

Decoding diversity

Rohini Corfield

I have always been fascinated by cultural diversity; maybe because I was born into a Hindu Punjabi family in post-colonial Kenya where the European, Asian and African communities intermingled culturally, but also operated within a hierarchy.

This interest blossomed further when we moved to England and I was the only Indian girl in my Bristol primary school, feeling somewhat different, but content. Supportive secondary school teachers encouraged me to apply to Oxbridge; an aspiration I would never have dreamt of. Studying at Cambridge University was both a privilege and painful experiential learning ... discovering my identity.

After graduation I started to work in a multi-ethnic primary school when multi-cultural education was in its infancy. My interest in diversity led me to work with the local Racial Equality Council, advising Derbyshire schools about delivering an anti-racist curriculum and building an inclusive culture in which every child could flourish. Later I worked in a similar role in Warwickshire when I first encountered Tide~.

Tide enabled me to contextualise race equality work into a more holistic education approach. I saw how many agendas around equality, justice, sustainable development, values, citizenship, power, poverty and community were fluid and inter-linked at many levels, locally to globally. The stimulating Tide~ resources, workshops, and safe spaces for networking were a constant stimulus for my professional development.

I led a Teachers' International Professional study visit to South Africa with 15 teachers exchanging ideas about race equality and global citizenship with peers in Johannesburg. I used Tide~ materials like *'Towards Ubuntu'* and the Development Compass Rose to help prepare the teachers for the visit. South Africa's apartheid revolutions and our experiences of evolution both offered teachers ideas for the classroom.

I deepened my involvement with Tide by becoming a Trustee.

Rohini has had a varied career in education, the media and the voluntary sector promoting equality and community cohesion through empowering diverse people to connect.



Kamala Harris - Vice President

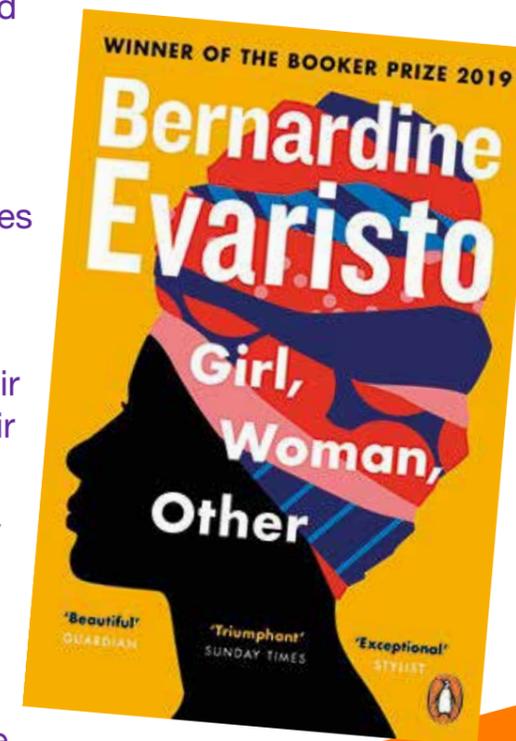
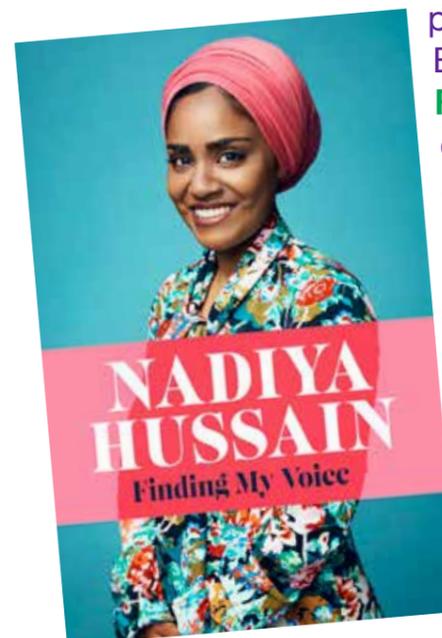
Many recent events around the globe provide educators with nuanced stimuli to start dialogue about diversity, equality and inclusion. Are the elections of Barack Obama as President and now Kamala Harris as Vice President in the USA evidence of the concrete ceiling being smashed? How broadly representative are their trajectories?

What has the Black Lives Matter global movement changed in real terms?

In England, Bernadine Evaristo jointly won the cherished Booker Prize with a novel about twelve BAME characters. It explored how their multiple identities [as women, transgender person, mothers, lesbians, of different ages and classes etc] influenced their lives. This intersectionality [how our different identities interact] is further highlighted by the experiences of

people like Nadiya Hussain, of Bake-Off fame, and Marcus Rashford who talk about how their early life experiences shape their activism.

Social mobility has been widely discussed. Michelle Obama's book detail her experiences of becoming First Lady in the USA, from a modest Chicago upbringing to the White House and global stage.

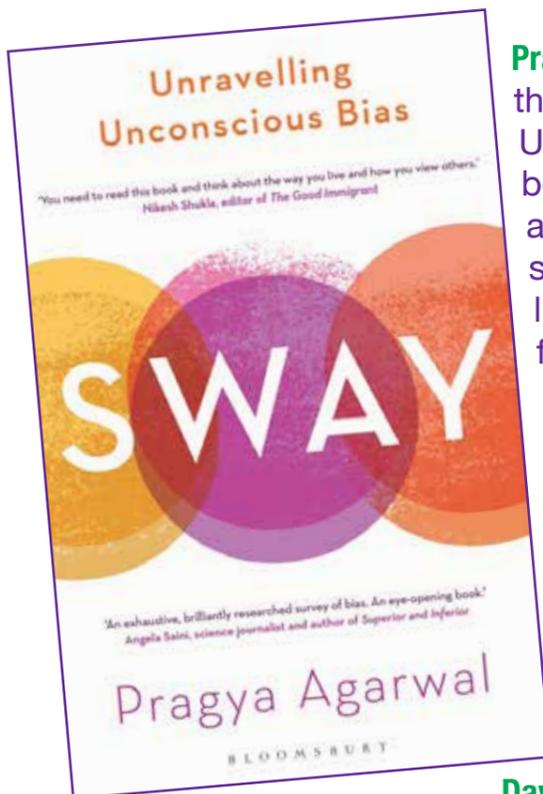




Hashi Mohamed's book, *'People like us'* describe his journey of transformation from a Somali refugee, through state schools and Oxford University to becoming a barrister, author and broadcaster ... and now part of the establishment.

