

# FI WE ROAD – Podcast Review - TRANSCRIPT

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

sustainability, people, Black, internship, academics, geography, writing, conversations, geographers, feel, speak, experience, thought, terms, mentor, Pat, networks, person, masters

## SPEAKERS

Britney Assam, Olasubomi Tolu-Ogunpolu, David Oliver Mululu Blagden, Marvin Tahoulan and Sophie Thompson-Hyland were in conversation with Rita Gayle

### Rita Gayle 00:05

All right. Okay, so Alright, so I'll just go around, as I can see on the cameras. So I'll start with yourself, Britney, and then Shubby next. And then David, Marvin and Sophie, if that's okay. And then I'll go back around. Okay. So Britany are starting with you first, if you could just tell me your name and a little bit about yourself.

### Britney 00:30

Well, I'm Britany, I am from Trinidad and Tobago, and I am a third-year undergraduate studying geology at UCL. And yeah, I mean....

### Rita Gayle 48:00

Yeah, it was okay. You don't have tell everything! Yeah. Not everything. Okay. And Shubby, you want to go next?

### Shubby 57:00

Sure. My name is Shubby or Olasubomi. I am British, Nigerian, however you want to discuss it. But I graduated from the University of Reading, studying geography and economics. And I am currently switching into a more consulting role in the energy and engineering sector, which will be quite fun.

### Rita Gayle 01:24

Thank you very much. And David?

### David 01:29

Yeah. So I'm David. I was born and raised in Nairobi, Kenya. While at university, I was seeded like social cultural research. That was like what I liked the most. And yeah, right now, I'm just in basically the employment circuit or unemployment circuit, as some would say. So I'm just trying to sort myself on that regard. But yeah.

**Rita Gayle 01:52**

All of us are in the same boat. Don't worry about that. You're in good company. Okay, so. And Marvin.

**Marvin 02:01**

Hi, I'm Marvin. I'm from Essex. Colchester, specifically. My family heritage is from Togo in West Africa. I studied chemistry undergrad at Bristol, and then did climate change science and policy as a masters. And yeah, I'm just searching for jobs at the moment waiting to hear back. Sort of in the transport sector, consultancy, or planning. And in assessment centres today which is why I'm dressed smart. I don't dress like this at home!

**Rita Gayle 02:48**

We're all there. Right? We're all at home! And Sophie.

**Sophie 02:52**

Hi. Yeah, I'm Sophie. My mom is from Jamaica, and my dad is Irish, but I'm British. I guess very complicated identity issues there. I'm doing my master's in human geography, or human geography and sustainability research. But I sort of ignore the sustainability side of the masters for the moment. I actually today.. I found out I was shortlisted for PhD funding, which is really exciting. I literally found out like this afternoon and had a little happy dance. So I'm hoping to do that with Pat (Noxolo) at Birmingham in September.

**Rita Gayle 03:25**

Very good. Well, what can I say? You'll be in good hands. Okay, so moving back around. So start again with yourself, Sophie. So if you can discuss the co-paper that you were working on as part of the project, and its topic. A little bit of what that was.

**Sophie 03:45**

Yeah, so I think when we first started speaking about it, we were really like covering the breadth of geography. And we couldn't really work out how we were meant to merge our ideas together. I mean, Britney's in geology and she's very, very geoscience compared to the rest of us, who were much more cultural geographies based, which is quite a big breadth of geography. And we sort of came on this idea of Black sustainability, about revisiting what sustainability means and how it's particularly important for Black futures. And we all took different sections of it and tried to co-write and put it all together. It was very different from writing at undergrad and being really like having full control over your work. And I think I think the final outcome was really good and I was really happy with it. But it was a process in and of itself, just writing it and merging our styles of voices and focuses all together was quite challenging.

**Rita Gayle 04:49**

Yeah, it is actually an achievement that you did that because it's hard, right? It's very hard. It doesn't get any easier. I'm going to say, because, actually, I think, yeah, I think if you're kind of doing this right now, I think it's a great platform for you all, really. Because I can tell you, I've done that with some of my

colleagues. And let's just say it's difficult. I'll say no more about that but, Marvin, can you pitch in on this?

**Marvin 05:15**

Yeah, yeah, I'd like to sort of agree with Sophie, that I'm really happy with the end product that we came out with. And it was a process, definitely. But it was an enjoyable process at the same time. It was good to start from different backgrounds, and see where you can meet in the middle in terms of our geographical knowledge and our perspectives on geography as well. And I think it helps contribute what was a really well-rounded piece.

**Rita Gayle 05:53**

And David?

**David 05:57**

Yeah, I'd say, Yeah, so just to, like, add on that, yeah. So, the actual pieces, obviously, something we're all like, really proud of, and I think we all like, work quite hard to make it like something that we could all feel like we left our own imprint on, even though it's a collective piece. But yeah, kind of I just agree. I think the process to me, is, was like one of the more rewarding things. Like, you know, doing, like I was saying, I'm doing like all these jobs, job seeking things now. You know, they often, you know, are saying, 'oh, like, name a time, you know, you had to work in a group and you know, to make something.' And I often talk about, like what we did while writing this paper during the writing retreats, and kind of how we went through that process of looking at, okay, we all care about, you know, this topic of sustainability, how can we all contribute in a meaningful way and play to our strengths? And kind of the, it was quite a tough process, because the writing retreat, we had three of them. And, you know, I think we were all pretty tired by the end of the third one. Because it was quite tough to kind of bring our own ideas together and try and, you know, sort out into a coherent piece. Yeah, I mean, we stuck out it, you know, we probably left a few of those writing retreats being like, I don't know what this paper is gonna look like, what the heck! But yeah, it all came together. And yeah, reading it, like it looked really good. So I was really, really happy with the result of that.

