

Channel 4



The
Black
to
Front
Project





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Introduction

The Black to Front Project

Channel 4 was created to champion unheard voices. To stand up for diversity and challenge the status quo.



That's why, on 10 September 2021, we issued a bold intervention, disrupting our entire programming schedule to showcase Black talent, both on and off screen.

It was a takeover on an epic scale. The day kicked off with joyful nostalgia – a revival of the sitcom *Desmond's*. Iconic morning programme *The Big Breakfast* was resurrected for the first time since 2002, with comedian Mo Gilligan and presenter AJ Odudu hosting alongside original newsreader Phil Gayle. *Channel 4 News* featured an all-Black presenting and reporting team. All our regular shows across the day, from *Celebrity Gogglebox* and *Hollyoaks* to *Countdown* and *Love It or List It*, were reimaged to put Black stories and Black voices front and centre.

We featured brilliant, brand-new shows too, including *Big Age* from up-and-coming writer Bolu Babalola; late-night talk show *Unapologetic*, which we have since recommissioned; and docu-reality show *Highlife*.

We went beyond editorial content and into commercial airtime, only broadcasting adverts that featured either a Black lead character or a majority Black cast.

And we worked hard with our indie partners to recruit from outside their usual networks and bring in more Black talent behind the cameras.

Black to Front reached 11.6% of the TV population. It entertained, challenged and provoked viewers. It forced an important national conversation around Black representation and inclusion. And it made the entire broadcasting industry face up to the uncomfortable truth: it is still not diverse enough.

The day was just the start. It was an electric shock to spark change. We know there is still a huge amount of work to be done, commitments to be achieved and new talent to unearth. Working closely with The Sir Lenny Henry Centre for Media Diversity, we will continue to amplify Black voices in front of and behind the cameras – and make sure the Black to Front Project leaves a lasting legacy.

Ian Katz
Chief Content Officer Channel 4

The idea

Shaminder Nahal



What if you switched on your telly one day, and every single show – from breakfast right through to late night – featured Black talent?

This was the question posed by Channel 4 Commissioning Editors Vivienne Molokwu and Shaminder Nahal in the summer of 2020, following the brutal murder of George Floyd in the US.

“That appalling event forced us to look at ourselves as a broadcaster. It pushed us to reflect on the shortcomings of the entire industry when it comes to representation. And it made us confront the systemic racism and injustice Black people continue to face,” says Shaminder. “We kept thinking, ‘What can we do to respond?’ We didn’t want to have a series of talks and no action. We wanted to make noise. We wanted to have a real impact.”

Vivienne Molokwu



“Hope isn’t a strategy,” adds Vivienne. “We knew we had to do something that was completely unconventional to challenge viewing perceptions and supercharge change.”

Transforming the look of the entire channel in this way was an audacious idea. It would involve every slot, every genre and every corner of Channel 4. No other broadcaster had attempted this before.

But we’re used to taking creative risks. Channel 4 was created to be an innovative and rebellious force in UK broadcasting. We wouldn’t just tweak traditional programming. We would take a sledgehammer to it.

Vivienne and Shaminder presented their plan to Sarah Lazenby, Channel 4’s former Head of Features & Formats, and Kelly Webb-Lamb, former Deputy Director of Programmes, and after extensive conversations with Ian Katz, it was given the go-ahead. “It felt like an opportunity to make a genuine impact,” says Kelly. “We knew it wasn’t going to be easy and we knew we’d come up against criticism. But if we’d been too worried about the day being perfect, we wouldn’t have taken the leap. We had to be brave and just jump off the cliff.”

The trio set up a core team, bringing in Channel 4’s former Head of Creative Diversity Babita Bahal

and Director of Commissioning Operations Emma Hardy, and started to set the wheels in motion. Backed by Chief Content Officer Ian Katz, the scale – and ambitions – of the project got bigger and bolder.

From the voices that introduce the shows to the people appearing on screen, across social and All 4, the entire day would be fronted by Black talent. As well as commissioning new shows, we would reimagine some of our most popular, iconic programmes, putting Black people at the heart of them.

We vowed to transform the entire commercial schedule for the day too, by only broadcasting adverts featuring either a Black lead character or a majority Black cast.

