

NETWORK

UNIVERSITY OF WESTMINSTER **ALUMNI MAGAZINE 2019**

MICHELLE DE LEON

ITV PRODUCER AND FOUNDER
OF WORLD AFRO DAY

MY SHANGHAI DIARY

WESTMINSTER STUDENTS EXPERIENCE
THE BRIGHT LIGHTS OF CHINA'S
BIGGEST CITY

WRITTEN IN THE STARS

PROFESSOR LEWIS DARTNELL
ON HOW PLANET EARTH
HAS DIRECTED THE COURSE
OF HUMAN HISTORY

UNIVERSITY OF
WESTMINSTER 



WELCOME



It is my pleasure to welcome you to this edition of *Network* magazine, our annual publication to celebrate the remarkable achievements of the entire Westminster community. It's been a busy and exciting year for Westminster and you, our graduates, continue to impress with your achievements and willingness to be involved in university life.

We truly value your feedback and continued support of activities across the University and we were blown away with the response rate to Your Alumni Survey. Launched in February, the survey asked for your opinions, feedback and ideas so we can continue to offer you the very best opportunities to engage with Westminster, both in ways to give back and your personal and professional development. We were so pleased to discover that nine in ten of you have,

or would be happy to recommend the University of Westminster. We also appreciate there are areas we can improve and we will continue to share our plans with you.

We are delighted to support your network with the launch of our new online community, Westminster Connect. This 'one stop shop' for all of our graduates around the world is an opportunity to connect with fellow alumni through the directory, to find out how you can give back to the University and to expand your network to achieve what you want professionally. Westminster Connect is a hub where you can find access to your alumni benefits and keep up to date with news and activities from around the University. If you haven't already signed up, we look forward to seeing you online soon at westminsterconnect.org.

In this edition, you can read how Media Studies graduate Michelle De Leon, founder of World Afro Day, realised her purpose was to create a positive environment and change views on Afro hair. We also catch alumnus and freelance documentary photographer Alessandro Rota between projects and he shares what it's like to document life in war-torn areas. Meanwhile on campus, Dr Peter Bonfield shares his thoughts one year on from taking up his role as Vice-Chancellor and President.

I very much hope you enjoy this edition of *Network* and continue to stay in touch.

Chris Smith
Director of External Relations

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NETWORK
UNIVERSITY OF WESTMINSTER
ALUMNI MAGAZINE 2019

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YOUR ALUMNI SURVEY 2019

In February this year, we launched an alumni survey to learn about your connection to and thoughts about the University, as well as to determine what engagement opportunities and benefits we can continue to offer you to best support your development after Westminster.

Thank you to everyone who took the time to complete the survey; we were so pleased with the response rate. Alumni all over the world shared their feedback, with responses coming from alumni who graduated as far back as 1954.

Your feedback has been insightful and incredibly helpful as we look forward to enhancing your experience as a graduate of the University of Westminster.

Here we share a summary of our key findings.

Through your responses, we know we need to work on making you, our graduates, feel connected to Westminster and feel valued as members of our vital alumni community. This is an ever-evolving and ongoing opportunity for us to find new ways to keep you up to date with knowledge of the University as well as developing even more unique ways you can be involved.

You fed back that you want more public speaking opportunities, and we know our students are incredibly interested in hearing from graduates. While we have current opportunities

YOU WOULD RECOMMEND WESTMINSTER TO OTHERS

We were thrilled to discover that an incredible 90 per cent of you have, or would be happy, to recommend our University to friends or family, and we were equally happy to learn that 7 in 10 of our alumni are proud to tell people that they studied here.

YOU ENJOYED YOUR TIME AT WESTMINSTER

We were pleased to receive the feedback that 93 per cent of you felt your time at Westminster had a positive impact on your life. Almost 80 per cent of you were satisfied with your overall experience as a student, and 70 per cent of you achieved everything you set out to during your time with us.

YOU WANT TO BE INVOLVED

It was very promising to discover that half of you would like to be more involved with Westminster and that 60 per cent of you are interested in giving back to support students, either through mentoring, completing an alumni profile or delivering a careers talk.

available for graduates to come back and speak to students during teaching, and with our alumni event speaker series What It Takes, this is an area we will explore further in the future.

After learning about your wish to access professional development opportunities, we will be working with colleagues across the University to expand our skills development offering for graduates.

You also showed a strong interest in connecting with each other to make the most of our global alumni community. We have recently

YOU WANT ONGOING OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT

What stood out most was the high level of interest in improving professional skills, with 9 in 10 indicating that they would like the University's support with their career development. You also specifically said that improving your digital skills would be useful to your professional development.

WE CAN DO THINGS DIFFERENTLY

We've realised we need to find different ways of sharing information with you as 40 per cent of you weren't aware of any of the benefits available as a Westminster graduate, such as access to online journals and magazines through JSTOR and discount on postgraduate studies.

HOW WILL WE USE THESE RESULTS?

Your feedback won't just stay with the Alumni Team. We are working to share this information across the University to a range of stakeholders to ensure we're offering beneficial opportunities relevant to you and your development.

launched Westminster Connect – an exclusive hub for Westminster alumni to expand their professional networks, search for jobs, and offer and receive mentoring from fellow alumni. Make sure you sign up to Westminster Connect at westminsterconnect.org to learn about the many benefits available to you now.

We will continue to look for even more new ways to support your connection to the University of Westminster, so keep a lookout for more information in our alumni e-newsletters.

STAY CONNECTED

 **University of Westminster Alumni Association**

 **@uw_alumni**

 **University of Westminster Alumni Association**

 **westminster.ac.uk**

 **alumni@westminster.ac.uk**

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I wanted to give you some positive feedback on the Westminster alumni magazine which I really enjoy reading. It is always really inspiring to hear of the incredible success of fellow graduates of the University. I also wanted to make a small plea – would it be possible to change the packaging of the magazine from a plastic wrapper to a paper envelope or better still, just a sticker to hold it all together?

**Astrid Blackburn
(Urban Design, 2009)**

You said, we did! We have replaced the polythene packaging with environmentally-friendly film made from potato starch. This can be composted or recycled in your household garden waste bin.



Thank you very much for everyone's support – thrilled to have won and be recognised amongst such great talented people from the University of Westminster – an institution that helped me shape my career to this day.

**Mariam Ahmadi-Moghaddam
(Professional Practice in Architecture PgDip, 2011), Architect and Senior Associate at Weston Williamson, on the news she had won the Outstanding Achievement Award in this year's Westminster Alumni Awards.**



Such a pleasure getting the opportunity to share my experiences of being a Female Leader today to students who are in the same place I was in just last year! Thank you @uw_alumni for the opportunity! #wearewestminster.

**Ethel Tambudzai, @etheltamb
(Development Studies and International Relations BA, 2018), Founder and Director of TAMBUGROUP was part of an inspirational panel of alumnae at our 'What It Takes to be a Female Leader' event.**



Once Proud, Forever Proud, to be a member of our global community! Great Shanghai Alumni Night spent! Looking forward to contribute to the Alumni Committee! #westminsteralumni.

Evelyn Ke (Public Relations MA, 2014), Founder of AdaptDept, joined our Westminster Working Cultures students at the networking event in Shanghai.



Excited to have joined the @UniWestminster @uw_alumni careers and employability mentoring scheme. I hope to add value and raise aspirations.

Dr Maria Kordowicz, @MariaKordowicz (Psychology BSc, 2005), Senior Healthcare Management Professional, on signing up to support a student through our Mentoring Scheme.

ARE YOU MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR ALUMNI BENEFITS?

- Expand your network, browse job opportunities and plan events through our exclusive alumni platform, westminsterconnect.org
- Save 15 per cent on a Masters or PhD at Westminster
- Come back to campus and use the libraries with your alumni access card
- Receive discounts on gym membership, room hire and summer accommodation
- Make use of the vast library of journals on JSTOR with your free alumni access
- Kick-start your career with free careers support for three years after you graduate

Find out more:
westminster.ac.uk/alumni-benefits

COMMERCIAL MUSIC BA GRADUATE RECEIVES OSCAR NOMINATION FOR BEST ORIGINAL SONG



Westminster alumnus and music producer Alexander Shuckburgh, known professionally as Al Shux, was nominated for the song 'All the Stars', featuring Kendrick Lamar and SZA. The track, which Al Shux produced alongside Kendrick Lamar, Anthony Tiffith, Mark Spears and Solana Rowe was the lead single from the soundtrack album for the Marvel Studios blockbuster film *Black Panther*.

A West London native, Al Shux has previously worked with Jay-Z, Alicia

Keys, Snoop Dogg, Nas, Plan B, Tinie Tempah and Lana Del Rey, and travelled across America as Lily Allen's musical director. His first major track was Lupe Fiasco's 'Hi-Definition' featuring Snoop Dogg in 2007.

In February 2011, he received a Grammy in the Best Rap Song Award category for producing and co-writing 'Empire State of Mind' featuring Jay-Z and Alicia Keys. Later on, in 2012, he also co-wrote

and produced seven tracks on Plan B's album *ill Manors* as well as scoring the music for the film of the same name.

Graham Ball, Assistant Head of School for Music, said: "It is always fantastic to see the great achievements of former Westminster students being recognised at the highest levels. Al Shux is an inspiration to our current music students as well as aspiring artists everywhere."

THE UNIVERSITY RECOGNISES MENTAL HEALTH DAY 2019

On 7 March, the University of Westminster participated in University Mental Health Day, an annual awareness day which brings together the higher education community to make mental health a national priority.

University Mental Health Day aims to create and enforce ongoing change for a better future for students' well-being. This year's adopted theme was 'Use Your Voice', a campaign which asks all affected students, staff and other members of the higher education community to use their experience and stories to change the narrative around the sensitive topic of student mental health.

