

EQUALITY VS EQUITY

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EQUALITY VS EQUITY

Tackling Issues of Race in the
Workplace

BY

JENNY GARRETT OBE

Jenny Garrett Global, UK



United Kingdom – North America – Japan – India
Malaysia – China

Emerald Publishing Limited
Howard House, Wagon Lane, Bingley BD16 1WA, UK

First edition 2023

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-80382-676-9 (Print)

ISBN: 978-1-80382-673-8 (Online)

ISBN: 978-1-80382-675-2 (Epub)



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REGISTERED

Certificate Number 1985
ISO 14001

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

PRAISE FOR *EQUALITY VS EQUITY*

‘An excellent book for anyone who wants to learn more and truly understand the importance of equity and how to create inclusion through the lens of race. Jenny shares many great examples of her own lived experiences which really help to bring the book to life.’

Asif Sadiq MBE, Chief Diversity,
Equity and Inclusion Officer, Warner Bros.

‘*Equality vs Equity* is a great work authored through the lived experience lens of specialist coach and trainer in the diversity arena, Jenny Garrett OBE. It is the game changer required to achieve a fresh new approach to challenge a 40-year-old problem. A must have (handbook full) of step-by-step advice for anyone with real commitment and interest in moving the Equality vs Equity Dial forward.’

Dr Yvonne Thompson CBE,
DL Chair, Black Cultural Archives

‘As usual, I learn from Jenny Garrett OBE every time we interact – this time via her latest fantastic book. Share this hugely practical book with friends, colleagues and others who either want to, or perhaps need to, become more ADEPT at living in a modern world where the global majority deserve far more.’

Dr Suzanne Doyle-Morris, Author
of *The Con Job: Getting Ahead for Competence
in a World Obsessed with Confidence*

‘A book of bountiful evidence and facts on the state of play today in terms of racial equality in UK workplaces. Combining powerful personal experience presented dispassionately with figures and

stories from across the recent past, Jenny offers a simple framework to get the reader – who is curious and interested to make a difference – to be part of the solution. A recommended read.’

Sarah Churchman OBE, Chief Inclusion,
Community and Wellbeing Officer, PwC

‘If you read one book this year, make it this one! I have worked with Jenny on a number of occasions and always come away having learnt something and with a renewed vigour to make a difference. The fact [that] Jenny has put her unique storytelling abilities, borne of her lived and professional experience, into a book is just a gift to us all. In her introduction, Jenny talks about the African proverb “if you think you are too small to make a difference, you haven’t spent the night with a mosquito.” I couldn’t think of a stronger rally call for everyone to listen, learn and continue making the difference we can [...]’

Gareth Hind, Head of Equality,
Diversity and Inclusion, First Bus

‘I never feel that I’m doing enough to understand and tackle racial inequity[.] I don’t think it’s possible for me or any white person to ever be doing enough in this space. We can all learn more, listen more, hear more and take more action. If, like me, you want to play your part in tackling racial inequity then you really must read this book. It’s time to be the Empathetic changemaker the world needs you to be. It’s also time we started to accept that those who are Black, Asian, Brown, dual-heritage, indigenous to the global south, and or have been racialised as “ethnic Minorities” are actually, as Jenny explains, the Global Majority. The clock is ticking for those of us white folks, we are the Global Minority, we need to learn fast, and make change happen even faster [...] in the interest of everyone on our little planet.’

Andy Woodfield, PwC Partner,
Global Sector Leader for International Development

‘If we’re going to tackle racial injustice, then we need to address the fact that there is no such thing as a level playing field, and that the systems in which we live and work are themselves biased

and discriminatory. Unless we tackle systemic inequity, there is little chance of achieving racial justice. This book is an important contribution to the field. It helps to increase our understanding and awareness of the systemic injustices at play in our workplaces, organisations and wider systems, and is also a call to all of us to do the work – with guidance on how to become a change-maker, as well as actionable steps we can all take towards greater equity. Most important of all, it stresses the importance of doing our own personal work to enable us to become instruments for change.’