But this wasn’t just about on screen representation. We promised to use this event to supercharge change in Black representation off screen too. We promised to maximise Black representation behind the camera, providing genuine opportunities for Black talent to progress their careers and have creative power.

The Black to Front Project was a chance to amplify the conversations around representation and diversity. To blow up ‘business as usual’ and create change through entertainment.

The Big Breakfast



How we did it

Inside Channel 4

Delivering the Black to Front project took over a year of planning and saw all departments across the channel come together in an unprecedented way to pull it off. From sales through to marketing, it compelled every person within the organisation to relook at the programmes we make, and how we make them. The core team met up each week and consulted with The Collective, our employee resource group, every step of the way.

“It was a real team effort,” says Maria St Louis, Agency Sales Manager and co-Chair of The Collective. “We were fully involved in the whole process. I’m super-proud of the way we made space for honest conversations, always being a force for good and helping to keep the project authentic at all times.”



Outside Channel 4

We knew we couldn’t do this alone. It would take the might and support of all of our partners to pull this off, and we would need to look outside the industry for impartial advice. “We recognised from the outset that, to achieve the change we wanted to see, we had to do something different. We needed an approach that would stretch us and our indie partners to do way more than has been done before. We needed an impartial, independent, credible partner who would guide us and challenge us,” explains Babita.

And so we turned to The Sir Lenny Henry Centre for Media Diversity (LHC) at Birmingham City University, asking them to help us shape something that would significantly increase Black representation behind the camera for years to come.

“Our job was to be the ‘critical friend’ throughout the process – to really interrogate what Channel 4 was doing and to make sure they created a legacy, as opposed to just making a splash,” says Marcus Ryder MBE, Head of External Consultancies at LHC.

Based on recommendations from LHC, we committed to: maximise Black representation on new commissions on the day; support indies to increase Black representation on existing shows; support Black talent via funded progression placements; monitor staff spend of Black to Front shows; capture Black to Front learnings; and help indies to widen their talent pools to include more Black talent.

How we did it (continued)



I've heard a lot of commissioners say, 'There's not enough Black talent out there.' I think that's nonsense. I don't want to hear anyone say that ever again. Across the board, we've proven that's not true.



Big Age

The talent

We've always known that Britain's got Black TV talent. But Black people are still glaringly absent behind the scenes in our industry. We were on a mission to challenge and change the status quo.

We did a mass callout to Black talent. From TV presenters and actors, to editors and producers, we made a Herculean effort to build a new database of contacts. "It was a really complex job," says Shaminder. "You're talking about unpicking groups and crews that often go from one project to the next."

"People tend to get hired off the back of their last job. It's always a last-minute scramble. If you're not already part of a network, it can be very hard to get hired," agrees Vivienne. "We worked really collaboratively with indies across the country to recruit differently. To look beyond CVs. To break those established networks."

TV Talent North founder Victoria Roye, who helped to manage Channel 4's talent strategy for the Black to Front Project, says we received more than 3,000 emails from people interested in taking part. "We were genuinely filled with joy at the response and read through every single email," she says. "We encouraged everyone to sign up to freelance database Talentbases, so that the whole industry has access to a much wider, richer and diverse mix of talent."

"I've heard a lot of commissioners say, 'There's not enough Black talent out there.' I think that's nonsense. I don't want to hear anyone say that ever again," adds Kelly. "Across the board, we've proven that's not true."

The Great House Giveaway



Black to Front should be the kick in the derriere to all British broadcasters and brands that Black talent exists, and we are not a turn off. We are a reason to switch on... The more the content we crave reflects the lives and voices of the breadth of people who live and work here, the more our media will thrive.

Marverine Cole, Countdown

How we did it (continued)



The Big Breakfast



Big Age

The criticism

Not everyone loved the idea of the Black to Front Project. Some people dubbed it “gimmicky”. Others said “it won’t make a blind bit of difference” or described it as “insulting” and “performative tokenism”.

“We knew the Black to Front Project wasn’t a golden bullet. It was never intended to be a super-fix where everyone would clap and cheer, then we would take a bow and forget all about it,” says Vivienne. “There was no roadmap to go by for this – we had to figure a lot of it out as we went along – but we were always set on a path of doing greater good.”