The University's Vice-Chancellor and President, Dr Peter Bonfield, chaired the second London Higher Health and



Wellbeing Network, which was established on World Mental Health Day in October 2018.

Dr Bonfield said: "One in five students has a current mental health diagnosis; one in three has had a serious psychological issue for which they need professional help; and four in five report that they have struggled with feelings of anxiety."

These are some of the reasons why the mental health and well-being of students is so critical and why we are working hard at London Higher Health and Wellbeing Network, bringing London's universities together to make a practical difference."

Westminster's Student and Academic Services Department (SAS) and the Students' Union (UWSU) were present at the Marylebone, Regent and Harrow campuses to speak to students, promote student well-being literature and raise awareness of future mental-health-focused events. The University's Mental Health Society also brought alpacas from the Pennybridge alpaca farm to the Harrow campus to help students de-stress and improve their mental health in support of Wellness Week.

CHAIR OF LGBT CHARITY STONEWALL, JAN GOODING, AWARDED HONORARY DOCTORATE

The University of Westminster named social change champion and Chair of the LGBT equality charity Stonewall, Jan Gooding, Honorary Doctor of Letters at the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences' 2019 graduation ceremony on 8 July. She received the award in recognition of her services to diversity and inclusion, and her commitment to championing social change.

Gooding is Chair of the Board of Trustees of Stonewall and was ranked 16th in the Top 100 Outstanding in Business list published in the *Financial Times*. She also chairs the Publishers Audience Measurement Company (PAMCo), the governing body which oversees audience measurement for the published media industry, and is on the executive committee

of Women in Advertising and Communications, London (WACL), an influential club for senior women in UK Communications. Gooding is also the President of the Market Research Society.

In her acceptance speech at the ceremony, Jan Gooding said: "That you have successfully honed the skill of learning how to come to your own independent conclusion about issues is priceless. I am here to encourage you not only to know your own mind, but to speak it. To continue to observe and be critical of what you see around you, but as your sphere of influence grows to do something to change it."

Other recipients of Honorary Doctorates at this year's ceremonies were: Dame Cilla Snowball DBE



Photo credit: H. Tempest

(former Chair of Women's Business Council), Richard Boden (television director and producer), Nigel Edwards (Chief Executive at the Nuffield Trust), Mo Abudu (broadcaster and CEO of EbonyLife Media) and Colin Barrow CBE (former Leader of Westminster City Council).



UNIVERSITY OF WESTMINSTER RANKED IN THE TOP TEN BEST FASHION SCHOOLS

The University of Westminster's Fashion Department was ranked tenth by *Fashionista* magazine in its Top 25 Fashion Institutions in the World.

In its analysis, *Fashionista* took into account a variety of different factors, including famous and successfully placed alumni, student and alumni feedback and annual tuition fees.

Westminster's Fashion Department has an outstanding track record of successful internships, with students gaining invaluable experience at some of the world's best fashion houses including Marc Jacobs, Alexander Wang, Christian Dior, Balmain and Givenchy.

In 2018, under the direction of Professor Andrew Groves, the

Fashion Design BA Honours course was aligned with the international fashion calendar, making it the first undergraduate course to be invited to show on the official London Fashion Week schedule. Westminster is also home to the Westminster Menswear Archive, the only public menswear archive in the world.

WESTMINSTER HOSTS UK'S LARGEST JAMAICAN MUSIC EXPO

Bass Culture 70/50 was a four-week exhibition exploring the impact of Jamaican and Jamaican-influenced music on British culture.

The exhibition, which took place in Ambika P3, featured previously unseen artwork, specially commissioned film, top industry speakers, UK reggae label pop-up showcases, live performances, and over 70 hours of individual testimonials, linking – for the first time – the memories and experiences of black British musicians,

industry practitioners, academics and audiences.

The exhibition also included two interactive events; the first, a 'Rude Boy Catwalk', invited attendees to come dressed as they were when they first experienced a gig influenced by Jamaican music, such as ska or reggae, jungle or grime, to reflect on five decades of fashion inspired by these genres.

The second was a mini film festival that premiered *Bass Culture*, a 60-minute documentary mapping the

impact of Jamaican music from a youth perspective.

The exhibition was staged by Bass Culture Research, a three-year Arts and Humanities Research Council funded project set up to explore the impact of Jamaican music in the UK. The project made headlines last year after publishing *The Grime Report*, which led to the withdrawal of Form 696, a controversial Metropolitan Police risk assessment form criticised for being discriminatory and targeting genres such as grime.



Photo credit: Adrian Boot

REGENT STREET CINEMA HOSTS GOLD MOVIE AWARDS

The Gold Movie Awards celebrate both independent and commercial film and television across all genres and were created to showcase the best up-and-coming and seasoned filmmakers, giving them a place to have their work screened.

The second annual edition of the awards was held in January at the Regent Street Cinema. Starting with live screenings at the Old Street

Gallery throughout the day, the red carpet event took place in the evening, followed by the awards, networking and an after-party at the Cuckoo Club. The event also included a champagne reception, a musical interlude and guest celebrity presenters.

The awards jury included Karen Bryson MBE, Kacey Ainsworth, Chizzy Akudolu, Kevin Guthrie, Elliot Cowan, Iain Glen, Simon Merrells,

Victoria Yeates, Josh Herdman, Ben Lamb, Laura Main, Tamzin Merchant, Christina Cole and Charlotte Ritchie.

The Best of the Year award was given to *Madre* by Rodrigo Sorogoyen, Best Actress was Marisa Tomei for her part in *Laboratory Conditions* and the Best Actor award was given to Billy Zane for his role in *Lucid* by Adam Morse, who also won Best Director and Best Feature.



ALUMNUS SHORTLISTED FOR THE TURNER PRIZE 2019

Oscar Murillo, a BA Fine Art Mixed Media graduate, was announced as one of the four shortlisted artists at Tate Britain.

The Turner Prize is one of the world's most renowned prizes for visual arts and aims to promote public debate around new developments in contemporary British art. It is awarded to a British artist for an outstanding exhibition or other presentation of their work in the past 12 months.

Oscar was selected following his participation in the 10th Berlin Biennale, his solo exhibition *Violent Amnesia* at Kettle's Yard, Cambridge and his solo exhibition at the chi K11 art museum in Shanghai. The jury praised the way Murillo pushes the boundaries of materials, particularly in his paintings. His work incorporates a variety of techniques and media including painting, drawing, performance, sculpture and sound, often using recycled materials and fragments

from his studio. Murillo's work reflects on his own experience of displacement and the social fallout of globalisation.

Since graduating from the University in 2007, the Colombian-British artist has shown at 'Forever Now' MOMA New York, has participated in the 2015 Venice Biennale and had a one-man show at the South London Gallery.

In February 2013, Oscar sold 24 works at Sotheby's and Christie's for an estimated \$4.8m. He is represented by David Zwirner (London), Carlos Ishikawa (London) and Isabella Bortolozzi (Berlin). His solo exhibitions include South London Gallery and David Zwirner London.

Speaking about his experience at the University, Oscar Murillo said: "The University of Westminster was my very first experience of an incredibly supportive educational system that nurtured my desire to develop into the complexities of being an artist in today's world."



Photo credit: Joo Yongsung

WESTMINSTER ALUMNI TRIUMPH ON UNIVERSITY CHALLENGE CHRISTMAS DAY SPECIAL

In a match which aired on BBC Two on Christmas Day, Westminster alumni tackled a series of questions to beat University of East Anglia alumni by 130 points to 100.

The victorious line-up included comedian and author Danny Wallace, neuroscientist Sophie Scott, photographer Stuart Roy Clarke and architect Torsten Schmiedeknecht.

Speaking about the experience, Torsten said, "I had some truly memorable experiences at the Polytechnic of Central London and formed many lifelong friendships. It was good to feel a genuine Westminster spirit in our fabulous team and it was great fun to be on the show."



Photo credit: ITV Studios



THE 125 FUND RECEIVES 290 DONATIONS DURING STUDENT-RUN TELEPHONE CAMPAIGN

More than £100,000 was raised over the three-week campaign last November, made up entirely of generous donations from Westminster's alumni community.

Established in 2016 to celebrate 125 years of the University, The 125 Fund is a matched-funding opportunity open to all current Westminster students. The Fund, which is generously matched pound for pound by the Quintin Hogg Trust, allows students to apply for financial support to embark on projects that will enhance their employability and professional development.

Thanks to the donations, a total of 122 students were awarded funding

in 2018/19 and projects now under way include a spice and relish stall at Borough Market, a documentary film on the LGBT+ community in India and Goa, and the establishment of a 'croquet and cocktails' event business.

Following the Fund's success over the past three years, another telephone campaign is scheduled to take place this autumn. Speaking of last year's campaign, student caller Hamada Abdelrahman said: "I thoroughly enjoyed working on the campaign and I know I speak on behalf of all of the student callers when I say it was a huge pleasure talking to so many

distinguished and interesting Westminster alumni. We all learnt so much from the conversations and gained such inspirational career advice from the alumni we spoke to!"

Jordan Scammell, Development Team Manager, also shared his thoughts on the successful campaign, saying: "The annual telephone campaign continues to go from strength to strength thanks to our alumni acknowledging the importance of The 125 Fund, and their commitment to helping our students access the opportunities they need to help set them apart in today's competitive graduate market."

CLICK AND CONNECT

Introducing our new alumni portal, westminsterconnect.org



We are excited to announce the launch of our new alumni networking site, **Westminster Connect**. This online community is an exclusive hub for graduates of the University of Westminster, allowing you to reconnect and engage with your fellow alumni.

Westminster Connect will enable you to:

RECONNECT

Utilise the trusted and talented Westminster community to expand your professional networks, and locate former classmates and friends from your time at university.

GIVE BACK

Introduce, employ or offer advice to new graduates and those looking for a career change through the 'alumni to alumni' mentoring function.

