

Press release: Historical notes on Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) staff working in the Foreign Office published

As part of Black History month, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) has today published a new booklet which for the first time provides an insight into the history of Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) staff in the department over the last 70 years.

The booklet, entitled 'Black skin, Whitehall: Race and the Foreign Office, 1945 – 2018' reveals the challenges to ensure equal representation for non-white people in the British diplomatic service in the context of decades of political debates about Empire, immigration and racism and pressure from campaign groups.

The document, written by FCO Historian James Southern, also highlights the progress achieved in recent years, including this year's appointment of the first black female career diplomat being appointed into an Ambassadorial Post and in 2017, over 23% of the FCO graduate entry scheme intake coming from a BAME background, one of the highest levels across Whitehall.

The publication, part of a series of FCO historical notes, which included a document published last July entitled 'Homosexuality at the Foreign Office 1967 to 1991' shows how attitudes can change and these documents can be used to support the work of British diplomats around the world to promote inclusion and end discrimination.

Sir Simon McDonald, the FCO's Permanent Under-Secretary and Head of HM Diplomatic Service said:

The diversity of our staff and their heritage is a prime source of our strength. This historical note sets out the challenges faced by BAME staff working at the FCO over the last 70 years, but also the important progress achieved. It is essential we make further progress to ensure our modern Diplomatic Service reflects the best of the diversity of the UK.

James Southern, FCO Historian and author of the publication said:

This publication tells the story of non-white people at the Foreign Office. Like many similar British institutions, the FCO has a difficult history when it comes to race; it is hoped that this History Note serves as a basis for the beginning of a long overdue conversation aimed at building a more inclusive organisation.

Muna Shamsuddin and Fouzia Younis-Suleman of the FC0's network for BAME Staff and authors of the afterword, said:

We are more diverse on ethnicity than we have ever been, with a number of BAME Ambassadors, the first black career diplomat appointed into an Ambassadorial post, and one of the highest BAME Fast Stream intakes across Whitehall. Yet, as this report also shows, there is still a long way to go to ensure that we are bringing up the best of British diverse talent and supporting all staff to meet their aspirations.

The report is available online [here](#)

Further Information:

- The publication of today's booklet was launched at an event hosted at the FC0 today (4 October) for civil servants across Whitehall. This was the first in a series of internal events the FC0's network for BAME Staff have organised to celebrate Black History Month throughout October.
- FC0 staff who come from a BAME background now represent the UK all around the world and at all grades. We have our first black career diplomat in Mozambique (Nnenna Iwuji-Eme), and over 23% of our graduate entry scheme intake came from a BAME background, one of the highest levels across Whitehall.
- Further information on the FC0 Historians and their publications can be found here or on Twitter [@FC0Historians](#).