MANIFESTO

VOTE

ANANYA AGAIN

FOR ASSOCIATION BAME

4th-5th March 2021

linktr.ee/ananyaforbame

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

I am Ananya, a third-year student, studying Art History and English. I am originally from New Delhi, India. Over this past year, I have created and held the position of your <u>Association BAME Officer.</u> I have decided to run for this position again, to continue to work towards sustainable and tangible Racial and Ethnic Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in the St Andrews Community.

I had the opportunity of working collaboratively with some extremely hard-working and driven individuals this year, and despite the limitations we laid the foundations for all areas of the Network.

While making a list of achievements over the year will not be representative considering the highly collaborative nature of this "position," there are a few key past actions that I would like to highlight. I also want to address my future goals and how I will go about executing them.

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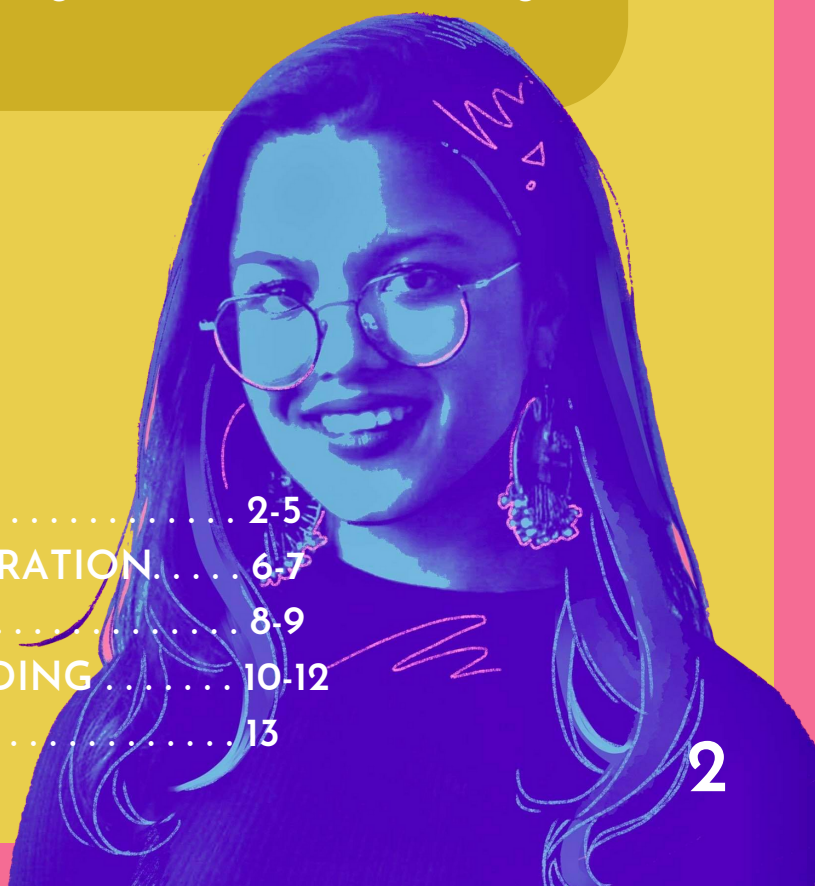
EXPERIENCE

I was elected to the position of the SRC Member for Racial Equality in March 2020. Despite the challenges brought by the pandemic, the summer proved to be imperative in generating mass public action. highlighting racial inequalities, and resulting in a re-evaluation of our own community and institution. I was part of the group of 25 students who put together the BAME Students' Action Plan Report, participating in the BAME Students' Roundtable Conference with the Principal and the Assistant Vice-Principal (Diversity). In August, I wrote a motion to Association Councils to establish the BAME Students' Network as a subcommittee of the Students' Association, drafting a constitution, list of roles, and subsequently recruiting a committee of 16 students.

Semester one consisted of building relationships, and understanding procedures. We reached out to student societies to collaborate on events, and also BAME Student Experience and Representation with Student Services, Admissions, Social Media teams, Faculty Heads of EDI, and the Head of Diversity. I worked on a BAME Student Mentorship Scheme with CEED, and sat on the Race Ethnicity Belief Group and the Central Equality Diversity and Inclusion Committee, to have these conversations on a larger scale and bring the student perspective to staff discussions and policy making. You can find updates on overarching actions that the committee was up to on our Facebook page.

My other experiences include working closely with various other societies: the Art Society (3 years on committee), BRIZO Magazine, St Andrews Multicultural Week Committee (Logistics) The South Asian Society, CATWALK Charity Fashion Show (Social Media), and as a show host on STAR. All of these experiences, whether being on committee administratively or creating of creative content, have equipped me with the technical, organizational and time management skills to cope with and continue to bring new perspectives to this position and committee.

My goal for the future of this role continues to be what it started out as: to serve as a bridge between the student body and the University administration and not just represent the 'voice' of BAME students, but enable as many of the students in this community to get involved This includes prospective, current and alumni students . We cannot talk about equality, diversity, or inclusion without acknowledging the systemic racism that exists within our community, our society, and our institution. In order to tackle this, there is a need to work closely with the institution and resist these engrained practices and structures to create new mechanisms based on the foundations of collaboration, equality, and inclusion.

WHY 'BAME'?

I want to acknowledge the contention that the acronym 'BAME'. BAME, which stands for Black Asian Minority Ethnic, is a term commonly used in the United Kingdom to refer to ethnic minority individuals. Some people identity with the term, others don't, but I want to re-iterate my personal belief in adopting an individualistic rather than essentialized experience to these identities. Each of these experiences is distinct and not one common 'minority' experience. When this position was created, this specific terminology was adopted based on common consensus. Yet, it is not one that is unanimously accepted. The fact is that no singular term will be accepted by everyone and will be able to represent all identities, but as a community we need to push back and not let the challenges posed by terminology hamper our efforts and community.