EXPAND

Enhance your own employment prospects and make new connections to expand your professional network; search by location or industry to see who is willing to help.

ADVANCE

Gain access to resources and benefits exclusive to Westminster graduates and keep up to date with the latest events and professional development opportunities.

FIND JOBS

Employ from the talented pool of Westminster alumni by posting job openings, or advance in your career by browsing the opportunities advertised.

REGISTER NOW

Sign up at westminsterconnect.org and register via LinkedIn (recommended), Facebook or by email.

Whichever way you choose to sign up, you can sync details from your social media accounts by clicking on account settings and the 'Connect' button next to the relevant logo.

DOWNLOAD THE APP

Westminster Connect is also available to download as an app for mobile devices.

For Android devices go to Google Play and search for 'Westminster Connect'.

For Apple devices, search for 'Gradway Community' in the App Store. Once downloaded, search for 'Westminster Connect' to install the platform on your device.

FIVE THINGS WE LEARNT THIS YEAR

Academics at the University continue to conduct world-leading, impact-driven research across a diverse range of disciplines.

Here are just five of the many discoveries made this year, which are helping to shape and develop the future of healthcare, transport and architecture.

1 IN THE UK, 4.8 PER CENT OF PEOPLE HAVE ELEVATED LIVER IRON

Dr Louise Thomas and Professor Jimmy Bell's new collaborative research with Perspectum Diagnostics reveals a prevalence of iron overload in the UK Biobank population.

The study assessed the combined burden of fatty liver and elevated liver iron levels within 8,865 UK Biobank participants. Researchers used the quantitative Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) technique behind LiverMultiScan to provide a non-invasive assessment of the liver iron.

The data showed that over 20 per cent of this population have excess fat in their livers and 4.8 per cent have elevated liver iron levels, with 1.3 per cent having elevated levels of both fat and iron.

2 BURNOUT IN DOCTORS HAS A SHOCKING IMPACT ON PATIENTS' CARE

Professor David Peters, Director of the Westminster Centre for Resilience, took part in major collaborative research revealing that burnout in doctors has devastating consequences for the quality of care they deliver to patients.

Professor Peters, alongside experts from the universities of Manchester, Keele, Leeds and Birmingham, looked at 47 papers which analysed the responses of 43,000 doctors. The research found that doctors with burnout are twice as likely to make mistakes, such as diagnosing incorrect conditions or prescribing wrong medications.

Findings also showed that burnout can double the likelihood of lower professional standards and could have an impact on patient satisfaction, which is three times more likely to be lower when doctors are physically, emotionally and mentally exhausted.

3 BUILDING DESIGN CAN REDUCE AIR POLLUTION

According to Dr Rosa Schiano-Phan, Principal Lecturer in Architecture and Environmental Design, the configuration of buildings could "potentially retain or aid concentration of air pollutants, while others allow them to disperse more easily".

Her research, which examines the role of vegetation in dispersing air pollutants, shows that incorporating plants into building design, as many new buildings have done, can help clean air in windy and airy places by enabling the pollution to pass through, trapping pollutants when arranged in a canopy-like design.

Dr Schiano-Phan's findings emphasise the importance of designing buildings that allow for adequate ventilation. "One of the biggest barriers in London is really the poor air quality," she explains. "Therefore with the PhD students, we are starting to apply some of the methodology of environmental design to improve this."

4 WALKING IN PATIENTS' SHOES CAN HELP US UNDERSTAND CHRONIC DISEASES

Dr Tina Cartwright and Candida Halton from the Psychology Department at the University of Westminster, conducted collaborative research supporting the idea that taking on the real-life experiences of a patient provides an effective way to understand disease.

The research was funded by the global pharmaceutical company Takeda as part of the company's 'In Their Shoes' programme, an immersive simulation launched in 2015, in which participants 'become the patients' to experience what it is like to live with inflammatory bowel disease (IBD).

By using a variety of different research methods, the study was able to demonstrate that participants in the programme gained a significantly better understanding of the physical symptoms as well as the psychosocial impact of IBD.

The study also showed that participants gained a much greater level of empathy, better connectivity to IBD patients and a greater sense of confidence in speaking to others about the impact IBD has on patients' lives.

5 TWENTY TIMES MORE ENGLISH CHILDREN COULD CYCLE TO SCHOOL WITH BETTER TRANSPORT PLANNING

In a collaborative project, Professor Rachel Aldred, Reader in Transport at Westminster, has developed a new modelling tool which will help transport planners visualise cycling potential for children in England.

Currently, only two per cent of pupils in England cycle to school, and planning for cyclists – especially school children – is often overlooked in transport schemes, with commuters taking priority.

An analysis of the National School Census suggested that if children in England could cycle to school at the same rate as Dutch children (ie for trips of the same distance and gradient), more than two in five children would do so.

With the development of the Propensity to Cycle Tool (PCT), planners are able to visualise and plan for such growth, by mapping the routes through neighbourhoods for individual schools.

Furthermore, the PCT shows that if England achieved its school cycling potential, the benefits could be huge: a 97 per cent increase in physical activity from school travel for secondary school children and the reduction of transport-related carbon emissions by 81 kilotonnes per year.

CREATIVE CREMATION

For the past six years, Architecture Lecturer Arthur Mamou-Mani has invited a group of MA architecture students and staff to accompany him to Black Rock City – an ephemeral metropolis in the Nevada desert – and experience the wonders of Burning Man.

What began as a bonfire ritual for the summer solstice, Burning Man is now an annual end-of-summer celebration of art, community and architecture, where revellers set up camp in Nevada's Black Rock Desert and for nine days create a 'leave no trace' city from scratch.

Asked in an interview with CNN why he takes his students to Burning Man every year, Arthur said: "Burning Man is very extreme, it's like an architecture boot camp – you take the students there not just for an architectural experience but also to experience community living. You are immersed into your art."

For the 2018 event, Arthur was chosen to design and build the 'temple', a wooden structure which traditionally forms the sacred centre of the temporary town. His creation 'Galaxia', which referenced the fictional planet Gaia

from Isaac Asimov's 1980s sci-fi book series *Foundation*, was formed of 20 timber trusses which spiralled into a tower and converged to create different pathways towards a giant mandala at the centre of the pavilion.

In keeping with the festival's *I, Robot* theme, Galaxia was a demonstration of the power of robotic devices and was designed with 3D-modelling and fabrication tools such as 3D printers and laser cutters. According to the *Burning Man Journal*, the structure was "the ultimate network, the fabric of the universe connecting living beings into one entity".

As is custom, the festival culminated with a ritual burning of the temple and Galaxia was sent up in flames to represent a 'collective release' on the final day.



Photo credit: [instagram.com/jamenpercy](https://www.instagram.com/jamenpercy)

BEING WESTMINSTER: ONE YEAR ON

I write this note to you having been in post as Vice-Chancellor for some 17 months since joining in May 2018. I am completely immersed in our wonderful and distinctive University of Westminster, which has such an amazing and proud history and which, of course, you are all part of. I am confident we have a bright future ahead of us that builds on who we are and what we stand for.

It has been a huge privilege and such a delight to discover our University. I have spent a great deal of time with colleagues, students and others who are part of our University. I have gained a strong understanding of what makes Westminster and what made the Polytechnic special.

I have tested, explained and promoted our position with the private sector, with our government, with universities and others – not just in the UK but in other countries too – and what is quite clear is that we are important and relevant. Our core purpose of bringing in students from a very diverse array of backgrounds to nurture them, to give them the confidence and good core values that make them very employable citizens in a changing work environment and an increasingly fractured world is arguably more important than ever.

I am pleased to say we are in good shape and set fair for the future, though the university sector is highly competitive and subject to changing external factors, so we will need to continue to

be innovative and proactive in how we move forward.

The spirit, mood and morale that is uniquely Westminster is doing well. There are so many ways in which this is evidenced. For example, the types of events we have – political, edgy, creative debates, exhibitions and shows. Some very large in our Ambika facility under our Marylebone Campus, and others that are smaller but still delivered with intensity and passion. It's just extraordinary. Our students are proactive and engaged in so many ways – within their courses and in voluntary activities. We are working hard to engage our commuting and working students who are so busy juggling the different facets of their lives alongside their studies. Many of our alumni will be very familiar with that because you have been part of this too. It's a unique essence and experience of Westminster that is alive and thriving and is so enjoyable to be a part of.

We are stretching, challenging and individualising the educational experience so that every one of our



students goes out knowing more about themselves and with the confidence to become good employees – or employers, because many are now setting up their own businesses, rather than going to work for others. Businesses around the world need people they can trust with good core values and a work-ready education, and so do governments. We complement the more theoretical, research-intensive universities and we are finding our place, becoming better known and valued for what we do – and that's both deserved and good for our reputation.

Despite the challenges of Brexit and the questions about the attractiveness of our country to others and the

“BUSINESSES AROUND THE WORLD NEED PEOPLE THEY CAN TRUST WITH GOOD CORE VALUES AND A WORK-READY EDUCATION, AND SO DO GOVERNMENTS”

affordability of education, at Westminster we are doing well, and our unique offering and spirit remain increasingly attractive to new students. We will work hard to sustain and further improve our reputation.

So, a key component for me over the last 17 months has been getting to know and understand our University, and finding out what we have stood for all this time. What is really relevant to the future is having a clear strategy.

And our 'Being Westminster' strategy is very clear – I commend it to all alumni to read. Testing it with external stakeholders has been another key element that evidences our attractiveness and relevance.

I have enjoyed meeting many alumni, either here in London or overseas. What is consistent is the Westminster spirit. It has been apparent in each of you I have met. To all of our alumni on behalf of the University, I thank you for all you contribute – as mentors, as donors, and as emissaries and ambassadors for our University. We are so grateful for all you do, wherever you work in the world.

