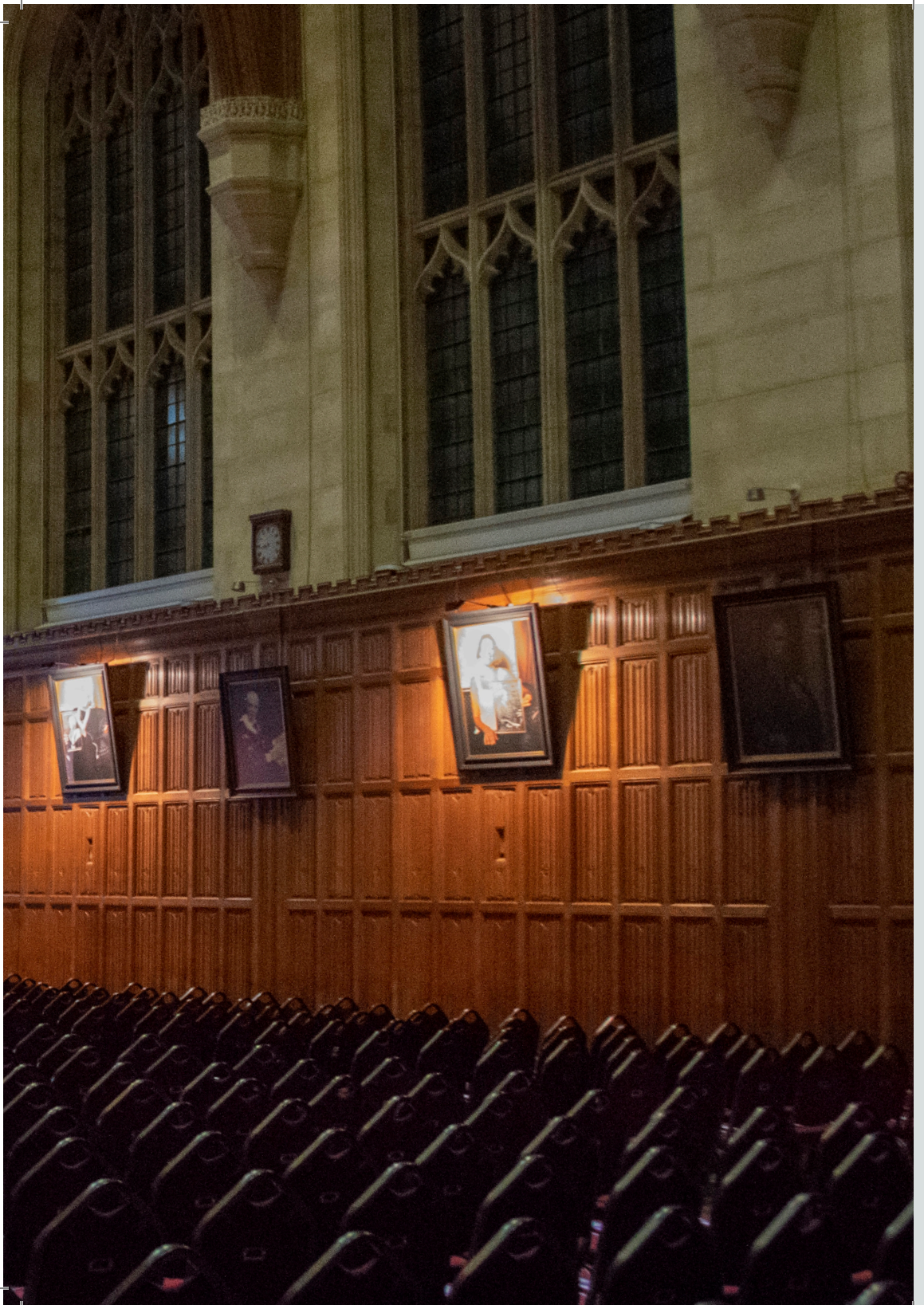




University of
BRISTOL

University of Bristol: past and present portraits

The Wills Memorial Building



Be More Empowered portraits

Portraits in the The Reception Room

In 2019, we launched the Be More Empowered for Success programme to support our Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) students to thrive at Bristol and beyond. To celebrate the first anniversary of this programme, we honour our staff and students of colour who have changed our institution, our city and the world.

