



Valuing Diversity & Inclusion – Krishnas' Story



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j5nOOcOg6XU>

Police Sergeant Krishna CHAUHAN, 6083 – works in the Equality Diversity & Inclusion unit for South Wales Police. She has kindly provided her story and experiences of being a Police Officer, positive and negative, and what it has been like through some turbulent times such as Covid and the BLM Movement. The video can be found by the link opposite and a transcript is below:

My name's **Krishna** and I've been in policing for 21 years. I joined the Metropolitan Police in 1999, at the age of 24. **I didn't tell my parents** that I was joining the police until about two weeks before I joined Hendon. **It's not considered a job for an Asian female.** But I did it anyway, and I'm glad I did. **I love my job.**

I was born in London. My parents came to the UK in the late sixties from Kenya. My grandmother was from India. So that makes me third generation immigrant. My parents instilled in me a great work ethic. Since the age of 10, I've been working in my dad's shops, at one point with about five, shops across London. So yeah, I, cut my teeth on the checkouts and fill stock.

And so since then, it's just, you know, my commitment to my work has been pretty good, strong one, I would say. And that's **all thanks to my parents.** I went to university and then I spent a bit of time working for a recruitment consultant. I did my degree in media, and again, a bit of a different degree for Asians <laugh>. but, you know, my parents supported me in that. **They've been absolutely amazing.**

I was posted to Southwark so I worked in Peckham, covering Camberwell bordering Brixton, Lewisham - really busy borough. Absolutely loved it, you know, feel like I'm a good communicator. I think **it's important to speak to people, with respect, treating people with respect.**

I've worked in a variety of work streams from response policing, then I worked on Operation Sapphire, which was the Mets response to serious sexual offenses. Then went to child abuse investigation. I've been a family liaison officer for the London bombings, that's when one of my first deployments. So I've been doing family liaison for 15 years, which I absolutely love, a great passion of mine. Then in 2008, I moved to Gwent Police having moved to Wales. I'm now with South Wales Police. I joined South Wales Police in 2017. I'm not moving anywhere now, I'm staying put.

The reason for this video is obviously for the race awareness sessions, **as a minority in policing things have been very challenging lately.** Throughout my career, I've always been **the only Asian female** in any department I've worked on any team. There just isn't enough of us. I would love to see more, **more people that look like me, that I work with.**



It's important that we are culturally competent. **I see a lot of cultural incompetence**, unfortunately from fellow colleagues, especially around the **Black Lives Matter Movement**.

It's been really difficult. I've never felt so conflicted as a police officer, and as a minority, because unfortunately there's a minority of people involved in the BLM movement who have carried out acts of violence, and that happens in any protest. But I think the message has really got lost on people as to why the movement exists in the first place, **and it is to tackle racism and inequality**.

I've always been a member of staff networks, the Black Police Association in the Met. I used to be the chair of Gwent Police's ethnic Minority Association. I am active member of the South Wales Police, black Police Association, because for me, it's really important. Other staff networks exist, disability, gender equality staff networks. But for some reason, staff networks associated with race seemed to get quite a lot of backlash.

And race brings out talking about race for some reason. People are either **quite squeamish** or they **just avoid it**, or **there's eyerolling** or there's comments like, **what a waste of time**. It's not a waste of time. And if, you know, people just realised how important it is for, for everyone. But also officers who are visible minority. Because, you know, **casual racism exists, throw away comments exist**.

I've had conversations with my white colleagues, who, have said numerous occasions in, in different work streams,

"I've never seen racism"

"why are we being accused of being institutionally racist?"

People get **very defensive**. But it all depends on what lens you are looking at it through. My lens is gonna be different to someone else's because of my experience, both as a woman and as a minority. I've got double protected characteristics. **I've got to work twice, three times as hard**, and I do, I'm a very hard worker.

