

BAFTA Television Lecture: Lenny Henry

17 March 2014 at BAFTA 195 Piccadilly

John Willis: Good evening. I'm John Willis, I'm the Chairman of BAFTA. It is my pleasure to welcome you all this evening for one of the high spots of the BAFTA calendar, the annual Television Lecture, this year given by Lenny Henry, CBE.

[Applause]

That's the first time anyone's applauded one of my speeches, so thank you, much appreciated. Nearly forty years ago Lenny made his television debut when he won *New Faces* with his impression of Stevie Wonder. Indeed I can say without any fear of contradiction that he is the first winner of *New Faces* to give BAFTA's annual lecture. I can't swear that there hasn't been someone who's been on the *Black and White Minstrels* who've given the lecture. Since then he's been one of the giants of British television with a string of successful and iconic shows including *Tiswas*, *The Comic Strip*, *Chef*, *The Lenny Henry Show*, and *Hope And Glory*. Latterly, he's emerged as a wonderful, serious stage actor as anyone who saw his powerful *Othello* will acknowledge. He's also been a key figure in Comic Relief from its birth. His lecture is entitled 'A Part Of This Industry' and will be his special perspective on the critical issue of ethnic diversity, or lack of, in our industry. After the lecture Lenny will be interviewed by Baroness Oona King, Channel 4's Diversity Executive, and also take questions from the floor. We're live-streaming the lecture on BAFTA Guru, our learning website, and tomorrow you can join Lenny for a live Q&A on Twitter at 1.15pm. But now, without further ado, please welcome tonight's BAFTA lecturer, Lenny Henry.

[Applause]

Lenny Henry: Thank you, thank you. My Lords, Ladies, gathered members of the media and my fellow members of BAFTA. My name, as John said, is Lenny Henry - I'm an actor, writer, comedian and producer. In 2008 I was asked to make a speech at the Royal Television Society. My talk covered the history of ethnic minorities in British Television, the story of my own personal

journey in the business, and I put forward some suggestions as to how we might make the representation of ethnic minorities a little fairer. At the talk's conclusion I said, "I hope that things will now change and that I don't have to come back and repeat myself in another five or six years time."

Yeah. It's good to be back people.

I'd just like to give you the background on how this second speech came about. Last year, I watched the BAFTA Awards on TV, and the next evening I went along to the Sony Radio Awards. There I was, going up the red carpet looking forward to a glass of Prosecco and a miniature sausage roll, when this journalist stuck a microphone in my face and asked if I thought the BAFTAs were "a bit vanilla."

And I went into this riff - like I was in my pyjamas at home, in a gallows humour style about how they had Chiwetel Ejiofor and Sanjeev Bhaskar and David Harewood presenting awards, but there were no Blacks or Asians collecting prizes because it seemed to me there hadn't been any significant Black or Asian projects made that year. We hadn't been given the opportunity to write or make or be in anything so we weren't winning anything. I ran my mouth off, basically, said something like, "it's gonna be a brand new show, 'It'll Be All White On The Night'". And this was before I'd had the Prosecco.

Next day it was in all the papers, I was getting phone calls, I had to ring BAFTA and say, "BAFTA, I love you guys. No, I think you do a great job. No please don't stop sending the free movies. I've got a deal with the newsagent on the corner. If we could figure out how to stop that caption 'Property of Bafta' appearing every ten minutes we'd be billionaires." That, Ladies and Gentlemen, was my call to action. BAFTA, it's all your fault. You are to blame.

So, once again, I'm here today to make a speech about diversity in the British Film and TV industry. I also want to make some observations

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about my own journey in the business so far, and weigh in with some ideas on how we could and should change things for the future. For those of you who don't know, and by the way, how many people here weren't alive in 1975? [Murmurs from audience] Dear God. Back then I got my TV break, as John Willis said, via a show called *New Faces*. It had an audience of about 16million people every week; it launched people like Victoria Wood. It was kind of like a *Britain's Got Talent* for comedians and variety performers, but without Simon Cowell.

So before I begin, let's look back at what happened since my speech in 2008. Well some broadcasters 'took action'. They have launched or re-launched various initiatives and training programmes. They created new training schemes for 'the yout' from underprivileged backgrounds to enter the industry. They've run senior mentoring schemes to 'help people from diverse backgrounds' break through the glass ceiling. They've even invested in extra monitoring of the problem.

