

Anti-Racism Leadership Book Club: Why, How, Benefits and Collective Action

*(Reflecting three years of learning, growth and
everyday commitment)*





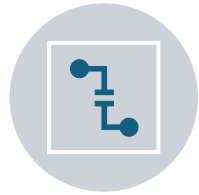
Why the Book Club Exists

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- The Anti-Racism Leadership Book Club was founded over three years ago with a clear and radical purpose: to challenge the idea that Black History Month is confined to a single month.
 - Instead, the club embodies the truth that **racial learning, allyship, and anti-racist practice must happen every day, every year.**

The group was created because:

- **Anti-racist education is not embedded in our education systems** from childhood to adulthood. Many of us reach leadership roles without ever having been taught the histories, experiences, and structural inequalities that shape the lives of Black and ethnically diverse communities.
- **Self-education becomes a moral and professional responsibility.** The book club offers the learning that the education system has failed to provide.
- **Safe, diverse spaces for honest conversation are rare.** Members needed a place where lived experience, theory, discomfort, challenge and growth could coexist with compassion.
- **Equality must be lived, not performed.** The club creates a rhythm of practice returning every six weeks to reflect, unlearn, and act.

How the Book Club Works



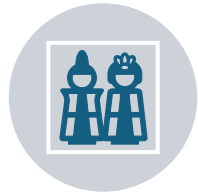
The group meets every six weeks, and this consistent rhythm has built discipline, depth, and trust. The process is intentionally designed to:



Focus on action over performance. Many members stated that your leadership continually brings the conversation back to **impact**, not just awareness. This emphasis has become a core strength of the group.



This **“how”** is what makes the group powerful: steady commitment, collective reflection, and brave action.



Engage with diverse authors, histories and perspectives from personal testimonies to structural analyses. Members highlighted how impactful this breadth is, naming writers such as Akala, Afua Hirsch, Natalie Morris, David Harewood, Anita Sethi, Emma Dabiri, Mikki Kendall and others.



Foster interdisciplinary learning. Members come from various sectors, enabling cross-sector insight into discrimination, equity challenges and organisational responsibilities.



Create a safe but challenging space, a space where people can be honest about what they didn't know, what they have learnt, and what they still need to confront. Members emphasised that the conversations are as important as the books themselves.



Encourage courageous conversations and the development of a 'challenge muscle'. Several members spoke openly about being pushed to question their own silence, comfort, and courage.



Benefits and Impact of the Book Club



Drawing from the feedback and the ethos built, the book club has produced meaningful change at individual, organisational, and community levels.



1. Deepened Understanding of Racism, History and Identity

Members reported:

- Learning histories that were never taught in school (e.g., Tudor Black presence, Windrush, activism).
- Understanding intersectionality and its relevance across different sectors.
- Gaining insight into how structural inequalities shape everyday life.

This has shifted mindsets, widened perspectives and created informed leaders.



2. Personal Growth and Self-Interrogation

Members spoke about:

- Being challenged to examine their own biases, behaviours and hesitations.
- Questioning whether they choose “white comfort” over courageous action.
- Reflecting on motives, values, and the real-world impact of their allyship.

This shows that the club is not passive learning – it transforms how people show up in the world.

3. Organisational Change and Practice

Concrete actions taken include:

- Creating EDI libraries in workplaces.
- Encouraging colleagues to join the book club.
- Sharing resources like newsletters and anti-racist frameworks.
- Bringing discussions back into teams and boardrooms.
- Sharing learning and actions with colleagues and leaders
- Focusing on anti-racist practices
- Challenging and questioning racial inequalities in decision making

These actions move anti-racism beyond personal learning into organisational culture.



4. Everyday Allyship and Behavioural Changes

Members reported:

- Supporting ethnically diverse businesses.
- Buying books to financially recognise the labour and expertise of ethnically diverse authors.
- Checking in with friends and colleagues after racist incidents or tragedies.
- Practising more courageous conversations even when difficult or uncomfortable.