**Rita Gayle 07:25**

Thank you. Shubby?

**Shubby 07:28**

Oh, yeah. Just to add on, it was really fun experience now looking back on it was quite a while ago. To kind of having to scratch my head a bit to think. But yeah, it was really, really good. Really fun. And I think it's a testament to kind of how well we could least put our academic differences aside, to come up with something. We're all quite a thing in terms of personality. We try not to step on each other's toes quite a lot. So as David was saying, during the writing retreat, a lot of the times, we'd come to decisions and think, 'Ah well, you know, I don't really want to step on people's toes,' and then kind of have this unanswered question going on. So I think our challenges were mainly working past that, and kind of getting on with the decisions and deciding, you know. And kind of going out, getting out of our shell a little bit. Where we didn't really want to make other people or overpower the writing. I think we had to kind of get comfortable with each of us kind of speaking out about what we did, or what we thought was

best. So it was quite a good experience I think to develop and grow in terms of personality and academics as well.

**Rita Gayle 08:34**

Thank you and Brittany?

**Britney 08:38**

Yeah, I agree with everything that's been said. It's like it was way beyond any kind of like, university group project ever! And, yeah, like it was, I think we really, I think we're really successful in managing to, like, come to like, a compromise that every single one of us was happy with. And yeah, it was just I am really, really proud of us. It was hard. Like, it was really, really hard. But I'm really, I'm really happy with what we produced. And I'm like, it was just it was it was an amazing experience. I would do it again if I could!

**Rita Gayle 09:15**

Oh, okay! That's good to hear. So listen, I want to open it up now. So we just warmed up a little bit now! Right, we're warmed up a little bit. Yeah? And so I want to open it up now to that writing experience. Kind of go into a little bit more detail, because you've all touched on it. But obviously you're going to these retreats, you know, going there to write and to work. Just talk about this process because obviously, I mean, I don't know.. I assume you didn't really know each other before didn't know each other that well. Correct. Is that right? Okay. So just talk a little bit more about that. Because I think for a lot of people who have not gone through this process, they're probably thinking, Well, how does that really work? I mean, you're coming together. Just can you talk about that in a bit more detail? Anybody jump in?

**Shubby 09:58**

Sure I'll jump in first if it that's alright then? I can kind of add on. Yeah. To start off, we've never met each other before this writing retreat. We all come from, I think different unis. Different kind of points of life. Most of us were ready to kind of graduate or had just graduated. And some of us kind of like Britany, moving on to final year. So yeah, we kind of never met each other before. But I think in terms of personality, we all get along quite well. We met each other I think once in the summer, apart from Britany. But we met each other once in the summer and we kind of hit it off. So I think in terms of personality, they did a really good job of getting people together who kind of got along and we're able to work on something. In terms of interests, quite a varied range, even within kind of what you thought was similar. When you then started looking into it during the research and writing process, we realised that actually were quite different and individual, which is fine. And I think it's quite important to have that. Then we obviously started the research process and the writing process. And I think until we actually got to the writing, I'm not too sure any one of us actually knew what was going on. I knew that for me, certainly, it felt like the whole process was kind of, 'okay, cool, we're gonna write this, I don't know how it doesn't still doesn't really feel like my problem, to be honest. But it will eventually get done'. So it was quite nice to move from that kind of passive, I'm not sure how to describe it, almost in limbo, moving into the real action of writing and getting into it. We took on different roles in terms of project management as well, and reviewing. Sophie-

**Rita Gayle** 11:49

Yeah. How did you work that out? How did you work?

**Shubby** 11:53

I think we just.. in terms of the different roles we took? I think it was just personality wise and taking on our different strengths. So Sophie did a lot of the editing and reviewing and her strength is in I think, is in kind of bringing everyone together academically and you know, putting those ideas together with really strong theory. David, as well. And Marvin helped with the reviewing and editing, Britany is always really good to bring ideas in. And she had a real challenge. First of all, being one of the younger ones. And second of all, having a completely different discipline to the rest of us, it was quite a challenge. I think one of the biggest challenge bringing her in to something where we can kind of all meet and say, okay, that kind of makes sense. It doesn't kind of stand out as an anomaly in the writing. So that was looking back quite fun, a quite fun challenge to go through. Personally, I quite like doing the organising and the project management side of things. So we kind of just took on the roles that felt natural to us, and worked to make sure that you know, things got done, essentially. So yeah, that was kind of how it worked. I don't think there's a real agreement. Maybe there should have been some sort of.. Looking back, if I was a teacher, I probably say 'Ah kids, you should do it this way'. But it was very much an organic process.

**Rita Gayle** 13:19

Does anyone wants to comment further on that. Just add anything more?