For the 3,000 students who graduated in July and for whom this is your first *Network* magazine, my message to you is to please join and be active in the alumni network. It is a brilliant thing to be a part of. Give back to those students who follow you. Become a mentor for our current students. Engage with others, keep connected. Be our voice out there. Remember our core values of being responsible, compassionate and progressive. Be forever Westminster. And reach out to other alumni who are more experienced to help you grow your career path.

Our future ambition is closely aligned with what we were set up to do over 180 years ago and which we have been doing ever since. Our ambition is to further that to a very clear and outstanding reputation about being the university, the best university – responsible, compassionate and progressive in the way it invites people from diverse backgrounds, gives them strong core values, makes them great citizens, gives them the skills and an education that make them eminently employable people. We want to lead the world in how we do that and that's the ambition for our University. Please do continue to play your part in helping us with this journey.

Best wishes
Peter

YOUR ALUMNI WINNERS

Westminster Alumni Awards recognise and celebrate the outstanding achievements of graduates of the University of Westminster and our predecessors, including the Polytechnic of Central London and the Regent Street Polytechnic. The awards highlight the variety of ways our graduates make a real impact across the globe.

We received almost 300 submissions for the Awards this year, and our selection panels had the challenging task of choosing just three finalists in each category, leaving us with 18 finalists overall. More than 2,500 alumni, staff and members of the public then voted for their favourites, and we checked and verified the votes to discover who received the most per category.

This year we introduced a new category for recent graduates. This award recognises someone who has achieved something extraordinary within just three years of leaving Westminster.

Here we present the final winners as decided by the public vote.

COULD YOU WIN A WESTMINSTER ALUMNI AWARD?

Look out for more information from January 2020, or visit westminster.ac.uk/westminster-alumni-awards-2019-winners to find out more.



CONTRIBUTION TO THE CREATIVE INDUSTRIES AWARD

RITNIKA NAYAN

MUSIC BUSINESS MANAGEMENT MA,
2007

Ritnika Nayan started her music company MGMH in 2007, dealing with artist management, live concerts and consultancy, as well as operating a rehearsal studio in Delhi. She is a strong advocate for local music and believes the Indian music industry needs to be at par with the rest of the world. In 2019, Ritnika set up India's first standalone music business management certification course with Sri Aurobindo Centre for Arts and Communication, Delhi. The course teaches students about the various facets of the music industry and helps them get real world experience through internships and job placements.



RECENT GRADUATE AWARD

REASAT FAISAL

INTERNATIONAL PLANNING AND
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT MA,
2017

As a passionate development practitioner, Reasat's work is reducing urban poverty in Bangladesh. Focusing on solid waste management and fire prevention mechanisms in informal urban settlements, Reasat's current project has helped 50,000 low-income people living in urban slums. He has piloted a fire prevention mechanism that is currently being replicated in 20 cities across Bangladesh.

SOCIAL IMPACT AWARD

ALICIA WILLIAMS

CRIMINAL JUSTICE BA HONOURS,
2016

When Alicia travelled to St. Thomas in Jamaica, she noticed that a number of children were illiterate, facing trauma after the loss of one or both parents and severely lacking in confidence. She decided to set up Araba Scott Children's Foundation, creating a safe haven for children from her grandmother's church.



ENTREPRENEURIAL AWARD

RAHAT KULSHRESHTHA

TELEVISION PRODUCTION BA
HONOURS, 2010

Rahat set up Quidich Innovation Labs in 2013, as one of the first few drone service providers in India. It has worked with leading companies like National Geographic, BBC on *Planet Earth 2*, Red Bull and PepsiCo. His team have developed cutting-edge technology that enables them to showcase broadcast-grade Augmented Reality on live aerial footage from the drone. This technology is the first of its kind in the world and was used during the Indian Premier League in 2018, as well as at the Men's Hockey World Cup 2018.



LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

DR MICHAEL TAYLOR

PHD, 1989

Michael is a passionate Chartered Engineer who has consistently used his engineering skills to improve the quality of life and safety of others. He has held roles with organisations including the Metropolitan Police Service, the Cabinet Office, and AbilityNet. Michael is a Fellow of the IET, the RAeS and the BCS, and a Freeman of the City of London. He is also a Liveryman of the WCIT and named inventor of over 13 patents. The UK IT archives recently published his profile online.

OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

**MARIAM
AHMADI-MOGHADDAM**

PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE IN
ARCHITECTURE PGDIP, 2011

Mariam's work as an architect has greatly contributed to the success of high-profile infrastructure projects in London and overseas. In 2017 she was the Lead Architect on the prestigious Crossrail Paddington project, Europe's largest infrastructure project, and one of the most complex ever undertaken in the UK. She was a finalist for the 'Best Woman Architect' in the Women in Construction and Engineering Awards of 2017.



NOTES ON A BIG CITY: MY SHANGHAI DIARY

Our Westminster Working Cultures programme gives undergraduates the opportunity to travel abroad and experience diverse cultures and working environments across the globe. This year, for the first time, 14 lucky students spent eight days exploring the bright lights and heights of Shanghai.

Liene Strobe (BSc Real Estate, 2019) shares her travel notes from the trip.



PRE-DEPARTURE

I have always been fascinated by Chinese culture and how it differs from Europe, although I've never had a chance to visit the country before. More than anything, I'm excited to learn about how business is conducted in Shanghai and to gain an insight into the culture, city life and the built environment.



SUNDAY 21 APRIL

After nearly 12 hours of flight time, we arrived in Shanghai in the early evening. The coach ride to the hotel was accompanied by rain and bright lights all the way.

We had our first dinner out as a group this evening and I was introduced to a large glass spinning tray called a 'Lazy Susan' to experience the food sharing culture. The roast duck, black fungus and lotus roots were divine!

MONDAY 22 APRIL

Jet lagged, slightly disorientated but excited for the week ahead, I was up early this morning to meet alumnus Vincent Schoofs. Vincent is Partner-Director of luxury events agency WHAT IF and he gave us a presentation on the creative sector and experience-based advertising in Shanghai. He also spoke to us about his experience as an expat acclimatising to life in China.

Later, we took a trip to the beautiful Jade Buddha Temple at Jiangning Road to try some traditional tea tasting. Then

we headed to Chenghuang Temple and experienced Shanghai in a whole different light – old traditional buildings, small shops and the delicious smell of street food.

The taxi ride home tonight was quite eventful as the driver didn't speak English and we had no access to the internet! I came up with the idea of pointing out the Metro station closest to our hotel on the map (as all stations are listed in English and Chinese). It was definitely a good opportunity to test my problem solving skills!



TUESDAY 23 APRIL

Today we met alumnus Kevin Bao, the founder of Imagination Education Inc. He gave us some really interesting advice on how to build a successful business whilst providing something that is necessary and benefits society. It was so inspiring to see the genuine passion he has for children's education. It was clear that he really valued the knowledge he gained at Westminster too.

His presentation got me thinking about the possibility of working in Shanghai one day myself, as it's such a large market for any industry. Although, in our afternoon presentation we met alumnus Klink Zhou from Grouphorse Group who explained the 9-9-6 rule: people in China work from 9am to 9pm six days a week! I'm not sure I could manage that...



WEDNESDAY 24 APRIL

We were back on more familiar soil this morning with a visit to the British Consulate, where I had the pleasure to meet and discuss property with Benjamin Jiang (the Senior Trade and Investment Officer). We talked about the real estate market and the current social aspects affecting property development, which I was keen to learn about from a local person's perspective.

Strolling through artists' studios in the M50 district this afternoon reminded me of Camden Town. Writing on one wall said "Shanghai is the future for 19 time zones". I think innovation is a priority in both business and creativity here.

**THURSDAY 25 APRIL**

After a studio tour of Shanghai Media Group today, we had the chance to meet lots more Westminster alumni at the networking reception. Everyone I spoke to was really friendly and knowledgeable about their business sectors, and happy to discuss the pleasures of living in Shanghai. I learnt how handy WeChat is when making contacts too, as it's a very popular platform for communication, even in business.

FRIDAY 26 APRIL

During our visit to East China Normal University today, we enjoyed round table discussions in English with local students.

The sky was clearer today at last, so I could finally appreciate the Shanghai skyline in all its height and glory. Perfect timing too as we went to visit the amazing Baiku Jiangxin Art Centre in the world's second tallest building – Shanghai Tower. We may have only made it to the 38th floor, but the view was still incredibly impressive.

**SATURDAY 27 APRIL**

For our free day, we chose to visit Qibao – a water town not far from Shanghai. I'd been getting a bit bored with rice noodle soup and steamed dumplings for breakfast, so I was very pleased to have the option to try grilled frog this morning! It actually tasted quite nice and I'd happily have it again.

After some souvenir shopping, we headed back to the city centre to see the vibrant colours of Yayoi Kusama's exhibition.

SUNDAY 28 APRIL

It was a late one last night, so the early flight back wasn't easy, but we made it home safe and sound. This trip has been a great team experience and I've learnt so much about the society, ethics and business environment in China. I've learnt the city is quite Westernised and I think I could adapt if my work ever took me there.

I feel very lucky to have had this adventure.

Thank you to all our alumni who have supported Westminster Working Cultures.

If you live in Berlin, Brussels, Dubai, Hong Kong, Mumbai, Shanghai, Toronto or Washington, D.C. and could provide a few hours to talk to our students or show them around your workplace, we would love to hear from you. Please email WorkingCultures@westminster.ac.uk



PHOTOGRAPHY ON THE FRONT LINE

Photojournalism MA alumnus and Study UK Alumni Awards Global Finalist **Alessandro Rota** shares the risks and rewards of working as a conflict reporter and photojournalist.

"It's completely different shooting a catwalk in Milan to being in a war zone in Iraq," states Alessandro, who at just 31 years old, has enjoyed a career spanning both.