This reinforces that allyship is not conceptual; it is lived through daily choices.



5. Collective Commitment and Community

A key impact often overlooked is simply this:
People keep showing up. Every six weeks. For years.

This is an extraordinary commitment in a world that often moves on quickly from anti-racist work.

Their willingness to return, learn, be challenged, and act reflects:

- Trust in the group
- Respect for the process
- Recognition that anti-racism is a lifelong journey
- Appreciation for leadership and consistent focus on impact

The club has become a community of accountability.

Actions the Book Club Has Produced or Inspired



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Organisational Actions

- Expanding EDI resources in workplaces.
- Encouraging workplace peers to join anti-racist learning spaces.
- Introducing newsletters and resources that embed inclusive practice.
- Sharing book club conversations with teams to influence culture.





Actions the Book Club Has Produced or Inspired

Collective Actions

- Creating a sustained, safe, and challenging learning environment.
- Broadening understanding of lived experience and structural inequities.
- Building cross-sector relationships rooted in allyship and justice.
- Developing a shared language and framework for anti-racist action.

Feedback from some members

Thanks for your time, sharing and actions



Deanne Heron

It has been very enlightening, shining light on my path and allowing me to see the bigger picture of existence and what we all need to do to know our true unique selves, so that we don't see differences as a threat.

Rick Walker

- I have found it very useful to hear from people working in different sectors about the challenges they face and how they have responded.
- I'm not a regular reader although I have thousands of books, so personally the discipline has been good.
- I have found it particularly useful to examine intersectionality.
- We have read a wide variety of books addressing racism, micro aggressions, colonialism and more and my preference has been for the mix of personal testimony and penetrating analysis of writers like Afua Hirsch, Natalie Morris and Akala over the 'how-to' manuals aimed at managers in usually large organisations.
- We will never finish learning the lessons from colonialism past and present and it is vital that these revelations are brought to a wide audience.
- It is perhaps obvious to say that those who are in most need of hearing anti-racist messages are least willing to listen, and nobody has yet come up with convincing strategy for tackling this in wider society.

Claire Slade

- **Why I attend:** I wanted a space to learn more about racial justice, hear lived experiences of people experiencing inequality, discrimination and other harms due to their ethnicity, and discuss what individuals and organisations can do.
- **How long I've been attending:** Since 2022.
- **Lessons learnt:** In these past three years, I've learnt so many things through the books, including the histories of Black and Brown folk (e.g., Tudor, World Wars, rebuilding Britain/Windrush, activism and protests), how ethnically diverse people experience the world (e.g., biographical accounts by people such as Anita Sethi, David Harewood, Emma Dabiri, Patrick Hutchinson), and practical tips on how to be anti-racist in my personal life and at work (found books by Robin DiAngelo, Felicity Hassan and Suki Sandhu, and Karen Caitlin really useful here). Importantly, I've also been really challenged by many of the books (Mikki Kendall, Nova Reid and Rachel Ricketts particularly spring to mind) as well as fellow Book Clubbers and Alyson. These challenges have probably stayed with me the most over the years - the key one being around reflecting on whether I lack courage and have a fear of speaking out - am I choosing white comfort over doing the right thing?
- **Actions taken and impact:** In no particular order: (1) Reflecting and self-interrogating (what's motivating me to do this, how is anyone benefiting from me doing this?); (2) Choosing to shop at ethnically diverse-led businesses where available; (3) Buying more books to pay for the authors' expertise, rather than getting them all from the library, and subscribing to The Voice; (4) Starting an EDI library at work, inviting colleagues to join Book Club and encouraging them to sign-up to Karen Caitlin's 'Better Allies' newsletter; (5) Checking in with ethnically diverse friends after acts of violence/tragedies to see if they're ok; (6) Having conversations with white and ethnically diverse friends about racial justice and what we can do... and I've been practicing flexing my 'challenge muscle' where people's views and values have clashed with my own (racism, homophobia, the environment) - this is still the biggest challenge for me moving forward. It's hard to measure the impact - I hope it's making some difference!
- **Why I'd encourage others to attend:** Hearing from Alyson and other Book Clubbers provides me with different perspectives. And having the opportunities to have conversations in a safe space helps develop critical thinking and formulate new questions and approaches to tackle racism and discrimination in the real world.