**Sophie** 13:23

No, it's really similar to what Shubby said. I feel like now reflecting back, it would have been very helpful to define our project management roles within it, because I completely underestimated that we'd have to or what that would involve. I just thought you'd write paper. And it'll come together because we all have the same understanding of what the paper is. And as soon as I started reading other people's I was like, they have a different interpretation of the title to me. Neither was wrong, neither was right. It was just, you know, our own positionalities give us a different understanding of things. So that would have been really useful to decide and take ownership of certain aspects to kind of have a better balance I think. I felt.. maybe it's a personal thing. I just felt very overwhelmed through most of it about the project management side, because I didn't expect it. And, you know, when you can't control every aspect of things that you want to and you want to get it done and you're meeting deadlines. That brings up stress levels. But I did overall really enjoy it. But I think I would have liked to take less of a role in the project management than I did because I felt like I had to do a lot of it and maybe that's just my personality type but I feel like I have to pick up things even though it isn't on me and I'm trying to work on that, because it just overwhelms me for no reason. But it would have been good, I think, to decide on roles, although we just didn't know what they were at the time. So I don't think we could have done it. Like Shubby said it was very, very organic. But when things are organic, they aren't necessarily the easiest to get through. So if we did it again, I would like to kind of focus more on what we can each bring to the project management side and the writing side. So to have a better overall balance of workload and capacities and meeting timelines, and the more practical side of things.

**Rita Gayle 15:16**

Thank you. I mean, I'm wondering though, were you.. would you have been in a position look, okay, looking back, you can review on that. But would you have known? Could you have answered that question at that time before you started?

**Sophie 15:29**

Not at all!

**Rita Gayle 15:32**

And then to all of you, but also, what have you learned from that? How do you feel now, having gone through that experience? How has it impacted your work as a geographer?

**Shubby 15:49**

Just waiting for if you know, anybody else wants to say anything?

**Marvin 15:55**

Okay, oh, speak. Um, I guess like, there was almost sort of ultimate exercise in teamwork. Because we all got given.. We didn't even really get given much of a brief. It was just write a paper about something to do with, Black Futures in Geography that we can all relate to and that speaks all of our backgrounds in the subject. And I think the the sort of openness of that task led to lots of aspects of teamwork that you wouldn't even usually get in a standard teamwork task, because usually, you have a clear objective that you have to complete. You might already have a clear way of working towards that objective. And we didn't really have. We had, as a team decide on our objective and deciding how we were going to reach it. I think that is almost a completely different team working task of actually writing the article itself. And yeah, I think that it's a great experience for us, though, because I guess, it's more of a teamwork experience. Because you do more aspects of working as a team, not just to do one task. We can carry that forward into our work or our research, we end up writing papers as part of our work.

**David 17:16**

Because like, yeah, kind of, on that whole teamwork process. Because when it comes to so yeah, as Marvin was kind of saying, we're given like a lot of freedom about how we wanted to do this and what we wanted to write about. So the idea like kind of originally, was okay, yeah, we had like a few meetings where we discussed ideas and stuff. So we were first like, Okay, well, there are a few of us who we feel are more closely aligned, like in terms of like, where in the geographic discipline we fall in. So we thought we'd like break the essays into more of like a collection of essays, each with like, its own intro, and conclusion. And that'd be like maybe four or five essays with maybe two people doing one essay, and then two people doing another. I don't really know how.. I can't really remember how it merged into one piece. But we eventually decided that actually, no, we're just gonna write it as one, I think 9000 word article. And then that will, we thought that was like the best route forward. But I think when we did it like that, that's obviously something at least in my experience of uni, I'd never done co-writing before. I'd done group research before, but never the written piece was always something you did by yourself. So I think what came to the fore quite quickly was kind of like voice and your voice and

your writing. And I think all of us have quite distinct voices in the way we write. So when it comes to putting that all together in one document it, you know, reading our first draft, you know, that you could basically kind of read where everyone had, like, done their own section, because you know, the tone would change how the sentence structure would change. But you know, and it was like a process to kind of meld that into a more uniform voice, but whilst also retaining, you know, the diversity of voice because, you know, that's obviously like, the most important thing is that all of us were able to express ideas within the 9000 words. So yeah, I think that was kind of what kind of Sophie was talking about, in terms of like it being really hard. In the project management side, because yeah, just making, you know, all of us basically sound like one person is like, that's a mammoth task to do. And, yeah, that's really hard. So yeah.

**Rita Gayle** 19:20

Thank you. And also just sort of, I guess, moving on from that. I mean, what I've heard a lot is this word of kind of working 'collectively'. About how you kind of are working together. And as you know, geography can be quite a lonely subject if you're a Black geographer, right? So having gone through this experience, how do you feel about geography now? And how do you feel about kind of your future within this discipline, either within the academy or in industry?

**Shubby** 19:54

I'm not sure about within the academy, because yeah, there's a bunch of issues there as well, that I'm not really sure I've actually paid much attention to address really. But outside of it, since I kind of moved out of graduating through this internship straight into work. I think it's been really helpful to have an environment where kind of different Black academics can meet. And we had the opportunity to meet other Black geographers, you know, and across disciplines as well. Sorry, the.. what's it called now?

**Sophie** 20:48

S.C.S.

**Shubby** 20:50

Yes! At that conference. That was a really great conference to actually see other Black academics in their disciplines, as well, whether it's history or art, or to whatever, and know that kind of as a community there. So it's quite helpful when, you know, thinking about geography and looking at topics and looking at discussions and realising that maybe you're not the only person there and kind of you know, there is a solidarity in a way-

**Rita Gayle** 21:20

-Sorry to interrupt but you're making a important point. Did you feel.. so you talked about 'a solidarity' and 'this collective experience'? Did you feel that before? Did you feel you did have that? Was it there? Do you sense that or experienced that before this project?

