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University of Birmingham opens new Centre for Research in Race and Education.

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Twenty years after the death of black teenager Stephen Lawrence, his mother, Doreen Lawrence will help launch a new Centre for Research in Race and Education at the University of Birmingham.

The Centre aims to pursue race equality and social justice by working to close gaps in educational achievement and career prospects of black and minority ethnic people. It is the first institution of its kind in England.

Speaking at the launch on Thursday 21 February, Mrs Lawrence is due to say: “We know that there remains a persistent gap between the number of white and black students achieving a first class degree. We know that it will be considerably harder for graduates with names that sound non-English to secure a job compared with their white counterparts. We also know from available research that qualifications and a so-called ‘good accent’ are not enough to protect you from racism…

“By opening this Centre the university has taken a bold and necessary action in a climate where race is no longer on the political agenda.”

The centre will play a leading role in the field, both nationally and internationally.

Professor David Gillborn, director of the new centre, said: “There is a widespread assumption that racism is no longer an issue in education but across the board in experiences and outcomes in primary, secondary and higher education, there remain significant ethnic inequalities.

“However, race is no longer on the political agenda in the way that it was. Despite the lessons of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry, too many people still assume that racism only relates to the behavior of a few obvious bigots: but research consistently shows how racism can operate in subtle ways, even when people have the best intentions. The Centr

e aims to work with a wide range of people – from parents and pressure groups, to policy-makers and teachers – with the aim of better understanding and combating racism in education.”

Dr Nicola Rollock, deputy director of the Centre, added: “Race and racism are often seen as being only about issues of Far Right extremism or the random rant of a person on a train. In fact race and racism shape the lives of many Black and minority ethnic groups. Working closely with our partners, the Centre will provide a space for debate and high quality research aimed at improving the outcomes and experiences for these groups and ultimately helping to address inequalities in our society.”

A spokesperson for the Stephen Lawrence Charitable Trust said: “The Stephen Lawrence Charitable Trust and the Centre for Research in Race & Education share a commitment to challenging race equality and improving the educational outcomes and career experiences of Black and minority ethnic groups. We are currently discussing the development of a new joint initiative and are excited at the prospect of working closely together in the future.”

Ends

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Note to Editors

The Centre for Research in Race & Education is led by Professor David Gillborn (Director), Dr Nicola Rollock (Deputy Director) and Dr Paul Warmington (Deputy Directory).

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