Jo Doheny

- I've been part of ED UK's anti-racism book club for a couple of years now.
- Being involved in this group strengthens my resolve to be a good ally by helping me better understand people's different lived experiences and the intersectionality that shapes all our lives.
- The books we've read and the conversations we've had have taught me a great deal and deepened my awareness.
- Alyson's focus on action rather than words also ensures that we commit to doing *something*, rather than remaining bystanders.
- As a group, this gives us the confidence to have difficult conversations, stand up for others, and highlight issues whenever we can.



Summary Statement

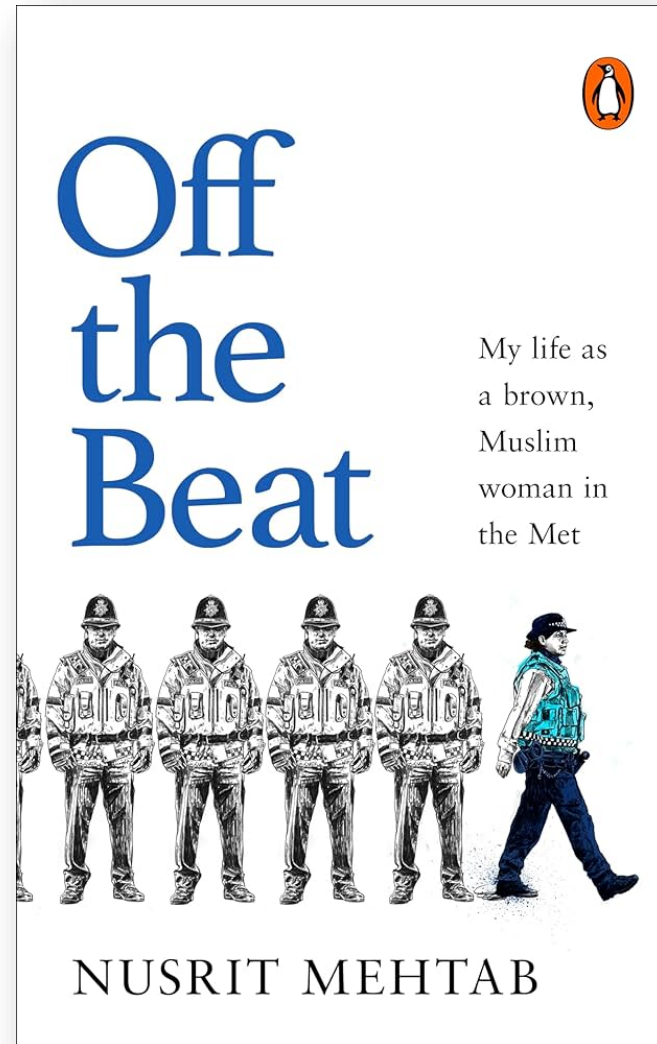
The Anti-Racism Leadership Book Club is not simply a reading group. It is a movement of everyday education, accountability, courage and action.

Through sustained commitment, diverse perspectives, and a deep focus on impact, the group has:

- Fostered understanding
- Challenged complacency
- Developed allyship
- Inspired tangible organisational change
- And built a community grounded in justice and equality

All of this exists because we created a space that education has never provided, one that continues to transform people, every year.





2026 Suggested meeting dates.

- February 4
- March 18
- April 29
- June 3
- July 15
- September 30
- November 4
- December 9