribbean and Arab, and that was once, and they had like a long list of...and it was like because they had like such a long list. But, other than that, I always have to tick "Other Mixed" and I'm just like [laughing], yeah...

Kyra: Yeah. Honestly. And like I remember one day like a boy asked me about this, and like I guess he just put two and two together and then... He literally told everyone like they didn't have boxes for people like me, and I had like such a big complex about it in high school, and I remember like, one day, I just got so fed up and I just started making my own box that said like "Mixed Black & Asian", and then my teacher told me I had to stop doing that, so yeah [laughing]!



Lubaba: No, that's so frustrating like, yeah.

Kyra: Yeah. And I look back now and I think like how many other like bi-racial children must experience like the exact same thing, like...

Lubaba: I think, yeah, and I think what makes our...our being bi-racial so different is because we're not mixed with white, if that makes sense.

Kyra: Yes.

Lubaba: Because...because, like, for me, obviously, I am mixed with Black and Arab, and then you're obviously Asian and Black. I feel like because...when we talk about mixed race kids and bi-racial kids, it's always constantly thinking about, yeah, you're Black and white, but, actually, there is a whole conversation here now about, no, there are mixed race children that are not mixed with white, like myself, and yourself as well, and I think...and I know that that was like a serious conversation. I was on [18:18 ? house] for a bit, don't recommend it at all, [I was like, I don't know, am I actually allowed to say app-spot] – I was on an app [laughing], was on an app, and, you know, there was that conversation, the constant conversation of "Are bi-racial people Black?" But the nuances of that conversation was on the idea that...was on the basis that I am half-white, and I had to constantly have to jump onto that forum and be like, no, listen, there are mixed race people that are not half-white – there are bi-racial people that are not half-white, and there are bi-racial people that identify equally with both identities. And I remember like someone saying, you know, mixed raced people, like bi-racial people, are privileged in some way or form, and I'm just like...I hear that, but you're now talking from a perspective that you've made an assumption I'm bi-racial and I've got white in me, and there is such a big conversation here with people who are not mixed with white. And that...you can't make that assumption that we are privileged in that sense because...that's...that's just like a bit frustrating. So, I remember like I was on the app and they were like telling me, "Yeah, you're privileged because you can pick and choose your identity", and I'm like, "Okay, but I'm not mixed with white so...!" But even with people mixed with white, like it's still a conversation, like you can't just go around saying to people, "Yeah, you're privileged". I'm half-Palestinian, half-Caribbean, em...so...yeah...it's just...

Kyra: No, I agree. I agree. And I also feel like it's dangerous to even say that kind of mixed race people kind of have this privilege because, at the end of the day, you have mixed race people who, like by appearance, they're automatically racialised as just being Black, so they don't get to...

Lubaba: Exactly.

Kyra: They don't get to have the experience of having that privilege that a lot of light-skinned mixed race people have, so I feel like it's dangerous, like even kind of trying to kind of have those debates.



Lubaba: Yeah. That's me, completely. When people see me, they see me as a Black woman. They don't even recognise the Arab side of me. They just see me as a Black woman. So, my experiences are very similar to a Black woman, so like...yeah, just...yeah, it's quite frustrating having to constantly defend where you're from [laughing]! And like, "You lot, yeah, I don't have nothing to prove to you guys, like what are you doing?!"

Kyra: You don't, but I also respect the fact that you make your voice known and you fight for kind of this because it's important and I feel like-

Lubaba: Yeah.

Kyra: Yeah, exactly, and I think...you know, thank you for sharing your stories on that, and I feel like, yeah, it's definitely important to have these conversations, not only so bi-racial people feel like they aren't alone but also for non-bi-racial people to understand our experience and that identity work is just as complex for us, and hopefully we can begin to spark more conversations in this area.

Lubaba: Hopefully. I hope so. It will be great if that happens.

Kyra: I think it's fair for me to say that your multi-racial identity has had a significant impact on your involvement in the Student Union, but I'm intrigued to find out like where did that begin, like were you involved in any societies as a student?