We listened and responded to the criticism and concerns. We stuck to our guns. We held our nerve. “By its very nature, you can see how easily people would think this was a gimmick and to ignore that would be insanity. It would have been tokenistic if it was only the day – but the day was never the end,” adds Vivienne. “We had a united vision of what we wanted to achieve and the challenge was hearing those voices who wanted us to change direction and weighing up whether to fight that particular fight.”



There was no roadmap to go by for this – we had to figure a lot of it out as we went along – but we were always set on a path of doing greater good.

On the day: the programmes

Highlife

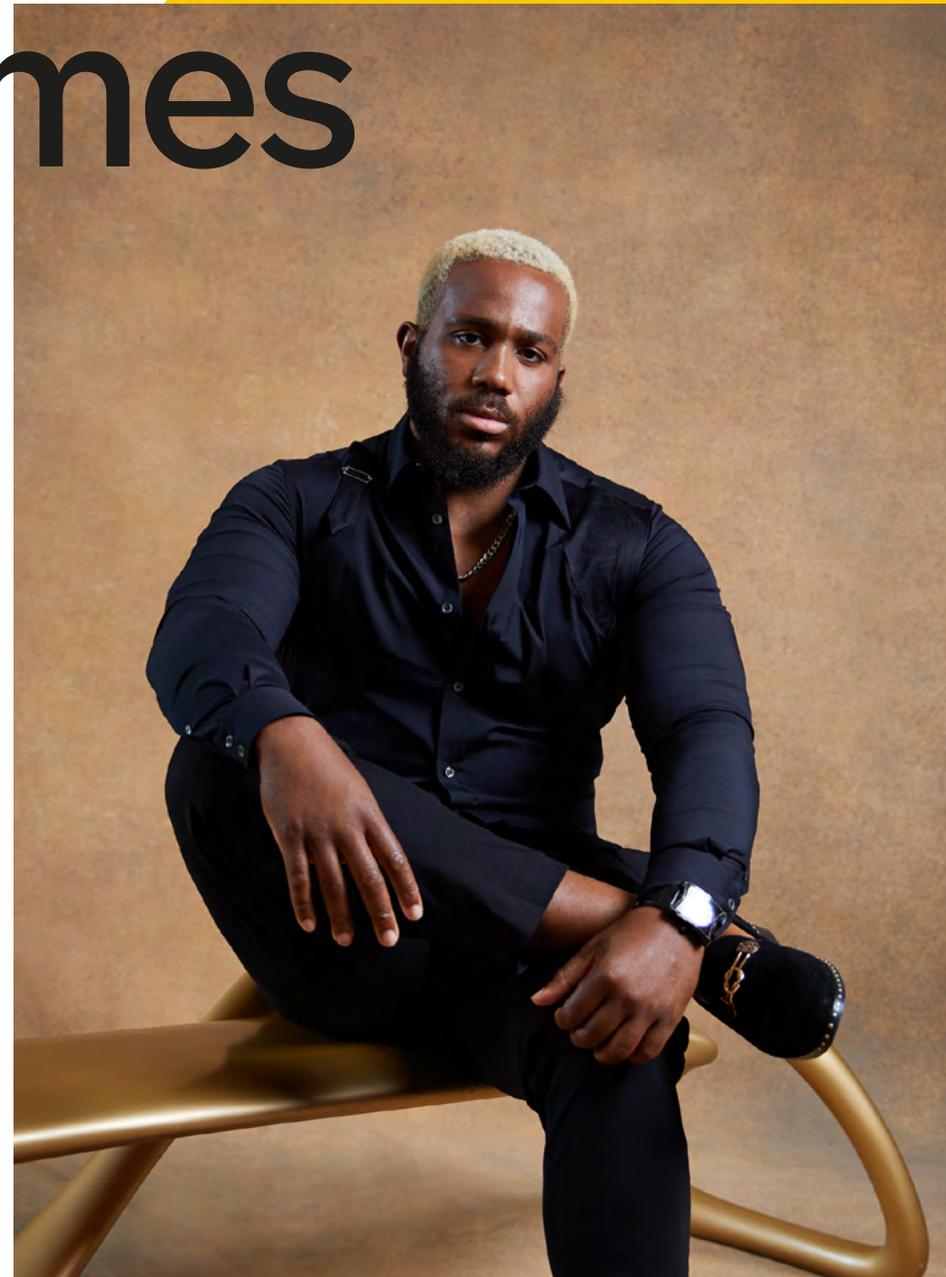


Unapologetic

We set out to celebrate Black culture, portray the everyday Black experience and reflect the cultural diversity of Britain. Here's a snapshot of our shows.