**Shubby** 21:35

Not at all because to be very honest, brutally honest, it was almost like I wasn't aware of other Black geographers, like, it wasn't even a thought. I was, I think I might be the only in my class or my degree, at least I was the only Black person to my knowledge. There might be one other person in a different

year. I'm not too sure. But in a class of maybe 300 people in the Geography Department taking the course. Yeah, I was very alone in that. And I wasn't really, to me, I've kind of always had the experience. It wasn't necessarily like I noticed it as a big problem. But I didn't really think of it, 'there's a community of Black geographers'. So it's nice to afterwards to kind of have that awareness. And it kind of impacts the way I think and the work I do, and the way I approach things. But yeah, it was like my third eye woke up, essentially. Put it like that.

**Rita Gayle 22:23**

And I open that question up to everybody else. I mean, what's your experiences previously in geography, in comparison to working collectively here on this project, FI WE ROAD?

**Britney 22:37**

Yeah, I mean, same thing, as Shubby. It was a really unique, good like in a really positive way, kind of experience to work with other Black people. Because, like, she said, like, I sit down in a class full of like, white British people, white Europeans, and I get lectured by like an old white British man. And it's like, it's very isolating, you know. I mean, like, you kind of, you're kind of used to it, but you're like, you're still pretty uncomfortable. And like, I just got, I was very excited to just meet all these other, like, Black academics and work with a group of like, other like Black students, as well and do something like this together, because I would never be able to do that in my uni on my own. Yeah. So it was, it was yeah, it was really good.

**David 23:42**

Yeah, I'd like had a similar experience, I went to Durham University, and the Geography Department actually had like, quite a few courses on like, you know, trying to tackle race and you know, think about how race figures in geography. But yeah, it's like different. So like, most of the class would be, it's like a predominantly white class. I think there was like one other I think someone who was non-Black, non-white, rather, in the class. I just remember because there was like, first, I think lecture, I think 90% of it was like this guy in the front row kind of came in and he was like, 'Yeah, well, I just don't really understand how like this systemic racism is like a thing like I don't understand it at all.' Like, I just basically had to like sit there while the lecturer like basically tried to convince this person that like systemic racism is a thing and like it's relevant. And that experience was kind of like, immediately from the jump, you're kind of thinking I'm like, 'Okay, I'm on the race course. But like, who is this for?' If that makes sense? And it's like about how you kind of.. in that space, you're wondering like, okay, because yeah, it was like a bit not distressing. But like, it's a bit shocking that someone like, you know, who has made it into like universities kind of, you know, struggling to think of racism existing and the power structures, no way that doesn't sound like anything I know, I was quite a strange thing to have to deal with in a class. So you kind of sat there, and you're wondering kind of okay, so that people in this class are trying to achieve, you know, racial consciousness, I guess you could say, and you know, it in that process that can be a bit messy, like learning anything, you know, you'll have questions and sometimes your questions won't be, you know, the most well thought out or whatever. But that can be quite damaging to people in the class with you. If you know that you're talking about that experience, you know, I feel you're talking or maybe trying to question whether systematic or systemic racism exists, what does that you know, what effect does that have to any non-white people in the room? So I think that's what I like the FI WE ROAD internship was like, such a rejuvenating kind of experience of like,



thinking about topics of race. Because yeah, I've never had like a Black academic kind of mentor figure before Pat. All of my lecturers have been white beforehand. And yeah, just being able to speak with like the other interns here, about, you know, their experience within, you know, university and just life in general. And getting their insights and perspectives on issues was just like, so refreshing. And, you know, like nothing I've ever experienced at university. So it's like, just really an experience I'm grateful which I had in that regard, because, you know, it was just such a breath of fresh air.

**Sophie 26:16**

I feel like I've had a really similar experience to David. But this after the internship. I don't know whether maybe I've just, I enjoyed being able to speak freely, and have like, deep conversations with the cohort so much. Whenever I've gone back onto my Masters, I'm now seeing issues I didn't either I was ignorant to before, or maybe they didn't happen. And I feel confident that I can say something. So I had an issue with a lecturer calling Black people 'coloured', and I didn't particularly like that language. And I confronted her about it in the middle of the class. And I probably wouldn't have felt confident enough to do it before. And maybe this is the wrong way of seeing but it was quite entertaining to watch a white woman who thought she was in power in the classroom, almost invert on herself, because she realised that she probably said something wrong. And she couldn't quite understand why it was wrong.

**Rita Gayle 27:12**

Yeah, it's good, isn't it? Yeah.

**Sophie 27:14**

Yeah and I was pretty much shaking at the time I was doing. I was so glad I was wearing a mask in the class.

**Rita Gayle 27:18**

It gets easier, don't worry!

**Sophie 27:20**

Yeah. And like two weeks later, I had the same experience with philosophy students who I've now tarnished as just being slightly intolerant as a whole. Maybe I'll be proved wrong. But telling me that, you know, we should still study people who are racists. And philosophy is really easy for Black people to get involved in, because you'll get loads of funding. Basically, just gaslighted me and sort of said, the sort of reverse racism happens that it's harder for white people in their subject now. And I just sort of sat there gobsmacked that I was even having this conversation with students at all, but if I'd had that before, maybe I wouldn't have noticed it and then challenged it. And it obviously escalated, because people don't like to be challenged. But I called them out on their white privilege. I think I actually said that to them. And again, it was quite fun. I felt a bit more confident that time. But it was quite fun to watch three white students who felt very confident, or three white male students particularly feeling very confident of their position, and then suddenly feeling like they were being called a racist. And you watch, obviously, their conversation spiral after that, because they didn't like being called a racist. But I wouldn't have been able to do that without the support of other people who've gone through similar things. And I felt like if I didn't say something now be letting them all down. Because, you know, we're not all capable of speaking out in those, you know, concern for our safety, multiple traumas, like

generations of people in my family haven't said anything. And I felt like I could in that moment, because I felt safe and powerful enough in that classroom setting to do so. And I think this internship has given me that power, in a sense.

