



# **Making Genuine Change: *Education and Marketing for Black Empowerment***

# // RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- Ahead of Black History Month, Channel 4 wanted to explore 16-24 year olds' exposure to Black History in school, with a specific focus on the importance of it being taught accurately, proportionately, and not through the white-lens
- We also wanted to enrich our knowledge regarding how brands can authentically contribute to a equal society in order to inform brands upcoming Black History Month campaigns

# // METHODOLOGY

## Part 1.

We explored 16-24 year olds experiences with Black History education at school in a 10 minute survey

## Part 2.

We investigated 16-24 year olds' perceptions of how brands can 'make a change' authentically regarding ethnic inequality in a 10 minute survey

- ❖ Whilst this report focuses on black history, it is important to acknowledge that there are many other ethnically diverse groups and stories that fail to be represented in the current education system.

# WHO WE SPOKE TO...

**PART 1 SAMPLE:**  
110 x 16-24 year olds

**PART 2 SAMPLE:**  
111 x 16-24 year olds

GENDER	PART 1	PART 2
Female	85	86
Male	23	22
Female / nonbinary	1	1
Gender nonconforming	1	1
Transgender	-	1

AGE	PART 1	PART 2
16-18	21	29
19-20	33	31
21-22	26	24
23-24	30	27

ETHNICITY	PART 1	PART 2
White (English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or Irish)	85	77
Black (Black British – African or Caribbean)	10	10
Asian / Asian British (Bangladeshi, Chinese, Indian, Pakistani)	8	9
Mixed Race (White and Black Caribbean)	2	3
Mixed Race (White and Asian)	2	3
Any other Mixed Race ethnic background	1	1
Any other ethnic groups	-	2
Prefer not to say	2	6

**Disclaimer:** Although the non-white sample is small, based on Government census estimates, our sample over indexes in comparison to the UK population's ethnic make-up percentages

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# Executive Summary

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

While 16-24 year olds acknowledge there has been progress in the UK regarding ethnic equality, they feel there is still a long way to go. To progress further, both the education system and brands have a role to play - but authenticity is required to make true change:

## EDUCATION SYSTEM

Youth feel that the **education system is not working hard enough** to teach children about Black History which is leaving them **unconfident in their Black History** knowledge. The accuracy of the (limited) Black History taught in schools is questionable given it is **centred around US history** and tends to fail to get to the heart of the Black experience. There is a strong desire for authentic Black History – taught holistically, accurately and through a Black lens.

### The Impact of Authenticity:

16-24 year olds believe it will further **open up the conversation** around race, increase **empathy** and understanding amongst children – all of which will likely increase equality and reduce discrimination.

It will give black children true understanding of their heritage and give them role models to look up to in history.

## BRAND BEHAVIOUR

While brands have begun to make strides with increasing representation in marcomms, 16-24 year olds feel it is not convincing enough on its own. Authenticity in this space looks like engaging with, and showing deep **understanding** of issues, **using their voice** for the greater good – not to capitalise on, **transparency** and **accountability** and ensuring this aligns with their **internal processes**.

### The impact of Authenticity:

When done effectively, not only would this represent the ethnically diverse country in which we live in a normal way, it would likely begin to shape the way in which people think and see others.

89% of 16-24 year olds would be more likely to **consider the brand** in future and 76% would be likely to **purchase** from the brand itself.

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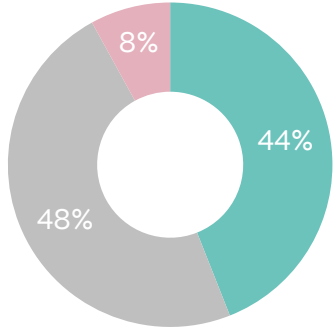
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**Discrimination in  
the UK today**

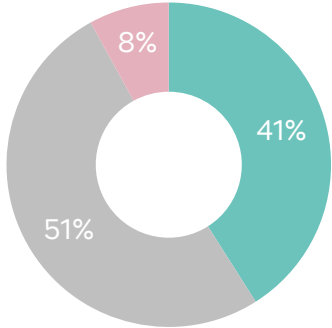
# Compared to 5 years ago, 16-24 year olds from ethnically diverse backgrounds are treated the same or more equally

People of ethnically diverse backgrounds are...

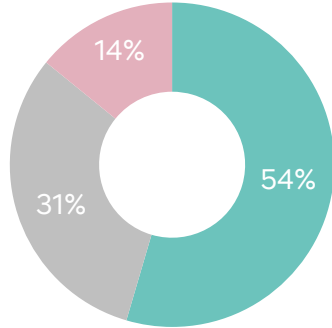
Amongst total



Amongst White 16-24 year olds



Amongst Non-White 16-24 year olds



Non-White 16-24 year olds are over **10%** more likely to have seen an improvement in the treatment of ethnically diverse people

**\*Small non-white sample size\***



I think **increased visibility and representation in the mainstream media** (i.e advertising, politics and celebrity culture) has helped minority ethnic groups to feel more recognised in UK society. **Social media** and increased coverage of societal problems related to race has also helped to encourage discussion on racial inequalities in the UK. There are lots of TV shows and films made recently covering these issues