New shows

- *The Big Breakfast*: BAFTA award-winning comedian Mo Gilligan was joined by co-host AJ Odudu and original newsreader Phil Gayle, live from the show's original East London location, the Lock Keepers' Cottages. The programme and presenters won two RTS awards.
- *Big Age*: Comedy pilot from up-and-coming writer Bolu Babalola, about four young Black-British friends of Nigerian heritage in their 30s.
- *Unapologetic*: A late-night topical discussion programme hosted by DJ and presenter Yinka Bokinni and social media star and presenter Zeze Millz.
- *Highlife*: A group of ambitious, glamorous young British West Africans chase their own idea of success in this four-part docu-reality series.



On the day: the programmes (continued)



Love It or List It

Existing shows

- *Celebrity Gogglebox*: The show returned with a high-profile Black cast including Tinie Tempah, Maya Jama, Charlene White, Jourdan Dunn and Wretch 32.
- *Mel B's Packed Lunch*: Former Spice Girl Melanie Brown made her live presenting debut, taking the helm of the lunchtime show *Steph's Packed Lunch*.
- *Hollyoaks*: A special one-hour edition, written by Hollyoaks core team writer Thabo Mhlatshwa, directed by Patrick Robinson, and anchored around the pivotal Black Deveraux family.
- *Countdown*: Sir Trevor McDonald was joined by acclaimed poet and playwright Lemn Sissay OBE, journalist and beer sommelier Marverine Cole and maths prodigy Dr Anne-Marie Imafidon MBE.
- *Love It or List It*: Scarlett Douglas and her brother Stuart took the presenting reins from Phil Spencer and Kirstie Allsopp for a special version of this hit property show.
- *The Great House Giveaway*: Tayo Oguntonade joined the presenting team to offer advice and handy tips to DIY hopefuls.
- *A Place In the Sun*: Jean Johansson whisked us away to the sunny shores of Marbella in Spain with house hunters Clement and Tracey-Anne.
- *Channel 4 News*: Ayshah Tull and Keme Nzerem put modern Britain under a forensic lens before a live audience with agenda-setting interviews, high-profile guests and exclusive public-interest journalism. The programme was led behind the scenes by Symeon Brown (editor-in-chief) and Toby Bakare (head of output). This news coverage went on to receive a BAFTA nomination.



Hollyoaks

Countdown



Case study: Scarlett Douglas



The day itself felt like Christmas. It was an honour and a privilege to be involved.

TV presenter Scarlett Douglas and her brother Stuart, a former professional footballer, fronted hit property show *Love It or List It* as part of the Black to Front Project.

The siblings have always had a passion for property and have been running a successful property development, interior design and renovation business for 15 years, making them the perfect pair to help fed-up homeowners decide whether to renovate or sell their property for a new one.

Scarlette, who has been presenting *A Place in The Sun* since 2015, admits she was initially sceptical about the Black to Front Project: "Like a lot of people, I was a bit dubious and wanted to know exactly what it meant. Was it just to tick a box? Was it something that would be just for a day and then nothing would come of it? But, after chatting to Channel 4, I soon realised that it's a genuine initiative. They're trying to leave a lasting legacy – and I think that's brilliant."

In this special version of the programme, the siblings took the presenting reins from Kirstie Allsopp and Phil Spencer, and helped Norbert and Shammie Nyandebvu decide the future of their four-bed semi in Ipswich.

While Norbert loved the house and thought it could become their dream home with a few changes, Shammie was convinced they had outgrown the property and longed for a detached house in a village location with an open-plan kitchen and a second bathroom.

In a battle of the siblings, Scarlett joined forces with Shammie for 'Team List it', while Stuart sided with Norbert on 'Team Love it'.

"I relished the opportunity to go head-to-head with my brother on such an historic day!" says Scarlett. "Stuart isn't a presenter but Channel 4 spotted his charm and personality, and took a risk. I could tell they were really invested in bringing in new and fresh Black talent."