Alessandro fell in love with photography when studying for a BA in Industrial Design in his hometown, Milan. After learning the basics at night school and discovering his passion for being behind the lens, he decided to move to London to study documentary photography at Westminster.

"The UK has a special relationship with journalism," he explains. "I wanted to get a sense of that. That's what drove me to choose Westminster, as it's one of the most prestigious universities for documentary photography."

Fast-forward ten years and Alessandro, now an award-winning conflict reporter working with humanitarian clients such as Emergency and Oxfam, spends up to six months a year travelling to war-torn areas of Africa and the Middle East, capturing the violence and the lives of those caught up in it.

"One of the things I love about photography is that you have to be in the field," he says. "You have to have your feet on the ground to get a sense of what is really going on. But it's a dangerous job and you must accept that, otherwise you're stuck and cannot work."

"The biggest threat these days is the fact journalists are no longer seen as impartial, neutral spectators. Especially in the Middle East with the Islamic State war. Journalists are now targets – not

only with bullets and explosions, but also with kidnapping – which is a really tough topic. It's increasingly difficult to report in war zones."

But since he's been willing to take that risk, Alessandro's photography has featured in publications including *the Guardian*, *Der Spiegel*, *Newsweek*, and on the *National Geographic* website – to name just a few. Considering how competitive the industry is, these achievements reveal Alessandro's seemingly limitless dedication to photojournalism; from the repeated risks to his safety on location to his day-to-day life back in Italy. (He lives "in the countryside of Milano, minutes away from International Airport of Malpensa" – ready to jump on a plane at a moment's notice.)

Above all, his experience so far has taught him – sometimes the hard way – the importance of being prepared. "Naivety is so dangerous," he says. "You can't just fly to Mogadishu and shoot a story for two weeks. It's becoming more and more unsafe to work in these areas and so constant training is absolutely compulsory."

The Hostile Environments training Alessandro is referring to is an intensive five-day course which covers surveillance, security and first aid; essential knowledge for living in a war zone. However, there are other risks which this type of training won't prepare you for.

"A few years ago, I started to confront the reality of being a conflict photojournalist; the notion of travelling to these countries and the consequences

when you go back home," he explains. "Sometimes when you come back, you feel like everything is senseless. So you need to be ready for that and learn to take care of yourself."

In his five years of freelancing, Alessandro has covered four active conflicts and travelled to more than 25 countries. Witnessing violence on such a scale has inevitably had some consequences. "The first time you see a gun or hear a gunshot is very frightening," he remarks, "but over the years you get completely used to it. This is dangerous, as the more time you spend in conflict the less vulnerable you feel. Which is one of the reasons you always need breaks at home with your friends and family, to properly decompress what you have witnessed and to realise that's not your reality, or daily routine – but part of your job."

"I've spent a lot of time in Iraq covering the Islamic State war. Even without assignments, I would travel there for research and to expand my network of contacts. It was extremely violent, especially the Mosul Offensive in the very last days of the caliphate. It was like a house-by-house fight, with a lot of casualties, including civilians. It was very tough and one of the most violent conflicts I've seen."

"You need to deal with things like this and be at peace with it. Another side effect of seeing such terrible events is that you feel powerless, which can make you angry but also depressed. You need to learn to let things go."

Fortunately, understanding the importance of self-care has allowed



Alessandro to disconnect from his career in conflict when needed.

"I had a very hard trip to Iraq in March 2017," he explains, "so last year I decided to take a break and went sailing around the Mediterranean Sea on my own. I found this old 1970s boat in France, bought and refurbished it, and sailed on my own from France to



Greece, all along the Italian coast. Friends visited sometimes, but I was basically alone."

"It felt extremely good to start a new photography project, telling the story of the amazing Mediterranean Sea, which is super beautiful and fragile. I found some incredible treasures; it was a completely unexpected and special

experience, and a good way to relax following my previous year. At the moment, the boat is in Greece as it needs refurbishment, but I will go back to it in the summer. For the meantime, I am starting to feel ready to go back to the war zones."

Photo credit: alessandrorota.photoshelter.com

WORDS HEAL THE WORLD

How one Westminster alumna is using the power of words to challenge hate and inspire peace.

In the video 'Behind the Scarf', a young woman, eyes smiling, explains to the camera, "I'm the same person with or without the niqab." In another video, '100 Black Girls', a mother talks about her search to create a list of 100 children's stories where a black girl is the main protagonist. And in 'Who You Fear, You Should Hear', four students are challenged to meet blindfolded and get to know each other through voice alone.

All these videos are the output of Words Heal the World, a non-profit organisation that puts young people centre stage in tackling extremism and online hate. Students are trained to use their natural creativity and digital skills to write articles, make videos, develop social media campaigns or produce documentaries – anything that challenges hate speech or promotes the work of partner organisations that advocate peace.

In only two years, Words Heal the World has grown to encompass 24 partner organisations, has won the Transcendence Award from Michigan State University and been nominated for the Luxembourg Peace Prize (awarded by the Schengen Peace Foundation and the World Peace Forum).

"Our work with students is very unique," explains Beatriz Buarque (International Relations and Security MA, 2018), founder of Words Heal the



World. "The methodology I developed cultivates critical thinking in our students. They learn about extremism, about the vicious circle of hate, about the impact of digital media on these ideologies and they also take action. They are encouraged to come up with ideas to tackle racism, antisemitism, Islamophobia, misogyny and homophobia. After they share their ideas, we implement them and monitor the results. They are involved in the full cycle."

Young people are at the heart of Words Heal the World. At a time when we value emotions more than facts and digital media is contributing to divisions

between people, young adults are often the target of the dark side of social media. But Words Heal the World sees young people as the answer.

"I think it is crucial to work with undergraduates. It is not enough to give them a flyer or a book, or ask them to read something. Our greatest advantage is that we inspire students to lead change," says Beatriz.

"The impact on our students is the most rewarding part of working on the project. You witness your students growing, not only professionally but emotionally. They become empowered and aware of their own potential; the fact that they can make a difference.



And while producing messages to challenge hate, they also challenge their own misconceptions."

Words Heal the World began life as a website in 2017, set up while Beatriz was a journalist in Brazil to increase the visibility of organisations that promote peace but did not have the resources for social media teams. Beatriz quickly recognised that students – naturally expert in social media and brimming with ideas – were the perfect people to do this. So Beatriz began a partnership with the Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, where students could gain credits by taking part in an extension course.

When Beatriz won a scholarship and moved to London to start her Masters here, Words Heal the World was quickly embraced by the University's Democratic Education Network (DEN) and University of Westminster students. DEN is a network of over 200 students and staff, led by Professor Farhang Morady (Principal Lecturer in Development and International Relations) that encourages our students, alongside colleagues and communities in London, to inspire, engage and apply their education creatively in society.

"DEN provided me with all of the means necessary to turn Words Heal the World from a website into a

project," explains Beatriz. "They really supported me. It started to gain international recognition and I was invited to conferences to talk about what we were doing.

"I am very grateful to the University of Westminster because I learnt a lot there. Not only from the professors, but from the other students. Westminster has a big diversity of students. You can find people from all over the world at this University. This is very, very important."

Words Heal the World is still growing and is expanding beyond the UK and Brazil to become an international force as universities and organisations start to realise the impact of empowering undergraduate students in challenging hate and preventing radicalisation, and involving young people in their outreach strategies.

"We have started negotiating with other universities to empower students to challenge hate in the US and Africa. Until December, we are going to premiere our third movie, *Silenced Saints*, and launch our first report in partnership with UNESCO-MGIEP, the Hate Map of Brazil.

"I really hope Words Heal the World will break the vicious cycle of hate and create a virtual circle of peace. That is my vision. We only need to give young people the opportunity to use their creativity for peace."





CHANGING THE WORLD WITH STYLE

Network magazine talks to University of Westminster graduate and World Afro Day Founder **Michelle De Leon** about world records, cultural education and the joy of finding your purpose.



Sitting on a plush sofa in the ITV Studios, overlooking White City outside, I can't help but think that Media Studies alumna Michelle De Leon, now Features Producer for *Good Morning Britain*, has really made it. But for all of the talent and hard work which has got her to this point, Michelle's career isn't even her biggest achievement.

"Afro hair discrimination is the absolute norm in society," she tells me. "The pressure, on women with Afro hair especially, is lifelong. They always feel scrutinised whether they choose to have

straight hair or natural hair. They're damned if they do and damned if they don't."

Michelle, the Founder of World Afro Day, realised her purpose was to help create a positive environment around Afro hair shortly after becoming a mother. "With Afro hair, it's always a personal journey first," she explains. "You work out that you want to embrace your own natural hair and in doing that, you consciously reject the other messages that are out there that say your hair is not normal or not desirable.

"For me, it changed when I had my daughter. I chose to make sure that the world she's growing up in is better than the world I grew up in."

And change the world she has.

On 15 September 2017, Michelle hosted the first World Afro Day event, which was backed by the UN's Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. In the borough of Westminster, she brought together 400 school children to learn about the qualities and value of Afro hair and set a Guinness World Record for the 'Largest Hair

"THERE IS STORY AFTER STORY OF KIDS BEING HUMILIATED AND MADE TO FEEL THAT THEY HAVE TO GET RID OF OR CHANGE THEIR HAIR"

Education Lesson'. The event went viral with over 2.5 million views and was a huge success, winning extensive international attention and receiving tributes worldwide.

Since the inaugural event, Michelle's creation has gone from strength to strength, pioneering new ways to change attitudes towards Afro hair. For the 2018 event, she held the World Afro Day Awards, to showcase Afro representation and excellence in the media. Again, coverage was widespread and attracted support from high-profile celebrities such as Naomi Campbell, Fleur East and Leicester City Football Club.