- Female, White, 21

**44%** see the improved treatment of those from ethnically diverse backgrounds as a result of...



### **SOCIAL MEDIA:**

Instagram, TikTok and other platforms have provided spaces for everyday people to become activist, sharing information about events and increasing engagement in the wake of the 2020 BLM protests



### **NEWS COVERAGE:**

Events such as George Floyd's murder and the 2020 BLM protests sparked more consistent attention from the mass media in racially motivated events, increasing awareness and inviting well-needed conversation



### **REPRESENTATION:**

Ethnic diversity has increased in film and TV as well as in advertising which has enabled a more well-rounded understanding of Black lives as well as role models for Black children growing up



### **GENERATIONAL CHANGE:**

As generations move on, new and fresh attitudes become the norm – Gen Z are seen to be more accepting, open-minded and activist



# Those who think there has been no change in the treatment of ethnically diverse people blame continued racism and lack of real policy implementation

## Why?

Lack of educational and social policy to tackle the roots of racial discrimination

Continued denial of racism and white privilege from white people

Hate crimes persistently take place against people based on the colour of their skin

There is **no real educational and social policy** aimed at eliminating racial exclusion at its roots

– Female, White, 17

Many White people continue to **deny the existence of racism** against people of colour because they assume that **racism is defined by deliberate actions** motivated by malice

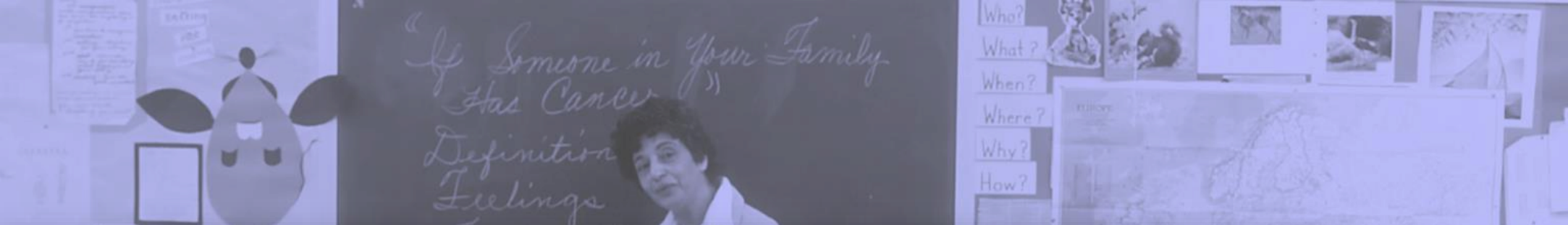
– Female, White, 20

Yet again **police brutality** still occurs to ethnic minorities. We are still judged based on the colours of our skin

– Female, Black, 20

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**Black History  
Education**



**Education plays a key role in development and wider cultural understanding. In this section, we explore how 16-24 year olds experienced Black History education, how it can be improved, and what impact said improvements could have**

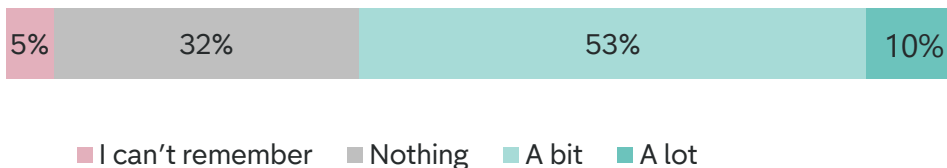


# While 3 in 5 16-24 year olds learned Black History at school, only 1 in 5 feel confident about their Black History knowledge

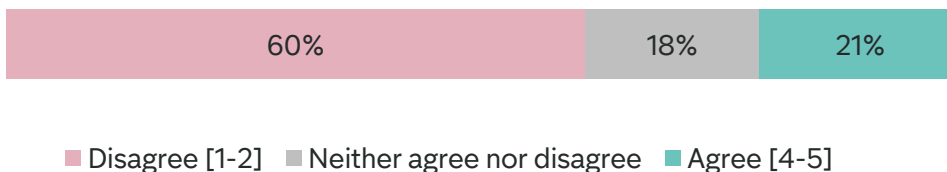
Black History at school is not working hard enough to give 4 Youth confidence in their knowledge, despite many touching upon it in their history lessons. This has left them lacking a comprehensive knowledge of important British Black History moments and figures

*I don't remember learning a lot about Black History, even during Black History Month. I wish I had because I'm a minority myself and I wish there was more than just White History in school curriculums*  
- Female, Asian, 20

Amount of Black History learnt at school...



Confidence in knowledge of Black History...

