

Review of the Month

Women's History Month

During March this initiative aims to increase knowledge of women's history: to take one month of the year to remember the contributions of notable and ordinary women, to show that it should be impossible to teach or learn history without remembering these contributions.

International Women's Day: 8th March

SI Canterbury launched their 60th anniversary **Canterbury Woman of the Year** award at a virtual breakfast held to celebrate IWD with Canterbury's business women.

The event was entitled '**Challenging the Norm**' - How Kent's women in business are rising to the challenge of 2021, and was hosted by Westgate Hall, in collaboration with Canterbury's Business Improvement District (BID)

The focusing question was 'In a world where nothing feels normal anymore, and we're having to reinvent, reimagine and recover, how do Kent's women in business rise to the challenge?'

This was Canterbury's 4th International Women's Day event presented by Westgate Hall. Speakers included Caroline Cooper, Head of Commercial and Cultural Development at Canterbury City Council and Rachel Sanders, BoConcept Canterbury's Director, who lead

a discussion on how women in Kent can and are paving the way for change through these challenging times.

President, Dawn Lilford spoke about the history and goals of Soroptimism and invited attendees to spread the word about our Woman of the Year award.

Lend with Care



This month's loan of £15 has gone to María Amparito Ipanaque Chero who is 45 years old and runs a poultry business. She usually lives alone in her own home in the village of San Pablo, Peru, but during the pandemic, she has chosen to live with her mother.

María mainly raises turkeys and ducks which are popular among the general public. They are sold to people in the neighbourhood and to restaurants.

She does not have the space to keep her poultry at home so they are at her brother's house, nearby. He currently lives abroad. The birds are free-range, but are kept in pens at night, when she feeds them.

María wants a loan to buy balanced feed and vitamins so

that her birds are healthy, getting the right diet while they are growing, and receive vitamins to prevent flu.

World Meteorological Day 2021 - The ocean, our climate and weather

When it comes to the weather and climate, most of us think only about what is happening in the atmosphere. If we ignore the ocean, however, we miss a big piece of the picture.

Covering some 70% of the Earth's surface, the ocean is a major driver of the world's weather and climate. It also plays a central role in climate change. The ocean is also a major driver of the global economy, carrying more than 90% of world trade and sustaining the 40% of humanity that lives within 100 km of the coast.

Recognizing this, National Meteorological and Hydrological Services and researchers regularly monitor the ocean and how it is changing, modelling how it affects the atmosphere and delivering a wide variety of marine services, including supporting coastal management and Safety of Life at Sea. Today, the growing impacts of climate change are making ocean observations, research and services more critical than ever before.

The World Meteorological Day theme - The ocean, our climate and weather - celebrates WMO's focus in connecting the ocean,

climate and weather within the Earth System. It also marks the launch of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030). The Decade galvanizes efforts to gather ocean science – through innovative and transformative ideas – as the basis of information to support sustainable development. WMO, as the United Nations specialized agency for climate, weather and water, strives to support understanding the inextricable link between ocean, climate and weather.

A Sunday afternoon walk in January

On the last day of January, a wet and foggy Sunday, I set out to walk from Preston village along the River Stour. It was a route that I had often walked in spring and summer, enjoying the many wild flowers, butterflies, birds and dragonflies along this peaceful path. But I had never walked it in winter, fearing that it would be extremely wet and muddy.

So, clad in warm waterproofs and sturdy walking boots – it's never the wrong weather, only the wrong clothing – I set off down the side of the village stores and across an extremely muddy field.

The footpath then led past a wood on one side and a smallholding on the other, with chickens and guinea fowl, together with a small herd of goats. There was no-one about, hardly surprising in the rain and mist, apart from an intrepid pair of women walking a boisterous black Labrador. As I headed towards the river I noticed a flash of iridescent green over the irrigation ditch beside the path. I stood motionless, holding my

breath. Again I saw it – a kingfisher – how beautiful!



As I walked along the riverbank, the scene before me was astonishing. The river itself was running full and fast, but the land to the side where normally cows grazed, bore no resemblance to anything that I had seen there before. Instead of pasture and grass, the land had become a wetland with mist just hovering over its surface. It was silent apart from the sound of the river. It looked both desolate and mystical, like another world, and I stood transfixed. Above me I saw movement and two white egret flew overhead. Dusk was approaching and it seemed as though time was standing still.

But I couldn't get caught here in the dark. I had to move on through woods and past the fields where horses and alpaca quietly grazed. Then through the old churchyard with its 18th century gravestones with skulls and hourglasses carved upon them. Then back to the village, the 'real world'. This had been a walk that nourished the soul and gave comfort in these strange times.

Jan Tebbett

Influential Women: Rosa Parkes

Because I grew up in Detroit in the 1950s and 1960s I was very aware of the racial tensions that existed there, in other industrial northern cities and in the American South. I always knew of Rosa Parks as an activist in the civil rights movement.