Now I love trainee schemes. I love mentoring. Haven't you watched every Hollywood buddy police movie? The young whippersnapper cop is teamed up with the older, wiser, white-haired mentor who's seen it all, done it all and shoots three gangsters every time he goes for coffee and a bagel. We love mentors. I've had many over the years. Now there's been Robin Nash, Jim Moir, Paul Jackson, Geoff Posner, Peter Bennett-Jones, Robert Luff... These people all helped to shape my career at various stages of my life and I'm deeply grateful to them, from my heart I really am. Although where those guys were when I was in the *Black and White Minstrels* for five years, I'll never know.

I also love increased monitoring, as that's how I can tell you the stats and figures that reveal that since my last speech in 2008, despite all those mentoring and training programmes, despite these easy to roll-out solutions, the fact is the situation has deteriorated, badly. Between 2006 and 2012, the number of BAME's working in the

UK TV industry has declined by 30.9%. Creative Skillset conducted a census that shows quite clearly that Black, Asian and minority ethnic representation in the creative industries in 2012 was just 5.4% - its lowest point since they started taking the census. That's an appalling percentage - more so because the majority of our industry is still based in and around London, right here, where there's a BAME population of 40%.

Want some more evidence? Here's another rocket-propelled statistical grenade for you. In the last three years the total number of BAME people in the industry has fallen by 2,000 while the industry as a whole has grown by over 4,000. Or to put it another way - for every black and Asian person who lost their job, more than two white people were employed.

And since 2008 I've noticed another worrying trend. Our most talented BAME actors are increasingly frustrated, and they have to go to America to succeed. You know who I'm talking about. David Oyelowo in *The Help* and *The Butler*. Idris Elba in *Long Walk To Freedom*, *Prometheus* and *The Wire*. Thandie Newton in *Crash*, *Mission: Impossible*. Chewitel Ejiofor in *12 Years A Slave*; he was good in *American Gangster* too. David Harewood in *Homeland*. Lennie James in *The Walking Dead* and *Jericho*. Marianne Jean-Baptiste, *Ladies and Gentlemen*, our first Black British female Oscar nominee for *Secrets & Lies* had to go stateside to find work in *Without A Trace*. Archie Panjabi of course in *The Good Wife*. All achieved a measure of success here but were frustrated at the lack of opportunity in the UK.

This kind of exodus, this kind of exodus has been happening for a while. I'm going to read an excerpt from a letter now. It refers to the lack of opportunity and prejudice towards minority actors in Britain, and the impetus to go where one is wanted as opposed to the alternative. So, forgive me as I read this.

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It says, "I at present enjoy a popularity equal to that of Mr. Edmund Kean in his heyday in England. I have more offers of engagement than I can possibly attend to or fulfil and on the terms of my own dictation, therefore I need not tell you that I have not the slightest idea of returning to England for at least two years, if then, should God spare my life. I have already had five offers from Parisian theatres. Here an actor is estimated according to his ability, and they the artistes are gentlemen generally, and received and treated as such by the public." This letter was written on March 11th by the black classical actor Ira Aldridge... in 1853. Imagine if he'd had to cope with whoever casts *Midsomer Murders*. He'd have topped himself.

Black British Oscar-winning filmmaker Steve McQueen –damn, that sounded good, I'm gonna say that again. Black British Oscar... and BAFTA-winning filmmaker, Steve McQueen, director of *12 Years A Slave*, has had huge success in the UK and the states with that film and *Shame* and *Hunger*. He has been fortunate to have had the backing of Film4, and I'm delighted he has chosen to return to the UK to direct a TV series set in West London, which is good news for us, both as a viewing public and as a workforce who want to be involved with something that just might compete with other high-end drama come BAFTA time.

My point is, we are often told that BAME don't have the marquee value or star power to drive a feature or long-running series. That's what we're told. These performers have demonstrated that this is no longer the case. I don't want to be too much of a downer – there's been some change. Idris Elba came back, didn't he, to make *Luther*. Yeah boy. A crime series set in a London-like metropolis. Idris plays the title role - an intellectual, troubled, maverick cop who has no black friends or family. [Audience laughter] Not at all, none. Have you seen this? He never has any black mates. You never see him talking to his Uncle Festus or whatever his name is? He's never down Jerk City having a curry goat and rice with his bredrens. You never see Luther with black

people, what's going on? And he never changes his clothes, what's that all about? It's a great show.