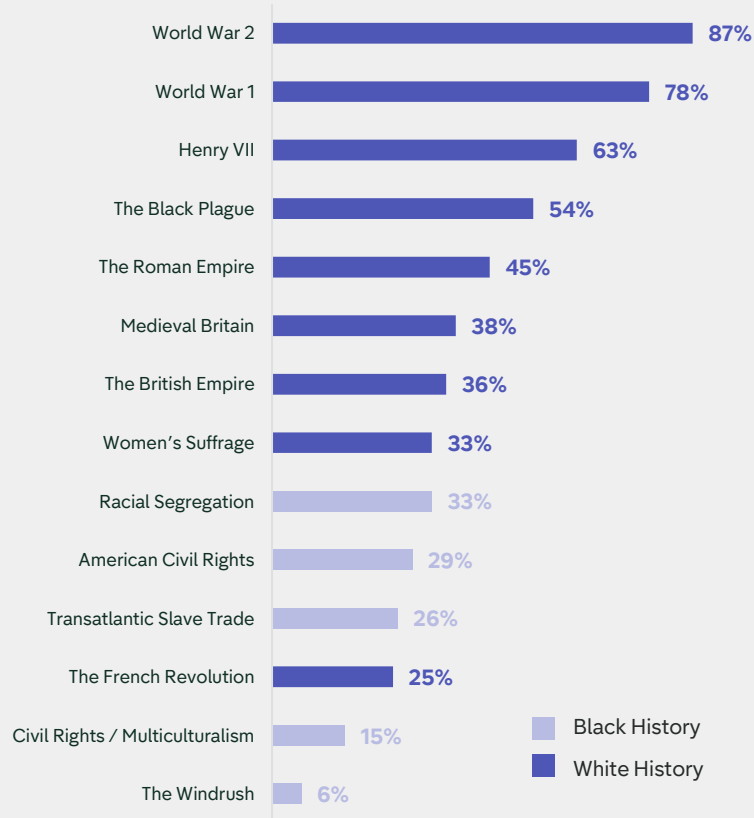


**80%** also think that Black British History is overlooked in schools

N=110 Q. How much did you learn about Black History at school?

Q. We're now going to show you a few statements about the teaching of Black History in school, please select how much you agree or disagree with them

### Topics learned in history at school...



# White people's stories are the primary ones told in history lessons, and Black people's contributions to events are often overlooked

The topics 4Youth remember skew majorly towards subjects such as **World War 1 and World War 2**, Henry VIII, the black plague and the Roman Empire

- These topics are often studied from a primarily **white perspective**, focussing on white stories and white experiences, **ignoring any role that non-white people** may have had in these events



This further contributes to Black children growing up with little understand of **personal heritage and history**, and non-Black children growing up with a lack of understanding on the **power and impact** of Black figures throughout British history

# Black History lessons at school were also often US-centric, and trivialised the Black experience



## US-CENTRIC

There is significantly **lower knowledge** of **Black British figures** like Mary Seacole, Harold Moody and Olaudah Equiano than American figures and to 4Youth, and 16-24 year olds' whole education seemed to centre around **American civil rights** and the **US slave trade**

*I remember looking at Martin Luther King and creating a timeline of his life. We seemed to **focus on American history** and the slave trade, learning about the Jim Crow laws*

**- Male, White, 20**

*I learnt nothing about Black British history, and it made it incredibly **difficult to understand how our current society is set up to privilege white people***

**- Female, White, 21**



## TRIVIALISED

Black History in schools is described as depicting only the **difficulties** that Black people have faced throughout history often through a **lens of whiteness** – this serves to give children a warped perception of the Black experiences throughout history, seeing it as always **horrific yet simplistic**, never joyful or complex

*The only thing we touched on was the slave trade and looking back it was a woefully inadequate. A quite egregious lesson had us (a class of all white students) write diary entries from the perspective of an enslaved child. We were not given enough actual information and mainly focused on how being enslaved was "hard work". This lesson was so inadequate and felt like it **trivialised the horrors of slavery**. That was the only time we ever learned any Black history, as far as I can remember*

**- Female, White, 24**

# This leaves children with a lack of understanding of each others backgrounds, and for Black children, an understanding of their own histories

## FOR ALL ETHNICITIES...

They are failing to learn the truth about the experiences of Black people and their contributions to UK society throughout history – missing out an essential part of history as a whole

## FOR THOSE OF WHITE ETHNICITY...

They are failing to understand the roots of white privilege and how it is enacted today

## FOR THOSE OF BLACK ETHNICITY...

There are feelings of lack of representation throughout history and a failure to understand true heritage

*The ignorance and lack of education makes it ten times harder to explain to people about the influence Black people and Black culture has had on British history, because if it's not taught in schools, **people don't think it's important***

– Female, White, 21

*Unfortunately **they do not teach the true reality** of the history of the black race ...both in the united kingdom and in the united states where unfortunately **racism is still manifested due to the lack of education** about the real facts about black people*

– Male, Black, 20

***Representation makes people feel worthy** of the same things as each other which means Black people can on feel more comfortable and confident in pushing himself to achieve certain jobs social skills life experiences etc. It's also just really interesting show more diversity and introducing people to wider views and experiences*

– Female, Mixed Race, 24

# Conversations around race should begin in the classroom, many of 4Youth wish they had learned more

There is a strong appetite for **more** Black History education, **taught at a better quality** i.e. structurally integrated into the school curriculum

94%

think it's important that it begins at school with Black History built into the school curriculum

