

**Minutes**

Meeting:	BME Caucus
Date:	Thursday 9 March 2017
Paper:	04
Author:	Annie Bhila
Purpose:	Record of Fourth Meeting

**Union of UEA Students Purpose:**

“To enrich the life of every UEA student”

**Chair:**

Edidiong Bassey (PSY),

**In attendance:**

Tarun Sridhar (LAW), Bhavna Raghuvanshi (LAW), Ikenna Enwereonu (LAW), Khyatee Tewari (LAW), Amanie Mathurin (DEV), Anjali Menezes (MED) Mohaned Alhasan (PHA), Karen Sakihama(PPL), Hussam Hussein (DEV), Prudy Zheng (DEV), Mohammed Rashwan (PHA).

**1. Introduction by Chair.**

**2. Approval of Minutes of the meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> January 2017.**

- Those in attendance were given the opportunity to read the Minutes.
- The Minutes were approved.

**3. NUS Summer Conference.**

- The Chair asked Hussam Hussein (HH) to explain what the NUS Summer Conference is to those in attendance.

- HH expressed how this is a Conference for all those who identify as BME where NUS policy and committee members would be voted on. HH compared it to the Winter Conference and spoke about how this Conference was more about deliberating policy in comparison to merely networking or training.
- The Chair explained the way the Caucus would vote for those wishing they attend the Conference.
- Those in attendance were asked about their interest in terms of attending the Conference.
- Amanie Mathurin and Edidiong Bassey were chosen to attend the Conference.
- Tarun was mandated to put forward a funding request to SOC to make sure the elected participants to the conference would be covered, in addition to the current officer (delegate) and the incoming ethnic minorities officer (observer).

#### **4. Report from Ethnic Minorities Officer.**

- The Officer expressed how he was working on promotion and creation of mechanisms to report Hate Crime. He informed the Caucus that this was in its early stages so he did not have a lot of information on this.
- He let the Caucus know that Israeli Apartheid week was coming up.
- Those in attendance asked for further information.
- HH explained what IAW is and about the Israel and the apartheid analogy compares Israel's treatment of Palestinians to South Africa's treatment of non-whites during its apartheid era within the context of the anti-humanitarian crime of apartheid. HH expressed that it is UEA SU and NUS policy-taking a stand to support all human rights.

- HH shared some of his experiences with Union and how the Union had never showed support to the week, often trying to find ways to disrupt its activities, including repeatedly “losing” rooms booking forms, not advertising the events, changing rooms at the last moment (even if requested months in advance), etc. The Officer shared the same views and his frustrations about this.
- Mohammed Rashwan (MR) expressed how the Union supports the other liberation groups and seems to marginalize BME students. He expressed how awareness should be raised on different issues regardless of how specific individuals within the Union feels.
- Anjali Menezes asked if the UK supports Palestine.
- Khyatee Tewari (KT) responded by letting the Caucus know that based on political policies it was clear that most of the Western World governments (not its people though) supported Israel.
- HH expressed how the National Students Union supports international law and human rights in the case of Israel-Palestine, and all Human Rights should be observed yet it seems some members of the SU, here and nationally, hinder any Events raising awareness of what is happening in Palestine.
- AM suggested the Caucus should campaign for this because it is important to preserve and support all human rights.
- KT asked how much money would be needed to fund the Event and if it could be raised through other avenues.
- HH expressed how it was not about money but about the principle. The Union should be seen taking a stand supporting all human rights and supporting students led initiatives and events, especially when mandated by policy as in this case.

- The Officer expressed how the Union claims they cannot support it because they will get a letter from the Israeli Embassy or its lobbyists.
- KT questioned the Union's motives and expressed how this was not Israel so Students should not be deprived from spreading awareness merely because the Union gets a letter from the Embassy or its lobbyists.
- MR expressed how it is policy therefore they have to support it.
- The Officer explained to those in attendance that when he went in with his funding request he was told they could only offer volunteers. He further explained that the main issue is the Union (the un-elected people in the SU, even if this should be the job of SOC) interprets the policy the way they want.
- HH expressed how Conference attendance is not policy based yet the Caucus receives funding for this.
- After this discussion the Caucus was in consensus supporting the BDS policy including Israeli Apartheid Week for all future years and expressed their support of the Officer in receiving funding and support for this week.
- The Chair and the Officer were mandated to write a statement expressing the Caucus' disappointment in the Union and expressing the Caucus' support of the BDS policy.