Corrie's BAME presence has increased in the last few years too, but let's face it, they had to do something didn't they? For far too long *Coronation Street* was the only street in the North of England with a corner shop owned by a white family. Indian families' would be watching at home going, "these people, they've taken all our jobs. You can't go in a post office these days without seeing a white face behind the counter. Something has to change!"

Even *Emmerdale* had Will Jonson, right on Will, playing Dominic Andrews. He was on *Emmerdale Farm*, check it out man. A black mechanic and single father, Dominic Andrews has had to cope with school bullying, one night stands, drug deals, teenage pregnancy, abortion and gunshot wounds... and that was just in his first episode.

But we shouldn't just look at onscreen portrayal, we should check out what's happening behind the camera. Now a black former-BBC executive, who's recently formed his own consultancy company playfully describes the workforce behind the camera as 'the makers and the pickers'. The makers, whether employees of the broadcaster or indies, pitch their ideas to the pickers who decide what gets made, which writers are in vogue, which actors get cast in the lead role, and which presenters front the show. When it comes to the makers I've found BAME representation patchy at best in production, and as far as craft is concerned – you know, cameras, lights, sound, studio crews, costume, makeup etc. - I rarely if ever see a black or Asian face. But when it comes to the pickers, the channel controllers and heads of commissioning who oversee budgets and make the key decisions, here's what it looks like.

[Pictures on-screen]

How can this be in 2014, and what can we do about it?

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Let's look at TV. Here's a selection of popular dramas and comedies in recent years. This is what's going on in the UK. *Southcliffe*. Yeah, I enjoyed that, that guy shooting people in that West Country village. Of course if it had been in The Ends people would have shot back, right? *Broadchurch* – mixed race boyfriend of sister of deceased, thank you very much for putting that in there, so there was somebody in there. *The Fall* was set in Northern Ireland which is rarely seen on TV, Northern Ireland drama, so I guess that was cool. *Miranda*. I like *Miranda*, there she is. *Mrs Brown's Boys*. The Irish, an ethnic minority? A transvestite, I guess, so that's a... Discuss. The evolution of BAME involvement in British TV seems to lurch one step forward and two steps back - a bit like John Sergeant on *Strictly Come Dancing*, except he had a job at the end of it.

Meanwhile on the other side of the Atlantic - this is what's going down. *Scandal*. "hold it down." *Grey's Anatomy*. *Boardwalk Empire*. *Breaking Bad*. *Parks and Recreation*. *True Blood*, "Sookie. Sookie." *New Girl*. *Elementary*, which is their version of *Sherlock*, I guess. Has the Korean actress Lucy Liu from *Kill Bill* and *Charlie's Angels* playing Doctor Watson. Ooh, very bold decision. There's as much chance of that happening here - as seeing Charles Saatchi and Nigella Lawson on *Mr and Mrs*, isn't there? Could you imagine that here? That's never gonna happen. So how come Americans manage this almost seamless integration in front of the cameras, whilst here in the UK we find it so difficult?

It's because they really invest and nurture BAME talent behind the scenes. It's no coincidence that the Head of Casting at ABC/ Disney who produces *Grey's Anatomy*, *Scandal* and *Modern Family* is Keli Lee, an Asian-American woman with a vested interest in promoting minority talent. Or that African-American writers like Shonda Rimes are able to write such brilliant three-dimensional characters; whatever race, creed, or colour. Or gender.

Talking of America, it was fifty years ago that Martin Luther King Jnr. made a speech about how America needed to keep to the promise that it made in the Declaration of Independence, that all men are created equal, a promise that America was breaking at the time. In that speech Martin Luther King "Had a Dream". He dreamt that one day America would fulfil its promise. He dreamt that sons of former slaves and slave owners would sit around a table together. He dreamt that his children would be judged not by the colour of their skin but by their character. That black boys and black girls would join hands with white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers. You all know the speech. I don't need to go on. It was his way of holding America to account.

Here in the UK we have the BBC and they too have promises in their Charter. Not quite the Declaration of Independence but promises all the same. The BBC Charter promises to "represent the UK, its nations, regions and communities." They've made a pledge to the people of the UK - the license-fee payers - that they will represent them. Well, BAME's are an integral part of Great Britain's communities, we deserve to be represented too.

