

INCLUSION & DIVERSITY 2021 VIRTUAL SERIES

Asians Speak Out: Exposing the myth of the 'Model Minority'

Wednesday 14 July 2021, 1.00 – 2.00 pm BST

What is "model minority"?

- It is a term primarily used in the US but becoming increasingly common in the UK to describe the cultural stereotype of a minority group - mostly about Asians being smart, successful, hard-working and law-abiding citizens.
- It is a harmful and dangerous assumption, for a number of reasons:
 - It erases the diversity and disparity of all Asian countries, enhances the stereotype of Asians, and creates a generalisation that all Asians are the same;
 - It downplays the issue of racism and equality by creating a false narrative that Asians face less systemic racism and discrimination as they are still able to 'succeed' in society, and that racism can be countered by the hard work of Asians;
 - It is a way of sowing division amongst the ethnic minority groups by pitting them against one another - the term was originally used by the white majority in the US - by citing the success of Asian Americans as a means to denigrate Black Americans.

The fragility of ethnic minorities in the UK

- Ethnic minorities are only deserving of tolerance to the extent that they are toeing the line - as shown in the recent racial abuse of England's black footballers following Euro 2020. If they are 'successful' then they may be tolerated and deemed an 'acceptable' minority in society, but are ultimately defined by their race and there is a fear that any positive experience is very fragile and subject to their success.

Lack of representation of East Asians in leadership roles in the UK

- The difference in cultural values between the East vs. West may impact the lack of representation of East Asians in the upper echelons of the workplace. In the West, individuals are celebrated. In the East, individuals are often expected to stay quiet and sacrifice oneself in order to do good for the society and their organisations.
- It has been a long-standing principle in many Eastern cultures to only speak up if there is a good point to speak to. This has resulted in

East Asians generally perceived as the 'quiet ones' in the workplace and not putting their head above the parapet as much as their Western counterparts.

- The perceptions of Asians, especially East Asians, being hard working, rather than as real leaders, has resulted in Asians being overlooked for positions of responsibility.

Racial Imposter Syndrome - are we Asian / British enough? Do we belong?

- Ethnic minorities are often regarded as perpetual foreigners, purely based on their physical appearance. There is a sense of shame put on ethnic minorities who do not look like the white majority.
- Disparity between how one feels about themselves and how the outside world regards them - there is a constant battle and difficulty in reconciling identity.

Have Asian's done enough in the fight against racism?

- The Black community has no doubt been carrying more in the fight against racism. Historically, Asians have been brought up with the notion, as well as societal expectation, that they should keep their heads down, which has resulted in the reluctance to speak up and the lack of voice in the Asian community.
- When bystanders are asked why they did not intervene, there is a range of reasons depending on the circumstances, but the highest proportion of respondents say because they feared the consequences, such as retaliation. Organisations have to create environments where people are not afraid to speak up.
- Whilst in recent months the Asian community has been speaking up more, there is still room for Asians to continue to step up to fight the cause for Asians and against racism more generally.
- It is crucial to create more opportunities for Asians to speak up, to talk about their experiences and to have their voices heard.

Chaired by:



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Baker McKenzie

Our Panel:



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Counsel & Head of Compliance APAC
Juniper Networks



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