These portraits commemorate staff, students and alumni who have led the way in education, the arts, economics, politics, activism and social change. From Lord Boateng, one of the first three Black British MPs, to Hannah Dualeh, whose work as a sabbatical officer led to the creation of the Be More Empowered programme itself, each of the portraits represents a member of the University who has brought about significant change in Bristol and across the world. They are accompanied by current and recent staff, students and alumni whose research, learning or work connects them to these figures, and who are themselves change makers, leaders and influencers.

At a time when we are reflecting on our institutional history, making a clear commitment to address racism at every level, and striving to ensure that our staff and students of colour have every opportunity to succeed, we are proud to see these influential members of our community take their rightful place on the walls of the Reception Room.

Okot p'Bitek



1931-1982

Renowned 20th-century poet



with Antonette Clarke-Akalanne, Archaeology and Anthropology (BA, 2018) and Masters student

“Okot p'Bitek was born in Gulu, Northern Uganda, which at the time was a protectorate of the British Empire. He attended Gulu High School and King's College, Budo, where he wrote and produced theatre and opera. Budo was patterned along the educational tradition of English boys' schools.

“‘What they were teaching us was irrelevant to my experiences – Shakespeares and Shelleys,’ he said later in life. During this period, he became familiar with many Acholi songs. His first and only novel, *Lak Tar Miyo Kinyero Wi Lobo*, p'Bitek published in Luo in 1953. Its title is a proverb, meaning ‘Our teeth are white, that's why we laugh at the sorrows of the world’. The story tells about the tragedy of a poor Acholi lad, who struggles hard to save money to marry his sweetheart, but eventually loses his savings.

“P'Bitek took a Diploma in Education at Bristol, and later he studied law at the University of Wales at Aberystwyth and social anthropology at Oxford, where in 1963 he completed a BLitt thesis on the traditional songs of Acholi and Largo.

“As a poet p'Bitek made his breakthrough with the *Song of Lawino*. It was first composed in Luo in rhyming couplets and was translated into English by the author, who according to his own words clipped a bit of the eagle's wings of the original Acholi poem ‘and rendered the sharp edges of the warrior's sword rusty and blunt, and also murdered rhythm and rhyme’. Although the work was turned down by several British publishers, in 1966 it became a bestseller.”

Dame Pearlette Louisy



Born 1946

Governor-General of Saint
Lucia 1997-2017



with Olivette Otele, Professor of the History of Slavery

“Dame Pearlette Louisy is an outstanding example of the transformative power of education in women’s lives. She was born in 1946 in Laborie in Saint Lucia and attended the local primary schools before obtaining a scholarship to continue her secondary education in a convent in 1960. Years later, St Joseph Convent, the institution in which she had been educated, offered her a position as a member of staff and she worked there until 1965.

“Determined to further her own education, Dame Pearlette secured a scholarship from the Canadian International Development Agency to read for a Bachelors Degree in English and French at the University of The West Indies in Barbados in 1966. The Canadian Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan granted her a fellowship for a Masters Degree to study Linguistics at the University of Laval in Quebec City, Canada. In 1991, the University of Bristol was fortunate to count her as one of their PhD students in

the Department of Education. Her research focused on the management and provision of tertiary education in small nations.

“She went back to Saint Lucia and worked as a teacher for a few years, then became Principal at Sir Arthur Lewis Community College in 1981. In 1997, she was appointed Governor General of Saint Lucia.

“Her extraordinary ability to thrive in very different education systems and environments demonstrates a remarkable facility for working with well with others. In recognition of her contribution to education, the University of Bristol awarded her an honorary degree of Doctor of Laws in 1999, the same year she was awarded the Dame Grand Cross of the Most Distinguished Order of St Michael and of St George. Her ability to sustain academic excellence through publications in international journals while contributing to Creole studies has inspired generations of young women and men.”

