

RACE intern – Serena Hayre

I first came across the Black South West Network (BSWN) through a role advertised on the University of Bristol website. In my second year of study, I was eager to gain some extra experience that would set me apart from others post-graduation and the position seemed to offer that. I felt like my values aligned with the organisation, being a British Asian growing up in an all-white area, racial equality is important to me, and I hadn't ever had the chance to make a change.

In my interview, Saffron and Angelique were lovely and at points, I forgot they were even assessing my answers and the conversation flowed naturally. When starting the job, I was concerned that with growing pressure from my studies and extracurriculars, I wouldn't be able to dedicate as much time as I would have liked to the role. However, Angelique and the team at BSWN were always understanding and considerate of my other commitments meaning I never felt pressured to take on more than I could handle. The team at BSWN are all so welcoming, patient, and talkative that it was hard to feel nervous there.

My main project as an intern for BSWN was the creation of the RACE data hub. This blended well with my economics degree where quantitative analysis is a key part. I was able to problem solve and enhance my Excel skills whilst considering the wider communication aspects and public reach. This project helped me to develop my research skills as some of the data was difficult to find or analyse meaning I often had to problem solve to find a way to access the data. Creating visualisations required abstract thinking as the data sets were often large and confusing but it became a rewarding task when the result was clear. With BSWN I felt a sense of responsibility to produce work that would be accessible to the public. Seeing the visualisations on the RACE website is really fulfilling. I have a tangible result to my work that makes it feel important and impactful. It's the first time I have seen something online and thought "I did that!"

I was also able to complete various small projects alongside this such as attending CoRE meetings, writing policy reports and I was even given the chance to write a blog on my personal experience as a British Asian woman which was a platform I had never had before. The response to my blog from colleagues, friends and family was overwhelmingly positive and reminded me of my growing support network which I wouldn't have appreciated as much without the platform of BSWN.

The main outcome from my experience was my outlook on racial disparity. I had been personally exposed to some of the issues I discovered but it is often easy to feel alone in your experience of racism and injustice. But, with BSWN, I was able to find real-life empirical evidence of the issues faced locally which highlighted the severity of the injustice faced by minority groups.

Overall, working with BSWN was an amazing experience and I would thoroughly recommend everyone to get involved with the organisation! I am very appreciative of the experience and skills that I have gained as an intern and for the varied opportunities that were made available to me. It has really given me food for thought when planning my future after university.