

UoM_Podcast_UNSDG_Episode_7

Introduction: [00:00:00] You are listening to a podcast from The University of Manchester.

In this podcast series, hear The University of Manchester's Dr Nic Gowland interview some of our leading experts about how their research is helping to deliver the UN Sustainable Development Goals for global health, equality and sustainability.

Dr Nic Gowland: [00:00:24] Today I'm speaking to Professor Claire Alexander, Professor of Sociology and Associate Director of the Center on the Dynamics of Ethnicity at The University of Manchester.

Claire, thanks for joining me today. The research and impact that we're going to discuss is based on more than a decade of collaboration between yourself, the Runnymede Trust and various academics across various institutes, and is focused on creating an inclusive history curriculum in schools. Very interesting topic.

Before we delve into this topic of research, I want to understand a little bit more about you, Claire. What drives you? Were there any early experiences or inspirations earlier in life that led you to be so interested and passionate about racial inequality and education?

Prof Claire Alexander: [00:01:06] I was born and brought up in the UK. I was adopted actually into a white family when I was a baby. I grew up in a very white part of the UK. I grew up on the edge of the Cotswolds, so Oxfordshire. I grew up through 1963 onwards and at school through the 1970s and 1980s in a completely white school. So, I think some of my interests around racial inequality in education come from that, that kind of realisation or experience, of being different and being made to feel very different in some cases. And also being very aware as I got older of the kind of the big mismatch between who people thought I was and what I was capable of, and the way that I looked and what I thought about myself. And particularly in education, I think, there was a very strong sense of being underestimated.

People always telling me the things that I shouldn't do, things that I wasn't capable of doing because I was a woman or because I was not white or because my family were working class. So, I remember very much particularly at sixth form being told by the sixth form tutor not to apply to Oxford because I wouldn't get in. And that I should apply to some, what were then polytechnics, because that was more what would be expected for someone like me. And another person saying to me 'Don't study law because you won't be able to have a career in law because you're the wrong class, the wrong colour and the wrong gender to be a barrister'.

So, I think my kind of sense of the gap between who I was and what I wanted to do and what people told me I could do was very big through that period. And I do a lot of work in schools now and I go to schools and this is 30 years later and you still find that a lot of the young people, particularly young people of colour, working class young people, are being told the same things. 'Don't try too hard. You'll probably fail. You probably can't do the things that you want to do'. So, I think my interest has always been about challenging that and trying to

make it possible for people to do the things that they believe in and the things that they think they're capable of.

Dr Nic Gowland: [00:03:08] At that young age, then when you were in school being told these things, you must have had quite a strong drive to think '...I think I can do those things or I do that'. Where do you think that comes from? Is it from your parents and up-bringing or just a kind of fire inside you?

Prof Claire Alexander: [00:03:24] I actually think it was my parents, my adoptive parents who were very supportive, my mother in particular, because my birth mother was a student in Oxford. So, my adoptive mother always said you should do it, you can do it know you. You should be able to do, it's part of your background and what you can do. But I think for a long time, actually, I generally just believed what people told me and said 'oh no, I can't do it'. So, there's a lot of things I didn't do I think. I didn't study law because I thought I couldn't, you know, I had very good teachers who would say to me, 'You're really good at this. You should apply'. I applied to Oxford to do English because my English teacher was incredibly supportive. That was really other people telling me what I could do really, rather than having much belief in myself. Much later on, and actually seeing it replicated in other people, where I've wanted to kind of help support them in the way that I was supported.

Dr Nic Gowland: [00:04:14] And obviously when you visit schools and things now, do you think those kids get huge inspiration from seeing you tell them that and what you've achieved and things like that? That's very helpful.

Prof Claire Alexander: [00:04:24] I hope so. I mainly hope that when I go and talk to people, they look and think, 'Oh, she's really ordinary. If she can do that, I can do that'. That's really what I think that is maybe what they think. They kind of think, 'Oh, that's a really strange, I didn't know that I could do that. I didn't know that was even a job that people could do. And certainly not someone that looks like, you know, like she does'. So, they look at me and think, 'You know, she seems really normal, I could do that', then that's, kind of I think, the most important thing.