Aboodi Shabi, Lecturer in Coaching and Behavioural Change, Henley Business School

‘I am excited for people to read this book and use it to have moments to have self-reflection, but to also consider the role they play in shifting the dialogue we need to have around race and identity. This is a book for everyone and all. Well done Jenny for continuing this important conversation.’

Geoffrey O. Williams, Global VP of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Burberry

‘The combination of Jenny’s honest lived experiences, well thought out research and clear explanations of complex topics make this a superbly compelling read. I recommend it for anyone who is afraid to have frank and honest conversations about race and wants to become a better ally.’

Janet Tidmarsh FCIPD

‘Jenny Garrett OBE has written a deeply personal, persuasive and highly educational book that will add to the rich, progressive discussion on racial equity and equality in the UK and more widely. This is definitely a must read!’

Peter Alleyne, Associate Director for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Race Equality, Rethink Mental Illness

‘This book is an extension of Jenny’s passion, honesty and ability to open your thought process and understanding of the world as it equates to racial equity. It’s unapologetic, enlightening, yet practical. Jenny is voicing the conversations that your black and

brown colleagues are having behind closed doors every day. If you are serious about understanding racial equity and challenging your own assumptions, this book is a “must” read for anyone to actively engage in changing the narrative.’

Devi Viridi, Group Head of Diversity
and Inclusion, Centrica Plc

‘Jenny Garrett has written a book that will soon become essential to anyone committed to developing and nurturing equitable workplaces and societies. Jenny draws on her experience in professional and personal spaces to inform how individuals, groups, and societies can become more aware of racial injustices, and she offers practice recommendations that can lead to greater inclusivity. I will be recommending this book to both colleagues and students.’

Professor Carole Elliott, Associate Dean Equality,
Diversity, Inclusion and Development,
Sheffield University Management School

‘I met Jenny in the lockdown zone, I mention this because it was a tipping point in the life and history for Black People. Notably we experienced the pandemic, the George Floyd murder, and a global community awakening and awareness. I think this book is timely, it is needed and instructional to make sense of the world we are living in and to help navigate how we move from equality to equity.’

Karl George MBE Partner RSM,
Author of the RACE Equality Code

“Knotty, gordian issues require focused minds and bold actions to unravel them and mobilise change. Jenny Garrett’s new book does this honestly, vulnerably and directly to the entrenched issue of racism. With finesse and compelling assuredness, Jenny invites one and all to the table to explore the issue of race justice and to do so from the position of “the solution focused change agent”. She compels the reader to state, full throated and unapologetically, that “The Time for change is now. The agent of change is me”. Get ready, dear reader, to be equipped, emboldened, and roused to be a powerful catalyst for change.’

Sharon Amesu, Co-Founder, She Leads for Legacy

‘This is a much needed book for the current times we are living in. It is extremely well researched with academic references and lived experiences. It is easy to understand and implement as a handbook for every organisation or leader who aspires to be anti-racist. Jenny explains the difference between equality and equity in a way that makes so much sense, while offering practical tips and strategies to achieve true equity in the workplace.’

Wali Rahman, Diversity and Wellbeing Manager, Forestry Commission

‘I love Jenny’s positive approach. In *Equality vs Equity* Jenny acknowledges that real change is happening and explains why the shift from equality to equity is a vital part of the process if we are to keep up the momentum. I applaud Jenny’s positive mindset and progressive nature which make *Equality vs Equity* a must read for anyone who truly wants to understand how to move the dial forward.’

Gamiel Yafai, Founder and CEO, Diversity Marketplace

‘I admire and applaud the courage Jenny Garrett demonstrates in raising a variety of issues in this very timely book. Whilst she could have been tempted to quietly enjoy the privileges afforded by her own success, she has chosen the less travelled road of identifying and analysing the very real issues we face, especially in the workplace and related settings. [...] I am certain that those who have values that include ethical and equitable conduct will embrace this book that draws us into deeper reflections about our own practices and conduct and how we can achieve racial equity. I am pleased that Jenny candidly discusses her own journey and the experiences of others as well as what the possibilities for change can be, if we are resilient in our pursuit of racial equity.’