82%

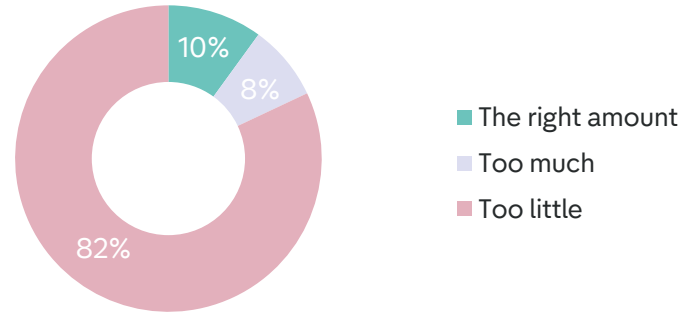
think they learned too little

Importance of understanding beginning at school, within the school curriculum



■ Not important [1-2] ■ Neither ■ Important [4-5]

Amount of Black History 4Youth received at school



■ The right amount  
■ Too much  
■ Too little

*It was completely ignored and skipped over which is **shameful** given how much it has **shaped our society** of today. I feel like I'm having to do so much learning now that should've been taught to me way younger. It's arguably more important than learning the names of Henry 8th wives*

**- Female, Mixed Race - White and Asian, 24**



# For Black 4Youth members, it feels vital that people understand the truth of Black people's experience, that they are visible throughout history and that their full impact be fully understood

Black 4Youth members wished people would learn 3 key things at school:

## 01 VISIBILITY

Black people have been **present and active** within British society for hundreds of years, way before Windrush, way before the transatlantic slave trade

## 02 TRUTH

The truth of the horrors that many ancestors have experienced based on the colour of their skin and many continue to experience today, and white people's responsibility perpetuating these conditions for **racism**

## 03 IMPACT

The **continuous and numerous contributions** that Black people have made to UK society (and worldwide) throughout history and today



Evidence for the importance of Black visibility in the classroom exists in wider academic circles in which studying race at school is defended as a vital part of education and *"Removing conversations around race and society removes truth and reality from education"*\*



*I constantly feel **unrepresented and uneducated** on most black topics. As a black girl I feel the **injustice in having learned the history of my oppressors** and barely any of my own. Almost everything I know is self-taught and even then, I haven't really done much of that as I've only recently started realising how much of my history I don't know. There is more to Britain than the monarchy and the benefits of their colonisation. **Teach me about the impacts of it! Sell both sides of the story!!***

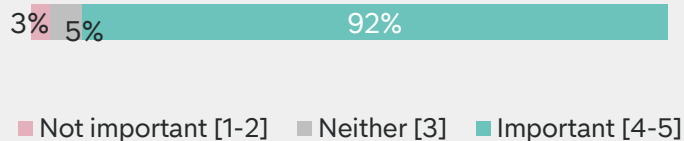
*– Female, Black, 19*



*I wish people knew just how much black people contributed to the world they live in today. We all know about famous white inventors and engineers and we all see pictures of white people building up Britain, but people need to know that in this country for ages (even before Windrush!!) and that we also invented things and built things and worked to create the world we all live in and the society we all exist in today.*

*– Female, Black, 20*

Importance of authentic understanding of Black History...



# Black History must be taught *authentically* to truly represent the realities

**92%** of 4Youth feel authenticity is important when teaching Black History, and it can be achieved through a few key techniques...

**01.**

Lessons be **written and told by Black people** through the lens of Black people's experiences

**02.**

**Reflect the realities** of the Black British experience, both **the good and the bad**: Black History should not only tell of the difficulties experienced but also of the successes and long-lasting impacts that Black British figures have had on society

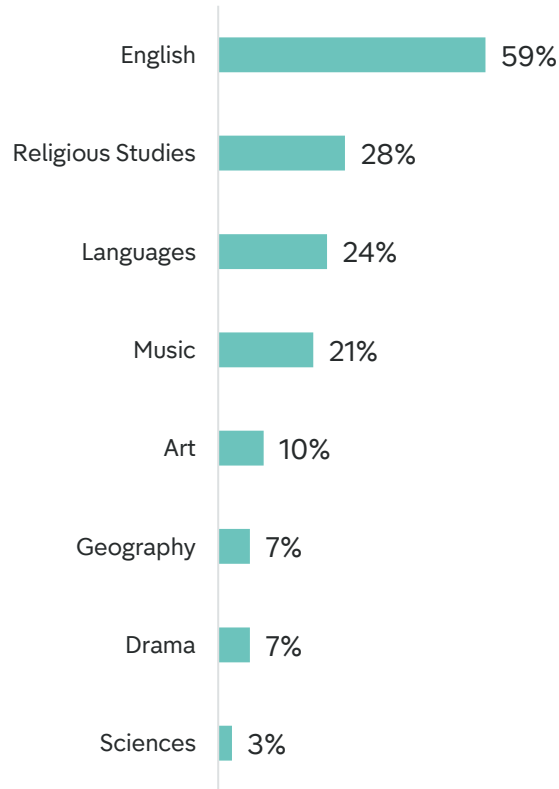
**03.**

Recognise the **role of white people and colonialism in discrimination**: acknowledging the past (and ongoing) mistakes of white privilege and British colonialism

**04.**

Acknowledge the realities of today – that **racism still exists**: Most importantly Black History education should not deny the ongoing realities of the Black British experience but look to the past as a way of learning lessons for the future

Lessons in which 4Youth learnt Black History  
(other than history)...