Dr Nic Gowland: [00:04:49] My next question was going to be, what's your kind of main driver behind your work, but I think you've answered that... it is to kind of push this change and just to give everyone a good shot at what they could do.

Prof Claire Alexander: [00:04:58] Yeah, I think so. The main thing is, is very practically to help support change. To understand what's needed to help people make the changes that they want to make, or that we think need to be made in the classrooms? That's what a lot of this work has been about, but it has really been a much broader passion to help young people, or whatever their background is, to succeed what they want to do and to be the best that they can be I guess actually is a bit of a cliché. Particularly for Black and Asian young people, British born young people, to feel like they belong in a way that I think I very often didn't feel like I belonged.

So, to see themselves in the classrooms, in what they're being taught, in their streets, on TV, in their cities, to inspire them to go to university, to do something that they want to do

rather than being told what they can do. And to make the change, so that they then will take that up and make things possible for the next generations now. I think that's always been my main passion.

Dr Nic Gowland: [00:05:55] Well that was your vision. And I think it's a very good one. And I suppose the way you do you achieve this is with your research of course. Your research interests are very broad. So, you cover topics, quite high up the agenda topics, I think in terms of the media and government and press. Things like racial and ethnic inequalities, Muslim identities, Asian gangs, South Asia migration, really interesting topics that we could talk for hours about, I think each of them.

But today we're focusing on inclusive history curriculum or inclusive education. What do you mean by, or what does the term inclusive history curriculum mean? Because I don't think everyone fully understands what that means.

Prof Claire Alexander: [00:06:32] I think when people talk about inclusive histories or inclusive curricula, they often talking about quite often quite different things. But for me, it's about broadening our understanding of what history is, especially British history.

So, to think about what the 'British' in 'British history' means. About how that connects with the rest of the world. It's impossible to think about British history without thinking about the rest of the world, although we seem to manage it quite well.

But also to think about what history is? Whose histories count? So, one of the things that this project, these series of projects, have been about what we might think of as histories from below, and I'm a Sociologist, so I'm not a Historian. So, Historians might be appalled by what I'm about to say, but I've always been interested in those kinds of hidden stories, hidden histories of people that never get talked about.

So, whether that's women or religious or sexual minorities or working class histories, Black and Asian histories. All of those things filter into our understanding of who we are as a nation. What Britishness is. So, it's partly, I think, tried to tell that story of Britain in a way that reflects all of those kinds of very diverse stories and make them equally kind of valued.

And as a Sociologist, I'm interested in where we are. So how do we understand the society that we're in now? How have we come to be that society, which is where the historical stuff is important for me, and how that then shapes our sense of possibilities? Who could we be? How could our society be better? So, I think my focus on inclusive histories is twofold. One is content, partly about whose stories get included, but also it's about method... how do we make history more interesting?

So, the dominant strain in schools history in the UK has largely been dates, facts, facts, facts, Kings and Queens, and politicians. That's not how I did history. I remember even at primary school doing Piltown Man and having a book of things where you were almost like a detective, trying to uncover the history and try to make sense of what happened to this body buried in the bog. And at A Level we did 17th century history, and I grew up in Oxfordshire, which is kind of the epicentre of the English Civil War. And in the second year we did a lot of stuff looking at pamphlets produced by the Quakers or the Lollards, or the

Ranters and the Diggers, and all these kind of amazing kind of Puritan groups. And being kind of in that space where some of the civil war was fought out, really brought those things to life. I don't think in most cases, that's how history is taught now and I think partly for me, it's going to be about pushing to make history more engaged, more real life, to connect it up to the pupils in the classroom. So, living histories is very important. So, it's a method as well as content for me.

Dr Nic Gowland: [00:09:23] I definitely agree with that because I was never really a history person at school, since I've been an adult I do find history fascinating and like you said, the kind of personal histories and the smaller histories, even though they're not small, they're still significant, very interesting.

