



UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL POLITICS SOCIETY

Dear UBPS Members and Our Wider Community,

As a committee, we have been disgusted and saddened about some events that have unfolded this week, reflecting some appalling truths about today's society. What has happened to Sarah Everard and Meghan Markle is truly distressing, and exposes a plethora of issues that are rife in our society. Subjected to sexual harassment, racism and a severe break of trust from institutions that we, as a nation, respect and put our faith in, these two women have suffered tremendously. Unfortunately, this is far from rare. Countless women and those who do not identify as cis-male across the world have spoken out, sharing their stories of abuse and harassment. It takes courage and strength to speak up about trauma as such events can ruin lives. The discourse around what has happened is a step in the right direction, albeit one which should never have had to be discussed. But now is the time to act, to make the changes that encourage a safe and supportive environment for women and those who do not identify as cis-male.

Sarah Everard's disappearance in London has sparked an outpouring of stories from people sharing their experiences of sexual harassment. Almost every woman has experienced some form of sexual harassment. I'm sure we have all seen the statistics from the United Nations saying that 97% of young women in the UK have been sexually harassed. This is a truly distressing figure that may come as a surprise to some while unfortunately for others it will not. To make matters worse, 96% of respondents in a YouGov survey said they didn't report incidents of harassment as they felt it wouldn't achieve anything. There is no room for debate. This epidemic of violence towards women and those who don't identify as cis-male would be disturbing even if it was just 1%, any violence towards another human is detestable. The fact that a major suspect in Sarah's disappearance is a police officer, someone whom citizens should feel safe to turn to, gives a glimmer of insight into why women and those who do not identify as cis-male, feel so distressed and betrayed by the recent events.

Sarah's story encapsulates a lot of what is wrong with society; we tell women to protect themselves, not men to act with morality. The way you dress, the way you live, the way you identify should not make you a target. Women and those who do not identify as cis-male shouldn't have to change their route home, cross the road to avoid being catcalled, in fear of whoever is walking behind them. Sadly, these have become common practices. Sexual harassment has almost been normalised, and often people don't even know they're doing it. To change this, one must educate themselves and act on it. Men have a duty, regardless of if one doesn't like it; the excuse of 'I don't do anything, I just stay quiet' perpetuates the problem. There is a duty to uphold the simple principles of respect, boundaries and safety, to look after and look out for those in trouble. There is too a duty to silence and stand up to any so-called 'banter' or 'locker room chat.' Learn to actively listen. Learn to respect boundaries and maintain them regardless. Learn that it is not all about ego and image. And if you can't, learn to seek support. It really shouldn't be that hard.

The undermining of mental health and racism, as extremely sensitive and grave issues, has also been made abundantly clear in the case of Meghan Markle. Meghan's recent interview revealed the extent of the challenges she faced in her experience in the royal family. Having been subject to racism, including concerns over her child's skin colour, and dire responses to her mental health issues, Meghan's story is one that, again, many can relate to on some level. Whilst none of us will have received the same level of tabloid criticism, social media and every-day racism is still an inexcusable and pervasive issue in the UK. The Black Lives Matter movement enforces the fact that racism is an atrocious issue still needing to be tackled, particularly if racism is an embedded ideology in one of the country's most historic institutions.



When a Christmas advert can provoke a racist response (Sainsbury's) or when a Black Lives Matter-inspired dance performance on Britain's Got Talent can prompt 24,000 complaints, it is clear there is still so much more to be done. In our previous letter in support of the BLM movement we encouraged the active change to an 'anti-racist' society. We acknowledged our limitations on the subject and asked the University to take immediate and effective action. To help us better the way we work as a society we produced and published the results from our Inclusivity, Diversity and Wellbeing Report while announcing the steps we, as a society, are taking to improve in those areas. We will carry on our efforts to provide a safe space for everyone.