But it's also being a role model to those joining the organisation from different backgrounds. I speak five different languages. I'm Hindu and my faith is very important to me. I've got different experiences of different faiths. I can speak or I can go to the Gurdwara or the Mandir or a Mosque and i'll be totally comfortable in speaking with them, because they're my community. They deserve, a real good level of service that we do provide. This isn't having a go at Officers, because you only know what you know. But I think if officers and staff and anybody within Police Forces nationally just **ask questions instead of being quite defensive or completely ignoring the issue**.

Throughout my career, **I've heard the "P"** word said in an open office - I'm not gonna say it because it **really pains me**.

I grew up in the eighties, combat 18 in London, combat 18 national front. It was rife. My brother was **regularly chased home by skinheads, called names in the street, spat at**, you know, these kind of things I grew up with. And **sadly hate crime is on the increase**.

Brexit brought out a lot of, I call 'em **"closet racists"**. It kind of gave people carte blanche to speak **very derogatory about immigrants**, about different communities. We are not all coming into this



country and claiming benefits and it's people **generalise**, people **stereotype** and the media, it can be our friend, it can be our foe.

There's a lot of police bashing generally, **coronavirus**, **hate crime amongst Chinese community** spiked, so there's **a lot of issues** at the moment. I think **it's really tough**. I think it's really important to talk about. It's fantastic to have been given this opportunity. The chief officer team really gets it, they want to know. And I think it's, it's really good for us. And I feel humbled actually and honoured to be able to share my story.

I dunno what else to kind of speak about. I'm a mother of two teenage children. I **do worry for them** and the world that we're growing up with. My daughter's 13 and my son is 16, being mother of a teenage boy at the moment... you know..... I would say things are far better in Wales than they would've been in London. I'm glad to have left, to be honest, <laugh>. But he's a good kid and parenting is one of the hardest things I've ever had to do.

I've been in fights and Peckham, and that, I would say that's fine. It been hairy at times. But, you know, he's a good lad and I'm really proud of him. He wants to join the Marines. My daughter, dunno what she wants to be, but for me, this job has really given me the opportunity to be a **role model to them**, as well as other female from minority communities coming into the service.

I remember in London being **called a coconut**, from members of the community, **black on the outside, white on the inside**, a traitor **regularly called a traitor** because some people found it really **hard** to see someone who is **non-white wearing a police uniform**.

But I'm proud, I'm proud that I do. And I think it's about education, not only for those communities, but also within the organisation.

The amount of times, you know, I'll give you examples. The amount of times **my name has been spelled wrong**, and I've been in South Wales police for three years. My name still gets spelt wrong. This happened in Gwent and it's happened in the Met as well, but it doesn't really take that long to look up a name and spell it properly. It's just things like that. I'm not saying that that's racist. I'm just saying that we could be a little bit better about appreciating differences, and I think we should be able to have **honest conversations about race**.

The whole promotion thing as well. That, that kind of bothers me. Why should there be... this is **gonna be quite controversial**. Why should there be a question on representative workforce as part of a promotion? You know, it should be something that's built into, the code of ethics anyway, just like everything else. it shouldn't be something that just comes out of board season.

“Quick, let me find an ethnic minority to mentor” or
“let's do something for this Hindu community”

Just because it's board season, that just **sends out completely the wrong message** to people like myself, but also to communities, who aren't daf. Why all of a sudden is the focus on them or post a terrorist incident or something like that. If we had better engagement consistently with communities, then I think relationships between the Police and the Public would improve. So it's just little things like that, that I think we could do a lot better.



You have some officers who identify themselves as non-white who don't want to be part of the staff network, and that's fine, that's totally fine. It's personal choice at the end of the day. The staff network is there if you need it. But it's also there if you don't need it. Some officers are quite, you know, I say officers, officers and staff, quite happy not to have anything to do with the BPA and that's fine. But for those of us who are involved and do have conversations, it's nice to be able to speak to others who are probably going through similar things as yourself, you know? because we have a shared experience of where we've come from, what we've experienced. Instance at work, it's having a support network, to be able to speak freely. Sometimes you can't always speak to someone,

because they just don't have that kind of understanding, and it's just easier to speak to someone who's either been through it or is going through it.

