18 09 20

UNESCO is upscaling its work against racism and discrimination. Identifying critical data gaps is key, e.g. to address social dynamics in the sector. As regional experts, our communal identity is key, e.g. in urbanisation, poverty and violence, the narrative remains the same around the World, although experiences may be different.

Levi Strauss has collaborated with UNESCO to publish its seminal annual report on racism for over 50 years. Today, the algo rhythms of digital economies must be reflective of cultural diversity and not representative of discriminatory practice.

Gabriela Ramos, Asst. Director General for Human & Social Sciences, UNESCO

*The time is right to rethink racism and discrimination.* ***We need to stop thinking that racism is foreign to Africa, and to look at what is going on inside.*** *E.g. discrimination and violence against people with albinism have led to World Albinism Day.*

Firmin Matoko, Secretary General for Africa/UNESCO

***The aim of the consultation is to conclude recommendations on the way forward, to guide UNESCO’s work with its partners.***

Mary Papaya, Chair of Media Freedom, Moderator

* WHAT TOOLS & GOOD PRACTICE CAN BE UPSCALED?

*“When one does not learn from one’s history, one is doomed to reproduce it. E.g.* ***Mauritius*** *was created to produce sugar-cane and prejudice (Mauritian saying)”. Legacies of slavery and indenture do not promote intercultural communication. This has manifested during the COVID situation by people abusing others of a different racist background, and counteraction by their targets. In Mauritius, COVID-19 shows the extent of who is most marginalised, most of whom are Afro-Madagasy and women, as well as the backlash against Chinese.*

Prof. Vijaya Teelock (President of the Scientific Committee of the UNESCO Slave Route Project)

*There is a lot of inherent discrimination in the music industry. UNESCO can build bridges to fuse different identities, so that each and everyone of us can learn from our differences and not erase them. Intolerance and the fact that we are not accepting otherness (…) is something we need to fight against.*

*We need to acknowledge and welcome people coming from different walks of life without fearing them; because of fear people have developed tools to divide them. This is creating processes that we need to fight against.*

*UNESCO should bring everybody together and create a multicultural platform without an ostentatious show. We should no longer be afraid to be together, despite cultural diversity.*

Mr Cheick Tidiane Seck (International Coalition of Artists for the General History of Africa, Mali)

*We tend to prioritise the visual in the West, whereas in the global South prioritises the whole spectrum of human forms of expression, such as aesthetic, taste, auditory and cultural traditions. Involuntary racism has built up over centuries, e.g. making discriminatory jokes as a form of hate speech.*

*In the absence of statistics, people here (in Africa) have been trying to corelate in order to build. A scientific study needs to be done as the situation has changed for the worst in Mauritius. We need to update data on* ***Mauritius*** *because intermixing and other changes have happened over the last ten years. There is also a strong element of people who don’t wish to evoke their ethnicity, (for one reason or another). In* ***South Africa****, data is very quantitative, and more narratives from various sectors of society is needed to articulate what people are experiencing, e.g. structural conditions for housing, health, etc in South Africa.*

*Regarding the biological, in the USA especially the issue of the biological was actually foregrounded. Scientific racism is resurfacing in the narrative of COVID-19; racialised bodies are seen as more vulnerable. E.g. hypertension and other co-morbidities are highlighted as mainly affecting Afro descendants. Observations made include that PAD were more susceptible to infection, and therefore more were wearing masks than their white peers in South Africa. However, there is a fine line between race (ethnicity) vis a vis co-morbidity as cause for vulnerability. Co-morbidity potentially makes PAD more vulnerable to COViD-19; but also, structural racism.*

*In that regard, the narratives of refugees are important and exemplar of those narrated to COVID-19 experts.*

Prof. Rose Boswell (Executive Dean of Arts at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, South Africa)

* THE POWER OF YOUTH IN COMBATTING RACISM & DISCRIMINATION

*It is important to have a conversation about what happened in the past to counter contemporary manifestations of discriminations and employ anti-oppressive actions as a mechanism.*

*A lot of conversation and histories people are digging up are about taboo subjects. Social media has played an important role in having these conversations and is important to use to have these conversations. We should have industry partnerships to address these injustices.*

*UN organs tend to track and contextualize data to eradicate discrimination; e.g. 2016 study says it will take around 28 years to close social mobility gap.*

Mr Sanele Junior Xaba (Founder of the “The Rolled Sleeves Outreach Program”, model and youth activist)

* WHAT IS THE BIGGEST SOURCE OF MISINFORMATION REGARDING COVID-19?