They all pose challenging questions about social mobility.

- Is equality a veneer or available to all?
- What is success?
- How can we help students build social and cultural capital?
- Does luck play a part?



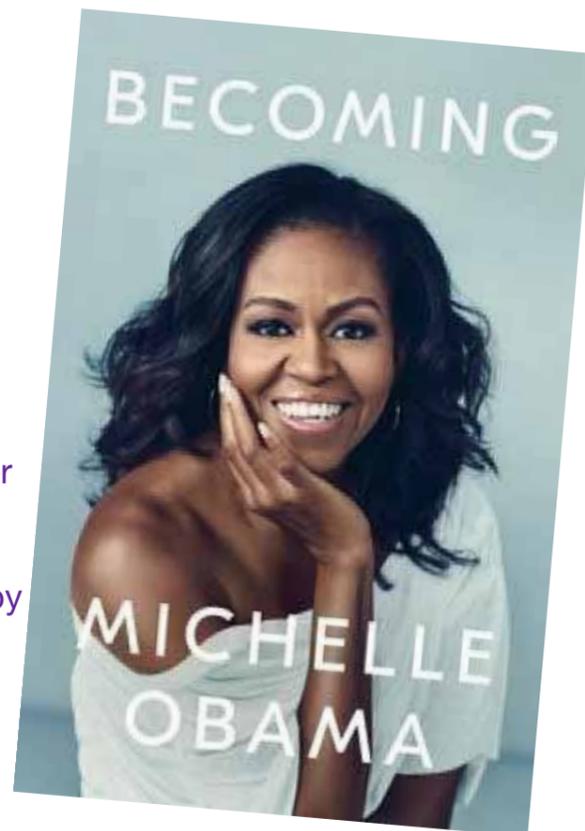
Pragya Agarwal explores the contested notion of Unconscious Bias in her book *'Sway'*; are we all guilty of acting on stereotypes and thereby limiting opportunities for some?

Is there a danger we hear only of the exceptional cases?

There are also other factual resources. June Sarpong's book *'Diversity'* and Afua Hirsch's book *'Brit (ish)'* analyse research about how different groups covered by the Equality Act in Britain fare in life.

David Olusuga's books and television programmes about slavery and Black British history provide context about the experiences of BAME communities.

Reni Eddo-Lodge's *'Why I am no longer Talking to White People About Race'* and Nimesh Shukla's anthology *'The Good Immigrant'* share an intriguing variety of experiences.



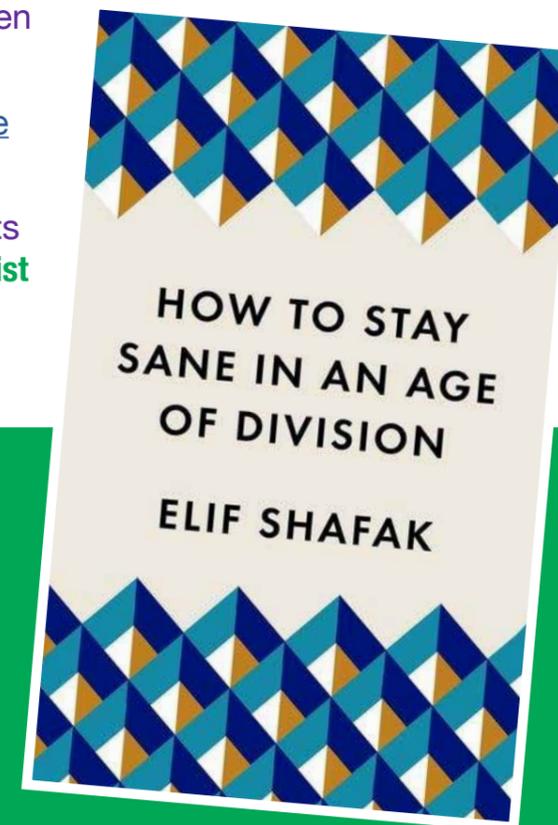
How can teachers use these resources to help students prepare for life in a world which is more diverse and connected than ever before?

- How can students learn from different perspectives?
- What role does social media play in understanding diversity?

Elif Shafak highlights the pivotal power of story, dialogue and active non-judgemental listening, enabling us to appreciate different perspectives; an approach Tide has been promoting for many years.

It is also worth listening to [Elif Shafak on YouTube](#)

A network like Tide, whether online, or through facilitating face to face interactions or study visits can **enable educators to craft ideas about how to assist students to decode diversity.**



Seeking a Conversation

empathy

us - us & them

identity

multiple belonging

complexity

democracy

optimism

creative pessimism

anger, anxiety, confusion

fatigue, apathy, wisdom

connect to 'the other'

We are seeking a group to discuss this book [by Zoom] and consider the implications for teachers.

Please express your interest to Rohini Corfield:
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- Does this booklet resonate with a Tide~ vision?
- How could it be used as a stimulus with teachers?
- How could it be used as a stimulus with students?