**Rita Gayle** 29:05

Really powerful. Does everyone feel that this project has empowered you? Shubby, I'll start with you.

**Shubby** 29:15

Yeah, I was just gonna go off what Sophie said. I mean, mine is in a workplace environment so it's not quite the same. But I think I've definitely become a lot more confident since the internship in terms of speaking out and you know, pulling things out whether it's kind of little jokes or just general kind of company communications, where I think there was one a couple of weeks ago, because obviously, for North Americans, my company currently at now has an American kind of head office and their black history month, I think is in February. So they sent out this email talking about, you know, Black History Month in terms of Canada and North America, in general. And they refer to I think, they refer to like Black people as 'blacks'. And obviously, across the UK, here, I have one other black colleague who, you know, we kind of pointed out the same time. But I think I had a certain confidence, which I wouldn't have necessarily had, if I hadn't felt kind of the solidarity and being in a safe space, such as this one, to be able to respond back and say, yeah, 'probably best not to refer to us, as you know, blacks'. And from that, I was able to have a conversation with someone in the committee whose kind of in a very similar position to, I think most of us in our everyday lives, like the one Black person in this all-white kind of, you know, environment, who's trying to tackle things. And so we're able to have that discussion and kind of move things forward and bring out some change. And I think I wouldn't have felt that confidence to do it, without having seen other peers, and other kind of mentors and mentor figures, going through kind of similar things and seeing the ways in which they kind of spoke up about it. So yeah, definitely, I think, an experience that helped me grow personality wise as well, rather than just academically.

**Rita Gayle** 31:22

Anyone else want to comment on that? It's not I'll move on.

**Britney** 31:25

Yeah, I was just, it just kind of crossed my mind. Like, it's conversations like just like this, you know, like, when we would share our experiences and stuff like that, like, it just felt. So like, it felt so refreshing. And so good to kind of just speak freely, like, just say, all the things that like you've had on the back of your mind, but have kind of maybe been a bit too scared to see around different company. Because you know, you don't want to step on anybody's toes, you don't want to start any kind of difficult conversations. And then being able to have those conversations with like, this cohort and stuff like that, you realise they aren't actually difficult conversations. And that's kind of like, you know, gives you like, it kind of like, almost, it's almost like you got to finally speak your mind. With people who you know, kind of support you see, you feel like you're not alone. And that's why that's when you can get the strength now to like, have those difficult conversations with other people and point out when you disagree, or when they do something wrong. And you need to, like call them out on it. It was very empowering to have a group like this as like a support system.

**Marvin 32:55**

Yeah, I mean, I'll just echo that, really and say that having these sorts of conversations about race, it's definitely become a lot easier through this internship. Those are the sort of conversations that especially growing up in a white area, going to quite a white school, white uni. I think chemistry and that course was predominantly white. I don't really know about my Master's course, because it was all online but not many people of colour there. So these conversations about race are just conversations I've never really had. And for that reason, a bit less wary of having them how people respond when they haven't experienced the same things you experience. And I think going through this internship and having these conversations with you guys has definitely helped me feel a lot more confident and assured in having those conversations and not necessarily feel like I guess sometimes you can doubt your own experiences. You don't you don't speak to other people about those experiences who have experienced them as well. And yeah, that reassurance is definitely helped build that part of my personality and character where I now feel comfortable to speak about those things.

**Rita Gayle 34:03**

Thank you. So do you feel that you're a network now? Of having gone through this experience. Are you going to keep interacting in some way, either through writing or some other forms? What happens for you, this network, this gathering post: FI WE ROAD?

**David 34:24**

I think we was supposed to be meeting I think at some point in the next few weeks, I think there was a I think it was like I plan to do that. And it because yeah, I mean, yeah. Shubby talked about when we met up in London, that's the only time we've met in person. We've obviously spoken a lot over zoom and stuff. But, you know, it was quite a cool experience just to meet people like face to face, because it's a different dynamic. But yeah, so, I mean, I think that's also one of the most valuable things about this internship is that it exposes you to a lot of these networks, which I previously wasn't really aware of, you know. Chiefly, like Black Geographers (@blackgeogorg), has been like one, which I, like now follow them on Twitter. They've been obviously really active with, you know, supporting this internship programme. And yeah, I think that's like, just the thing when you're thinking about kind of Black Futures, you know, within the workplace, within geography, wherever the kind of arena is. It's all about I think, yeah, just knowing that these networks exist. So you know, I know that I have like my FI WE interns. You know, like, probably, if I went back to you in some years, some things to vent, I would definitely be like, on the group chat like guys, 'can't really believe what's just happening!' But yeah, it's yeah, it's that exposure, I think, to just multiple arenas of Black networks So that's Black Geographers and this internship, The Society for Caribbean Studies was like a really cool exposure to you know, but different networks of Black academics for me. And yeah, so that was like such a valuable thing within this internship programme.

**Rita Gayle 36:15**

Do you want to speak, Sophie?

