

BSA - Black Swimming Association

<https://www.thebsa.co.uk/>

“There is a racist history that surrounds swimming, stemming back to segregation, when black people were not allowed to access swimming pools”

These people are on a campaign to challenging the myth that black people don't swim.



Danielle Obe / Seren Jones / Alice Dearing / Ed Accura

Seren Tanaka Lloyd Jones

Seren Jones, is a bilingual Welsh Zimbabwean broadcast journalist working at the BBC, specialising in podcast production and documentary-making. She has presented two documentaries, one of which led to her nomination for a BAFTA award in 2019 in the 'Breakthrough Category'.

Seren was a news reader at 'BBC Minute', where she presented 60 second radio bulletins to younger audiences around the world. She started her journalism career on the BBC's Journalism Trainee Scheme based in Cardiff working in the Welsh medium for BBC Cymru. Beyond journalism, Seren is a co-founder of the BSA.

Seren has also hosted and participated in a number of panels and televised events to do with diversity and inclusion in media, including last year's 'Wales Book Of The Year Awards', 'We Are Black Journos', S4C's 'Gwyl AmGen' and 'Global Welsh In Media'.

"We don't talk about inequality and racism within the Welsh speaking community. Wales is not only my home but it is home to thousands of other people from black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds. From what I understand, according to society, I have never 'looked' Welsh. And I have noticed, no matter how Welsh your name is, if you don't look how your name implies, your Welshness is questioned. I wasn't aware that for some people, Seren Jones usually looked like a certain person of a certain colour. The realisation set in that I belong to a percentage of the country's population who is not considered Welsh because of the colour of our skin. Although Wales is becoming more multicultural and diverse every year, for some there is still a select nature of belonging to the Welsh speaking community, which is felt by many on the outside. The Welsh speaking community is a proud and fierce one that has successfully battled to keep its language and culture alive for generations.

But although the Welsh language is moving forward, I wonder if our attitude towards our changing population moving in the same direction? Do we need to question people's Welshness who have different accents, different backgrounds and different experiences? Or compare the Welshness of someone who isn't white but speaks Welsh with someone who is white but can't speak the language? Do we need to stay in the past when the future can look so hopeful? Once we dismantle this hierarchy of Welshness, change will begin, at home".

Danielle Obe

Danielle Obe is a British inventor from London and co-founder of BSA.

Danielle created a waterproof headscarf, the Nemes, designed to protect afro hair, in a bid to encourage more black and minority ethnic (BAME) people to go swimming. *"Regardless of gender, age or ethnicity, swimming is an important and essential life skill that everyone should have. One of the key objectives of the BSA is to tackle aquaphobia and get adults especially to take that first step into the water as part of our swim clinics".*

She herself had previously given up swimming for two decades because she did not want to risk damage to her hair. *"Getting into any type of aquatic activity then was a huge no-no. I couldn't go swimming in the evening after work. If I did, how would I turn up for client meetings the next morning?"*

The charity, the first of its kind in the UK, aims to encourage more BAME people to go swimming, after figures revealed 95% of black adults and 80% of black children do not go swimming. Under-representation of the BAME community is believed to be in part due to racist stereotypes about the sport.

Alice Dearing

Alice Dearing, one of Britain's best open water swimmers and on target to become the first black woman to represent Great Britain at the next Olympics. She is part of the campaign to encourage more black people to swim and a co-founder of BSA.

Less than 1% of registered competitive swimmers identify as black or mixed race. The alarming effect from those statistics is that the risk of drowning is higher among ethnic minority communities.

"I like the idea I can inspire even one person to get in the water. That is the main thing because one might become 10 and 10 might become a hundred".

"I vividly remember a black girl saying at training that the reason black girls don't swim is because of their hair. I was about 12 or 13 at the time and had never thought of the idea of hair stopping you from swimming. Now that I am older I can fully understand why someone would quit over their hair. It sounds ludicrous but it can be really damaging to your self-image and confidence as chlorine wrecks hair. But it's even harder for girls with thicker hair, which the majority of black girls have".

Alice has represented Team GB at numerous international competitions including two World Championships. She's English and Ghanaian and seeing someone like her in the sport at this standard is rare.

Ed Accura

Ed Accura is a British songwriter, producer, rapper and host of 'In The Deep Side' podcast, songwriter, screenwriter and producer of the new documentary feature film "A Film Called Blacks Can't Swim". He was born in London and raised in the UK and Ghana.

Ed is a co-founder of the BSA. Research from the WHO (World Health Organisation) found the risk of drowning is higher among BAME (Black Asian and Minority Ethnic) communities.

Ed is also the founder of the 'Bear A Witness Homeless' campaign, supported by celebrities all around the globe, inspired by a chance conversation with a homeless man. The campaign encourages the general public to show an act of kindness to a rough sleeper they may pass on their daily travels.

Black History Month Wales October 2020 - 2000 Nations | Celebrating Diversity



<https://bhmwales.org.uk/>