"The day itself felt like Christmas," she adds. "It was an honour and a privilege to be involved."

This new on-screen property partnership will return to our screens as Scarlett and Stuart co-host new Channel 4 show *George Clarke's Flipping Fast*, a six-part competition series which offers aspiring property entrepreneurs the chance to start their own business.

"I thrive on being an advocate of change," says Scarlett. "It's no longer a shocker to see Black people on primetime travel and property shows. We're no different or any less capable than anyone else."



Love It or List It



It's no longer a shocker to see Black people on primetime travel and property shows. We're no different or any less capable than anyone else.

Case study: Channel 4 News



Channel 4 News



If we want real change,
we need Black people in
decision-making positions.



The Black to Front
Project was a success.
It proved there's Black
talent out there.

When Channel 4 asked journalist and reporter Symeon Brown to take part in a special news programme for the Black to Front Project, he agreed on one condition. He wanted to be in charge.

"I didn't just want to front the show – that's already my day job. I wanted creative power," he says.

And so he took the helm as editor-in-chief of Channel 4 News, with the ambition of "elevating what you can do with a news programme".

"I wanted to create a BAFTA-winning show that was intelligent and provocative," he explains. "The idea was to put modern Britain under a forensic lens. To source stories and agenda-setting interviews about the country's past, present and future to really capture the cultural mood."

Presented, produced and edited by an all-Black senior team, the programme kicked off with a feature on Nigeria's battle to reclaim the Benin Bronzes, a historic collection of thousands of artefacts looted by British forces more than 100 years ago. Off the back of that story, the Nigerian government served a legal letter to the British Museum demanding that the bronzes be returned.

The show also included interviews with Scotland First Minister Nicola Sturgeon; Chair of the Equality and Human Rights Commission, Baroness Falkner; and the Queen's first Black Lord-Lieutenant for Greater London, Sir Kenneth Olisa, who revealed that the Queen "easily" supports the Black Lives Matter movement. "The stories we broke became the week's biggest scoops," says Symeon.

According to *The Guardian*, the programme felt "genuinely revolutionary"; it was "an inspiring glimpse into what could be – and should be – happening in newsrooms on a monthly basis at the very least."

"The Black to Front Project was a success. It proved there's Black talent out there," says Symeon. "But we need to make sure there's a long-term impact. Where are the Black CEOs? Where are the Black executive producers? Who owns the production companies? If we want real change, we need Black people in decision-making positions."

Case study: Unapologetic



The Black to Front Project is about amplifying Black voices and talent in front of and behind the screen – and above all about making this part of an ongoing conversation.

Shaminder Nahal, Channel 4

Unapologetic didn't hold back.

The show where guests were encouraged to say what they want – without apologising – made its debut on Channel 4 as a new commission for the Black to Front Project on 10 September.

Hosted by DJ and presenter Yinka Bokinni and social media star and presenter Zeze Millz, the energetic late-night topical discussion programme tackled issues such as Black Lives Matter, football, racism, colourism, and featured guests including Terry Crews, Troy Deeney and Gary Younge.

The legacy

Unapologetic wasn't a show about Black people, it was a show where Black people could talk freely about everything, offering views on the big issues of the day; as well as topics such as cultural appropriation, sex, relationships and parenting, and what's making news on social media.

Featuring guests from the worlds of politics and popular culture as well as the people who've been at the heart of controversies themselves, the programme challenged ideas of what Black people are allowed to say and what is off-limits.

Recognised for its potential, the highly successful pilot was a new show from the Black to Front Project which has since been recommissioned.

Unapologetic returned as a six-part series, produced by SBTV and Cardiff Productions, offering new views on existing subjects as well as bringing new subjects and voices to the table.

"It's time to shake things up and bring new views to the mainstream. *Unapologetic* represents the viewpoints of my generation in a provocative and entertaining style," says SBTV's Jamal Edwards. "We're thrilled that the pilot was so successful and excited to be producing more episodes."



Unapologetic



Unapologetic is a rare space in UK television that allows Black voices on the right, left and centre debate the issues that matter to them with each other and on their own terms.