And just like Martin Luther King Jnr., I want to hold our leaders to account. But I don't just have a dream Ladies and Gentlemen, I have a screen. I have a screen where great programmes are produced by the multi-cultural many, as opposed to the mono-cultural elite. I have a screen. I have a screen where the actors of the future are cast not by the colour of their skin, but by their talent alone. I have a screen. I have a screen where the stories in our cinemas and on our TVs will reflect the wealth and variety of experience of all our communities, not just some. I have a screen today, can I get a hallelujah?

Audience: Hallelujah.

LH: Now, the thing is... White people down here, "Hallelujah", right on, Simon, right on. The thing is, we won't achieve this screen by launching yet

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another round of training and mentoring initiatives. We need a different solution. So I've looked around and tried to find things that have worked in the past, and the answer is right here, in the UK.

Back in 2003, the BBC realised it had a problem, a representational problem. The nations and regions were not getting a look in. According to the BBC's Annual Report only 3.7% of core programming budget was being spent in Scotland, despite Scotland having around 9% of the UK population. If you looked at the network programmes the BBC produced, 91% of them were being made in and around London. 91%.

So the BBC decided that if it was going to keep its promise in the charter, things needed to change. Now, they didn't change things by going to local schools in Glasgow and setting up new entrants schemes for the 'yout dem'. They didn't give all their staff in Wales mentors - although that could make a good buddy movie, note to self. And finally, they didn't think they could solve the problem just by increasing monitoring.

No. What they did was structural. First they said they would spend 50% of their money outside of the M25; and for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland they went further, promising them that the proportion of programme spend in each nation, would at least match that nation's percentage of the UK population. They set firm targets and even set quotas of a minimum amount of programmes they were going to commission from each nation and region. And the result, like Sally Berkow's alleged drinks bill, is spectacular.

Since 2003 there's been a massive increase of programmes made outside the M25. There has been a 400% increase in the number of network programmes produced in the English regions. By 2016 over half of network spend will be made out of London. In just two years' time the amount of network spend in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland should accurately reflect the size of the population there. Now that's an amazing

turnaround in increasing regional diversity. It has completely revolutionised the broadcasting landscape. But I think there is another part of the charter promise to be fulfilled. The promise was to represent the UK's nations, regions and communities. The BBC has kept its promise for the nations and regions but what about communities? More precisely, the BAME communities?

I think they can keep this promise by taking exactly the same approach they took to increasing the output of nations and regions. And that means ring-fencing money specifically for BAME productions. For the nations and regions they set quotas, but I know people don't like the word 'quota', so let's say 'ring-fenced money'. Okay, ring-fenced money. If license fee-payers' money isn't spent, it will be clear in the Annual Report for each channel. But you know what, I've got a feeling people would quickly discover good programmes to spend the money on. But that's also why it involves appointing a couple of 'pickers and deciders', specific commissioners to hunt out internal and external BAME productions to commission.

But what is a BAME production I hear you ask yourself. I'm gonna tell you. Currently Ofcom has three criteria to decide if a production qualifies as coming from the nations or the regions, okay. First, the production company must have a substantive business and production based in the UK outside the M25. Second, at least 70% of the production budget must be spent in the UK outside the M25. And third, at least 50% of the production talent (i.e. not on-screen talent) by cost must have their usual place of employment in the UK outside the M25. A production needs to meet two out of the three to qualify. I believe these criteria can be easily adapted to define a BAME production in the following ways:

A) At least 50% of the production talent (i.e. not on-screen talent) by cost must be Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic. The production staff will be self-declaring about their ethnicity - self-declaration is

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a common principle in both police, health and other government monitoring of BAME statistics.

B) The production company must be 30% BAME controlled, and/or 30% of senior personnel involved in the production in question must be BAME.

And C) At least 50% of on screen talent by cost must be Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic.

Productions should meet two of these three to qualify.

Now there are more details and copies of this proposal which you'll receive on your way out for you to analyse and hopefully build on. This proposal has been months in the making, drafted by myself and a number of key BAME industry figures, talent drawn from both sides of the camera. We believe everyone stands to gain from this proposal. Everyone. Both culturally and commercially, and if they don't like it we're happy to consider their alternatives.