‘We can all contribute to the debate – I believe that this book shares a balanced perspective that all of us, from all walks of life and communities, can learn from. I hope that we embrace the many lessons and take time to reflect on our own values, beliefs and practices as we read this book with the view to as Jenny says, “seeing differently, thinking differently and doing things

differently”. [...] Together we can create a truly better tomorrow for us all.’

Dr Irene Brew-Riverson, Senior Lecturer,
University of Westminster

‘An engaging and relatable read that had me gripped from the beginning, *Equality vs Equity* helps readers grasp the concept of racial equity in its true essence through practical and action-oriented strategies — a must-read for those serious about understanding and implementing racial equity at work.’

Hira Ali, Founder of Advancing Your Potential
and Author of *Her Way To The Top: A Guide to
Smashing the Glass Ceiling* and *Her Allies: A Practical
Toolkit to Help Men Lead Through Advocacy*

‘The conversation on racial inequality in the UK has progressed over the last few years but there is still much to do, learn and be implemented in order to make real progress on this agenda. *Equality vs Equity: Tackling Issues of Race in the Workplace* is the tool we’ve been waiting for that provides really helpful guidance and practical solutions [for] an ongoing issue and for organisations willing to make the change. I really do recommend reading this!’

Sharniya Ferdinand, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Consultant

‘Jenny has achieved through this book a brilliant work of authentically narrating her lived experiences, intricately woven persuasive arguments about the urgency of amplifying equity and providing actionable strategies for anyone. Each chapter is steeped in history, research, anecdotes, and practical tools to kindle one’s desire for action. This is a must read for anyone interested in contributing to creating an equitable future in business and society at large.’

Dr Jummy Okoya, Senior Lecturer and Chair,
Women’s Network, University of East London

‘Jenny has been challenging and shaping equality in the workplace for many years and as a result is a leader in this space. I have witnessed leaders change their internal processes as a result of her delivery and heard employees reflect on the impact they can have

following her sessions. I know that this book will have a huge impact on every reader and will continue to shape ED&I globally.’

Sonia Meggie, Diversity and Inclusion Consultant

‘The narrative around racial equity has always been uncomfortable in the workplace; made even more difficult when you include the many layers of intersectionality. [...] After nearly two decades of [...] debate, this book will offer a fresh insight into racial bias and discrimination, and how leaders can become more comfortable and, more importantly, diligent change makers rather than [...] complacent managers sitting on the side-lines expecting change.’

Sonia Brown MBE, Founder and Director,
National Black Women’s Network (NBWN) and SistaTalk

‘In this book Jenny has provided an easy, informative, and engaging resource that bridges the gap between awareness for race equality, and the practical steps we must all take to ensure race equity. This is not just another book about race, this is a playbook that will shift gears for race equity, from conversation to action to long term impact!’

Pauline Miller, Chief Equity Officer EMEA,
Dentsu International

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To my wonderful caring and patient family and friends, in particular my husband, mum, daughter, and goddaughter who came on the writing journey with me and inspire me daily.

A special thanks to those busy people who made time to be interviewed for this book, I appreciate you.

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INTRODUCTION

I write this book from a place of hope, optimism, and progress. Although the pace of change is not fast enough, and some may doubt the sustainability or true commitment of organisations to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Real change has happened over the last two years. In every sphere, the topic of racial equality is being discussed from the media to politics, in living rooms around the country, the classroom, and in your organisation. The challenge is to sustain the momentum and build on it with irreversible action. I truly believe that this can be achieved when we join together. As the African proverb goes ‘If you think you are too small to make a difference, you haven’t spent the night with a mosquito’. If each one of us chooses to unite in positive action what may seem hopeless and insurmountable can be overcome.

To achieve racial equity in the workplace, we need to become ADEPT by:

expanding our Awareness of the context,
Deepening our knowledge of lived experience,
being an Empathetic changemaker,
defining our Pathways to action,
and practicing Thoughtful introspection.

This book will help you unpack the concept of racial equity and understand its importance in moving the dial on inclusion, providing language, and practical tips for you to take action. It is essential reading for HR professionals, leaders, and those who want to

educate themselves and influence others to do the crucial complex work of achieving racial equity in the workplace.