So you've been doing this research for over a decade, I suppose, leading us to where we are now, which we'll touch on later, but this all started with a project called the Bengal Diaspora, mid-2000's. Maybe you can tell us a bit about that research and how this started and the objectives of that.

Prof Claire Alexander: [00:09:54] So the Bengal Diaspora project started in the mid-2000s and that was working with a colleague at the University of Cambridge, who was an actual Historian, Joya Chatterji. And what we were interested in was the history of migration in, and from, the Indian state of Bengal in the period after partition. So, after 1947.

And it's one of the largest migrations of modern times, so they reckon, estimate that probably 20 million people have migrated in the period since 1947 for a range of different reasons. So, we wanted to kind of capture the experiences of Muslim migrants in particular, because most of the people that came to the UK were Muslim migrants from that part of Bengal.

So, we were interested in the kind of ordinary stories. So, what does it feel like? How do you understand the big history of the things like empire and partition and climate change and war and independence and mass migration... from the perspective of people that kind of lived it.

So, we were very interested in how you open up those histories through a range of different things. So, people who migrated, maybe just across the borders, after partition, people who actually stayed put when the borders came down between them. We spoke to two brothers who lived kind of five miles apart in separate villages who hadn't seen each other for 60 years because the border had come down and they weren't able to move.

And then people that have migrated much more dramatically to the Middle East or to the UK. So, on the Bengal Diaspora book, our front cover is a man called Mohammed Shamsul Haq, who, when we interviewed him, told us that he was 108 years old and he probably wasn't quite that old, but he was born when Britain still ruled India and he had worked in the Merchant Navy and he'd worked as an engineer in the ship, and had been torpedoed in the Second World War and cast adrift on a raft for two weeks before he was rescued. And then went back to India and opened a tea store just around partition. And had been

displaced a number of times, you know, as Muslims were expelled from India and then ended up in a refugee camp, in the northern border of India, kind of Bangladesh.

So, then you can tell a whole wealth of stories through the life of this one particular individual. So that was kind of what we really wanted to capture through that project. And as part of that, we wanted to make those stories available to young people in the UK who didn't know these histories. I didn't know these histories. You know, I learned nothing about India at all when I was at school.

So, we wanted to bring those into classrooms and also bring the different way of telling those stories. Stories of ordinary people who never normally in history into the classroom to see how young people would engage with those. So that was partly where that Bengal Diaspora project started.

Dr Nic Gowland: [00:12:39] How did young people react to that then? Were you surprised that they were really enthused by it or as, as you expected?

Prof Claire Alexander: [00:12:46] One of the challenges for us when we went to the classroom was the young people, particularly BAME young people, Black and Asian young people tend not to choose history at GCSE. They tend to do geography. So the numbers were comparatively low.

Dr Nic Gowland: [00:13:01] Why do you think that was, was it because it was just an absence of anything relevant?

Prof Claire Alexander: [00:13:06] I mean, honestly, I think partly is the way that history is taught in schools in general, which was just... 'It's really boring'. And a number of them said, 'Ah yeah but history is just really boring'. And that was true of all young people, but also I think the idea that it didn't reflect their experience or they didn't feel like it belonged to them. So, I think it was about making those histories relevant, more interesting, more open, more connected. And I think that's true of all young people, not just Black and Asian young people.

Dr Nic Gowland: [00:13:33] So those stories then became the online resource, which was Bangla Stories? And then where did you go after that then? I imagine that was very successful and things continued from there.

Prof Claire Alexander: [00:13:44] We were really pleased with the Bangla Stories website. It's a beautiful website, which was designed by a colleague at Runnymede, Vastiana Belfon. It is absolutely stunning. We wanted to see whether people were going to use it and how they would use it, whether they could make those connections more broader from, you know, talking about kind of Bengali migrants, just to talk about migration just in general.