But the growth and success of World Afro Day is a double-edged sword, as Michelle's determination to combat hair inequality is sustained by the ongoing media reports of discrimination and repression.

"I just get fed up," she says. "There is story after story of kids being humiliated and made to feel that they have to get rid of or change their hair. And every time there's an article in the press, you just have to read the comments. You can guarantee there will be parents saying 'This is happening to my child.'"

For this reason, the focus for World Afro Day 2019 will be the Big Hair Assembly: a live-streamed global gathering, which will link up school children from around the world to celebrate Afro hair on an international scale. "Afro discrimination is a global problem," says Michelle, "so I want to use this opportunity to bring kids together from different global perspectives and show them that together, we can change things."

I ask Michelle why she thinks it's important to focus these campaigns on young children specifically. "Working with children means working with schools," she replies, "and the school system is part of the main problem in society."

What Michelle is referring to are the numerous cases of conscious or unconscious discrimination towards black and mixed-race children in the form of school rules. Last year saw multiple cases of children being compelled to 'tame' their natural hair, under the threat of being expelled. In the USA, one African-American high school student was forced to cut off his hair before being allowed to continue in a wrestling match. While in the UK, a five-year-old was denied playtime because of his normal haircut.

"If we tackle it here," she explains, "we're stopping the cycle altogether. And that's the most important thing."

It's for this reason that World Afro Day has a second focus: an education programme for young people. Classroom-based World Afro Day lessons put emphasis on critical thinking and cultural education to teach children that, despite what the system says, Afro hair is valuable, beautiful and above all, normal.

While the uptake of the education programme has been largely positive, Michelle's plans for improving the school system and ensuring equal opportunity are more ambitious.

"How we're different from other organisations is that we're focused on structural change. Because actually, we need to change the whole environment rather than focusing on individuals. That means looking at the law and the

government, and how they allow us to be equal," she explains. "But globally there's a lack of evidence; and research is the key to having certain conversations with the government as well as with teachers and Ofsted."

In order to overcome this obstacle and quantify the issues of hair discrimination, Michelle worked with researchers to conduct a survey earlier this year and published the Hair Equality Report.

"Now we have the evidence," she says. "The findings show that one in six children with Afro hair is having a bad or very bad experience in school. I have gathered the data in a report and so I can confidently say: 'This is the problem – we need to do something about it.'"

And going by her track record, there is no doubt that Michelle will do everything in her power to make sure that happens.

Plenty of parents may aspire to improve the world for their children but Michelle's dedication to Afro equality is having an evident impact, with more and more children and adults learning to love and embrace their natural Afro hair.

"The great thing about finding my purpose," she claims, "is that I get to use all my skills as a TV producer and all my passion as a black mother to tell the story of marginalised children. Never think, being a woman or black is a disadvantage because whoever you are, your story matters and using your experience can help others."

I ask Michelle what she believes is the ultimate goal for World Afro Day and her response comes without hesitation. "Normalisation," she says. "Normalisation is always going to be that benchmark. When it's not a big deal if a news reporter or a politician has got his or her own natural hair. When everybody is able to be themselves on screen, without judgement. That's how everybody with straight hair lives their life, so why can't the rest of us?"



Photo credit: Kacper Rudolf

IT GIRLS

The glaring gender disparity in the technology workforce remains. But University of Westminster alumnae prove that women can be successful – and help create equality – in this lucrative sector.

Ask someone to name a leading female in technology and they might say Sheryl Sandberg. Or perhaps Ginni Rometty of IBM. But if you narrowed it down to the UK, they would be hard-pressed. A Google search for 'influential women in UK tech' even brings back Ada Lovelace – a female computer pioneer who died in 1852. Clearly, if this is any barometer, business needs to face up to reality.

In the UK alone, the industry is worth almost £184bn, and is growing twice as fast as the economy as a whole, according to the 2018 Tech Nation report. London is recognised as one of the world's top tech centres, often mentioned in the same breath as Silicon Valley. And, aside from the fact that tech-driven household names such as Deliveroo are based in the UK, technology and digital creations are omnipresent in everyone's daily lives – from Facebook to Skyscanner – regardless of gender. Obviously, half of the workforce and half of consumers are women.

But our tech worlds continue to be shaped by men. The WISE Campaign's 2018 Workforce Statistics show that just 13 per cent of leading technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM)

roles in the UK are held by women, while that figure rises to only 22 per cent of STEM professions at all levels. The discrepancy can be traced back to school, where, according to PwC's extensive 2017 Women in Tech study, 83 per cent of males were studying STEM A-level subjects compared with 64 per cent of females.

Girls – under-represented in STEM to begin with – cited various reasons for not wanting to continue these subjects at university (where they remain outnumbered) or pursue careers in these sectors, and these ranged from being discouraged by a lack of advice to being naturally better at essay-based topics. And this is without mentioning the 'self-efficacy' factor, that is, an inner belief – or lack of belief – in oneself in a particular subject, which confirms that girls still inherently have a disinclination towards STEM career paths, perhaps based on the misguided idea that these are simply 'not what girls do'.

WHAT CAN BE DONE

Universities have a key role to play in bridging the gap. They may offer incentives to women to take STEM subjects, or organise events in schools



to improve advice and, at least, make such a route more visible and attractive to female pupils.

The University of Westminster is a member of the aforementioned WISE, a collaborative network incorporating various businesses and educational institutions that is attempting to engage more schoolgirls with STEM subjects. It undertakes research, offers apprenticeships and fellowships, and provides a platform for employers to advertise jobs.

BUCKING THE TREND

And, while the landscape is evidently still not perfect, there are successful women in tech eager to promote change – University of Westminster alumnae among them. Nina Monckton, Chief Insight Officer at the National Health Service Business Services Authority, studied part-time for an MSc in Statistical Applications in Business and Government.

She recently won Transformation Leader of the Year at the Women in IT awards for her work on a data analytics lab that has identified £1bn in cost savings for the NHS. Healthcare professionals can use the system to, for example, see which antibiotics are being over-prescribed (therefore becoming

ineffective) and act accordingly to make savings. Nina is a keen advocate of the University and its STEM opportunities.

"That degree provided me with a solid foundation, the roots of what I do now," she says of her time at Westminster. "Even then (1995), the University was unique. It recognised flexibility, and offered part-time programmes, which are really important for supporting all kinds of people, including women already working."

Aliona Sladzinskaya (Business Management MA, 2016) created and runs the event-planning app PartyMaker App and is one of the co-founders of dgArt, a web development agency that, among other things, helps start-ups create a minimum viable product they can pitch to investors. She echoes Nina's praise for the grounding she got at Westminster. "There was a 'go and do it now' approach. The course was very useful as it helped me to structure business knowledge and gave a general overview. It allowed me to become more confident."

But while both acknowledge that their university education helped to propel them to greater things, they are also in agreement that the current gender imbalance in the STEM workforce is unhealthy and, indeed, counterproductive – on various levels.

Nina says it is no surprise that women are often put off by macho terms, including for job roles, and that the language does nothing to attract females to such roles. "It's difficult when it's only males involved. But in the tech sector particularly, the terminology is still so male-oriented. For example, a 'scrum-master'. That just shouts: 'No girls allowed.' This is strange when there are so many female consumers."

Aliona is equally as dumbfounded by a persistent trend that sidelines female expertise. She started PartyMaker with male co-founder Stas Kulminski, and wants to see more businesses pool the talents of males and females so that all views are represented in the final product. "It is important to have balance in everything," she says. "Women and men are different, it's been proven! But when we combine our skills, something great comes out of a 50/50 input."

THE NEXT STEPS

Efforts continue to be made to redress the balance. Along with campaigns such as WISE, there have been targeted attempts to promote change. Tigerspike, a digital products outfit that counts Emirates and Centrica among its clients, has teamed up with the University of Westminster to

pledge a £5,000 prize fund for final-year female BSc Software Engineering students who gain a distinction, to be split between those achieving the grade. It's an encouraging direction, and it can be bolstered if women follow their passions despite the apparent obstacles. One of these may be perception.

There is a "huge misconception" about the technology sector, Aliona says, which means that girls might fail to see how creative many roles can be. "They might think it is super-complicated but it is broader," she adds. "You can create something that is unique through teamwork."

More broadly, Nina says that current female students on the brink of graduating should have a fearless approach to the world of work. "Don't be afraid to be brave. Ask for what you want. There may be barriers that are only perceived," she says. For example, just ask if you can do a job part-time. I'd rather have half of a really good person than no one."

Such boldness is integral to Aliona's mindset. "Don't be scared; if you have an idea just go for it," she tells tomorrow's tech women. "If you have a great idea it will work. London is full of opportunities, as long as you have the entrepreneurial spirit within you."

Both encourage partnerships with experienced specialists to help fledgling female entrepreneurs get a solid start. They urge graduates to tap into the knowledge of seasoned professionals. "Find someone who is well respected. Get them to show you the ropes. You will benefit from having this interaction. They will act like a mentor, so take their advice," says Nina.

"Find great people on the way. It matters who you meet and who you work with. Use those skills," Aliona adds.

So the benefits of greater diversity for individuals are clear. But it is also imperative that this inequality is addressed to improve the attractiveness of the UK as a place to work. PwC's report outlines how strides towards improvement can break a vicious circle – when businesses are seen to be more diverse then in turn they will attract the top female talents.

Its earlier study, The Female Millennial, revealed that 83 per cent of British female millennials actively target employers with a strong diversity record. So diversity breeds diversity. And beyond that, an equitable balance may bring down the gender pay gap at the top – men earn a huge 25 per cent more in high-tech roles, according to consulting firm Mercer. This again could help to empower women in the

technology sector and ultimately boost UK business, enhancing its competitiveness with the US and China.

ENCOURAGING PROGRESS

Nina and Aliona have seen signs of change. Aliona namechecks niche networks such as Women in Tech, which have given her encouragement from the proof that there are like-minded women in business.