I want to start by answering the question that you may have which is ‘Why a book on racial equity when there are so many issues to focus on including sexism, ableism, homophobia, and classism to name a few?’ The truth is that there is no single-issue challenge, all are important and intersect with each other, and are worth focussing on individually and together.

Conversations around diversity and inclusion have tripled in the last year and Diversity and Inclusion roles are growing 1.65 times faster than HR roles in Europe, the Middle East, and Africa according to LinkedIn, the world’s largest professional network on the internet. Yet, in the UK, we seem to find the subject of race and racial justice hardest to talk about, according to findings from the Business in the Community report 2021, 59% of employees are still uncomfortable talking about race in UK workplaces. You may have been trying to educate yourself in the equality, diversity, and inclusion space, and felt overwhelmed by initiatives, and time pressured in your day job, this book is *an accessible resource to guide you through that journey*.

It’s likely that you will have a woman in your family, know someone who identifies as having a visible or invisible disability, have a friend who is from the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer/questioning, asexual + community but you may not be close to someone who has a different ethnicity to you, and as a result you may not have considered that their lived experience may be very different to your own or had conversations that discuss race and ethnicity.

The strategies within this book can be used beyond racial equity to create wider fairness and inclusion for all in your organisation and beyond.

My desire is for us not to compete in the oppression Olympics and argue about which groups are more ill-treated, instead my goal is for all of us to understand that solutions and a fairer society are what we all seek. In fact, what if we could hold the view that for everyone to win, no one had to lose? It might radically change things.

Within these pages, I use the term ‘people of the **global majority**’¹ to describe the myriad of people from Black, Asian, and ethnic minority backgrounds in the UK. You may be familiar with other terms, including BAME, those from underrepresented communities, those who are a visible minority, people of colour, African diaspora, and those who are from ethnically diverse backgrounds. This is a diverse group of people who really can’t be grouped together, and so the limitations of language do not do them justice, but this is what I have settled on for now. The global majority refers to people who are Black, Asian, Brown, dual heritage, indigenous to the global south, and/or have been racialised as ‘ethnic minorities’. Globally, these groups currently represent approximately 80% of the world’s population making them the global majority now, and with current growth rates, notwithstanding COVID-19 and its emerging variants, the global majority is set to remain so for the foreseeable future. The language is evolving and may have evolved by the time you are reading this book, if so, I ask you to forgive me and see beyond it and look for the learning.

MY LIVED EXPERIENCE

I want to start by acknowledging that I am my ancestors’ wildest dreams. I am one of the only 500 people each year who has received the Queen’s honour of Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (OBE). I have my own home, am university educated, and have a successful business. I am filled with gratitude for these things, while also understanding that they do not make me immune to experiencing racial bias and experiencing obstacles in my journey that others may not.

I am alive to the challenges of achieving racial equity in the workplace, through my lived experience as a Black British woman and through my leadership development work with organisations over almost two decades I have personally listened to the struggles of hundreds of executives from the global majority who are trying to navigate and realise their potential in the world of work in the UK. I have also run focus groups and team coaching sessions for white leaders, who in the UK are usually, but not always white men,

who have shared their fears of saying or doing the wrong thing, and how that keeps them paralysed from taking action. I have also seen organisations clumsily set targets and make public statements that could be deemed *performative*, they look like they are doing the right thing, when they haven't done the work to truly commit to doing what they think is right or know what that is for them. There is a huge amount of work to be done. However, I am pleased to say some companies are doing the work, attempting to make change, and taking brave steps, we'll talk more about that in Chapter Four.

As a Black woman born and growing up in the UK with Caribbean heritage, I found myself in majority white spaces a lot, from the Girl Guides to the Catholic school I attended, I was one of less than a handful of Black people present.