But let's not just focus on the BBC. This is a problem and solution that relates to the entire industry. All of us. All the major broadcasters have made a promise to BAME people. They've signed up to the Creative Diversity Pledge. All except for Channel 5, but let's not go there. The Creative Diversity Network made a pledge in 2009 in which people signed up to:

- Recruit fairly and from as wide a base as possible and encouraging industry entrants and production staff from diverse backgrounds.
- Encourage diversity in output.
- Encourage diversity at senior decision-making levels.

Like the BBC, the other broadcasters have not been that good at keeping their promises to the BAME communities, but like the BBC, they have kept their promises to represent the nations and regions. Last year half of all Channel 4's programmes were produced out of London. Half. And Channel 4 spent two fifths of all its money

outside London. This isn't just *Shameless* or *Hollyoaks*, this was achieved after Ofcom set specific targets for Channel 4 to meet its license requirement, targets that it has hugely exceeded now.

So what's the point of all this then? Does this screen, your screen really matter? I put it to you Ladies and Gentlemen, that it does. For many people around the world, the perception of the United Kingdom is determined by our TV exports. Whenever I'm in America, New York or somewhere, and I tell them I'm on TV, they say, "Are you the new Jazz singer in *Downton Abbey*?" I say, "no, I'm one of the servants working so far below stairs, by the time I get to the house the show's finished."

Team GB's global image should be a fair and honest reflection of our society, not a fictionalised version of who we are. It's a misrepresentation not to include BAME as major contributors in the television and film industry. There is a wealth of talent to be tapped. There are writers, producers, executive producers, directors, script editors, skilled technicians who just want to work. When it comes down to it, all we're asking - is for the broadcasters to keep the promises they have already made to Britain's communities, either through their charters, license agreements, or when they made the CDN pledge. Right now it feels there are no consequences when promises are not kept. That's why I'm delighted that the Culture Secretary, Ed Vaizey, has taken such an interest in this area and has promised to make them accountable for delivering on these pledges. Good work, and not before time.

For myself, well I love collaborating, working with new writers and new writing, and I look forward to the challenge of making new high-end drama and comedy to rival the best that's out there. A bold claim I know, but I did three Jägerbombs and a packet of wine gums before I came on, so you'll have to excuse me.

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Let me leave you now with this quote. It's from the 3rd of February 2005. Nelson Mandela [coughs], Nelson Mandela, how soon they forget, Nelson Mandela said these words about taking action on world poverty, but this could easily apply to all of us involved in making this great industry more diverse. He said, "Sometimes it falls upon a generation to be great. You can be that generation. Let your greatness blossom." So why don't we do that? Every chairman or controller or commissioner or exec in this room? Every H.O.D, production manager and casting director. Every agent. You have it within your power to effect a radical change upon this appalling situation. Let your greatness blossom, and let's just see how great our generation can be.

Thank you very much for listening, good night.

[Applause]

Oona King: Oh that's so exciting. That has excited me. I mean, seriously, I know all the ladies probably say that to you, but...

LH: A bit inappropriate, Oona.

OK: But I've been working in this area a very long time and so I have to take part of the blame, I have to take part of the blame, but I also share your screen dream. I absolutely share your screen dream. And I just mentioned earlier, you started off, you mentioned the exodus. And just to sort of frame this debate I just wondered why you think it is, you know the reasons behind ethnic minority, BAME. Does everyone know what BAME stands for? I know it's a bit obvious, but I go to lots of meetings and people don't even explain enough.

LH: Bame? What do you mean bame? Why are you spelling it?

OK: No, it's barmy.

LH: They should just call us vex.

OK: Yeah, vex, that would work.

LH: I represent all the vex people. 2,000 of us have gone now, what the hell?

OK: Yeah exodus, or worse really isn't it. So, the, I nearly forgot what BAME stands for then. The Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic. Right, so, ethnic minorities...

LH: It just used to be black people.

OK: I know but we have to be, we have to diversify.

LH: We have to include more people.

OK: Yeah, we have to be more inclusive, come on. All of that, anyway, so, I wondered do you think that ethnic minorities don't have enough opportunities in this country, that they feel they've got to go to America. Is that either due to a conspiracy within the broadcasting industry, or is it incompetency. And by incompetency I mean a lack of imagination, creative imagination, in terms of colourblind casting, that sort of thing. You know, do commissioners, and there are some commissioners here today, we love you, do they wake up in the morning and think 'How do we get black people'...