And for both of these pioneers, it is crucial that businesses, big tech firms among them, begin to engage women with practical experience including through apprenticeships, and that universities target talent by partnering with these big businesses to make an impact. Even the basics – such as money – will offer motivation to graduates, Nina adds. "The industry isn't interested in shouting about salaries – and there are some big salaries! The potential is great. It's about luring women from other sectors."

With a course roster including Computer Science BSc Honours, Data Science and Analytics BSc Honours, and Software Engineering MEng, to name just a few, the University of Westminster is continuing to support female STEM students and can play its part in helping women in technology reach parity.



Written in the stars and driest deserts on Earth

As a species, humans are having a more profound and destructive effect on the Earth than any natural force. But how did we become so powerful? The answer, as **Professor Lewis Dartnell's** latest book *Origins: How the Earth Made Us* demonstrates, lies in the planet itself.

Professor Dartnell is an astrobiologist, but his latest and best-selling book is grounded firmly on Earth. "This book isn't about change or environmental degradation," he says. "We now recognise the disruptive effect that humans are having on the planet, so I take it as a given. Instead, I wanted to focus on the flipside: how the Earth has influenced us over millions of years. Or more specifically, how features of the planet have directed the course of human history and helped build the world we live in today."

According to Professor Dartnell, the force of planetary cycles on plate tectonics has dictated our movements and our history, from trade routes to the rise and fall of empires. And it all began in the Rift Valley 200,000 years ago.

"How we first emerged as a species relates to one very curious question: why we became so exquisitely intelligent," he explains. "It comes down to an interplay between the quirky landscape of East Africa and cosmic cycles – specifically Milankovitch cycles – dictating the climate and forcing our ancestors to adapt and migrate. The basis of why we were driven to evolve such high intelligence in the first place, is therefore due to an interaction with planetary forces."

Thus, by pinpointing events and analysing their position in Earth's history, *Origins* exposes how everything about the world as we know it has been shaped by cosmic forces. "Even today, the imprint of the Earth is visible in our political maps," says Professor Dartnell,

in reference to one study that examines an incongruous patch of blue votes on a political map of the USA's Deep South. According to his research, the trail of democratic votes which correlates to the banks of the Mississippi is a result of the richness of the local soil which makes it ideal for cotton farming. Hence, in the 19th Century, this area became home to thousands of African-American slaves whose descendants remain there to this day. Due to socio-economic problems and high rates of unemployment, the electorate in this so-called 'Black Belt' of fertile soils continue to vote for the Democratic Party, sustaining a distinctive curve of blue votes on the Presidential map.

In order to trace the origins of pivotal events in human history such as this back to movements within our solar system, Professor Dartnell draws on a range of disciplines. "My main field of research is astrobiology, which is deeply and intrinsically interdisciplinary," he says. "I come from a biology background, but for my research I've had to learn a lot of physics, geology, planetary science and instrumentation. In *Origins*, I used the same technique: pulling together threads from wildly different fields and weaving them together."

"The area of study that *Origins* falls into is called 'big history' and I was dissatisfied when reading other big history books because I found them to be straightjacketed by their own chronology. I wanted to look at the broad brushstrokes of human history and how it's influenced by planetary

history, so each chapter isn't the next part of time but a different theme."

Closer to home, for example, *Origins* considers the causes and effects of global warming. "The premise of the book is basically the whole thing that the Extinction Rebellion are demonstrating about right now," says Professor Dartnell. "Page one, chapter one of the book is that we now recognise the profound and on the whole disruptive effect that humanity is having on the planet. But if we understand how the Earth made us, I suppose we can consider what responsibility to take on ourselves in order to be a good kind of steward for the planet."

"There is an interesting chapter in the book," he explains, "about how we got into this situation in the first place. There was a peculiar period of Earth's history about 300 million years ago when trees grew very fervently but when they died and fell over, they refused to rot. It's because of this strange occurrence with our planet's recycling system that we had these thick deposits of coal from the carboniferous era which powered us through the Industrial Revolution."

"Similarly, something broke in the Earth's oceans more recently (about 60–70 million years ago), which gave us all of the crude oil we have been sucking up. Thus the problems we have with global warming and climate change today are because we were facing an energy crisis in the 1600s and 1700s which was resolved by digging up ancient forests."



"The problem with that solution, as we have come to realise, is that by burning all these ancient forests, we are pumping carbon dioxide into the atmosphere faster than it can be removed naturally. It was a rational solution to a problem in our history but, as I say in the book, it was like unleashing a genie with unintended consequences, and we now need to find a solution to the solution."

Beyond these fascinating correlations, Professor Dartnell's research is more than a series of thought-provoking case studies into the effects of the planet on humanity. As an astrobiologist, the

study of influences on life on Earth also helps to inform his research into microorganisms on other planets.

"A lot of my research is on analogue sites on Earth," he explains. "Locations which environmentally mimic places on Europa or Mars or Titan can tell us whether microbial life can survive in that kind of environment. One of the sites I use is the Atacama Desert in Chile, which is the oldest and driest desert on the planet. So something which can survive there, has the right kind of skills and cells for surviving on Mars as well."

"The next step in Mars research is taking place next year, when the European Space Agency is launching its next generation of Mars rover, *ExoMars*. We're going to dig up deep soil and analyse the Martian dirt for signs of organic molecules – the building blocks of life – but also hopefully biosignatures and cells; unambiguous signs of Martian bacteria. I'm just one tiny cog in that whole European-wide venture to explore Mars, but it's very exciting."

Originsbook.com

Feel younger than you are? Here's why you're on to something good

Professor Catherine Loveday, Principal Lecturer in Neuroscience at the University of Westminster, writes in *The Conversation* about how challenging attitudes to chronological ageing could help us live longer.

Emile Ratelband made international headlines when he launched a controversial legal battle to change his official date of birth from March 1949 to March 1969, reflecting the fact that he felt 20 years younger. The story probably made some of us laugh, but who can blame him for wanting to share his year of birth with the likes of Jennifer Aniston, Jay-Z, Steffi Graf or even my good self?

The legal bid may have been a first, but it is actually common to feel younger than we are. A 2018 study with 33,751 respondents showed that once people pass the pivotal age of 25, they typically rate their subjective age as younger than their chronological age. And this discrepancy grows as we get older – for every decade that passes, people tend to feel they have only gained five or six years. This is the equivalent to living Martian years as opposed to Earth years.

It turns out that this phenomenon may have rather important implications. A recent surge in research in this area has revealed that the extent to which people feel younger than they are is strongly associated with a whole range of health outcomes. People with a younger subjective age are less likely to suffer from diabetes, hypertension, depression, cognitive impairment and dementia. These people also tend to report better sleep, stronger memory function and more fulfilling sex lives.

People with a younger subjective age also view their future selves in a more

positive light and are more likely to walk faster. One group of researchers even found that people with a lower subjective age have a younger looking brain. Brain scans showed that they had more grey matter overall, with particular resilience in areas called the prefrontal cortex (involved in planning and complex cognitive behaviour) and superior temporal gyrus (responsible for processing sounds and emotions).

These findings are not trivial – new research shows that people who think of themselves as 13 years older are 25 per cent more likely to die, even when education, race and marital status are taken into account. This study, by a team at the University of Grenoble, pooled together data from three large longitudinal studies, where 17,000 participants were assessed over a number of time points.

Overall, people reported feeling on average 16–17 years younger than they really were – not far off the difference described by Ratelband. But importantly, this research showed that the risk of mortality was almost twice as high in those people who felt older than their age compared to those who felt younger. This effect appeared for both shorter time intervals (three years) and for longer ones (20 years).

CAUSE AND EFFECT

So it seems that to some extent, we really are as young as we feel. But how do we know which is the chicken and

the egg? Are people who feel younger simply healthier to start with or are they so keen on being young that they actually take better care of themselves and therefore live longer?

Most scientists agree that it is a two-way street. We know that poor health makes people feel older, as indeed can stress and low mood. The real question is can we do anything to break this vicious cycle? If we could somehow feel younger – perhaps by ignoring societal and personal expectations about age – might this mean we can live longer, happier and healthier lives? Early indications suggest yes.

In one study, researchers enrolled a group of older participants in an exercise regime and found that their performance improved significantly if they were praised – but specifically if they were favourably compared to other people of the same age. Reducing age stereotyping might also be helpful – another study showed that exposing people to photos and words that are typically associated with old age, such as 'grumpy', 'wrinkled', and 'helpless' made them feel older. Interestingly, this was true even when positive associations like 'wise' and 'full of life' were used alongside a smiling older face.

Back in 1979, psychologist Ellen Langer – now the longest serving professor at the University of Harvard – showed that simply turning the clock back 20 years had an age-reversing



effect on a group of 75-year-old men. After five days of being immersed in a mocked up 1959 environment and treated as 55-year-olds, these men showed increased physical strength, improved memory and better eyesight.

Ratelband's case centred on his claims that at 69, society did not allow him to do the same things that he could do if he was 49. He did not have the

same employment opportunities, couldn't buy a new house and didn't get replies when he advertised on the dating site Tinder. He may not have won his legal battle, but if nothing else, this case highlighted an opportunity for society to change its attitude to chronological age.

If we can learn to ignore the numbers on a birth certificate and cut down on

the relentless societal references to getting old, then maybe we will lead healthier, happier and longer lives.

