

**Editorial introduction by Professor Gillian Rose: Diversity and Inclusion**

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I love writing and so it's wonderful to see Routes as a new platform for emerging geographers to share their essays. As the editorial in the first issue said, what geographers write about is incredibly diverse: this issue includes topics that range from Malaysian mosques to Indian microclimates, to mention just a few.

So it might seem rather perverse to ask if geography writing is diverse enough. But that's a question the discipline has been grappling with for some time now. Do geographers write from sufficiently diverse viewpoints? And – relatedly – are geography authors themselves sufficiently diverse?

As my colleagues Steve Puttick and Amber Murrey-Ndewa argued in a recent essay, geography is a very white discipline. It attracts fewer BME students at GCSE and A level than many other subjects, and even fewer at university level, particularly in research intensive universities outside London like mine (though the numbers in both schools and universities are on an upward trend). School geography curricula don't discuss race as an issue. There are also very few BME lecturers and professors in university geography departments. This is not a problem exclusive to geography, it should be said. Last year, there were 21,000 professors in UK universities and only 140 of those 21,000 professors identified as black (and of those, only 25 identified as female).

Does this matter? Of course it does, for many reasons and in many ways. In this short editorial I'm going to look at just one of them.

I was doing my undergraduate degree when the first book on feminist geography was published, in 1984. Feminist geographers then were very clear that because there were so few women geographers in the discipline at that time, geography neglected many topics that were likely to be of much more interest to women than to men because in most societies, they were the things women were seen as most responsible for: childcare, for example, domestic geographies, geographies of education, formal politics. And what it did study, it studied in a particular way: apparently objective but actually making generalised claims about the social world that didn't stack up if women's experiences were taken into account.

The same argument applies to other kinds of social diversity, including race. If geography is being written overwhelmingly by white folk, then it's unlikely to be sufficiently attentive to issues that are felt especially keenly by many black communities. And as a result, it's not going to be very good geography.

Since the 1980s, feminist geographers have been joined by geographers interested in the experiences of LGBTQ+ lives, of people living with disabilities, of immigrant lives, for example, and, to some extent, by geographers interested in issues of race and racism. And I would argue that, as a result, geography itself has become an immeasurably more insightful. As geographers, we understand the world much better if we are attentive to, and write about, a world that is diverse all the way down. And that is much more likely to happen if geographers are diverse too.

And in case you think this refers only to human geography, Stephen Tooth and Heather Viles have recently made very similar arguments in relation to physical geography. Deciding what to research and how are not neutral decisions for geomorphologists either, and making scientifically robust and socially-relevant decisions also requires input sensitive to diverse points of view.

In relation to race, geography clearly has a long way to go, particularly in terms of who writes the discipline. But along with organisations like Black Geographers and others, I'm sure Routes will be part of changing that, giving an early platform for a new generations of geographers to re-write and re-build the discipline once more.

### **General resources on anti-racism and geography**

The Black Geographers website is here: <https://www.blackgeographers.com/>

There's a podcast with two members of Black Geographers here:  
<https://www.rgs.org/schools/teaching-resources/a-conversation-with-francisca-rockey-and-louis-smi/>

Resources related to anti-racism in school geography: <https://medium.com/oxford-university/working-towards-anti-racist-school-geography-in-britain-8b16a94e25ba>

## References

The Royal Geographical Society reported on 'The Geography of Geography' in 2019 and their report is here: <https://www.rgs.org/geography/key-information-about-geography/geographyofgeography/report/geography-of-geography-report-web.pdf/>

Puttick, S., & Murrey, A. (2020) Confronting the deafening silence on race in geography education in England: learning from anti-racist, decolonial and Black geographies. *Geography*, 105(3), 126–134.

The Guardian, 27 Feb 2020 <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2020/feb/27/fewer-than-1-of-uk-university-professors-are-black-figures-show> (Accessed 8 December 2020).

Tooth S and Viles HA (2020) Equality, diversity, inclusion: ensuring a resilient future for geomorphology, *Earth Surface Processes and Landforms*, Online First (Accessed December 8, 2020).

Women and Geography Study Group of the IBG (1984) *Geography and Gender: An Introduction to Feminist Geography*. London: Hutchinson in association with The Explorations in Feminism Collective.