# Learning Black History in classes other than history also enables a more well-rounded understanding of Black experiences

Around  $\frac{1}{4}$  recall learning about Black History outside of history lessons. These analyses of Black stories in subjects other than history give colour to the otherwise often one note analysis of topics like American civil rights and the slave trade – enabling children to learn more about the **context and surrounding experiences** of Black people through writing, music and language which ultimately leaves them with a more **accurate view of the complexities of the Black experience**

- **English Literature:** the work of Black authors and poets
- **Religious Studies:** the concept of discrimination and morality
- **Modern Foreign Languages:** the development of language
- **Music:** the use of music in different communities



## Building authentic Black History into the school curriculum would serve to help combat discrimination via...



Black History lessons enable children to “comprehend interpret and integrate into their worldviews the science they learn in their classrooms and experience in their lives”\*

### ...CONVERSATION

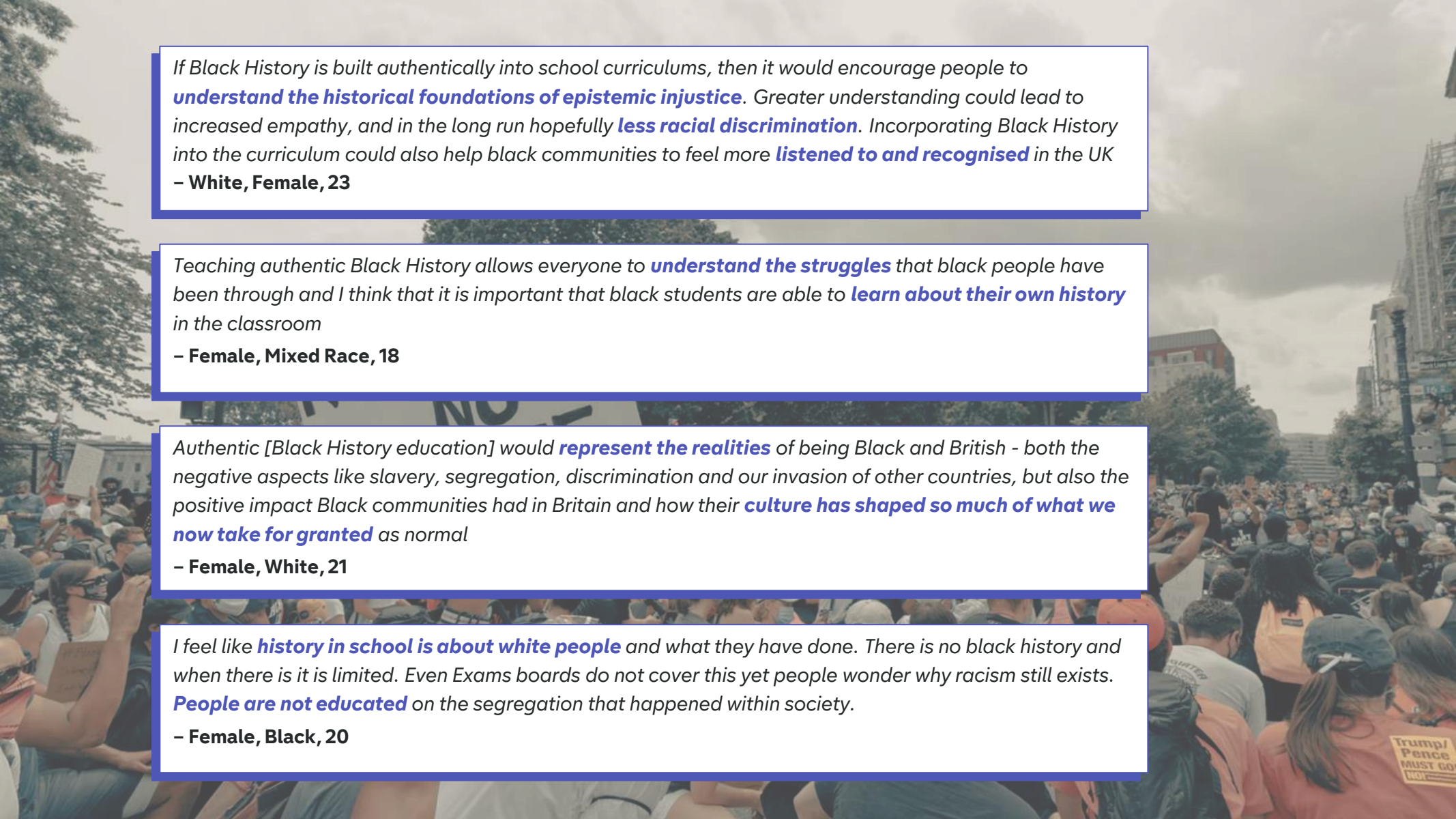
Black History lessons would open up conversation about race and discrimination – parts that have previously been ignored, enabling comfortable and honest discussion about people’s experiences

### ...EMPATHY

Learning about Black historical events and figures would enable a more well-rounded understanding of the experiences of Black people throughout history, and ultimately increased empathy surrounding those different to us

### ...REPRESENTATION

Seeing role models throughout history would enable Black children and communities feel seen, heard and understood, by acknowledging the past and giving Black children people to look up to, inspiration and a sense of belonging