LH: I should have had a calendar to figure out when this question's going to end.

OK: I know, I know, I know, I know. Well you can't, with a politician.

LH: Day 49.

OK: With a politician, with a politician you're not going to get a quick question.

LH: Damn this is a long question.

OK: Of course you're not going to get.

LH: I might have to send out for a Big Mac.

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OK: We've got 25 minutes, we've got 25 minutes before the roving mics come, alright. So, do you think it is conspiracy, or do you think, do you think, do you think that, do you think that this question will ever end? What do you think? What do you think?

LH: Well, I know quite a lot of the people who've gone to America and it's not incompetency and it's not conspiracy, it's just an absence. It's an absence of script, it's an issue of, of course rainbow casting, that's an issue I know. People say we want the best actor; we just want the best actor you know. Lennie James in *Line of Duty*, for instance. But it feels to me like there isn't enough effort made to include, and I think that the more people can be included in general casting for parts, the better it will be. I mean I just read a script by Russell T Davies where he very specifically said I want this type of person for this part, I want this type of person for this part, and I think if more writers do that, that will go some way to answering those questions.

David Harewood rang me before this to wish me good luck and just said, "I'm in America making a film, there's no money but at least I'm working you know." He's gone, he's very disappointed with the fact that the offers aren't coming in, even after two years on *Homeland* he still has to... He comes back here and there's nothing to do. I worked with Marianne Jean-Baptiste shortly after *Secrets & Lies*, Oscar-nominated, and she said "you know what, I've come home and there's nothing, so I'm off." And she's been in *Without A Trace* for yonks now. And she came back to do *The Amen Corner*, it was great to see her, but then she's gone back. It's difficult, it's very difficult if you're an ethnic minority actor in this country. You're waiting and waiting and waiting. Of course there's work in the soaps, and right on for *Casualty* and *Holby* and for *Doctor Who*. When Russell T Davies was running *Doctor Who* I rang up and said there's too many black people in the show. Russell, why are there all of these black people in the show? But in high-end drama and comedy there is a paucity and we must try and do something about it.

OK: And do you think that one way to do something about that is to get the pickers more diverse?

LH: Well yeah, I mean, I had a 30-year period where I never met anybody who looked like me or you in a meeting, ever. I'd go to meetings in boardrooms all over London and never see another Black or Asian person. Not many women, and it was weird. And because it was the norm I got, you know... For me this is about other people, I'm speaking on behalf of people. The 2,000 people who have left because there's no work, that's who I'm speaking on behalf of. I've been very blessed. My mommy, "Len, you blessed you know. Them bless you, look how the BBC look after you." So I feel I've been blessed, but I'm speaking on the behalf of people who've had to leave. The 5.4% of people who have no work, you know it's awful. So you know, that's what I'm here for, and I think it's something that can be done if there are more pickers and deciders who are people of colour. I think it will change things.

OK: You mentioned the CDN, the Creative Diversity Network's 2009 diversity pledge, which I think is a really important thing to underline. I think it's great that you mentioned that because so many production companies have signed up to it. Why do you think they're not really applying it?

LH: Because it's like turning around this massive, three million-foot oil tanker, isn't it? Anything that big, that is something, the status quo, takes a long time to change. Look how long it took them to dot the I's and cross the T's on the civil rights paper. It just takes a long time to change these things. It would be fantastic if this were to happen in my lifetime. I would love to be not dead and see change happen. It would be good, wouldn't it?

OK: That can be the take home strapline. You would like to be not dead.

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LH: I would like to be not dead and see some change happen in our industry. Because it seems to me the more pickers and deciders who are people of colour, the more you might see an openness to the kind of things that get chosen to be made. You know Shakespeare said we want to hold a mirror up to society, we need to start don't we?

OK: Yeah we do need to start. What's really interesting is where we start, because you also mentioned this point about there have been lots of initiatives.

LH: There's been lots.

OK: There have been loads of initiatives, and you know the broadcasters do some really fantastic initiatives. What has really been brought home to me since you did the BAFTA...

LH: The RTS one? That was the BAFTA one.

OK: Yeah, sorry, that was the BAFTA one. No, when you were talking about the BAFTAs and then you went to the Sony Awards, what has come home to me is that the initiatives, although they are excellent, aren't actually resulting in a game change.