Dr Andrew Sheng



Born 1946

Pro Chancellor,
University of Bristol



with Leon Tikly, Professor in Education

“As one of our Pro Chancellors, Andrew Sheng continues to inspire and to act as a role model for students and staff from all backgrounds. His story is one of outstanding achievement. After graduating in Economics from Bristol (BSc, 1969), Andrew rose through the ranks of the Bank Negara in Malaysia, to become Chief Economist and Assistant Governor. He later worked at the World Bank as a Senior Manager, where he undertook pioneering work on bank restructuring. Andrew is a Distinguished Fellow at the Fung Global Institute, Chief Adviser to the China Banking Regulatory Commission, and a board member of Khazanah Nasional Berhad, the sovereign wealth fund of Malaysia. He has published widely on monetary, economic and financial issues.

“Andrew is passionate about the power of education – an issue close to my own heart as an educator. As he recently put it, ‘education is all about continually learning, adapting and honing your skills. We, the baby-boomer generation, created

the greatest wealth, but also the greatest inequality [...] In effect, we consumed more than our fair share of planetary resources at the expense of social and planetary justice. The next generation will pay for most of this. [...] The young, including the young at heart, must think out of the box to survive the tough days ahead’.

“For Andrew, the importance of the University also lies in the ability to foster interdisciplinary approaches to tackling urgent problems including climate change, disruptive technology, intense geo-political rivalry, widening social inequality, migration and ageing demographics. We must adapt, he says, ‘by becoming more flexible, creative and open-minded to radical ways of dealing with problems’. He goes on to say that the future for graduates today is ‘far tougher than when I graduated [...] so the University needs to prepare its graduates for this’. Having outstanding role models like Andrew to inspire the next generation is a crucial part of the process.”

Lord Paul Boateng



Born 1951

British Labour Party Politician,
Member of Parliament



with Robiu Salisu, Student Inclusion Officer

“Lord Boateng was born in Hackney, London, of mixed Ghanaian and Scottish heritage. As a qualified barrister, he began his journey at the University of Bristol reading Law and becoming a civil rights activist. He worked primarily on social and community cases, involving women’s rights, housing, and police complaints. He was an executive member of the National Council for Civil Liberties and became a firm partner.

“In 1987, Lord Boateng was first elected as the Member of Parliament for Brent South, being one of the first three Black British MPs, alongside Bernie Grant and Dianne Abbott. During his victory speech he said: ‘We can never be free in Brent until South Africa is free too... Today Brent South, tomorrow Soweto’, paying a homage to the efforts against dismantling apartheid in South

Africa. In 2002, he became the first Black cabinet minister when he was appointed Chief Secretary to the Treasury. Following his departure from the House of Commons, he served as British High Commissioner to South Africa and was introduced as a member of the House of Lords in 2010.

“In my current role as BAME Student Inclusion Officer, I am inspired by Lord Boateng’s journey from activism to creating meaningful change within the British political system and paving the way for the future generations of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic politicians. Lord Boateng’s story serves as a reminder to many across the country, including myself, to be alert to injustices wherever they may exist and to exert efforts to increase representation and equality of opportunity for all.”

Liv Little



Born 1994

Founder of *gal-dem*



with Cyril Ip, Student Advocate

“The homepage of *gal-dem* is always a sensation of colour and vibrancy: beyond the aesthetically pleasing layout is a collection of great social commentaries by writers who often do not receive the attention and appreciation that they deserve – women of colour and non-binary people of colour. Fuelled by her growing desire for diversity and representation, Liv Little founded this platform in 2015 and it quickly became a community for people interested in seeing things from perspectives different to those habitually offered by the wider society. Regardless of age, gender and professions, intrigued individuals come together and celebrate the life of a magazine full of passion and heat.