The following pages outline some of the key aims and goals, that I wish to pursue if I am re-elected. I hope they align with your visions and expectations.

COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION

Multiple groups and individuals at the university, both staff and students, are actively working towards racial equality and justice for ethnic minorities. However, a lack of communication, coordination, and collaboration often results in efforts being doubled or not recognised. This comes in the way of effective, efficient, and sustainable action.

PROPOSED SOLUTION

Centralised strategy of communication of ALL EDI (and especially race/ethnicity) activities to ensure awareness, active involvement, collaboration, accountability and most importantly transparency.

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COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION

Centralised EDI Webpage
- Semesterly updates from members of staff, student representative bodies, office holders.
- Information on all initiatives and focus groups and relevant contact details.
- Inventory of activities and information, that can be added to via a submission form.

Open Fora Meetings with EDI Faculty Members, and administrators, (e.g. AVP-Diversity, Principal, Head of EDI) in conversation with the BAME student body, to facilitate communication, engagement and effective feedback. This will also create room for discussion and facilitate a greater sense of trust between staff and students.

Yearly Public Review of progress and strategy via the CEDI (Central EDI Group) which is accessible to all students who register to encourage transparency and provide direct access to information

WWW

REPRESENTATION AND ACCESS

The election of Dr Leyla Hussain, the establishment of the BAME Network, and the inclusive curriculum audit, amongst others have been huge milestones in diversifying voices at the University. But these are only a few steps in the right direction. The figures released last year clearly reiterate the low number of BAME (and specifically Black) individuals, (about 20 %, and much lower in the UK Domicile), across undergraduate and postgraduate student but also administrative and academic staff and faculty.

PROPOSED SOLUTION
Whilst efforts to address this are underway, I will place emphasis on a targeted outreach strategy in collaboration with Admissions (for students) as well as concerned members of faculty (with respect to recruitment of staff). Access to current students and resources, but also avenues of funding, will be key areas of focus.

BAME Access Conference
Creating direct links from current to prospective students, in order to encourage application and provide a wholistic view of the student experience at St Andrews. This will additionally contribute to myth busting and create a personalised sense of connection with the town and its community.

Mentorship Programmes for BAME Offer Holders (rather than only those students who firm their offer). This will encourage direct access again, and could potentially tackle the issue of students not wanting to come to St Andrews despite getting in, because they feel like they may not fit in.

Arrange for subsidised visiting ppportunities for BAME students to be able to come up to visit St Andrews (when it is safe to do so). This incentivises student to visit and gives them a chance to form a personal bond with the town and the community, rather than going off preconceived notions and judgements.

Emphasise accessible funding for BAME Postgraduate Research (PGR) students, as a major long term goal. Avenues for funding are often extremely limited for PGR students, and when students are from minority backgrounds and/or even come from international backgrounds, this become more challenging. By working in collaboration with the various PG Representatives, o want to encourage this to be made a central part of the conversation at the University, I also want to look at providing better resources on how to access funding via external sources to make the process slightly more accessible.

- **BAME Access Conference**
- **Mentorship Programmes for Offer Holders**
- **Subsidised Visiting Opportunities**
- **Funding for PG Students**

SUPPORT AND COMMUNITY BUILDING

Prioritising Representation and efforts to increase the number of BAME Individuals in the St Andrews community, need to be accompanied by effective and adequate support for mental health, as well as a safe environment that fosters growth and alleviates (rather than creates) stress. Being able to adjust into the community and meet like-minded individuals is also essential.

PROPOSED SOLUTION

Over the past year, there has been an emphasis on events related to sharing experiences and personal journeys, and while these have amplified voices and created space for BAME experiences, they have also resulted in emotional fatigue and an added emotional labour upon BAME individuals. There is a need hence, to focus more on community building and providing a sense of joy, specifically in such isolating times.

SUPPORT & COMMUNITY BUILDING

SUPPORT

Collaboration with Student Representatives and Societies to create safe spaces that encourage non-judgmental support systems

(DoWell, Equal Opportunities, Rector's Committee, Nightline, Peer Support, The Healing Collective, Got Consent, Sexpression, Cultural Societies and any other groups and individuals with common goals.)

Student Services

Establish a working group to discuss inclusivity in practice along with regular feedback and specialised training for Counsellors. Creating BAME-specific support groups.

External Specialised Support

Offer effective and accountable avenues of external and pro-bono support to staff and students if required, especially during times when the internal services are fully booked.

COMMUNITY BUILDING

- Events that encourage enjoyable social interaction, in collaboration with other societies and groups (When feasible In person interactions)
- Bonding over regular scheduled meetups (study groups/virtual coffee mornings /speed friending/book clubs/walks)
- Encourage all societies to adopt an inclusive approach in activities and initiatives via an Inclusive Society Guidance
- Continuing efforts to improve and take forward the BAME Mentorship Scheme for Students, created collaboratively with CEED
- Building a strong Alumni Network (in collaboration with Saint Connect) to help current students access them, as well as help Alumni stay in touch

CONCLUSION

Throughout this document, I have provided an objective glimpse into my experiences and vision for the future. Whilst a lot of work in this direction is actively being pursued, a lot is left to do and I want to ensure that we are continuously working towards our established goals, but also questioning and re-evaluating constantly. Racial justice, equality or representation are continuous processes rather than a singular goal or destinations, and requires community engagement. These goals are neither static, nor one that can be pursued individually, but dynamic, forever changing and a collective endeavour. I have the skills, vision and dedication to continue to serve in this position and be your representative.

Voting opens on the 4th and 5th of March 2021, so don't forget to cast your vote and exercise your right, in electing your own representatives.

VOTE

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