Because of my complexion, medium brown skin, and green eyes, I wasn't necessarily called names about being Black. I most likely benefitted from **colourism**. Colourism has been around for centuries and is 'thought to be a lasting relic of slavery; white masters showed preferential treatment to light-skinned or mixed-race slaves' says Sociologist Meeta Jha. She adds that 'physical attractiveness, whiteness, and youthfulness have accrued capital, just as darker skin colour, hair texture, disability and ageing have devalued feminine currency'. So, the term that was banded at me was 'half-caste', an incorrect racial slur, but slur nonetheless, I recall being called this up until my twenties. At the time, it was the term often used to describe those of mixed heritage, I thought that it meant to have one parent who was white and one parent who was from the global majority. However, the root of 'half-caste' is the Latin word 'castus', meaning pure, and its Spanish and Portuguese derivatives 'casta', meaning race. So 'half-caste' means impure, it means white is pure and anything else just muddies the blood. So, it was even more offensive than I realised at the time.

I found myself feeling different in lots of ways, my build and physique seemed much bigger than the other girls at school, although when I tell people this now, they seem shocked because, I am average height at 5ft 4 and a half, with a small build. Maybe I grew quickly, and others caught up. My hair was also a source of difference, afro hair styles are steeped in tradition, styles would be used to express our status, whether or not we were married and if

we had been through puberty and should be a source of pride, but instead my kinky coily afro hair, was a source of curiosity, from the cornrows to the braids and then the chemical straightening, my hair was different. It was only in 2019 that The CROWN Act² was created to ensure protection against discrimination based on race-based hairstyles in the USA. There is no similar law in the UK specifically banning hairstyle discrimination. But this does not mean that there is no issue with this in the UK. There have been a small number of UK cases alleging hairstyle discrimination, including where an employee was told her natural hairstyle was inherently ‘untidy’ and unprofessional, and a High Court case in 2011, where a child was excluded from school for having cornrows.³ However, in October 2022, the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) shared new guidance that pupils should not be stopped from wearing their hair in natural Afro styles at school. Speak to anyone with afro hair working in the UK and they will have a story to tell. Whether it’s comments on looking unprofessional, being asked if their hair can be touched, or if their hair belongs to them, they are made to feel like a curiosity at best and at worst as an excuse to be dehumanised. As Emma Dabiri⁴ shares the texture of black hair was used as a ‘justification’ for the enslavement of Africans between the sixteenth and the nineteenth centuries. Emma’s research found: ‘One of the examples of this [justification] was “look they don’t even have hair” – European people have hair. They have wool. Animals have wool. They’re more like livestock’.

One incident that sticks with me, aged 12, is sitting at the bus stop to go to school and a white man, probably in his 50’s, who appeared to have a blue-collar role, such as builder or plumber, driving a nondescript white van stopping to shout ‘Black bitch’ at me before continuing with his day, while of course totally ruining mine.

My Mum (who became a schoolteacher while I was in my teens) brought me up to speak ‘properly’, no slang, no dropping my ‘h’s’ and this helped, it helped me to be accepted and assimilate to a degree. I would get comments from people who would meet me the first time after speaking to me on the phone and be shocked that I wasn’t how they had visualised me, telling me ‘How surprisingly articulate I was’, I now recognise this as a **microaggression**,

but I didn't at the time. We'll talk more about microaggressions in Chapter Two.

In the world of work, I did OK. I carried on oblivious to a lot of bias and discrimination. I was sometimes told by white colleagues, you should have got that opportunity but they're racist, but I didn't let it bother me. Sometimes, I found that someone just really didn't like me, when I couldn't ascertain why, I absorbed it and accepted injustice as just the way things were.

I am Black, I am a woman, and I had a working class start. The intersection of these identities really created a feeling of *otherness* for me, particularly in one place I worked which was mostly public school educated white colleagues. I often had no idea what my colleagues were talking about, their lives and upbringing were so different to mine, and I often felt excluded inadvertently and sometimes very directly. I have one memory of working in a small team where there was a high-profile sought-after event that my line manager had one ticket for someone to attend, in turn she asked everyone but me, it stung to be excluded and ignored in this way. Looking back, I should have asked why, I think that I would now, but at the time, it was like school, everyone wants a ticket to that party, and you are waiting to be invited. It's like that a lot when you are "the only" one.