**Sophie 36:17**

I was just gonna say, I actually think the challenge now is to maintain the network, because now we don't have a shared goal. Like our group chats obviously been quiet, because we're not doing stuff. But I think I personally don't want to lose the network that this has given. And whether people stay in academia or not, it's still really valuable because we have this really unique shared experience that we were thrown in together. And generally from like an academic side, you know, Cynthia is doing a PhD. Simi's doing a PhD now. I'm developing connections to have that shared experience with them as well. So I think that it's going to go like the FI WE ROAD. It's our road, our journey, our future, and it's gonna take different directions. But we had that one experience. And even if potentially, we don't speak again, like for me that one experience was enough to know that I finally have some solidarity with other Black people at that moment in time, because I probably never had it before then.

**Rita Gayle 37:20**

Wow, okay. Yeah. It's, think it's important. I mean, this project is an amazing project, as you know, you've gone through it, but me watching it kind of Pat's told me a little bit. You know, I had to set up my own networks, because these things just didn't exist, you know, but it is hard work. It is hard work. But there's a need, you know, and it does support your work. You know, I feel like as a geographer, my work has been enriched by being in a network of other critical Black geographers doing work. So speaking of Pat, he talked a little bit about your experience of working with Pat Noxolo?

**Britney 38:17**

I love Pat!

**Marvin 38:22**

I was gonna say basically the same thing anyways.

**Britney 38:25**

It was amazing. Like, I don't know, I don't know about y'all. But to me, she felt like, like, kind of like my auntie, you know, but like, in like a academic kind of way. She was so helpful and so supportive. And like, I think for sure she was integral to our success, like, fully. And then I also had the added benefit of having her as my mentor. So like, which was absolutely invaluable, like she really spent the time to like, because I again, I was I'm, I think I'm the youngest. I might have been the youngest in the cohort, and I was going from second year into my final year, so I was kind of watching all of my friends, you know, they have they talked about masters and PhDs. And I was like, I don't know, what are we gonna do from here? And she gave me so much guidance and so much great advice. And yeah, I it was absolutely like, invaluable how helpful she was to us.

**Rita Gayle 39:32**

Anyone else, if we could talk about your mentors. You all smiled when I mentioned Pat's name!

**Sophie 39:42**

She's been so good. Like, the fact that she agreed to be my PhD supervisor coming out of this was just amazing. For me, when I saw the email when she sort of hinted that if I didn't find anyone else, she

would be happy. And I was like, 'wait, you're agreeing to be my supervisor? And she's, you know, in the kind of time finishing the project as a group in sort of October, I've been working on my proposal, and trying to deal with AHRC Funding which has caused a lot of stress in its own right. And I think she sat there watching me sob over zoom, because my proposal was 2500 words. And it turns out, it had to be 500 words, and she was so calm, and so chilled, just like 'yep, all done, send it over, and it'd be finished'. And I don't think I would have got through it without someone who was able to stay so calm, and so kind of positive in that situation. And that's how she was the entire project. To even when we were coming to her with sort of like problems and negative things. She managed to make a positive spin on it. And you felt better coming away from the conversation with her.

**David 40:57**

Yeah, I think it's like also related to that thing about, like you talked about, like it's work right to maintain these networks, these black networks. And Pat is like someone who just works tirelessly to maintain this, you know, whether this internship I think is testament to that, like. Not just the willingness to maintain networks but create new ones. And yeah, that was like path through and through like, she's always just, yeah, so kind like it. Yeah, without her I don't know what this internship would have looked like. But she has been so such a big part of its success. And yeah, as you said, we all smile when you had said her name. So yes, you've been so good enough in it.

**Shubby 41:25**

Yeah, just to add on, I feel like I've got to get my own two pence about Pat. She's amazing. Like, honestly, I think I would, I wouldn't be lying if I said she was maybe the first Black female professor I've ever in my life met which is amazing to kind of look up to so to me a real role model. And really someone to kind of look up to and aspire to so amazing to be able to actually meet someone like that and have something like that. I follow her on Twitter. She does like her CARIC work. A lot of stuff really amazing. Like just really, just a real, just really amazing person. Like, I think her wealth of experience and knowledge about the geography, discipline, and her positivity as well. I don't know how she does it. But yeah, just definitely an amazing person. And I'm really glad that she was kind of the one to lead us through this internship. I don't know if we'd have been able to do it with someone else to be honest.

**Marvin 42:38**

Yeah, I feel like everyone's spoken about how calm and positive she was. And that was such a such a big help to us, especially during the writing part of the internship during the writing retreats, I think. Quite a few times where we probably felt like, you know, we've been on zoom talking for two and a half, three hours, and we haven't actually got anywhere, just because conversations had been going round. And people were putting in their opinions, but it felt like we weren't getting to somewhere tangible. And I feel like that Pat always helps us see that, like we had done a lot of work towards achieving our goals in a very positive and calming way. Yeah, throughout the internship, sort of anything we needed, stuff outside of the internship, like, proposals and stuff like that, or just general help with jobs, asking us how meeting things were going with our mentors. Every aspect of and like, I was doing my dissertation as well. And she'd asked me about that. So every aspect of how we were as people inside and outside of the internship, she's invested in and helped us a lot to be successful.

**Rita Gayle 43:52**

You know, as I said earlier, Pat is my supervisor and, and also my first Black teacher, really like formal teacher, you know, and, yeah, I mean, you've worked with her and I've worked with her. I mean, she really is a brilliant scholar, and a great teacher, you know, it's very hard to get the combination of the two in the same person. And, yeah, it's been a fantastic journey with her. To be honest, I can I say, that hasn't already been said. So if we could talk briefly a little bit about your mentors as well, if you want to talk briefly about that. So Britney, you with Pat. So, I'll talk to everybody else who wasn't with Pat.