Pat Younge, Cardiff Productions

Case study: Highlife



Highlife



The series is an authentic, relatable, beautiful portrayal of Black British life, which isn't trashy or depressing. It speaks to young people and it sets a bar.



There is always so much more that could be done. But I believe that liberation is coming and it will take all these 'chips' to bring it about.

Highlife was the first Black British reality show to hit our screens.

Co-produced by CR8TIVE ROW and Optomen as part of the Black to Front Project, the four-part docu-ality series followed the personal and professional lives of a group of ambitious young West African Brits, including jewellery designer Chiefer, celebrity make-up artist Bernicia and billionaire's daughter, philanthropist and Apple Music DJ, Cuppy.

The show was glossy and glamorous – without a gang or gun in sight. “We’ve had brilliant shows like *Top Boy* and *Chewing Gum*, which are confined to council estates, and we’ve had ‘Black trauma porn’ on racial violence and slavery. But, up until now, we haven’t had a single British Black show

that is aspirational. And that’s just dishonest,” says BAFTA-nominated film-maker Luti Fagbenle, who worked as an executive producer on *Highlife* alongside his brother Daps.

Luti says *Highlife* is representative of his own experience as a Nigerian Brit from a “very ambitious family”. “The series is an authentic, relatable, beautiful portrayal of Black British life, which isn’t trashy or depressing. It speaks to young people and it sets a bar.”

He describes the Black to Front Project as a “f**king brilliant idea” and a “daring initiative”. “When you try to confront the mountain of racial oppression and injustice, the solutions will only ever chip away at the issue. There is always so much more that could be done. But I believe that liberation is coming and it will take all these ‘chips’ to bring it about.”

Highlife was created in partnership with Google Pixel, the tech company’s smartphone and tablet range. Alongside the main series, the collaboration included a five-part social series called *Picture This*, shining a light on the cast and featuring the first appearance of the new Google Pixel 6 phone; a set of TV sponsorship idents; and four contextual ads – making it Channel 4’s biggest branded entertainment partnership to date.

On the day: the adverts



When Channel 4 presented the Black to Front opportunity to us, we were blown away. Diversity is at the heart of everything we do, so it was a no-brainer to get involved. As a brand, you have to be willing to put yourself out there. To take a stance. The days of indifference are over.

Jayden Taylor
Senior Brand Manager, HSBC UK



On 10 September, as well as our programming, we transformed our entire commercial schedule to support the Black to Front Project.

“We wanted all the ads on the day to represent the Black community in every walk of life, from buying cars and playing with their kids to listening to music and banking,” says Clare Peters, Deputy Head of Client Sales at Channel 4.

“Taking Black to Front beyond editorial content and into commercial airtime felt impossible at first,” she admits. “The scale of it was huge. We spoke to practically every advertising agency in town. We had to convince brands to come on board and either make new things with us or bring their campaigns forward. It was touch and go: up until 48 hours before the day, we didn’t know if we could fill every ad slot. But we did it.”

In a world first, every single commercial break across the day featured ads with a Black lead or a majority Black cast. More than 60 brands took part, with 70 campaigns across Channel 4.

Beyond the core ads, 4Sales teamed up with Direct Line, HSBC and Tesco for *The Joy of Black*, a bespoke ad-break takeover which premiered in the first break of *Celebrity Gogglebox* at 9pm. The break included three separate 30-second adverts featuring Black employees from each of the participating brands, giving viewers a glimpse into their personal lives and sharing what brings them joy. The campaign was created by a crew that was more than 60% Black – well above the industry average for representation.

Over on All 4, LinkedIn sponsored a bespoke collection lounge, *LinkedIn Conversations For Change*, featuring a range of Black stories from the Channel 4 archive.

“The Black to Front project ignited so many discussions with brands around diversity and inclusion. It helped to push companies in the right direction,” says Clare. “We hope it heralds a step-change in behaviour and a commitment to better representation in the advertising industry.”

The impact

Highlife



Who watched?