So, we then took those into classrooms. We worked in Sheffield, in Leicester and in Cardiff, a couple of schools in Cardiff. And what we asked young people to do there was, this was Key Stage 3, so before GCSE, and we asked them to work in teams, we put them into teams and then get them to go and interview a family member or a community member and record their life history, their history of migration, how they felt about moving.

So we had teams of four or five people... one was a director, one was a researcher, one was an interviewer, you know, one kind of held it all together and got them to kind of pull these stories together, went and spoke to their grandmothers or, you know, their teachers, or, you know, somebody from the community centre and just got a sense of the variety of those kinds of histories and brought them all together. And were able to see, I think, what they shared as well as how they were different. But one of the important things that we learned from that, was when you do that kind of more hands-on history people were much more enthusiastic, much more engaged.

We partly tapped into that kind of, 'Who do you think you are?' version, which is very popular and everybody loves that on TV. So, I think it was partly that approach which connected them as well. People that they knew had histories that were part of these bigger histories. And also the other thing we learned was, you know, the young people were really proud of where they were, their cities. So, the thing that they all started was, you know, we're all from Cardiff or from Sheffield. And actually there's a whole range of pathways that bring us, and journeys, that bring us to those and we can look at those alongside each other and learn from those. But, you know, being in Cardiff or being in Leicester or being in Sheffield was actually the thing that they shared and that they were really proud of. And they hadn't even realised that their cities had those very interesting histories.

Dr Nic Gowland: [00:15:48] I imagine some of the kids were, kind of, I don't know if you've heard every story that came out, but some of them must have been quite blown away or amazed by some of the stories they uncovered from relatives and things.

Prof Claire Alexander: [00:15:57] We had one young man in Cardiff, who was white Welsh, but he managed to trace his history back, his family history, back to the 1700s and a boot maker in Twickenham, so that kind of story. And then there were stories of people whose grandmother had given birth on the boat over from Ireland or those kinds of stories.

And the thing that was really interesting in Cardiff, particularly actually was there are a large number of Somali young people in one of the schools that we worked in and they uncovered a lot about the connections between Somalia and Cardiff through the trade in what they called 'Welsh gold', so coal, and none of them had been aware of that history. So a lot of them would come as kind of refugees, but they weren't aware that there's this much longer history through the docks in Cardiff of, you know, connection between Cardiff and Somalia. One of the young men did a fabulous poem, which was around kind of that, his experience of that. So that was really nice.

Dr Nic Gowland: [00:16:50] So these are these activities in schools... is this what led to the history lessons as the resource?

Prof Claire Alexander: [00:16:55] The history lessons resource started in two parts. So the first was from that first set of work, thinking about family and community histories. And then from there, we did a follow up piece of work, which was primarily focused on teachers. So, what were the issues and challenges and concerns that teachers had when they were teaching a more inclusive history?

But rather than replicate what we'd done wholly the first time, we wanted to focus on the idea of heritage. So, this was around the time that the national curriculum was being revised under Michael Gove — he talked a lot about heritage. So, we thought, okay, let's talk about heritage, but let's talk about heritage in a different way. So rather than just our stately homes and palaces, let's talk about heritage in terms of space. So, the idea of the cities that everybody was so proud to be part of, you know, but in terms of, you know, their streets, their community centres, their mosques, their churches.

How can we tell those stories? So, we focused much on place and space, and we did very similar kinds of things with filmmakers, but also we brought in local historians and archivists, and they did local history walks to get a sense of their space. And there we worked in Manchester and in two schools in London, one in, just north of the river, one just south of the river, very different kinds of pupils, one very, predominantly South Asian and one almost entirely White. And got them to, kind of, investigate histories of their areas. So, yeah, there were lots of really nice stories that came out both of those projects.

Dr Nic Gowland: [00:18:20] Is this where the next step of this came from... that is helping teachers, kind of, plan these things and resource this and things like that?

Prof Claire Alexander: [00:18:30] The next step of this project, series of projects, was the Our Migration Story project. And that directly came out from a suggestion from one of our teachers that we'd been working with in the history lessons project, and we'd done a policy round table. And two things came out of this. One was, someone said to us, you need to work with exam boards because actually they're the ones that will help you get these histories into classrooms, which is one of the things we did.