**Sophie 44:28**

Yeah, I was with Professor Parvati Raghuram. I actually have a book still, because it's been so useful. I took it out of the library and I've stolen it! I'm the only person who has it now. Yeah, she was, we were focusing on like thinking about my PhD because that was sort of overwhelmed by the thought of having to plan a three-year study in sort of, like six months. And she was just really useful in sort of the, like skills that underpin how you create research. And it was very helpful. Now going into doing kind of a more research-based Master's, I've realised that actually, she was so good teaching me how to plan research, that kind of a research design modules really quite rubbish in comparison. Sort of how to approach something, what's your methodological approach and why you can come up with methodological problems. My undergrad dissertation did not even deal with a single issue like that, I just sort of wrote it and pulled it together. And it came out with the first but you know, I think undergrad is very much like that, you sort of just do it. And as long as you write it, well, you will do reasonably well in it. But masters and PhD, it's an art form. And the way she spoke about it was, was exactly that she just described the process in such a way that made me want to learn about it. And before, I would have told you that that would have been really boring, and dull. And I just wanted to look at kind of my data and my analysis. So that's been really, really helpful. And she keeps sending me interesting, like conferences I might like to attend. And all sorts of just random things that she thinks might interest me. So we've kind of maintained some sort of communication, albeit not very regularly. But afterwards, we're kind of back and forth a little bit, which has been really nice.

**David 46:30**

Yeah, I think that's like one of the cool things, which is I think everyone used their mentors a bit differently. So I my mentor was Dr. Caroline Bressey at UCL. And she does, I think it's like cultural and historical geography. That's kind of like a field. But yeah, we only really talked about like, academic stuff, probably for the first 15 minutes, you have three meetings, and probably only a bit of it, of the first meeting was talking about academic stuff. We more like focused on because I was Yeah, I was trying to try to get a job. And I really didn't my careers department. I didn't go that much when I was at university. So I felt a bit out in the cold after I graduated. And yeah, she was just really helpful in like, basically, you know, helping me make my CV like, as good as it could be. Just giving me like advice about like, how, how to navigate the workplace and stuff like this. And, yeah, see, whenever I do the, like a job application, I always say my CV is good so I that's I attribute that her but it falls apart later! But the first stage is always good. And that's largely because she helped me so much, you know, get like at least my ducks in a row before I started applying to things so that was like a really helpful experience for me

**Rita Gayle 47:43**

And Marvin, could you talk about your mentor?

**Marvin 47:46**

Yeah, I had quite a similar experience to David. My mentor was Dr Nigel de Noronha. He works at Manchester University. And but I think what I gained from him in the most part was his background in like working in industry and sort of policy related roles. And being on the other side of job applications assessments and things like that. I spoke with him a lot about firstly, during the internship what I wanted to get out of it. What sort of skills I could take with me into the workplace? And then after the internship he still helps me a lot with my applications. He's helped me prepare with some of my applications, giving me advice before assessments and things like that. It's great to have a relationship with someone like that, especially black academic, because that is the sort of recurring theme. None of us really had an experience with black academics until this internship, so it is great to have someone like be there for you.

**Shubby 48:58**

I had Dr. Margaret Byron, University of Leicester. And yeah, she was amazing. Again, I kind of well used my relationship with her differently to everyone else. I think we all did it uniquely. So she really helped in kind of understanding my approach to things and who I kind of was as a person, which helped to, kind of which helped me with pointing out my strengths and understanding kind of how to relate with people, how to relate with my work, etc. And also just to have understand how academia was, the environment of academia, if I actually wanted to do it. Because at the time, I was preparing, applying for jobs, but I wasn't too sure if I should go for a masters ahead of like, you know, go for Masters instead, or try and go for a PhD, etc. Because there's still things I do want to get done. But I was kind of in that position where I wasn't too sure how to get to it if I was actually ready for it. So by having those conversations with her I was actually able to understand that maybe, you know, you don't have to kind of follow the structure of like a, undergrad, master's, PhD. If you'd like academia, it's just when it fits with your time, if it fits with your personality, if you're actually ready to research something. So a really good mentor to have in terms of kind of, I guess, life in general. And I quite liked how kind of frank she was about things. She didn't kind of sugarcoat things, or, you know, try and be diplomatic, which is quite nice and refreshing to have.

**Rita Gayle 50:35**

Margaret's wonderful really. Just a very wise person. And, yeah, she's absolutely fantastic. So I'm just gonna come up to the close now of sort of winding up to the close. And I really want to talk about the legacy of the project. So obviously, you've all got a lot out of it. You formed this great network. You produced this article. We'll talk a little bit about the article before I come on to the last bit. So I guess this is part of the legacy. So how do you want people? What do you hope people get from the article you've developed collectively?

**David 51:36**

So I think, the article, so the article was kind of our kind of take on sustainability discourses, I think, what the kind of macro thing we wanted to do was kind of have a starting point for a new way to think about sustainability. So we kind of refer to it as like setting an agenda. So in the article, we refer to this

as Black sustainability. And, you know, for us, for me, it was kind of like Black sustainability, can kind of give us a mode to like reimagine praxis, when it comes to sustainability in a way that can kind of allow Black Futures to unfold differently, you know, in a climate change affected future. So, kind of when we think about how systems of power and stuff kind of person can persevere or rearrange themselves, so that, you know, they're able to withstand, you know, big changes, like climate change and stuff. For me, Black sustainability was kind of being like, Ah No. I think sustainability should be something which enables us to reimagine not just how we see the future, but how we do things in that future. And, you know, that can be a future where anti blackness and black violence can no longer be so prevalent within society and you know, can be extinguished. And for me, I think that hopefully, is the legacy of the project is just maybe to have people be like, oh, yeah, well, that's, kind of a cool reimagining of, you know, sustainability discourses, and, you know, a cool rethink of, of maybe the power of just, you know, being critical of discourses, and trying to reimagine what, you know, a climate change, affected future could look like basically.