I have heard the saying 'Diversity is being invited to the party and inclusion is being asked to dance' but some of us aren't even invited! Imagine how I felt when one of my colleagues brought up my exclusion to me (as if I hadn't noticed). I just sucked it up and carried on working there. So if I had become angry and unmotivated you could not blame me, could you?

One of the worst experiences I had was speaking at a conference and then attending the evening gala dinner. I was sat opposite an older white gentleman who first asked me if I was catering staff, even though I was sitting opposite him and dressed in an evening gown. He then proceeded to ask me where I went on holiday, when I answered that I like to see the world and don't have a particular place that I go back to, I was then asked whether 'I go back to my own country regularly', followed by a string of comments about going back and staying there. Others around us squirmed in their seats and tried to veer him off his mission to make me feel like I

didn't belong, yet no one acted as **ally** and intervened, stood up for me, or called him out. Typical **passive bystander** behaviour took place, and it was a painful experience, in a work environment. The interesting thing was that the following year I spoke at the same event and saw the same person, he didn't recall how rude and offensive he'd been to me, but the memory stays with me.

Three chapters into writing this book, I attended a networking event at a prestigious City of London venue. I was talking to a connection of mine, a tall white man who is inclusive and open, we were in mid conversation and a white woman who looked like she was in her early 60's interrupted and introduced herself to him. She evidently had no intention of introducing herself to me, so I assertively held out a hand and introduced myself, forcing her to acknowledge me. She shook my hand and told me I was beautiful and got back to her talk with my connection. This sounds like a compliment, but it wasn't, it was 'if I give you a compliment, I can get back to talking important stuff with the important person next to you'. As I watched her network throughout the evening, she was talking to everyone she decided looked like they were powerful and influential and ignoring everyone else. If I was a less confident, resilient person, I could have taken her behaviour quite badly, maybe felt like I didn't belong, didn't have much worth, and gone home early. Instead, I shrugged it off, but I am clear that a **microaggression**, can look like a compliment, 'You are articulate, you are beautiful, you are intelligent, that should placate you while I speak to the people that really matter' the equivalent of 'You're pretty for a Black girl'. My connection was gracious and knew that her behaviour was at the very least rude, he made a passing comment about it, and we moved on. It was subtle enough not to challenge directly, but not subtle enough not to leave a bad feeling.

The struggle is real, the struggle is ongoing, and the struggle is rarely visible. No one should suck it up, no one should be made to feel inferior, and people should be able to realise their potential. It's time for change and YOU can make it happen.

How often do you watch the news and say, 'oh that's sad, but what can I do about it' or 'that's depressing I think I'll stop watching because it's bringing me down'? This is your chance to make a difference in a practical way, take the blinkers off, stop numbing

yourself to the situation, and be the change! I believe in the goodness of people and that you personally and intentionally can change things and this book will help you work out how.

HOW TO READ THIS BOOK

We are all at different points of our journey and I wrote this book with the intention for you to read it cover to cover; however, you may want to dive in at a particular chapter, which will work well too. Underpinning all I do is the foundation of being a coach, so please note my calls to action and reflection, you may want to read the book as a team, or with your peers and discuss it together, this will help you develop your thinking and your ability to speak about these topics. Reading books is great, taking action makes it meaningful.

In Chapter One, 'Awareness of Context', you will learn about the evolution of equality and the growing importance of equity. This chapter explores the current state of the UK workplace in terms of equality and equity and how we got here, and how far we still must go.

In Chapter Two, 'Deepening Our Knowledge of Lived Experience', you will gain insight into the racially inequitable workplace. Through stories, you will then be given an insight into the lived workplace experience of those from the global majority and their experience of inequity.

In Chapter Three, 'Being an Empathetic Changemaker', you will gain understanding on how to be a changemaker. This chapter identifies what stops individuals (often white leaders) from tackling racial inequity, pitfalls that they can experience when they try, and strategies to move forward.

In Chapter Four, 'Defining Our Pathways to Action', you will consider actionable steps to disrupting the workplace system. This chapter will provide you with practical actions that can be taken organisationally to advance equity in the workplace which include: ascertaining collective knowledge, bringing to light your blind spots, learning from your colleagues, and experimenting to find out what works for you and your organisation.