Lubaba: Yes. So [laughing], I actually...so what really sparked my involvement, in the beginning, with the SU was actually my identity as a Muslim. I'm not sure if you're aware of the history of Westminster as such, but I might as well give a bit of a context. It was...after 2015, the Henry...is it Henry Jackson Society, which was a far-right, not-for-profit organisation, released a report saying that Westminster had a problem with radicalisation, and we had like some students who went to ISIS here at Westminster. Now, as a result of that, Westminster ended up putting some...had Prevent, which is trying to prevent students from being radicalised, which was just – Prevent as a policy needs to be abolished anyways, but that's a whole different conversation. But we had like cameras in our [private/pro] rooms, we had a tap-in system in our [private/pro] rooms, and there were – the Islamic Society was heavily, heavily monitored, and that's what actually triggered my first involvement in a political space here at Westminster. So, obviously, I started getting involved in the campaigns against Prevent, against having [pro] rooms, but then, also, on top of that, you know, the Palestinian Society, I was part of the Palestinian Solidarity Society as well, and that is where, on that, I was...they were also heavily monitored as well because of Prevent, so then that was how I got really, really active initially at Westminster. Then, obviously that campaign was successful because now we don't have any more – Prevent has been pretty much under control here at Westminster, and we don't have cameras in our [pro/home] rooms and so forth.



So, then I was involved in the Middle East & North African Society, and I was a tiny bit involved in ACS – I tried to get in there, but, yeah, it was proving to be a bit difficult because of my bi-racial [laughing] identity and also because I’m Muslim. At the time, this was at the time, ACS was all about partying and drinking and I [wasn’t about that] so I was like, yeah, need to step back on that one. So, I got involved in the Middle East & North African Society. I was the Vice-President there. And then I ran for Black & Asian Minority Representation Officer, but when I ran for the Representation Officer, I was running on a completely different mandate, which was around Black students especially, around the attainment gap and things like that. I really wanted to challenge that because that was a whole different experience that we just hadn’t been able to work on. So, I ran for BAME Officer, started work around the attainment gap, worked very closely with Jennifer Fraser, absolutely like been a legend like for me, and started the work. And then I felt like...then I was like, okay, the work is not done and I feel like I still have so much to give to the Union and to the University, so that’s when I ran for a full-time position, em, and continued the work around the attainment gap and especially like making sure that [Black students’ voices] were heard because there was a lot of work there, and then, now, we’re here, where I’d like to think, slowly but surely, we’ve like improved a bit, so much in comparison to how it was when I was a first-year student, instead of like – it’s [no longer become] a hostile environment for [Muslim] students here at Westminster. But there is still a little bit more work that we need to do around the attainment gap and Black students. I feel like that’s where now – I’ve shifted my focus because that was where the biggest gaps are. But, em, yeah, so just slowly but surely, that’s like what I’ve been working on and that’s what’s...like...

And then, now, obviously, with everything happening in Palestine, I’m now trying to do some work and see what kind of things we could do to make sure that we, as a Union, are in solidarity with the oppressed in Palestine. And even as a Union, we’ve actually changed...like I have to say, there’s been a massive [glow-up] for Westminster Student Union because like five years ago, we had such a rubbish by-law, by-laws, where, within our by-laws, it said we couldn’t campaign against Prevent. I don’t know why it was in our by-laws but it was there, and it was just so difficult to be political because it was against our by-laws, absolute chaos left, right and centre, but now, from that to where we are today, where we had a [?] commitment and we’ve got the working group around that, and we’re now looking at pulling together a statement. I’m assuming it will be already out by the time this podcast goes out, but we’re now putting together a Palestinian Solidarity statement, things like that, which, when I was a first-year student, would have never happened. So, there’s like a massive growth and [glow-up], which I’m just so proud of, and, yeah, so...

Kyra: That’s amazing. I had no idea like the kind of history behind the Student Union, and I think, you know, that’s so important, and I’m just so...I feel so proud to even just like...like be able to talk to you today, to know that you was a part of this kind of progress, and, yeah, it’s amazing. So, like you said, you said you worked on the “What is the Attainment Gap?”



report, so would you say that that kind of...was that what was...did that inspire you to kind of go up for Vice-President of Welfare, like was it kind of like I'm going to do this?