Read the article online at:
theconversation.com/feel-younger-than-you-are-heres-why-youre-on-to-something-good-106794

CLASSNOTES

The University of Westminster has a global community of more than 180,000 alumni in over 180 countries worldwide. Here is a small selection of the updates we have received from our alumni over the past year. We would love to hear about your career and life since graduation, so please send your news and a photo to alumni@westminster.ac.uk



SHAHEEN MAMUN
SOLICITORS EXEMPTING HONOURS LLB,
2014

After graduating, I qualified as a solicitor and co-founded the Black Antelope Group in 2018. I have a growing reputation in the legal profession as a young award-winning solicitor and have been recognised with the 'One to Watch' at the British Muslim Awards 2018, the 'Malcolm X Young Person's Award for Excellence' at the Muslim News Awards 2017 and Highly Commended for the 'BSN Rising Star' at the UK Legal Diversity Awards 2016.



KEIRON SPARROWHAWK
MBA, 1998

Following a long career in pharmaceuticals and after achieving my MBA, I founded PriceSpective in 2003 which worked globally to support 17 of the top 20 pharmaceutical companies, helping dozens of new products be brought to market. In 2005 I co-authored an article in *Nature* 'Pricing medicines: theory and practice, challenges and opportunities', that to this day is the most referenced in pharmaceutical pricing. I am also the founder

of MyCognition, which has developed digital programmes to monitor and strengthen cognition. The programmes, accredited as medical devices, have won prestigious awards and are NHS approved.



ALISON BANCROFT
ENGLISH STUDIES BA, 1996

I was the first member of my family to go to university, and the English programme at Westminster was a transformative experience for me. After graduating and enjoying a career in the music industry, I made my way to a PhD. In 2012, my thesis became the book *Fashion and Psychoanalysis* which at the time was one of the only three books ever written on the subject. It has been credited with starting a new conceptual approach to fashion and since its publication, there have been two conferences on the subject, a special journal edition, several book chapters, and another book on the same subject. Outside of academia, it was the inspiration for the Christian Dior haute couture collection.



IMRAN SANAUULLAH
LAW LLB, 2015

I've worked hard over the last seven years to help young people from disadvantaged and under-

represented communities to engage with mainstream politics and civil society. As a founding member and CEO of the Patchwork Foundation, I have helped over 32,000 young people from across Britain to engage with decision makers. My work on political engagement has been recognised by the likes of the Mayor of London, Prime Minister, Leader of the Opposition and Speaker of the Commons. Since 2016, I've organised Youth Interfaith Iftars to bring young people of all faiths and none to engage in social action. The annual Iftar has seen over 500 young people from across London joined by the Chief Rabbi, Archbishop of Canterbury, Cardinal Vincent Nichols and Mayor of London.



DARINE HAMZE
ARTS AND MEDIA PRACTICE
MA, 2004

With the artistic inspiration I gained at

Westminster, I have made more than 15 hit movies in Lebanon, Germany, Paris, Iran and the USA, alongside 37 TV series across the Middle East. Now a well-known film star in Lebanon, I tend to choose roles of Arab women who question the injustices of society upon female inequality. I've been nominated for awards at international film festivals, including Cannes and the Sundance Film Festival and recently won the Best Actress Award at the International Arabic Film Festival.



DELPHINE DUFF
SOCIAL WORK DIP, 1989

An experienced and versatile criminal justice professional, I was employed by London Probation in 1989, initially as a probation officer and have since worked to develop a range of training courses and specialist interventions which include assisting offenders into employment and tackling unconscious bias. In 2010 I was assigned as an expert in Jamaica's Department of Corrections; the programme I designed has now become an integral component of service delivery. I was one of the first people to receive a Sheriff of London Award and am the first female to twice receive a Butler Trust commendation. Now retired from probation practice, I'm a visiting lecturer at Middlesex University, a consultant on criminal justice matters and remain active within the community.



GEOFF MULGAN CBE
PHD, 1990

As Chief Executive of Nesta, the UK's innovation foundation, I have played a major role globally in public policy, social innovation and collective intelligence. My previous roles include director of the government's Strategy Unit and head of policy in the Prime Minister's office. I was the first director of the think-tank Demos; Chief Adviser to Gordon Brown MP and reporter on BBC TV and radio. I have also co-chaired a World Economic Forum group looking at innovation and entrepreneurship in the fourth industrial revolution. Currently I'm a senior visiting scholar at Harvard University and President of the Innovation Design Department and the Italian University for Design (IAAD) in Turin.



PAOLO CASAMASSIMA
GLOBAL BUSINESS - INTERNATIONAL
MARKETING MA, 2008

I'm the Founder and CEO of Bighous, a Social Impact investment firm, focused on purchasing and re-developing distressed properties across the UK, to be let solely to charities helping underprivileged minorities and vulnerable tenants. Since its founding in 2015, Bighous has grown to close to £2m in assets and has attracted HNW and Institutional investors funding. Through partnering with five different charities and housing associations, Bighous is currently helping over 47 individuals, including former homeless, prisoners, individuals with a drug or alcohol addiction, mentally and physically disabled, minor orphans, asylum seekers and victims of family abuse.



ANJALI PINDORIA
QUANTITY SURVEYING AND
COMMERCIAL MANAGEMENT BSC, 2017

My dissertation research gave me the platform to spread my passion about diversity and inclusion within the Construction industry. I was awarded the Constructors' Prize by the Worshipful Company of Constructors, now a Yeoman with the Livery. As an advocate of diversity, I often speak on panels and present with the CIOB, BIM Region London, First100Years, Willmott Dixon, UK Construction Week and London Build, where I strive to bring positive change breaking stereotypes and tackling myths held by the younger generations. I am a UK Construction Week Role Model, NAWIC Education Ambassador and BAME representative whilst also sitting on five leading industry change committees.



TOMER BEN
MANAGEMENT PGCERT, 2012

Realising that all traditional Jewish media outlets are political, in 2015 I founded *Solomon Mines* Luxury Jewish Magazine. Now for the first time, brands and companies can reach the affluent Jewish market without the complications and implications of political identification. The magazine has grown from 300 copies to 35,000 copies printed in 17 countries reaching 250,000 readers via print and digital editions. It remains the only luxury Jewish magazine in the world to specifically target the high net worth Jewish consumer market.



PARRY RAVINDRANATHAN
INTERNATIONAL JOURNALISM
(BROADCAST) MA, 2003

Starting out as an intern with CNN in its Delhi bureau, I joined a fledgling media company called TV18 where I went on to executive produce morning primetime programming and then evening primetime by the age of 25. Later, I joined Al Jazeera English as an Assistant Programmes Editor and was among the first journalists at the scene to cover the Mumbai attacks in 2008. I joined Bloomberg Media in 2010, leading its expansion into India, and am now President and Managing Director for all of Bloomberg Media's international operations outside the United States.



NEIL MATTHEWS
HISTORY PHD,
2014

Since graduating from Westminster, I've completed a successful

four-year stint as Development Manager for Historic Houses, the association for over 1,600 privately or independently owned historic houses and gardens. More recently, with my wife Helen, I've written a brand new guidebook to the Chilterns, where we live, with additional content on the Thames Valley and the Vale of Aylesbury – details are online at bradtguides.com



LUAN GOLDIE
MEDIA STUDIES BA, 2001

I have worked as a business journalist and teacher. At the start of 2018 I won the short story prize at the Costa Book Awards. I then signed a two-book deal with HarperCollins. My debut novel *Nightingale Point* is set 90s East London and follows a working class community as it's thrown into crisis. It has been picked by BBC Radio 2 for its Book Club.



DAN ILYWELYN HALL
ILLUSTRATION BA, 2002

A year after graduation I won Sunday Times Young Artist of the Year and after working initially as an illustrator for the *Independent on Sunday*, I have slowly crafted a career as a painter of portraits and landscapes. Recently I became the youngest artist to paint a portrait of Her Majesty the Queen and in 2014, was the first ever official Artist in Residence for the Cannes Film Festival. My work is in public collections such as the Royal Collection, The Imperial War Museum, Contemporary Art Society and others.



JAMES WONG
MARKETING AND
COMMUNICATIONS
MA, 2006

After leaving Westminster, I fell straight into a career in entertainment publicity where

I represented the likes of Lady GaGa, Chaka Khan and Zendaya. For eight years I went on tour, hosted premieres and organised shows. I stepped to the other side in 2014 and became a journalist. Today I write for VOGUE International, so I travel across the world to put together travel features and guides. My stories are available on www.boxojames.com



BRIA WOODS
MULTIMEDIA BROADCAST JOURNALISM
MA, 2017

I founded Bria Woods Photography soon after graduating and worked with London-based bloggers and models and covered London Fashion Week. Unexpectedly, I was offered a position at KAVU-TV, a news broadcasting station in Victoria, Texas. Now an Executive Producer of Digital Content, I manage and curate all of the content on the station's website and social media channels. I am extremely thankful for the superior education that I received at the University, which has allowed me to make a measurable difference at KAVU-TV and in the lives of the citizens of Victoria.



ALEXANDRA PENELOPE
CONTEMPORARY MEDIA PRACTICE
BA HONOURS, 2016

After graduating in 2016, I founded *Queerly Beloved*, an events organisation hosting film screenings and performances featuring LGBT+ and feminist works, with the aim of creating a safe and engaging space to be challenged and educated through art and community. Simultaneously, I work full time for Little Dot Studios, a next-generation media company producing digital content for branded entertainment. My work has earned the company multiple 100k and 1m subscriber plaques for various clients. I've also been actively involved with the LGBT+ media community, writing occasionally for *DIVA* magazine, including a full article on found families in the queer community.



LAURENE EYMER
INTERNATIONAL LIAISON AND COMMUNICATION MA, 2016

Following my Masters degree, I had the unique opportunity to work as an intern within the University of Westminster's Press Office. I gained valuable real-world experience in a busy Press Office and the opportunity enabled me to develop a wide variety of skills in communication. I have since been appointed Communications Officer which is a role combining both

public relations and student communication missions. It is a real honour to work for the institution that offered me both an education and my first work experience. I am very proud to be responsible for the promotion of one of the most diverse, progressive and compassionate universities.



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