You know, teachers don't have time, they need to be able to go to the THE website and download their lessons. So, you know, if you want us to teach these histories, you need to put them == THE website. So, we thought, okay, well, let's design a website, which gives teachers the resources they need to teach these histories. So that was where the, Our Migration Story website kind of started was in that suggestion.

So, from there we worked in two ways. One was with the OCR exam board who just launched their GCSE on Migration to Britain, which was one of the first courses of its kind, it's a great course.

So, we worked with them just largely in terms of taking how they divided up kind of British history to different periods. And we then held a series of workshops with Historians, representatives from archives and museums, and said to them... 'Okay... in this period of history, what are the most important histories that we need to tell? Whose stories do we need to be including? How would we include those?'- and so we worked then with, I think, in the end, over 80 academic historians, museums, archives, who basically gave us their research. You know, gave us a kind of, a piece of original research, gave us the content, shared their knowledge with us, actually, in a way that we were able to make accessible to teachers. So, I worked with a couple of younger scholars, Sundeep Lidher, a historian now at Kings and Malachi McIntosh, and they took these stories and this academic work and turned

it into resources that were, kind of, accessible to GCSE pupils. So, lesson plans and so on. So that was where the Our Migration Story website came from.

Dr Nic Gowland: [00:20:31] How does something like this ever become on the curriculum in every school? Or is it always going to be select GCSEs or is it going to be gradually scaled up, do you think?

Prof Claire Alexander: [00:21:40] At the moment these histories are quite marginal, so there's not a huge amount of space for teachers to teach more diverse histories more broadly. So, the OCR Migration to Britain course was one of the first ones and then the AQA also developed an A Level course on migration to Britain, partly because, you know, Britain's classrooms have become much more diverse and, you know, people are asking for those kinds, this was before Black Lives Matter, which has put it, made it even more urgent.

The Head of the Royal Historical Society at the time, Peter Mandler was the person that said to us 'You need to be talking to exam boards. They are the ones that generate what the curriculum is, what gets taught'. So that was why we were lucky to partner with the OCR and then the AQA, in terms of pushing for some of those changes. They're not the biggest examiners, so we're hoping at some point we can work with Edexcel or Pearson.

So, one of the things we learned very early on in Sheffield was a young man who did our history lessons course, and said that he'd really enjoyed it, but he didn't think his dad would really be that keen on him doing it because if it didn't count, if it doesn't count towards my GCSE, I'm not going to do it. So, one of the things that was important about working with the exam boards was it was a way of making those histories count. Now I would be very keen and my colleagues at Runnymede and people I've worked with were very keen on making those histories compulsory. They're not compulsory, they're optional and you can teach them, but generally people don't, because it's a lot of additional work. I think very often because often teachers are kind of worried they're not prepared, they don't have the right resources and so on.

Now the popularity of those courses is growing, but still quite slowly. I would like there to be much firmer direction from Government, from the Department for Education that these things should be made, if not compulsory, certainly kind of, there should be strong suggestion that they should be centralised much more, and at an earlier stage, so primary school onwards. You know, so that talking about migration, talking about Britain as a space of migration, you know, as a country with a migrant history, is done very early on.

And I think that makes it much easier for people to accept forms of difference, rather than the kind of dominant notion of Britain as this kind of island society, you know, so the latest curriculum changes were centered around this idea of Britain's island story. Britain's never been an island except for the kind of geographical sense. It's always been connected with everywhere. So, I think there are different ways, you know, people have come and settled here, people have moved from here to the rest of the world and those connections are the thing that make Britain, you know, what it is. So, I think telling the story as a history of migration is really important. We want that made much more central I think.

Dr Nic Gowland: [00:23:21] That links to my next question of... you mentioned Black Lives Matter and the, kind of, spotlight on racial inequality over the last year. Is that driven up the kind of appetite for this sort of teaching much? Or is it still fairly gradual in terms of the growth of these sorts of lessons and things?