Around the turn of the 20th century, the former Confederate states had adopted new constitutions and electoral laws that disenfranchised black voters and many poor white voters also. Under the white-established Jim Crow laws, racial segregation was imposed in public facilities and retail stores in the South, including public transport.



Famously, on December 1st 1955, in Montgomery, Alabama, Rosa Parks rejected bus driver James F. Blakes' order to vacate a row of four seats in the 'coloured' section in favour of a white passenger, once the 'white' section had filled. Parks later said that when she was asked to move to the rear of the bus, she 'thought of Emmett Till, a 14 year old African American, who was lynched in Mississippi in 1955, after being accused of offending a white woman. His killers were tried and acquitted. Several months after her arrest (for violating Alabama segregation laws), Parks said she 'would have to know once and for all what rights I have as a human being and a citizen'.

Backed by The Women's Political Council, on 4th December, plans for the Montgomery bus boycott were announced at black churches in the area. Every 'Negro' was asked to stay off the buses from Monday in protest at the arrest and trial. The black community rallied and most people walked to work.

Rosa Parks' trial dragged on and the bus boycott lasted for 381 days. The case became bogged down in the state courts and

Women inspiring action, transforming lives

resulted in a decision that segregation was unconstitutional. Parks' act of defiance and the Montgomery bus boycott became important symbols of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) movement.

In 1957 Raymond and Rosa Parks left Montgomery to move to Detroit. But Parks encountered numerous signs of discrimination against African-Americans in this northern industrial city. Schools were segregated and black neighbourhoods were sub-standard. She never gave up the fight and was known as the 'first lady of civil rights' and 'the mother of the freedom movement'.

In Detroit, in 1976, a road was named after her, Rosa Parks Boulevard. Parks continued to fight for racial equality all her life and she received many honours and awards, including the Congressional Gold Medal.

Millie Brierley

Bitesize 5: A new concept - 'Micro-intervention'

In the last newsletter I looked at the concept of the micro-aggression. This is a brief, commonplace, verbal, behavioural or mental event that may, intentionally or unintentionally, communicate derogatory racial messages to the receiver. Here's an example, after hearing a person of colour speak at a meeting, someone might say, 'Well done! You were so articulate/eloquent! Your hair is terrific, by the way! Is it real? Can I touch it?'

I discussed the fact that though some of the example remarks I offered are, on the surface, well-meaning and intended as compliments, it is not the intention that is important. It is

the unconscious meta-message, the fact that they communicate derogatory or hostile racial messages to the receiver that is important. It is not the **intention** but the **effect** that is important.

A person of colour out and about in the UK on public transport, at work and in their free time, may encounter many micro-aggressions in a day. They may be completely sick of them, tired of wondering where the next one is coming from. And if a person in this situation murmurs in dissent, they may well be accused of being touchy or having no sense of humour. If the person has the energy, they may try to explain why the unconscious message is hurtful. But they may have tried to explain in the past and got nowhere. They may be too exhausted that day to try to educate white people or those from a different heritage from themselves.

This is where an anti-racist ally can come in. When I am in the company of friends, family, colleagues or others, I may realise that someone has said or done something which is racially problematic. If I do and say nothing, I am in effect condoning the aggression. I am complicit. So, what can I do, as an anti-racist ally to interrupt the bias?

If I call a person out abruptly as a racist and take the high moral ground, I am likely to encounter defensiveness, upset and anger. Instead, I need to encourage the person to reflect, to learn, to empathise, with the person attacked. I need to educate the person rather than lose them. This is where 'micro-interventions' come in.

I need to address the unconscious message in the micro-aggression, to make the invisible visible. This

is because the perpetrator may be quite unaware that they have been offensive. I need to shift the focus from the intention of the remark or action to its effect.

Let's look at some problematic remarks and consider how we could interrupt the bias contained within them. It is sensitive work!

- 'Wow! She's so eloquent, so articulate!' *'Oh, what makes you say that? Are you surprised? What were you expecting?'*
- 'White privilege doesn't exist. We all have problems in life.' *'That's true. But how often are you and I stopped by police when we are driving? Do store detectives follow us around when we go shopping? How often do people try to touch our hair? Do people clutch their handbags in fear when we pass them in the street?'*
- 'All lives matter!' *'Absolutely! And all houses need to be protected. But if one house is on fire, don't we rush to protect that one first?'*
- 'I'm colour blind! I don't see race!' *'I guess we don't have to see it! Everything is arranged for our benefit!'*
- 'I'm not racist. I have a black friend, partner, neighbour, colleague...' *'That's funny! The other day, I heard a man say that he couldn't be sexist because he is a husband and a father of daughters!'*

In this article I have assumed that we have been the ones to spot a micro-aggression and that we want to do something about it by using a micro-intervention. But what happens if a person of colour calls **us** out and we realise that we are the ones who have said or done something racially problematic?

That's my topic for next time!

Tessa Woodward