Lubaba: So [laughing], actually, no, because, when I did that report, I was already elected as the Vice-President of Welfare. I hadn't officially started, but I was already elected. The background behind, if I remember correctly, the background behind doing that report was we needed to actually understand our statistics, and that was something I was saying as a part-time officer, and I was telling Jennifer that we need to actually understand the statistics that are in front of us, and, at the moment, we don't understand – well, we didn't understand at the time. And so, the report, the whole purpose of it was to give a nice little understanding of our statistics and how can we improve as a University. What happened was, there was a lot of data, but no one actually understood the data, no one, like from academics, senior management, students, nobody [laughing]! And that's why that report... and then that was something we recognised, myself and Jennifer, as I was the BAME Officer, and then Jennifer commissioned me to put together the report during that time where I submitted my dissertation and I hadn't started my VP Welfare role, so I got commissioned to do that report and I put it together and then it was sent out. It was sent out, and now, it's been proven to be successful because people now actually understand the data. Within the report, I found some interesting stuff, you know, like...that was – like, for example, it was actually students, Black students, that come in with the highest tariffs, so they come in with the highest grades, and [were] the most let down by the University when they leave. So, we can't use the excuse as "Oh, they come in with lower tariffs" because that's not the situation at Westminster. That was completely opposite to the sector. When I found that data and I spoke to the person that's – he didn't even know that was the case, and I was like, "Okay, well, that's the situation now so we need to do something here." And then, actually, things such as finding that Black students are the most disadvantaged in our University, and with the lowest attainment in our University, so shifting the focus on not BME as a whole but more focused and narrowing it down to students, sorry Black students. We also did...I also... yeah, and then I put a tiny bit of recommendations there as well, which I know is having a positive impact because one of my recommendations was we need to start having difficult conversations, and that was something that we weren't having before, and I know that that has now been questions that have been used in interviews as well. So, I sat on a University interview and that was one of their questions, "How will you handle and navigate difficult conversations around race and attainment?" So, I know that there has been – people are listening, and it has been used and people have read it and it's becoming quite useful. So, yeah, that was definitely...so I think...like big up Jennifer Fraser like because they've helped me so much, put me together, do everything with me together, and like I really appreciate that opportunity to put that together, that paper, because that was...that was really, really game-changing at Westminster.

Kyra: I know that you've said kind of how the report and kind of the things that you've done have kind of been used now and how they've helped kind of the University, but what are some of the challenges that have also kind of come with it?



Lubaba: Oh [sighs heavily]... Naturally, having these conversations, naturally, is going to be challenging [in] universities such as Westminster, which were established a very, very long time ago, and I think what one of my challenges have been is allowing people to understand that I am not attacking them as an individual but attacking the structures that weren't built for people like us, and trying to let people understand that because what happened at first when I was speaking about specific causes and criticising specific systems and policies in place, people took them personally. They thought I was calling them a racist or whatever. And I was like, no, I'm calling the University a racist, and the University is separate to the individual, right, and it's actually recognising...I'm constantly, and it's something I've always said, and I always will say, universities were not built for people like you and me, right? They weren't. Not only because we are people of colour, but we are also women, right, and then, for me anyways, I have a disability. When universities were established here in the UK, they were built for rich, white men, initially, rich, white, straight men, and Westminster was built for the working-class white men, okay, just like to give...because it was a polytechnic beforehand. But it wasn't built of us, which means there are systems and policies that are not in place, such as an adequate policy to challenge racism on our campuses and challenge sexual misconduct. We're only now seeing these policies pass in universities. We're only now seeing the structures and the systems to challenge that kind of behaviour. Why is that? It's because the universities weren't, initially, when they were established or founded or whatever, there weren't people thinking about women, there weren't people thinking about people of colour, because they never thought we would make it into university. And so, now that we are at universities, we are teaching, you know, learning, you know, we are part of like staff and everything, now, we are seeing a rise in racism on our campuses – not really a rise but we're seeing more people vocal about it, and like sexual misconduct. So, those are just two examples, because that's what's been making national headlines, right? And so, yeah, and I think that was...that has been a challenge to speak to people and to tell them, "I'm not attacking you as an individual" – because I'm a very vocal person. I'm very vocal on Twitter, I'm very vocal on like social media and things like that, and I do say things on social media and things like that, and I would say, you know, things such as universities weren't built for people like me, because they weren't! But I'm not attacking [you]. And so, you know, what happened was people thought I was attacking them on a personal level, and I wasn't – I was just attacking...I was criticising the structures, which, again, like I said, weren't built for us, and I think that has been my biggest challenge, is allowing people to understand that this is not a personal attack to them, but it is about how we can make this University safer for us.