- Kicking off with the nostalgic return of *Desmond's* at 06:05 and running right through until the early hours, the Black to Front Project reached **11.6%** – that's **7 million** – of the TV population. Within this, the event reached an impressive **13.2%** of Black viewers.
- The event took a **15.1%** consolidated share of Black viewers – the highest share among this cohort since the London 2012 Paralympic Games.
- The biggest show of the day was *Celebrity Gogglebox*, which averaged **3.5 million** viewers (17.7%). Amongst Black viewers, the show averaged an audience of **138,000** (27.5%), almost double the slot's usual viewer count and share.
- The adverts featured throughout the day reached **7.2 million** viewers across the UK.
- Across the week of Black to Front, the campaign had **20,900** mentions on social media by **9,900** unique authors, reaching **57.3 million** users with **321.1 million** potential Twitter impressions.

The impact (continued)



Highlife

The perceptions

- **60%** of all viewers agreed that the Black to Front Project highlighted the breadth and depth of Black British talent.
- **62%** of viewers agreed that programming like this helps to break taboos and **41%** of viewers found the event thought-provoking.
- **32%** of viewers agreed that the Black to Front Project was different and innovative, delivering on Channel 4's remit to take bold creative risks.
- **51%** acknowledged that they had never seen anything like this on TV before and that the event made them think about the challenges facing those who are Black/ethnically diverse in a different way.
- **6 in 10** viewers agreed that there should be more Black-led or Black-focused programming on TV.
- **85%** of viewers agreed that Channel 4 tackles issues other channels wouldn't.
- **71%** of those who watched any part of the event said that Channel 4 is the leading broadcaster for giving a voice to the under-represented.

Big Age



The impact (continued)

In our viewers' words



My eyes are watering whilst watching #BlackToFront @ Channel4 this really is beautiful. All these beautiful adverts, with people who look like ME! #BlackJoy #BlackGirlMagic #TheFullPicture



Even the adverts... this is so mad we've never been exposed to this level of representation before it's making me really emotional. So much talent and beautiful faces #BlackToFront



Hopefully it will help change perceptions and open up avenues for Black and other minority ethnic groups to be better represented in all areas.



Really pleased to see @ Channel4 #BlackToFront today! Feels so surreal seeing Black representation in their adverts too #C4BlackAndProud



The adverts today have been AMAZING. I've only watched Channel 4 today and I've loved it so much. I hope this is done again. #C4BlackAndProud #BlackToFront



It was education on just how White TV is and how more needs to be done to include people of all backgrounds.



Channel 4 goes where no channel has gone before.



I've never been so happy watching UK telly. Literally ALLDAY. Adverts included #BlackToFront



They're listening to what the people want, they're taking on hard subject matters and they're being the change.

Research method: We spoke to 195 viewers of Channel 4's Black to Front takeover event – based on those who'd watched at least one programme on the main channel during the day. The survey was carried out online via our Core4 panel (which is made up of All 4 registered users). Fieldwork took place between 17 and 27 September 2021.

Manifesto 4 Change

As a result of the Black to Front Project – and two years of collaboration with the Lenny Henry Centre – seven key areas of focus have been identified to lead to a more inclusive and diverse industry for Black talent and talent of other diverse ethnicities.

We want to work across the industry to bring these recommendations into practice.



Black to Front created a ‘new normal’ for the level of Black talent it is possible to achieve on a production.

Lenny Henry Centre for Media Diversity, April 2022

1

WORKING MORE EFFECTIVELY WITH ETHNICALLY DIVERSE-LED PRODUCTION COMPANIES

It is clear that, in order to effect real and sustained change, the number of ethnically diverse-led companies that are commissioned across the industry must increase, as must the scale and scope of the work they do.

We acknowledge that the Black to Front Project did not include enough commissions from Black-led indies.

- As a result of reflections on this, in November 2021, we ring-fenced funds for commissions from ethnically diverse-led independent production companies, tripling our current spend to £22 million by 2023.
- We also committed to every Channel 4 Commissioning Editor having at least one ethnically diverse-led indie on their development slate.
- More recently, in March 2022, we launched the Channel 4 and Motion Diverse Indies Fund. This is a multi-million-pound fund to boost commissions from ethnically diverse-led production companies. With commissioning rounds throughout 2022, this fund focuses on returnable formats. It ensures that more ethnically diverse-led indies raise their profile with commissioners across more genres, and are able to pitch for bigger, more ambitious series.
- We have listened to the sector and will ensure that ring-fenced funds will be tracked and monitored.