Mental health is no game, not for anyone. A report by the Mental Health Foundation found that suicide is the biggest killer for men under the age of 45, accounting for 3 out of 4 deaths by suicide, and women are three times more likely to attempt suicide than men. Within the LGBTQ+ community, 46% of people who identify as transgender tried taking their own life, with 31% of the LGB community also considering suicide, in 2018. The common causes, as highlighted by the mental health charity Mind, are: mental health problems, bullying or discrimination, different types of abuse, including domestic, sexual or physical abuse, and bereavement. There are innumerable reasons why someone may have suicidal thoughts, none of which should be devalued. We understand that everyone has a different relationship with mental health. It isn't unusual to end up in an unhealthy place mentally but it is not okay for others to be the cause. Megan Markle should never have been bullied by society into wanting to take her own life, as nobody should. Saying 'she knew what she was marrying into' is an easy excuse and protects the toxic relationship between our institutions and the media, inhibiting society's progression. Furthermore, this scathing and cruel behaviour from the media towards Meghan Markle occurred at the same time as allegations against an individual within the same institution with links to a known child sex trafficker. This individual has maintained their title, benefits and was allowed a forum to speak and defend themselves; a platform which Meghan herself was denied and then received intense media abuse upon eventually speaking out.

Ending such inexplicable and abhorrent behaviour begins with EDUCATION, it changes with ACTION and will end when the excuses STOP.

We would like to help in educating our community so we can make the vital changes needed to resolve these issues. We have provided a few key articles that can help better one's understanding of the problems many people face in society and some for those seeking support. The articles are here for you to read and develop your understanding and gain perspective but also to support those who need it. We are also taking action; we would like to provide a safe space for discussion about the social issues society is facing. It is time we don't just discuss experiences and thoughts on the issues but to use our space to discuss solutions. Admittedly, we are talking about changing systemic issues, but it must start somewhere. As a committee, we want to use every ounce of our network, experience and time to support our community. While we are aware you may want to discuss issues or seek advice from a professional body (we have included a list of contacts below), we too are **always** here to listen. Please always feel free to get in touch with any of the committee via email, social media or anonymously through our Wellbeing and Equality Reporting System.

We wish you all the best,

UBPS Committee

Anna Parsons
Ella Geering
Georgia Taylor
Ellen Graves

Luke Foster
Frances Smethurst
Oscar Wollen
Meghan Kidd

Susie Chilver
Hannah Parry
Rosie Neville
Abi Godfrey



Sources Used in the Letter

- **LGBT In Britain Health Report** - https://www.stonewall.org.uk/system/files/lgbt_in_britain_health.pdf
- **Differences in Suicide Among Men and Women** - <https://www.verywellmind.com/gender-differences-in-suicide-methods-1067508#citation-2>,
- **Prevalence and reporting of sexual harassment in UK public spaces - A report by the APPG for UN Women, March 2021** - https://www.unwomen.org/site/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/APPG-UN-Women_Sexual-Harassment-Report_2021.pdf
- **University of Bristol Politics Society Black Lives Matter Letter Sent to Vice-Chancellor Hugh Brady** - https://3ca31b21-0919-4998-bfc8-6e3a8f649079.filesusr.com/ugd/6127c5_85ae221b40b64158a6acfb9e097c836.pdf
- **University Of Bristol Politics Society Equality, Diversity And Inclusivity Report 2020/21** - https://3ca31b21-0919-4998-bfc8-6e3a8f649079.filesusr.com/ugd/6127c5_bf85d1426a404fac9ec99d5a41d3f0f6.pdf

Educational Resources

“6 Reasons ‘Not All Men’ Misses The Point”

<https://www.bustle.com/articles/171595-6-reasons-not-all-men-misses-the-point-because-its-derailing-important-conversations?fbclid=IwAR0GGXFEi72kLVkdoUI4RRu0Ixt4IxbJRbS-rvqJizFHo56Z0W0TueR628M>

