

Anti-Racism: Action and Accountability

For Clean Break an active commitment to anti-racism lives at the very core of our mission to challenge injustice within and beyond the criminal justice system. The disproportionate number of Black women imprisoned is undisputed¹ and we know that the harm caused by this experience further compounds and entrenches existing inequalities and exclusion. Structural racism also lies deep within the theatre industry, seen through the lack of diversity and representation on our stages and in our companies, the marginalisation of Black and global majority voices and gate keeping of talent that has served to maintain the status quo for generations.

World events during 2020, particularly the murder of George Floyd and the unequal impact of the Covid 19 pandemic brought about a racial reckoning and a surge of grief, anger and burn out in many Black communities. In response, Clean Break committed to transform its organisational approach to anti-racism and brought in the expertise and skilful guidance of *darvaja*² to assist us, in recognition that we had been inadequate in our duty to drive out racism internally and to call out racism within the theatre and criminal justice systems. The Leadership Team and Co-Chairs of the Board acknowledge that the foundational connection between anti-racism and our mission should have been exercised more intentionally all along and that without it we have been complicit in racism ourselves. We also understand that this is likely to have resulted in harm for individuals within our community. Moving forward we are resolute in our non-negotiable commitment to fight racism where it shows up systemically, structurally, culturally and at an interpersonal level.

We acknowledge the immense contribution of the Black feminists, including Patricia Hill Collins³ and Kimberlé Crenshaw⁴, who have informed and shaped the work we are embarking on.

As a staff team and with Trustees, Members, volunteers and artists, both individually and collectively we are investing time and energy seeking to better understand, reflect, listen and

¹ Prison Reform Trust (2017) Counted Out: Black, Asian and minority ethnic women in the criminal justice system. London: PRT available at: https://prisonreformtrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/old_files/Documents/Counted%20Out.pdf

² [darvaja](#)

³ Collins, Patricia Hill. Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment (Revised 10th Anniv 2nd Edition). Revised, 10th Anniv., 2nd, Routledge, 1999. Available at: <https://negrasoulblog.files.wordpress.com/2016/04/patricia-hill-collins-black-feminist-thought.pdf>

⁴ Crenshaw, Kimberle () "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," University of Chicago Legal Forum: Vol. 1989: Iss. 1, Article 8. Available at: <http://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/uclf/vol1989/iss1/8>

learn about how and where racism shows up in our practice. We have created multiple spaces where important and uncomfortable conversations continue to take place. The building of trust has been a significant part of this journey, trust that the company is serious in its pursuit to eradicate racism from its structures and practices, and trust that the process takes time to result in meaningful change rather than performative actions and platitudes. We are grateful for the commitment and courage shown; in particular we want to acknowledge the Black and global majority women in our organisation who have invested emotional labour committing to this course of action.

We have an anti-racism action plan in place which forefronts action and accountability. This was co-created with contributions from our stakeholders and has been sense checked at each stage in its development by those who are harmed by racism. It was launched in April 2022 as a living document, owned by all of us. and it continues to grow and develop as we progress over time. It is monitored by a cross-organisational anti-racism working group, which keeps the organisation on track, identifies gaps, reviews priorities and ensures that we are living our aspirations to alter our own practice and become a strong champion for change. Progress is reported on a quarterly basis to the whole community in a CEO report.

Some of the actions we have achieved during our first two years include:

- allocated human and financial resources to this work,
- agreed and published a [glossary of antiracism language](#)
- set up a six weekly healing space for our global majority staff,
- trialled an external reporting mechanism for our creative projects with partners,
- hosted an anti-racism take-over afternoon for whole community engagement,
- reviewed and implemented new recruitment and induction practices,
- published our employment data,
- shortlisted for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion category at the 2022 Charity Governance Awards.

Some actions prioritised over the coming year include (2024/25):

- commission a play on racism in the criminal justice system,
- recruit co-chairs to lead our Board of Trustees,
- review our contracts and partnership agreements,
- provide training for our Members,
- review our action-plan and build on progress made and new actions.