Prof Claire Alexander: [00:23:35] I think after Black Lives Matter, even before that actually there'd been a growing pressure to change the curriculum. We've worked in partnership with a number of really great organisations, so something like the Black Curriculum or the Advocacy Academy, who are young people, who've been pushing for this change now for a number of years and then Black Lives Matter gave it the extra impetus.

But I think it's really important to recognise we weren't the first people at all to do this work. There's a long history of people pushing for diverse curriculum. So there's been a lot of stuff very recently about the kind of failures of the education system on, kind of, Caribbean migrants through the 1970s. So that's when I would have been at school, you know, sin bins and, you know, and there's been a pressure for a number of years to make the curriculum more inclusive.

So, there's, you know, supplementary schools and so on have been really important from the 1960s onwards. So, it's really just a continuation of that history of work that have been done by people in supplementary schools. Bernard Coard, you know, very famous 'How the West Indian Child is Made Educationally Subnormal', that's 50 years old, he was asking for the same kinds of things. The Black and Asian Studies Association also have been pushing for these kinds of curriculum for a long time. But I think now Britain is much more diverse classrooms. State schools, secondary state schools are something like 30% non-white. So, the curriculum really has to adapt now just partly by force of numbers, but also because those young people are asking for a more representative curriculum in schools, we see it in universities as well. So, there is, I think, a step change now in a lot of institutions that are very keen... you know, museums, archives, universities who are taking on board those arguments and trying to, kind of you know, change their curriculum to meet those demands.

Dr Nic Gowland: [00:25: 28] You mentioned the pressure for this teaching to increase in terms of migration stories and things. I suppose with everything there must also be a kind of resistance to it as well, with most new things. I think of things like the National Trust and some criticism they've had about teaching certain parts of history. Does any of that resistance worry you or do you think it's kind of expected and normal and it's just to overcome that?

Prof Claire Alexander: [00:25:50] I have to say that in our experience, we've been very lucky with the people we've worked with. In the sense of, we really haven't come across much resistance, everyone, teachers that we've spoken to, the classrooms and young people are keen to try something different. The main constraint seems to be time very often. And I think often teachers themselves sometimes feel like they're not prepared, they haven't been taught these histories themselves in university or school.

And they're worried about getting it wrong. So, one of the pieces of work we're doing now is looking at how teachers, what kind of support teachers need for that? Are they getting

adequate teacher training to support teaching a diverse curriculum, teaching in a diverse classroom?

So, I think that we haven't had a huge amount of pushback. I think people are much more open-minded than is suggested by those kinds of very high-profile kind of cultural arguments. I don't think that's actually... and I think one of the things with Our Migration Story is we've always been very keen not to focus it just on Black and Asian histories, but on migration histories.

There is a way in which, you know, most families in the UK have a story of migration. You know, so my adopted family, for example, you know, if you go back a number of generations, are part Italian. So it's partly about uncovering those histories and seeing, placing those histories alongside each other and say, this is what we share, this is where we are... how do we understand the different journeys that got us to where we are? So, I think in schools, as a starting point, that's actually a really positive and constructive one, but I'm never really sure why people would think that is so threatening.

Dr Nic Gowland: [00:27:27] Yeah. No. I agree. I absolutely agree. And I just wish I had done this when I was at school... it sounds fascinating. It's obviously very hugely successful kind of resources and work you've been doing. In terms of reach around Migration Story... I think you've had pretty much a million hits from over 300,000 users, which is obviously incredible. And that's nicely split between I think, 50:50 UK and rest of the world, which is obviously key. How do you personally measure the impact of this? It's a tricky one to kind of quantify, isn't it the impact of this sort of thing, but it clearly is hugely impactful.

Prof Claire Alexander: [00:28:01] I mean the profile of the project rose dramatically when we won the Guardian Award in 2019 for Research Impact. So, there was a lot of interest in it then. We were really lucky with timing, which is kind of maybe ironic given that it's about history. In the sense that I think we seem to have been doing this work alongside other people at a time when everyone became suddenly much more interested.