If Black History is built authentically into school curriculums, then it would encourage people to **understand the historical foundations of epistemic injustice**. Greater understanding could lead to increased empathy, and in the long run hopefully **less racial discrimination**. Incorporating Black History into the curriculum could also help black communities to feel more **listened to and recognised** in the UK

– White, Female, 23

Teaching authentic Black History allows everyone to **understand the struggles** that black people have been through and I think that it is important that black students are able to **learn about their own history** in the classroom

– Female, Mixed Race, 18

Authentic [Black History education] would **represent the realities** of being Black and British - both the negative aspects like slavery, segregation, discrimination and our invasion of other countries, but also the positive impact Black communities had in Britain and how their **culture has shaped so much of what we now take for granted** as normal

– Female, White, 21


I feel like **history in school is about white people** and what they have done. There is no black history and when there is it is limited. Even Exams boards do not cover this yet people wonder why racism still exists. **People are not educated** on the segregation that happened within society.

– Female, Black, 20

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**Marketing and  
Representation**

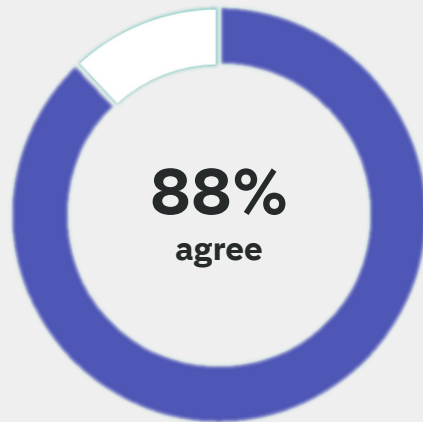
A city street scene with a large curved billboard on the left. The billboard features a black and white photograph of a group of people cheering and raising their arms. Below the photo, the text "Follow us on the remarkable i" is visible. To the right of the billboard is a tall, ornate statue of a winged figure. In the background, there are various buildings and a flagpole with a flag. The entire scene is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue rectangle containing white text.

**Beyond education, marketing and advertising have an instrumental role to play to reduce inequality. In this section we detail the role brands can play in addressing discrimination based on ethnicity**



# Consumers are increasingly socially conscious, so expect brands to mirror this behaviour too

Brands have a responsibility to work towards ethnic equality...



Brands need to **represent their consumers**, who are multicultural, come from diverse backgrounds and consume their products. It wouldn't be fair, at this time when your consumers most need your support, for brands to turn their backs and ignore the problems

– Female, White, 22

Why?

Brands have wide audiences, and therefore have a lot of actual **power** to influence people and make change

Brands need to **represent** their actual consumer-base who are often diverse in themselves

Brands which **profit** off black or ethnic minority culture (particularly fashion or beauty brands) have even more of a responsibility to give back

**Everyone** has a responsibility to do what they can – and brands are no exception to this

*“I believe as a brand you are **representing the community** so you have a job to combat discrimination.” – Male, Black, 17*

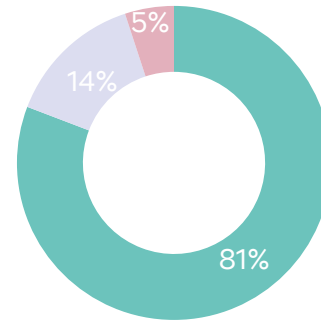
# 4 Youth have seen huge improvements in representation of people of ethnic minorities in marcomms over the past 5 years

This representation has been particularly marked in TV, digital adverts and on social media where ethnic diversity is becoming commonplace – particularly in models. Brand ads are now becoming more reflective of the consumers overall

*I feel like it is **more frequent to see ethnic diversity in advertising**, especially since the BLM movement brought a lot of issues to light*  
– Female, White, 16

*I am increasingly seeing **more and more people who look like me** which is good because it is the representation we have been lacking for so long.*  
– Female, Black, 19

*In marketing/ advertising, compared to 5 years ago, people of ethnically diverse backgrounds are...*



- represented more equally
- represented the same
- represented less equally



While **81%** have seen improvements in the representations of those of ethnic minorities in advertising, only **44%** have seen the treatment of people of ethnically diverse backgrounds improve in the last 5 years overall. This demonstrates how **media representation alone** is not enough to make a difference and must be **paired with other efforts** to tackle discrimination

# TV/ ad representation is not enough

**There's still a long way to go before 16-24 year olds are convinced brands are authentically engaging with social issues**

The last few years have been marked by unrest and tragedy, this has made consumers more sensitive about who they are buying from, seeking our brands who's values align with their own.<sup>1</sup>



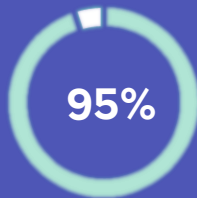
<sup>1</sup><https://valassis.com/consumer-intel-report/>

**4Youth's checklist of  
how to authentically  
engage beyond  
marcomms:**

Authentic representation.

# Diversity of organisation and accessibility of products.

Brands must ensure diversity is represented across all levels...