## **5. Racism and Discrimination on Campus and in the Community: Medical School incidents.**

- Anjali Menezes(AM) introduced herself to the Caucus and expressed how she works with International Students Committee within the Medical School. She informed the Caucus that there had been many allegations made about racism on the Committee.

- AM explained to the Caucus that they are two main issues within the Medical School. These are: incidents where Students had been ill treated at the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital (NNUH) by patients and then the lack of mechanisms to address the hate crime and racism.
- AM began to tell the Caucus of the various incidents within the Medical School:  
*She expressed how there was one particular incident where a student had been refused to collect his medical cards because the receptionist insisted he was from the prison and not the medical school based on his complexion. The student reported the incident to his superiors and was told that based on the color of his skin he would have to become accustomed to such treatment.*
- Another incident brought up in the meeting was a medical school party where one student had dressed up in a blackface and was not condemned for such behavior.
- Those in attendance agreed that these incidents showed the underlying racism within the Medical Students.
- AM expressed how she told students that they could get support from the Caucus. She explained how she only interacted with International Students about the racism and discrimination they faced that they may be more BME students who face this type of discrimination.
- The Chair asked those in attendance for their opinions.
- HH suggested writing a letter as the Caucus to head of schools explaining what type of conduct should be condemned for example blackface.
- KT expressed how a solid solution was needed. She asked AM how many students would be willing to speak up and share their story.

- AM let the Caucus know that it is already difficult to get Students to open up about their experiences as many of them internalize them.
- KT expressed how she felt medical students did seem to not be well equipped to deal with individuals who do not understand Diversity. She explained how in her opinion it was not an isolated issue- it could possibly affect other students at various universities.
- HH suggested possibly bringing it up at the NUS Summer Conference. He suggested a collaboration with UCU to understand the best way to tackle racism and discrimination within the medical school
- Those in attendance were in agreement that action needed to be taken.
- The Caucus mandated the Officer and AM to come up with a motion that would be presented at the Summer Conference and voted on in Union Council.
- The Caucus mandated the Officer to go to the Medical School with other Officers to understand and request reform in the way BME student issues are handled.
- Mohaned Alhasan(MA) expressed how it is policy in the Pharmacy School to have every ethnicity in the Equality Diversity Committee and if the Medical School adopted this policy it could solve some of the issues BME students face.
- AM expressed how unfortunately the Committee within the Medical School only has space for one student and there are only 4 BME professors within the School. She asked if MA could possibly liaise with the Pharmacy Committee to give a talk about Equality and Diversity.
- Those in attendance agreed that the idea of an Equality and Diversity talk could be beneficial.

- The Caucus expressed that it would be powerful to have one of the students speak about their experience when the motion had been drafted.

## **6. Karaoke Night and Fundraising Event.**

- The Chair informed the Caucus of his plans to host a BME social to allow members of the Caucus to network.
- Dates were discussed by those in attendance.
- The Caucus agreed on 20<sup>th</sup> of March 2017.
- The Chair also spoke about the Caucus possibly raising funds for different charities.
- Those in attendance agreed this would be a good idea and a good way for the Caucus to engage with the community and other societies who raise money for various causes.

## **7. Any Other Business**

- Ikenna Enwereonu expressed his disappointment in the way the Monday Night Project often hosted by cultural societies was advertised and the way the societies were treated by the Events and Marketing departments.
- He suggested that the Caucus should take over the Monday Night Project to ensure that there is a club night on campus where the interests of BME students are upheld.
- Those in attendance agreed that the Union had failed in making sure there was a diverse themed night on campus.
- The Chair suggested setting up a Facebook group with relevant cultural society presidents so the Caucus and the cultural societies do not need to be so exclusive and societies can gain support from the Caucus.
- The Caucus agreed that this would break the barriers that exist between the relevant cultural societies and the Caucus

and could possibly mean holding the Union more accountable on occasions they fail cultural societies.

- The Chair and the Officer were mandated to start up the Facebook group and contact the society presidents about taking over the Monday Night Project.