



At 'Roads to Recovery' AIM's recent Virtual Conference, Hilary Carty, Executive Director of Clore Leadership explored the issues, challenges and opportunities of leadership during a period 'not of crisis, but of multiple crises.'

Here, in an excerpt of her powerful, provocative and inspirational presentation she focuses on recent sector positions on Black Lives Matter and asks: Who holds to account the changes we do or do not make? How do we shift the responsibility for change from the activist to the institution? From the excluded to the entitled?

A new Age of Enlightenment?

At this time, I think it would be invidious to speak without sharing some reflections on Black Lives Matter.

I'm sure I'm not alone in having both despair and hope swirling around in my head. It has been such an emotional two weeks when, I think, we have all had to reflect quite deeply about the sort of society we have, the one we want to have, and how we might get there.

Why, after all the statements, policies, approaches and actions of the past, are we still challenged by the racism Martin Luther King talked about and Naseem Khan wrote about, in her seminal publication of 1976 – *The Arts That Britain Ignores*? Yet closer still, we have the 2005 Greater London Authority publication 'Delivering Shared Heritage' with Chapters including: Embedding Representation and Accountability; Championing Workforce Diversity; Empowering Community-based Heritage; Building Equitable Partnerships and Fostering Inclusive Education. Its NINE Recommendations and countless points of Action set a template for moving towards the aspirations we share in our beautifully crafted Diversity statements. Yet progress is either negligible or slow.

Or is that the despair speaking?

Should I focus more on the hopeful part of me that acknowledges wider diversity in many institutions; and is genuinely bolstered by the number of organisations who were proactive in declaring their allegiances on their websites and on social media?

So our cultural and heritage institutions are affirming that #BlackLivesMatter... it's an important statement, a welcome acknowledgement. But then what...? Who holds to account the changes we do or do not make? How do we

shift the responsibility for change from the activist to the institution? From the excluded to the entitled? How to ensure that #AllActionsMatter, #AllOutcomesMatter and #WordsAreNotEnough?

As leaders, we have to live through our values, as individuals and organisations. Of course, All Lives Matter – that is also true. But let us not be afraid to be clear about the essential challenges facing discrete groups of people at this time. And let us not become confused and reticent because we don't want to get things wrong or to cause offence.

Rather than staying confused or conflicted, I think our duty, as leaders, is to learn, to absorb, to reflect, to debate – an array of actions to educate ourselves so that we CAN be thoughtful, considerate, but also clear.

The lack of change, the macro evidence of different treatment, the micro-aggressions, the lack of progression into senior roles for BAME professionals... all show that racism is still highly prevalent in our UK institutions. But institutions are collectives of people working together: So who but ourselves should take action for change?

Why should accountability rest with monitoring forms to the funding bodies? Why not present your outcomes firstly to your staff, particularly your junior staff, and see if they find the lack of progress acceptable?

It requires every one of us, both individually and collectively to look at what we are doing and to ask ourselves if we really are doing enough? Are we making even a dint of a tangible difference?

It has been heartening to see the fully multi-racial campaigners for BLM. That is important as it reflects a growing realisation

that it will take all of us, black and white, to shift this dial. And as purveyors of heritage we have one of the most crucial roles to play – right here, right now.

Is it 're-writing history' to expand the narratives to better account for the people, incidents and places that were previously overlooked? They were there. These incidents happened. Just because the stories were not previously told, should we really now be silent?

Opinions change over time. That, elsewhere, is called 'progress' or becoming enlightened. Surely, we too can update the script and acknowledge this period as simply a new Age of Enlightenment?

We have re-vised and expanded our knowledge and perspectives before – I'm thinking of the revisions to politics, philosophy, science and communications in the long 18th Century in Europe... What is so challenging about doing it again now?

www.cloreleadership.org

Read the sector statement on BLM at www.aim-museums.co.uk/heritage-sector-organisations-issue-joint-statement-intent

Find links to watch Hilary's full presentation and more at www.aim-museums.co.uk/virtual-conference

In brief

DigiFest Manchester – Celebrating Alf's Act, 50 Years of Disabled People's Rights

Manchester Histories is taking its festival digital this year, with the announcement of its first ever DigiFest. Running across two days, Friday 4 and Saturday 5 September, DigiFest 2020 will work with individuals and community groups to present their stories, ideas and creative content. At the heart of DigiFest 2020 remains a celebration and recognition of the 50th anniversary of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act (1970), a landmark piece of legislation that was pioneered by Lord Alf Morris (1928 – 2012).

www.manchesterhistories.co.uk



Alf Morris was born and bred in Manchester and served as an MP for Wythenshawe. Throughout his lifetime, he campaigned tirelessly for the rights of disabled people.