Kyra: Yes. No, I can definitely relate, and I think that also kind of plays with conversations about decolonising and, you know, I am telling you that the institution is colonial and, you know, and I think...there needs to be kind of...a kind of point where it's like...I'm not necessarily calling you a racist or calling you a colonist, but there is that element where we all have kind of colonial epistemologies and ways of being and ways of doing, so, in a sense, you do need to decolonise your ways of thinking, you do need to read on anti-racist texts



and learn to be anti-racist because, whether you know it or not, it's the unconscious kind of racism and the unconscious kind of colonial kind of thinking that is important and needs to be addressed as well. So, I think there's definitely two elements of that, and thank you for sharing. I'm just so inspired by you, honestly, and I think, even from our first meeting, like you really just come across as someone who just doesn't do anything half-heartedly, and like you really give it your all, and I feel like we need more individuals like you, and I can only aspire to kind of accomplish as much as you have in the early stages of your career, and I'm so excited to see what is next for you.

Lubaba: I hope, yeah, like I'm just praying that I've now opened the doors for people to come into like positions of...you know, running for [sabbatical] officer roles, where they realise that actually they can create change, because now they've seen [how I've] done it, they've seen [us] quite radical in their ways, and quite, you know, not willing to step down and just... So, I'm hoping that that will now open the doors for other [?], people in the future, students in the future, to run, especially Black people, because that's so important.

Kyra: Yes, no, I agree. I think you've definitely opened up doors and kind of inspired people – I know for a fact. But, unfortunately, our conversation is coming to an end, but there is a question I like to end on, and it is: what is something that you'd like to see happen or see developed within higher education in the next 10 years.

Lubaba: Em [sighs]...that's a really tough one because I do have a lot of things. I think...I think, going back to...I want universities to start rethinking the way they go about things. And I think Coronavirus – and we haven't spoken about Covid, but I know Covid has forced universities to do that, and I want them to continue to do that, and to continue to think about, in the sector, how can we change our ways because it's not accessible, like in any way or form, and I think...like completely getting...demolishing these structures that we have today and re-building them from scratch, I think that's something that would be amazing to see in the higher education [field], and people being a lot more open to that concept, like abolishing – I said "demolishing", but it's really abolishing – abolishing those kind of structures and re-building again. I think that's something...if that happens, that'll be phenomenal, [because] I feel like that will just solve all the issues that we see here.

Kyra: I agree. I think it's more about – we say this quite often in our...like in the project meetings, but I think it's more about transformation rather than like reforms and things like that, like we want to completely change everything from the ground up and...you know, yeah... That's what needs to be done. Well, Lubaba, I cannot thank you enough for joining me on this episode of the podcast.

Lubaba: Thank you for inviting me!

Kyra: You've shared some really insightful knowledge about the Student Union and your role as VP, and you've also been open to sharing some really touching and some painful stories



as well. I look forward to seeing what's next for you and also having you on the podcast again soon!

Lubaba: [Maybe, I don't mind] [laughing].

Kyra: And hopefully we can see this transformation, rather than reforms, develop in the next 10 years. So, thank you so much again.

Lubaba: No problem at all. Thank you again for inviting me.

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