**Rita Gayle 53:19**

Anyone else? Sophie.

**Sophie 53:21**

I would say, I think for me, like, if I found out that in 10 years' time that somebody who's been studying geography and sustainability, you know, like my issues with sustainability discourse, before then, was that it was really unnuanced and not very critical of itself, and really centred around a very specific type of sustainability, a very western centric, very white centric sustainability. And, you know, if in a few years' time somebody who's doing their undergrad actually happens upon our paper. And that actually is something that they can see their future in, that would be the legacy for me. Because if I'd had that different viewpoint in a legitimate form of knowledge, during my undergrad, I probably would have been more open to engaging with things like sustainability science and that side of geography, but because it wasn't, I completely closed that door, in terms of like an academic subject. So I think if you can give people that reimagining, in a legitimate way, and I know maybe that's a problem in itself, but we are all in kind of academic circles. And we want knowledge comes from places that it's legitimised and that's really important and it you know, if they then see it, and they look and realise that it was written by undergrads, post grads, Black students, you know, is it's an extra form of representation and journal literature that maybe they've never seen before. I mean, I think I wrote my whole dissertation on race. I think most people who were writing about race happens to also be white. You know, it's, you don't get that representation. And I think it's a different form of representation. But when you're in that world, it's equally important.

**Rita Gayle 55:05**

Anyone else would like to comment on? Marvin.

**Marvin 55:09**

Yeah, I agree with both of what David and Sophie said. I think it's really important, that sort of legacy of the paper takes into account that we are people that wouldn't usually be seen in the literature or academia, writing about those particular subjects. And also, the paper inspires a different way of looking at the future. I also think that the legacy of the different perspective, we take on sustainability



from a more sort of social and cultural viewpoint of the effects of sustainability, both now and in the future, and how it's applied, and how that knowledge is actually generated, is one factor to what the message we're trying to get across in the paper. Just our perspective, on its own is somewhat part of the legacy.

**Rita Gayle 56:05**

Shubby and I'll come to you, next Britney.

**Shubby 56:08**

Yeah, going off what David, Sophie and Marvin have said, I think the legacy is, for me two different things. It's kind of having that almost like a history, or I don't know how to describe it. Yeah, just having that kind of imprint that, you know, I would never have imagined or expected. I never have read kind of something from people like us, in literature about these issues, in particular. And I think that kind of showed as we was struggling to find Black academics in the literature we were researching as well. So I think that's quite important to have. I think that will kind of shape the way hopefully, academics, especially undergrads, and you know, fresh academics can engage with the literature on the subject. But then for me as well, I'm hoping that the legacy can also be really practical, quote, unquote, in terms of the real world, quote, unquote. In terms of, you know, careers, and in the organisations or companies actually, you know, engaging with climate change and sustainability, etcetera, I'm hoping that it can be kind of a pointer in terms of what they need to be keeping in mind. So I'm moving, I think I mentioned for moving jobs. I'm moving into engineering, energy, etcetera, consultancy firm. And when I was doing my interview, I mentioned this internship as well, kind of what I'd learned and what hoped to kind of take into it. And they were really interested in that, because they were able to say that we've actually neglected that. So I'm hoping that not just you know, for this company, but for other organisations, as well supposedly involved with this and supposed to be kind of turning our academic literature into reality, or policy, I'm hoping that actually makes a difference in the way people think and approach what they do. And I'm hoping as well, in terms of education as well that, you know, younger students can actually, you know, look at it and think, 'Oh, well, you know, I've been thinking about climate change and sustainability this way. But maybe I should think about it that way instead?' So, yeah, I'm hoping that can actually help in terms of practical change, and action, as well, just as a pointer is a guide, maybe.

**Rita Gayle 58:34**

Brittany.

**Britney 58:36**

Yeah, I mean, I agree with everything that has been said already. Like, it's, it was it to me, it was like, you know, a really a fresh take on this thing that you just kind of passively learn about in school called sustainability. Like, what is it? I think that was one thing that even came up, but because it's such a buzzword, we were having trouble defining it. We didn't even know what it was like, people just talk about it. Like all the time. And yeah, so that was that was really important as well. Like kind of a wake-up call, you know, to really think about what it is and, like all the effects of it in all these different disciplines. And for me, personally, one of the most important things was actually getting that link between geography and geoscience. Because, like, I have a I remember in my first year of UCL. I

remember we had a lecturer. I can't remember what he was lecturing about. But I remember him getting us talking about climate change, he got so frustrated, he was like, 'Oh, we've been warning everybody about this and that for decades'. And to me, it's just like, why is it such a disconnect between like, what all these scientists are saying? What's going to happen? And then, you know, the people who kind of are supposed to, like create policies and kind of translate it into the real world, you know? So that was important for me to kind of link the two disciplines, because that's the only way that we're actually going to solve any problems is if we work together.

**Rita Gayle** 1:00:25

That's a really beautiful point to end.

**End** 1:00:31