

Professor Charlotte Williams OBE



As the daughter of a white Welsh-speaking mother and a black father from Guyana, Professor Williams has written about how her childhood in North Wales left her feeling that "*somehow to be half-Welsh and half-Afro-Caribbean was to be half of something but never quite anything whole at all.*" Professor Charlotte Williams grew up in Wales subjected to "*personal slurs*", casual racism and with no sense that her family's story was part of the history of Wales, she was being taught.

Now she is tasked with helping change all that.

She has been appointed by the Welsh Government to oversee improvement in the teaching of Welsh BAME history and she warned that teachers alone cannot tackle the racism still "*deeply entrenched*" in Wales and elsewhere.

She went to Craig y Don Primary and Ysgol John Bright in Llandudno and says although the curriculum has moved on since the 1960s "*it's not different enough*" and what children learn and do in the classroom must reflect all their lives. As a child, Professor Williams went to school for a year in Nigeria when her father Denis, an academic, was working there. She said this experience of having black as well as white teachers was important.

A graduate of Bangor University and now an Honorary Professor in the School of History, Philosophy and Social Sciences there, the academic retired recently as Professor of Social Work and Deputy Dean at Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology University in Melbourne, Australia. She holds Honorary Fellow appointments at Glyndwr University and the University of South Wales. Alongside her academic career here and in Australia, Professor Williams is known for her ground breaking text, 'A Tolerant Nation?' which explores ethnic diversity in Wales and her award-winning memoir of growing up mixed race in Wales, 'Sugar and Slate', which won Wales Book of the Year 2003.

She has made numerous television and radio appearances and is a regular commentator on issues of Welsh multiculturalism. In 2007, Professor Williams was awarded an OBE in the Queen's New Year's Honours List for Services to Ethnic Minorities and Equal Opportunities in Wales. The feminist sociologist Dr Roiyah Saltus named Charlotte as her icon for International Women's Day 2015.

"The challenge is to ensure that black and minority ethnic peoples have a presence across the new Welsh curriculum, so that within all of the areas of learning and experience we can hear the sound of their voices, know of their experience, history and contributions, past and present.....our curriculum in Wales will ultimately be reflective of our common experience of a vibrant, inclusive, multicultural society. We have a rich history in Wales, built on difference and diversity. This isn't about adding an element of black and minority ethnic history here and there in the new curriculum, but about reimagining learning and teaching across all the elements of the curriculum so that it reflects a Wales that is, and always has been, ethnically diverse, internationalist in its outlook and progressive in its aspirations."

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