So, for me, the impact is measured really in terms of a number of things. One is I think whether young people more interested in history, you know, so, the resources have been used in a variety of ways, by things like the Advocacy Academy and so on, you know, where people have used those as examples of the kinds of things they might want to be taught. That's hugely important. If it makes one young person think... 'Actually, I'd quite like to study history. I'd quite like to study that history' - that would be a huge achievement. Partly we're hoping that schools will adapt, will adopt these resources and take on these kind of new courses that have been developed by the exam boards and teach those. I think that would be huge.

More broadly, I would hope that it changes the way in which people think about what Britishness is and what British history is and who gets included in that. And also how it gets taught. I mean, the methods element is really important for me that, you know, you don't just teach about Kings and Queens. You know, it should be a much more inclusive, broader set of stories that get told in classrooms that everybody can see themselves as part of.

If that happened, if we can get that change, that is really the impact that I would be most interested in.

Dr Nic Gowland: [00:29:33] Another thing we're focusing on in these podcasts is the UN Sustainable Development Goals. I think this kind of case study research addresses quite a few, but I don't know if any stand out to you as particularly being addressed by this research.

Prof Claire Alexander: [00:29:46] So I think the obvious one is Quality Education. So, the idea that, you know, education is for everyone and history is for everyone. So, I think that is the one that speaks most broadly to what we're interested in and also that connection between the UK and the world. So, it's a global, you know, global history is interconnected. If there's one thing we're learning now from the pandemic is that we're all massively interconnected and that's really important. That needs to be understood and taught. We can't tackle any of our, kind of, key issues of the day from climate change to kind of racial inequality without understanding those broader global connections. I think that's the really important one.

I think also Inclusive Institutions probably and Reducing Inequalities. So, I think if we recognise that we share a history, we share a present, we can make it a more shared, and equally shared, future. And change in our institutions, schools, universities, cultural institutions, museums are already undergoing those kinds of transformations. They change all the time anyway. And I think, you know, making those more accessible, more equitable, is a really important part of rethinking who we are. Who we are and who we could be.

Dr Nic Gowland: [00:30:54] Finally, my last question, what's next for you Claire? Does this research continue? I suppose, is this research ever done, in this area, and what are you working on next? And in the future?

Prof Claire Alexander: [00:31:03] So we're currently working, as a continuation of the Our Migration Story work, we're doing some work with (CoDE), the Centre for Dynamics of Ethnicity, on a project, which is on the impact of the pandemic, and post Black Lives Matter. So, one of the packages we're working on there is on history and the curriculum, trying to map those changes post Black Lives Matter when there's been a real impetus to change.

And thinking about how we support teachers. So, as I was saying, you know, teacher training is a key issue. Are teachers being supported? How do we make our teaching staff more diverse themselves? And how do we make them more comfortable with teaching things outside their area of expertise or experience? So that's what we're following up at the moment.

And I'm doing a project as well on the restaurant trade in Brick Lane. The restaurant trade in Brick Lane, which is run by Bangladeshis, almost exclusively, is a really important part of British history. So, you know, Indian restaurants in the UK are something like 85% owned and run by Bangladeshi Muslims. And they are crucial to the way in which we think about what Britishness is, you know, chicken tikka masala version of British identity. So, looking at how that's been shaped historically and how that's adapting to the current circumstances is another project.

Dr Nic Gowland: [00:32:17] That sounds brilliant. I look forward to hearing and reading about that in the future as well. Well, that brings us to the end of this discussion, Claire. I want to say thank you very much for giving me your time. I really enjoyed that chat. I found it fascinating and good luck with your future work.

Ending: [00:32:35] Visit our web pages to find out more about how we're delivering the UN Sustainable Development Goals and to keep up-to-date on our research and its impact across the globe.

Go to manchester.ac.uk/research and subscribe to our mailing list. We're at the forefront in the search for solutions to some of the world's most pressing problems, seeking to be a global force for positive change.