“Ask for Angela”

<https://www.met.police.uk/AskforAngela>

“If You’re Saying ‘Not All Men’, It’s Probably You”

<https://thebroadonline.com/if-youre-saying-not-all-men-its-probably-you/?fbclid=IwAR01W9QkDg9de5bndg2Cjgof6H23OCdSISFaKDNt6Sw3CcQerodTxB-vdi0>

“For Women To Feel Safe In Public Spaces, Men's Behaviour Has To Change”

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/mar/11/women-feel-safe-public-spaces-men-behaviour-change?fbclid=IwAR2XkiVFss9ttx2M2zcPmkfxyGbPqTSvpsVDkRMosNwMliC9z4f-YL7n1IY>

“Guidelines for Being Strong White Allies”

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1VHw4nGfDogf7-SaftsCzxosQ19ITB4uz/view>

“Men, We Need To Make Women Feel Safe”

<https://medium.com/blueinsight/men-we-need-to-make-women-feel-safe-7715ec75db7>

“The Core Message of Meghan and Harry’s Oprah Interview: Racism Drove Us from the Royal Family”

<https://time.com/5944613/meghan-markle-oprah-racism/>

“What has Meghan Markle Taught Us?”

<https://www.globaljustice.org.uk/2020/01/what-has-meghan-markle-taught-us-uk-needs-educate-itself-racism-and-white-privilege/>

“Why Meghan Markle Discussing her Mental Health Crisis Can Help Others”

<https://www.healthline.com/health-news/why-meghan-markle-discussing-her-mental-health-crisis-can-help-others>



Support Contacts

Bristol Nightline:

Bristol Nightline offers a confidential, impartial and non-advisory listening and information services for students

Tel: 01179 266 266

Messaging: im.bristol.nightline.ac.uk/webim (8pm-12am)

Email: listening@bristol.nightline.ac.uk

Website: <https://bristol.nightline.ac.uk>

Community Security Trust:

A charity that protects British Jews from antisemitism and related threats.

Tel: 0800 032 3263

Email: incidents@cst.org.uk

Website: <https://cst.org.uk/>

Islamophobia Response Unit:

A response unit for reporting religious discrimination on account of being perceived as Muslim.

Tel: 020 3904 6555

Email: iru@mend.org.uk

Website: : <https://mend.org.uk/report-islamophobia/report-an-incident/>

Lighthouse Victim Care:

Lighthouse offers an enhanced service to vulnerable, intimidated or persistently targeted victims of crime and anti-social behaviour, and victims of serious.

Tel: 0800 555 11

Website: <https://www.lighthousevictimcare.org/>

Nilaari:

A culturally appropriate counselling service providing help and support for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people, the university will pay for up to 6 counselling sessions.

Tel: 0117 952 5742

Email: nilaari@nilaari.co.uk

Website: <https://www.nilaari.co.uk/contact-us/>

Papyrus:

A UK charity for the prevention of young suicide (under 35).

Tel: 0800 068 4141

Website: <https://www.papyrus-uk.org/>

SARSAS:

Helpline, support and counselling for survivors of sexual violence/assault.

Tel (female): 0808 801 0456

Tel (male): 0808 801 0464

Website: <http://www.sarsas.org.uk/>

Shout:

A 24/7 crisis support service. To start a conversation, text the word 'SHOUT to 85258.

University of Bristol Wellbeing Support Request:

<https://uob.sharepoint.com/sites/wellbeing-access?fbclid=IwAR3w4lEzdAezfW60GErdGRDyvL2844xUWnLfkfZweI9A0qizNH93yVDEAyU>

UBPS Wellbeing and Equality Reporting System: A non-judgmental space to report the issues and concerns of UoB Politics Society members. All matters will be responded to meaningfully and appropriately by the Wellbeing and Equality Board, within our capacity and dealt with confidentially (<https://forms.gle/nyDWUQuy99DZfS616>).