Big Age



Manifesto 4 Change (continued)

2

DIVERSE OFF-SCREEN TALENT AT ALL LEVELS

A critical mass of diverse off-screen talent on all productions is essential to ensure different voices are heard as part of the creative process, and enough new talent is developed to fill key senior roles in the near future.

We recognise that ethnically diverse off-screen talent has often been overlooked in the past and we aren't prepared to accept this going forward. To make meaningful long-term change for under-represented talent, contracts, credits, money and real editorial power are key.

- Our new diversity guidelines include stretching and challenging targets for off-screen diverse talent on all of our shows.
- We will challenge and change dated recruitment practices across our shows through our ongoing relationships with talent consultants to identify skills gaps and help suppliers fill them.
- Going forward, we will work with production companies to ensure real progression for ethnically diverse talent on existing, returning shows (where it has been demonstrated that it is harder to change the make-up of production teams).

3

INCREASING DIVERSE SENIOR LEADERSHIP

There is a lack of ethnically diverse leadership across the industry off-screen. It is clear that certain interventions such as training, entry level schemes, and mentoring are valuable – and diversity and inclusion should be embedded within them – but these initiatives alone are not the answer to the challenges around diverse senior leadership and progression. What will effect real change is to hire ethnically diverse talent into senior positions – now.

- Our new diversity guidelines will require ethnically diverse senior leadership on ALL our productions. The time to increase diverse leadership is now.

4

FINANCIAL COMMITMENT BEYOND HEADCOUNT

Industry research shows that ethnic diversity has often been achieved on productions by employing Black and Asian people in junior roles, e.g. runners, researchers. The Lenny Henry Centre report referred to this as the 'low hanging fruit' approach to diversity. In order to effect sustained change this practice needs to be challenged.

- In our new Commissioning Diversity Guidelines, we're highlighting the option for our suppliers to focus on a percentage of salary spend, rather than headcount. This means that they will be encouraged to employ under-represented talent across mid and senior roles, rather than simply hitting a numerical target with junior team members.
- We will work closely with indies, putting in place check-in points throughout the commissioning and production processes to ensure that new talent is sought at a range of levels and across a breadth of roles.

Manifesto 4 Change (continued)

5

AUTHENTIC DIVERSE STORYTELLING

Diversity of voice in content is key to change and integral to true representation.

- The Black to Front Project provided Channel 4 with a springboard for telling Black stories better. But that wasn't just for one day. We are now committing to year-round commissioning that ensures ethnically diverse stories and talent are interwoven in editorial decision-making.
- From 2022, each genre will commission at least one new show with ethnically diverse talent and/or ethnically diverse stories at its heart every year.



As powerful as the day itself was, the Black to Front Project will only be judged on what it does to drive meaningful change across the industry.

Emma Hardy
Director of Commissioning Operations, Channel 4

6

RACE FLUENCY AND ANTI-RACISM TRAINING

As a result of a year of immersion in the Black to Front Project, the extended Black to Front team – and the channel as a whole – became better at having important and difficult conversations about race, openly and without defensiveness. Culture change only comes when people fully understand why the change is needed and do things every day, as part of their professional behaviour, to embed that change.

- We are developing training with ScreenSkills to help all our indie partners to access race fluency and anti-racism courses. We will mandate that all senior leaders on Channel 4 productions complete this training and we will share all learnings with other broadcasters.
- We understand that, as leaders, we must set the example we want to see in the industry. Our Executive team, Board, Heads of Department and Commissioners will undergo race fluency and inclusive leadership training, with the intention to cascade the learning and behaviours to the rest of the channel. This will ensure that ALL our staff, together with our indie partners, will move in unison to create inclusive social and industry change.

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THE IMPORTANCE OF DIVERSITY WITHIN COMMISSIONING

It is widely acknowledged that without enough key senior creative decision-makers being from diverse backgrounds, all other measures and commitments to diversity have a greater chance of failure. We cannot ask our suppliers and partners to make these changes without also making changes ourselves.

- We are already committed to ensuring that 20% of the Channel 4 commissioning department is ethnically diverse. We are now committing to ensuring that at least 20% of editorial decision-makers – Commissioning Editors and Commissioning Executives – as well as the most senior team members, the Heads of Department group, are from ethnically diverse backgrounds.

Love It or List It



