On International Women’s Day the BAME Staff Network had the pleasure of inviting Candice Brathwaite, influencer and founder of ‘Make Motherhood Diverse’, to a panel discussion at the University of Birmingham. Attended by University staff and students, a brimming room listened to four panel members discuss race in relation to women in mental health, parenthood, business and healthcare.

Chaired by Professor Kiran Trehan [hyperlink name], the panel also welcomed Beverley Maynard, co-Chair of the BAME Staff Network and Dr Catherine Dunlop [hyperlink name], Junior Doctor and Research Fellow at Birmingham Women’s Hospital to share their experience, expertise and perspectives.

It was an empowering experience for all. Attendees learnt stories, facts and figures from panellists which generated powerful discussion and debate. Topics included growing up as a black female in the UK; how mental health issues impact family life in different cultures; the disparity in degree attainment level between BAME students and their white counterparts; that black students, especially young women, are less likely to obtain top level degrees, continue with their education and move into academic-related careers; and that there are shocking mortality rates for black and Asian pregnant women in comparison to white pregnant women.

Top quotes included:

* “If you want change, you are going to have to go and make it!”
* “We have the resources to deliver infants properly but women’s lives need to be given more importance”
* “Feel the fear, do it anyway”

A huge thank you to all who attended and contributed to this debate. We hope this is the start of more honest, open and challenging discussions that need to be heard by all.