LH: Well it's kind of tap dancing, isn't it? It's kind of plate-spinning whilst nothing happens. It's fine to have initiatives and training schemes. It's like "hey, look over here we're doing this", and then it means that the status quo can continue. And I think it sort of becomes... a sort of block to stop somebody actually doing something. The thing is, people just want to work. Those 2,000 people who left the industry just want a job. They don't want to necessarily go on a training course, because a lot of people they have trained, they are, they can do their job. They don't need to go on another training scheme, they just want to work. So entry-level training schemes are great, but what about the people who are trained and know how to do those jobs? What about those execs who have had to, there have been loads who have gone to America. You know, Tony

Dennis, gone, you know Barbara Amiel, working in Canada, you know Pat Younge, went to America, came back, went away again. You know people go because there's nothing going on here, and there should be more going on here. We're such a rich, vibrant, multicultural, multi-ethnic culture in this country, and we should reflect that.

OK: Well I'm sure we're gonna be asked by the audience, well I say that, maybe the audience is going to ask about what the CDN, which is basically the body of broadcasters.

LH: The Creative Diversity Network.

OK: Yeah, the Creative Diversity Network, what are they actually going to do now?

LH: Well Tanya Mukherjee's talked about this Silvermouse thing, you know about this, it's the monitoring thing isn't it?

OK: Yep, it's all about the monitoring. I couldn't go on maternity leave until we'd made another small little baby step forward with the monitoring. Because to my mind if you can show people, for example, how many black writers were there of British TV programmes last year? I think that is a huge thing, when people actually see the truth they will be very shocked, and commissioners will be very shocked.

LH: How does it, how will it work? It's self-declaring isn't it? They have to...

OK: Don't you interview me, I'm interviewing you. What's that about? I'm flipping it back. As I was saying...

LH: Damn, you saw through my ploy.

OK: We'll come onto that, I'm sure we'll come onto that. But did it surprise you that the Minister for Culture, Ed Vaizey, Ed are you in the house tonight? Does it surprise you that he has really taken notice of what you're doing?

BAFTA Television Lecture: Lenny Henry

17 March 2014 at BAFTA 195 Piccadilly

LH: Well the thing is Ed Vaizey is a fan of theatre; he goes to the theatre a lot, he watches telly a lot. And he came to see *Fences* when I was at the Duchess Theatre and he said "why aren't there more black people in the audience?" He said "I noticed this at The National, there aren't any black people, and why don't they go to the theatre. Why aren't they here?" And I said "what are you asking me for? You're the Culture Minister, why don't you investigate Ed?" And then when we started talking about this I wrote him a letter and said you should get amongst this because this is what you're supposed to be doing. And he took a, he's taken an interest and I'm really glad that he's taken an interest because he's part of holding people to account. And he's very keen on the monitoring. And we're very keen on, the people that I've been talking to who are industry professionals, people behind the camera and in front of the camera. You know a speech like this just doesn't happen; it just doesn't fall out of your head. I've sought advice on how, you know I've talked to everybody about what to say here and they all said that it's really important that Ed takes an interest in this and pushes from the government side, otherwise nothing will happen. So perhaps this is the new element of this, is that somebody in government actually is keen for something to change. And when you have that, you might have Jenga.

OK: I don't know what that means, but yeah he really, really is keen for it to change, which I have to say makes a bit of a difference. To be honest it does make a bit of a difference. We're going to go to Q&A in a minute but I just want to say a little thing about Lenny here. To my mind what you've done is genuinely extraordinary because it's about leadership, because for too long we haven't had anyone from the BAME community themselves getting up and saying this is what needs to change and we're not just going to be the vex people in the corner screaming, but here's a plan, here's something you can do. But like you say, go away, come up with better proposals if you've got better proposals, but do something because it's got to change and the time is now for it to change. And I think for the

leadership role Lenny has played just can we give him another big round of applause.

[Applause]

LH: But as I say, I've, you could say well Lenny's done very well and he's had a career and things. I'm not speaking for myself, I'm speaking for those 2,000 people who are no longer working in the industry because there's nothing for them to do. I'm speaking on their behalf, and I'm speaking on behalf of all of those BAME professionals who just want to have a voice, who just want to say "we wanna work, and can we start soon please?"

[The floor opens to questions from the audience]