## WHAT TO DO

Beyond marcomms, diversity should bleed through **all levels of the organisation** from most junior team members up to senior board level. **Products must be suitable** and appropriate for the people advertising them, reflecting the diversity within the company



## WHAT NOT TO DO

Diverse representation in marketing feels tokenistic if there are other areas of an organisation where discrimination remains. For example, ethnicity **pay gaps**; fashion brands **underpaying and overworking employees** of colour; **failure to actually cater** for diverse consumers in their products; or at exec level, having all **white board members**



### During Black History Month:

**ADDRESS ANY AREAS WHERE ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE IS WHITEWASHED**

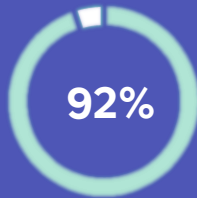
*Many hair and shampoo adverts feature black and/or lighter skinned women despite the products not working/being suitable for their hair type is something I notice a lot. It is clear that it is **only for the sake of appearing 'equal'** when in this case I would say it is okay if they don't use women of black backgrounds in particular since the products we use to care for our hair are a lot more complicated than a simple 2-in-1 shampoo and conditioner*

**– Female, Black Caribbean, 19**

Authentic representation.

# Understanding the true complexities of the situation.

Brands must take the time to understand different customers...



## WHAT TO DO

Brands need to **educate themselves** and their employees to understand the context around diversity and the experiences of their different customer base (95% agree). They could speak with relevant people, listening to them share stories and experiences to begin to build a picture of their experiences, and take this forward into their organisational structure



## WHAT NOT TO DO

Lack of understanding can lead to \*awkward\* moments and huge **backlash**. For example, Kendall Jenner's Pepsi ad in which the supermodel wandered into a protest and 'solved' it by opening a can of Pepsi demonstrates a **blindness to the context** around these issues



### During Black History Month:

**PASS THE MIC TO PEOPLE OF COLOUR**

**EDUCATE CONSUMERS ON BLACK HISTORY IN BRITAIN**

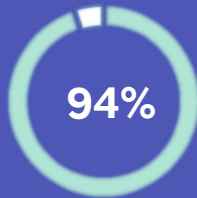
Bring **people of colour to take over social media** channels and devise a campaign that goes beyond Black History Month so better representation is across all projects related to the brand and not just for the month. It should have a long-lasting impact by having a diverse senior leadership in the company and ensure there is **strong commitment to the board of directors**. Embed the importance of **better representation** not just for October but in everything they do

– Male, Mixed Race – White and Asian, 17

Authentic representation.

# Being transparent and taking accountability.

Brands must hold themselves accountable for past mistakes...



## WHAT TO DO

Brands should open up to the public about **future efforts** to combat discrimination as well as owning up to **mistakes and blind spots** and being clear about plans to rectify them in future. This should also be paired by **standing by beliefs** even in the face of backlash to truly demonstrate support



Taking responsibility and claiming accountability is extremely important for building trust in consumers



## WHAT NOT TO DO

**Cover up past mistakes** coming to light without acknowledgement or **ignoring** the issues completely



**During Black History Month:**  
**TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR PAST MISTAKES**  
**SHARE FUTURE PLANS**

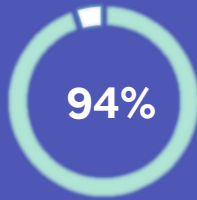
*For some reason [the 2020 Sainsbury's Christmas ad] was the first to spring to mind because of their advert with a black family which received a LOT of controversy online. There was so much hate from racists online who suggested that they wouldn't shop with Sainsburys in future because "clearly they only cater for black people" which is ridiculous. You never see that kind of thing on an advert with a white family. They **responded to it very well, and very professionally** and it's definitely stuck with me and gave me a more positive perception of Sainsbury*

- Female, White, 24

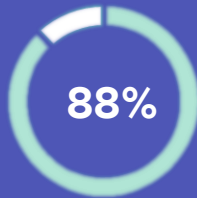
Authentic representation.

# Working with relevant activists and charities.

Brands must work with appropriate partners...



Brands must donate/ support relevant charities...



## WHAT TO DO

Brands must work with appropriate partners (94% agree) and **donate to relevant charities** (89% agree) to show real understanding of the situation whilst making an actual **tangible (monetary) difference** to people's lives



## WHAT NOT TO DO

Hire **irrelevant diversity managers** and fail to offer monetary aid to those groups who brands claim to support



### During Black History Month:

### DONATE AND WORK WITH APPROPRIATE AND CONSIDERED PARTNERS

*Try and find inspiring ideas of black people who have done the little things that have made an impact. They don't have to be famous they should just **have a story to tell that feels inspirational***

- Female, Black, 19

***Donating a certain amount of profits** to the cause and putting that on the website so that people know that it's happening. Put some input of black history month on the website*