In the spirit of openness and learning, we are happy to share our plan and welcome any feedback and comments or suggestions for improvements or gaps noticed. These can be shared through feedback@cleanbreak.org.uk

This document will be reviewed annually. Next update due May 2025.

Our Goals

Clean Break has been working with *darvaja* to better understand racism, and how it operates. *darvaja* shared useful Black Feminist frameworks for Clean Break to better organise how racism shows up in and around our work so we can target our action. Guided by *darvaja*, we have organised our goals below using Patricia Hill Collins Matrix of Domination framework.

Goal 1: Systemic

Clean Break seeks to disrupt and dismantle systemic racism which is built into the fabric of the sectors we work in, including our organisation. We do this through intentional anti-racist practice in the criminal justice system, theatre industry, and voluntary sector.

Anti-racist practice is a non-negotiable when working with Clean Break.

Goal 2: Structural

Clean Break has effective structures, systems, policies, and procedures that enable the organisation and its people to challenge racism internally, and drive antiracist practice externally. These structures serve to protect all its people (staff; Members; trustees; artists; and volunteers) against racism at every level; particularly Black Women and women with lived experience of racism.

Goal 3: Practice

Clean Break creates and embeds anti-racist practice as a culture for our organisation. Challenging and dismantling racism, and its intersection with classism and sexism is integral to our work. Clean Break ensures that people are fully equipped with the tools and understanding they need to embed anti-racism in their work - through regular training; effective management; and an open and reflective practice on race, racism, and systemic oppression.

Goal 4: Interpersonal

Everyone within Clean Break is supported to stand up to personal experiences of racism when they happen and to report them safely. When racism presents, individuals trust that Clean Break will respond with accountability and action through restorative justice, without defensiveness, punishment or blame.

Clean Break understands anti-racism as:

- **Recognition** of racism, and **redressing** the harm it has caused to the people and communities that experience it (without hand wringing and emotionalism)

- **Proactively challenging** the ways in which racism exists, and **dismantling** it at the systemic, structural, and interpersonal level. We do this with an understanding of how other factors like sexism and classism can impact experiences of racism. This is based in an understanding of **intersectionality** (as created by Kimberlee Crenshaw)
- **Intentionally curating and reimagining radical systems, structures and practices**, centring dignity and respect; while actively challenging oppression and marginalisation

Ultimately, Clean Break is working towards anti-racist practice becoming a non-negotiable for anyone - in the organisation, with all our people and partners.

Glossary – other terms referred to

Institutional and structural racism work hand in glove. **Institutional racism** was first coined by Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton in their 1967 book *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation*. The term became known in the UK in the Macpherson report into the racist murder of teenager Stephen Lawrence, which identified the police as institutionally racist. **Structural racism** goes beyond the institution and refers to wider political, economic and social disadvantages within society, such as higher rates of poverty or high rates of death from COVID-19 amongst black people.

Systemic racism is seen in all areas of society, including social systems as well as laws and regulations, to privilege white people and result in and support unfair or harmful treatment of others based on their race.

Intersectionality is an analytical framework for understanding how aspects of a person's social and political identities combine to create different modes of discrimination and privilege. The term was coined by leading American civil rights activist and scholar, Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989. Examples of these identities include gender, caste, sex, race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, religion, disability. Intersectionality broadens the lens of the first and second wave of feminism, which largely focused on the experiences of white and middle-class women.

Intersectional feminism acknowledges women's different experiences and identities, particularly those of Black and migrant women.

Restorative justice refers to an approach to justice that seeks to repair harm by providing an opportunity for those harmed and those who take responsibility for the harm to communicate about and address their needs in the aftermath of an offence. In this context, it is a process which allows people affected by racism, if they wish, to communicate with the individual/organisation which caused harm. This gives them the chance to talk about the incident, explain how it has impacted them, seek assurances that it won't happen again, and agree on how to put things right.