Social media is the guiltiest feature as it allows anyone in the World to say anything; we also have too much information, fake experts, and fake websites. Rumour spreads like wildfire.

*The numbers in sub-Saharan Africa show quite clearly that we did NOT get the disaster that had been forecast. There is much disinformation on the issue. There is no reason we should support someone’s (disinformation) just because they are members of the same ethnic group.*

Mr Cheick Tidiane Seck, (the International Coalition of Artists for the General History of Africa, Mali)

My Questions and Recommendations to guide the work of UNESCO and its partners

**What tools and methodologies could be leveraged in order to address different types of discrimination?** Black Emancipatory Action Research illustrates a methodology that facilitates democratic community involvement from the onset. Community participation and community empowerment are integral for achievement of Agenda 2063, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the International Decade for People of African Descent as successful outcomes.

**What is the role of UNESCO in the present conjuncture? What way forward should it take?** UNESCO currently plays a vital role as an arbiter for knowledge exchange and education of historic and contemporary Afrophobia and its consequences. The way forward entails collaboration with other UN bodies, state parties, legal systems and other stakeholders to ensure racism and discrimination are eliminated in accordance with ICERD 1965, for a fairer and more just World.

RECOMMENDATIONS & KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THE CONSULTATION

* Taken from a regional perspective, one should also explore the possibility to set up a regional observatory for Africa. We need a pro-active observatory that can receive data from different parts of the World on a daily basis and process it. This offers dynamic day to day involvement of officials who can monitor things.
* *The public narrative on the subject of migrancy needs to be changed. The idea of the observatory is therefore recommended, also political leadership on global issues. Sustainable leadership practices make a difference to outcomes in dealing with the pandemic, with good practice exemplified in Bristol and New Zealand. Therefore, a sustainable leadership convention that holds signatories accountable to the electorate, but also to global leaders with best interests of the World at heart.*

Prof. Rose Boswell (Executive Dean of Arts at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, South Africa)

*It is important to use debate with effective “guard rails” as frames for analysis of racism.*

Sanele Junior Xaba (Founder of the “The Rolled Sleeves Outreach Program”, model and youth activist)

*A masterclass for all generations is a good idea, i.e. a global biennale once every three or four years to create social cohesion; in addition, education by parents on sensitivity, and public cultural spaces where different cultures can interact with each other.*

See <https://en.unesco.org/themes/fostering-rights-inclusion/masterclass>

Cheick Tidiane Seck (International Coalition of Artists for the General History of Africa, Mali)

*HALFWAY THROUGH IT IS TIME TO TAKE STOCK & RE-DIRECT OUR ENERGIES*

*We are halfway through the Decade and should assess what we have achieved (…) we are nowhere near achieving those goals, why have we not achieved them? Civil society needs to be more involved including academics, activists for more holistic feedback NOT only from authorities.*

Prof. Vijaya Teelock (President of the Scientific Committee of the UNESCO Slave Route Project)

*Cross industry partnerships can help, as well as inclusion where individuals, and not just organisations partake in these partnerships.*

Sanele Junior Xaba (Founder of the “The Rolled Sleeves Outreach Program”, model and youth activist)

*Agenda 2063 and 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development require concrete goals and projects implemented at the national level. Proponents of these Agenda need to collaborate with youth and civil society, so that we can see practical projects on the ground and goals can be implemented.*

Gabriela Ramos, Asst. Director General for Human & Social Sciences, UNESCO