“Women of colour experience intersectional discrimination for their gender and race, which is an easily recognisable problem across societies. While mainstream publications have increasingly sensationalised the concept of ‘intersectionality’ by presenting it as little more than a sparkly buzzword, Liv Little has made it her mission

to bring this concept into bright and authentic light with *gal-dem*, by providing real accounts and narratives from women of colour themselves. It’s best to learn about someone’s experience by listening to them talk in first person, rather than reading excessively decorated interviews from agenda-driven journalists. On that note, ‘First Person’ is one of the seven exceptional columns offered by the magazine, featuring unfiltered, unpolished (in the best way) and undiluted pieces from talented and opinionated writers.

“As a young Chinese man negotiating my position in British society, seeing women of all backgrounds – Black, East Asian, South Asian, and so on – join forces to confront racism and racialisation, while their allies, like myself, cheer them on by supporting the cause, is beautiful and delightful. And Liv Little has made this visual more colourful and vibrant than ever before, for which I am grateful and by which I am inspired.”

Professor Nishan Canagarajah



Born 1966

**Former Pro Vice-Chancellor
for Research and Enterprise,
University of Bristol**



**with Raeesah Ellis-Haque, Widening Participation
and Undergraduate Recruitment Officer**

“Nishan joined the University of Bristol in 1993 after receiving his BA and PhD degrees from the University of Cambridge. What followed was a 26-year career in which Nishan served as Faculty of Engineering Research Director, Head of Department of Computer Science, Head of the Merchant Venturers School of Engineering and Dean of Engineering. In 2014, he became the first person of colour to sit on the Senior Team when he was appointed Pro Vice-Chancellor for Research and Enterprise. Nishan was appointed President and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Leicester in 2019, but has continued to be an engaged and enthusiastic member of our University community.

“Nishan has contributed widely to his academic field, gaining international recognition for his work in image segmentation, texture classification and content-based video compression. His research on signal processing led to an exhibit

at the London Science Museum and several international research partnerships.

“Nishan has always been passionate about equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI). At the University, He was the institutional lead on all things EDI, sharing reflections on his journey from Sri Lanka to Bristol. He used his success to support and inspire others – whether through his everyday interactions or his partnership work with Babbasa (a local social enterprise) and Bristol City Council.

“Having first met Nishan as a junior member of staff, I was struck by his kindness and interest in all. Sometime later, when I began my role in Widening Participation at the University, we met again and began a mentor-mentee relationship. Nishan always strives to support others and has been a great advocate for the advancement of people of colour – so it is fitting that he is remembered and celebrated through this portrait at the University.”

Hannah Dualeh



Born 1993

Former Sabbatical Officer,
Bristol Students' Union



with Hillary Gyebi-Ababio, former Undergraduate Education Officer

“Hannah Dualeh was Bristol Students’ Union’s Equality, Liberation and Access Officer in 2016 and led on one of the most impactful pieces of research that Bristol SU has ever produced. Her work on the BAME attainment gap lent power to the voices of BAME students who for a very long time had fought to be heard locally and nationally on their experiences of university. The impact of this is palpable: from the ongoing successes of the BAME Network to the creation of the BAME Success Advocates, she paved the way to seeing the lives of BAME students improve at the University of Bristol.

“The BAME attainment gap research that Hannah championed showed the transformative power of co-creation with students and how it creates meaningful and transformative change. It is a huge acknowledgement to have young people like Hannah recognised for the work she’s done and the impact she’s made on the student body and student movement.

“The legacy of Hannah’s work has seen Black and BAME issues start to become more prominent and widely spoken about in our University community. Students have become the architects of some of our most impactful projects that have helped to tackle the BAME attainment gap, confront racism and racial inequality and make the University a place where BAME students can feel that they belong. The foundation that Hannah and her successors, colleagues and student activists have laid down continues to produce groundbreaking work that has changed lives and challenged the status quo for the better.”

Photo credits

Celebrating women at the University of Bristol portraits

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Modern portraiture

by Jessica Augarde Photography

Be More Empowered portraits

Okot p'Bitek

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Dr Andrew Sheng

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Lord Paul Boateng

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Modern portraiture

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