I think that just kind of **makes you stronger** and makes you realise that actually **I'm not isolated**. This isn't just happened to me or is happening to me. It's happened before. But to have the ears of the chief officers, it's nice, because for us, it's very real.

I'm not gonna name names, but I made **several race related complaints**, in the space of 12 months, in one of my forces. And, **each one I think could have been dealt with better**. It was just a, a kind of a **denial that it happened**, or **you imagined it**, or **you're sensitive**. I'm by no means a snowflake, but I know what's wrong and I will always stand up against inequality. And then you'll get the comment that the **onus gets put on you**:

“Well, what do you wanna do about it?”

And, you know, for supervisors who are listening to this or who are, you know, may listen to this, don't put that onus on the officer or the member of staff. **Be proactive and deal with it**, because if you are put in that kind of onus on that person who has had the **courage** to come forward and talk to you about it and report it, that takes a lot of **courage**.

It takes a lot because you're a minority in an organisation, and to come forward and say, **I'm not happy with this**. I'm challenging this, that shouldn't be underestimated. Because it's happened before, and I haven't challenged it, **and that does pain me**, and I think I should have. But challenging things comes with experience and confidence. Two things that have, you know, experience has naturally grown, but my confidence has improved massively.

I also think if you don't challenge anything, then **how are things ever gonna change?** I think we need more people to challenge as well **on our behalf**. Because you might see, an officer or a colleague member or staff who is a minority, who is suffering in silence because they don't have the confidence. Part of being a supervisor or even a human being, **is to stand up for those who can't stand up for themselves**.

It's really important and it's **not just a buzzword**. People don't like to be challenged, but that's life. How are we ever gonna move forward? How are we ever gonna open people's eyes if we don't challenge.



As a female in policing, I feel like I've had to work very, very hard. And, you know I have had the odd comment:

**“oh, you only got it because you're, you're a female” or
“you only got it cause you're brown”**

and I'd like to think I've got everything on my own merit. I work hard. I'm good at my job, very experienced, yet the **struggles are still there**. You know, you think, is it me? Is it.

I think people have got this misconception that **everything I have is handed** on a plate because of **who I am** and **the colour of my skin**, which is **absolutely not true**.

It, um, it's quite the opposite, in fact. I feel like I've had to work, harder. But I don't focus on that, this is my journey. This is what I'm about, and these are my mountains to conquer. I just don't focus on what everybody else is doing, and I'll just work hard and do what I need to do. I do what's right.

For me and my family, **coronavirus has affected** all of us. That goes without saying. There has been a lot reported about it affecting those from the **BME communities**, for variety of reasons. Health reasons could be, you know, a factor. Lack of natural deficiency in vitamin D. Those from BME communities who work in the frontline, NHS, consultant surgeons, working in care homes, cleaners. So although no one really knows, I'm not clever enough to know what the what the reasons are. But that impacts on us as well as officers working frontline and staff, who are from BME communities.

We worry about our families and yeah, it affects everybody. But those of us who, have had it or, have got the potential to, to get it, is, it is a worry. I'm not saying it isn't a worry for everyone. It totally is. And, you know, global Pandemic is, it's gonna affect everyone differently. And that's another thing on top of BLM that I think has compounded the effects that it can have on people's mental health.

As a staff network, we were able to bring that to the chief officer's attention. The response was, was pretty good, we were allowed to have a platform to discuss these things and how we were feeling about things. It is good that we are being listened to.

I just hope that, these experiences and these stories from us has helped. I don't want to come across as patronising, but, and I hope I haven't been. **I think I'm very approachable** and if anyone wants to just **pick up the phone** and **have a chat**, and just embrace difference, we're human beings, but we also, we're all different. We all got different qualities and different experiences. If there's anything people wanna know, **then just ask**. I think there's not enough of that that goes on and especially around race.

I'm gonna leave it there. Thanks for listening.