- Female, White, 16



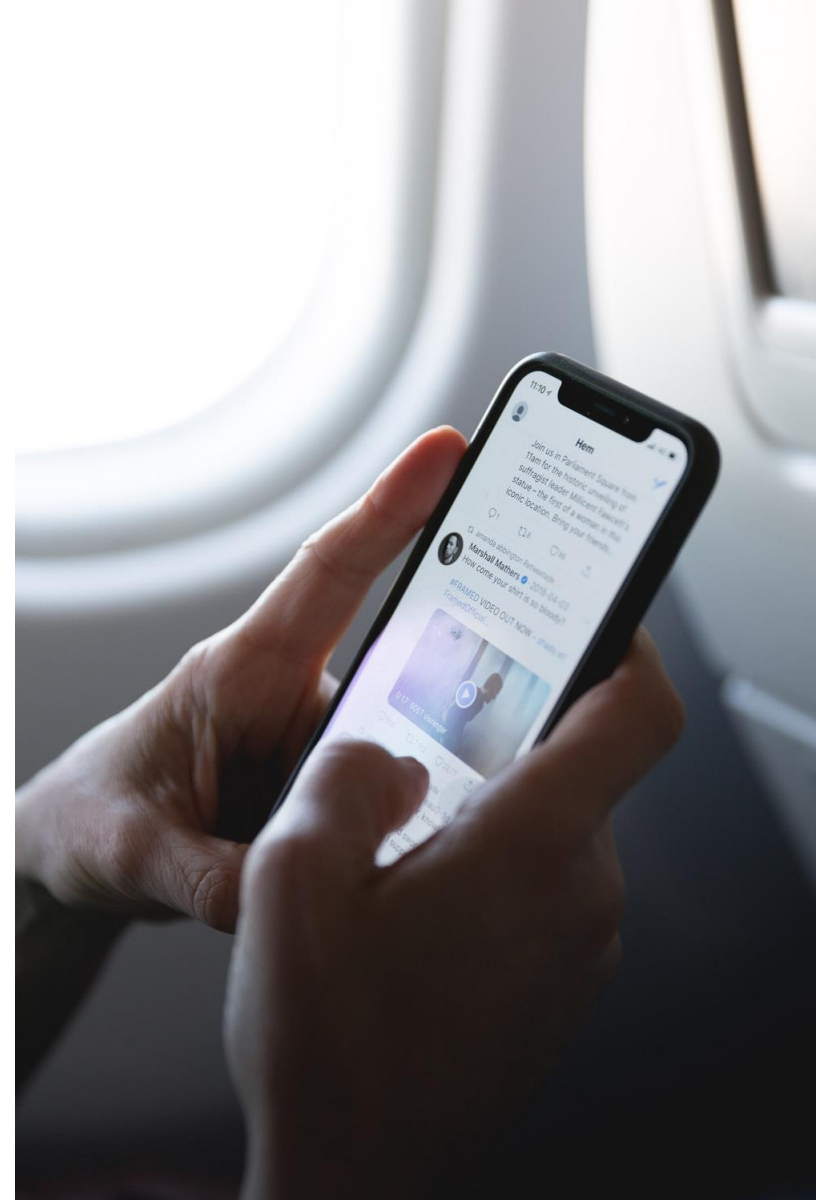
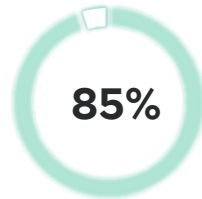
# Brands must ensure they are using their large followings on social media to actively engage in relevant issues

BUT...

Becoming a part of the conversation on social media works only when others 'proof points' have been made to showcase social consciousness.

Only then does this appear authentic, and if done right can build **trust and inspire consumers to form a lifelong relationship with brands** – playing the 'brand ambassador' (i.e. sharing content on their profiles).

Brands must use their voices on social media to fight against discrimination...



# Black History Month is an ideal time to kickstart engagements relating to ethnicity in the UK, but brands should continue these efforts year round



For 4Youth, Black History Month is an important time to begin initiatives and spotlight Black stories, providing education and highlighting Black achievement.

Black History Month should provide brands with the momentum and understanding to continue engaging, collaborating and being a proactive member of the conversation beyond October. This is particularly important for 16-24 year olds who acknowledge that while Black History Month is an important celebration, the Black experience does not halt when October ends, therefore brand engagement shouldn't either.

**4 in 5**

agree that *brands need to work to ensure ethnic diversity and inclusion in the comms all year round*

*If a brand only pays attention to particular issues in one month of the year, it tells me that they don't really care and are doing it because 'the seasons and the rest of the world tells them to', such as the changing of the logo and 'emails declaring their support' before changing back at the start of the next month. It **becomes performative**. A brand should really be taking necessary steps to **ensure diversity all year round**, such as spreading awareness on issues and appreciating (not appropriating) cultures at any given time of the year- **Female, Black, 19***

# 4 Youth have ideas for initiatives to demonstrate support during Black History Month and beyond...

Depending on the company, you could partner with Black activists / influencers / individuals / charities on an **initiative that has longevity**; for example, leading a podcast or video series that looks at the sector of the brand in question and its history and future with Black lives and voices. **Multiple episodes continue beyond the month, and indicate a consistent narrative**

- Female, White, 23

- Launch a **podcast or web** series spotlighting important voices from the Black community
- Hire diverse and **relevant diversity officers** to run campaigns
- Run marketing campaign which **educates viewers** on influential Black figures throughout history
- Research the sector and highlight **Black people within the industry** or organisation itself who have contributed – explaining their contributions in a meaningful way
- Create an initiative which can **aid specific Black communities** to make a difference to people's lives
- Implement **internships / apprenticeships** for people of colour to encourage Black success

# Authentic engagement like the aforementioned, will have significantly positive impacts on 16-24 year olds' perceptions of brands

Upon seeing authentic content from brands, likelihood that 4Youth will...

