

# Reflections on Fi Wi Road 2022 (Transcript)

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## **SPEAKERS**

Rita Gayle, Isabella Bromfield, Mahalia Marsh and Bryce Mathurin-Lindsey.

### **Rita Gayle 00:04**

My name is Rita Gayle, I'm a completing PhD researcher at the Department of Geography at the University of Birmingham. And it really is my absolute pleasure to be able to return by popular demand, evidently, to host the Fi We Road - Part Two, you know! And I'm hearing very exciting things about it. And I'm very glad to hear, to see as well, that by technology, we have some of the participants from this internship. We're going to talk about their experiences. I've been looking at the things that you've been doing. You've been doing quite a lot, actually! So, I don't know if you'll be able to get enough time to talk about it all but let's see how we get on. So, we're going to start going from my left to right. So, if you would like to introduce yourselves to the audience, and so just tell us your name, and what you're doing at this moment and your relationship to the geography discipline or subject.

### **Isabella Bromfield 01:10**

Okay. Hi, I'm Isabella Bromfield. And I recently graduated from the University of Manchester. And I studied geography. So, I graduated in July, and I was actually working at the RGS (Royal Geographical Society) over summer. Because of this, actually, I was offered the opportunity to kind of just do front of house, which was great for me. Saved me from my bar work. And now, I'm working for a charity called *Blueprint For All* and they work to get young people from diverse ethnic backgrounds, lower socio-economic backgrounds, into careers. And it's kind of a careers programme. So yeah, that's what I'm up to now.

### **Mahalia Marsh 01:54**

Hi, I'm Mahalia Marsh. I graduated from my undergrad in Global Politics and IR at Kingston in the summer and I do Development Studies at LSE. And I'm now a Caribbean officer for the LSE's, ACS. Yeah.

### **Bryce Mathurin-Lindsey 02:15**

All right. Hello, guys. My name is Bryce Mathurin-Lindsey. So, I recently completed my undergraduate in Geography with Spatial Data Science at King's College London, and I've continued on at King's College London doing a master's. I'm now doing an MSc in Environment, Politics and Development and thoroughly enjoying it.

**Rita Gayle 02:37**

Okay. Thank you so much. Where did you see this whole Fi We Road? What attracted you to apply? What was it about, you know, Black Geographers that you thought, 'okay, this looks interesting'. Why did you think, 'okay, I might want to get involved in this'? What inspired you to seek it out?

**Mahalia Marsh 02:58**

I think for me, it might be quite different to everyone else because I don't come from a strict geography background. I was never particularly great at maths, which is kind of the foundation of this. So when I got to A level, when I was picking my A levels, they didn't let me do A level Geography because I was like a grade under their expectation, even though I got an A\* in Geography (GCSE). So, I thought it was the end of the road. I thought it was over for me in geography and I kind of hyper focused on politics. And it was really seeing this internship, and I still followed geography and like things that were going on. So, I was still following Black Geographers. I think seeing this opportunity and seeing how it linked to the Caribbean encouraged me to apply. Thought, you know, maybe this will be my re-entrance into geography and my passion for geography. So, it certainly attracted me.

**Rita Gayle 03:55**

And has it done that?

**Mahalia Marsh 03:55**

Yeah, definitely! Without a doubt. It's encouraged me and Pat (Professor Patricia Noxolo) knows everyone. Pat was my mentor. She knows absolutely everyone. And she introduced me to everyone-

**Rita Gayle 04:05**

- Pat does know everyone!

**Mahalia Marsh 04:07**

She introduced me to a member of staff at the LSE in the Geography Department that works in diasporas. So even then it allowed me to take a geographical angle for my development studies master's so it's still carried me closer and closer to geography in a way that I hadn't anticipated before I had seen the intention.

**Isabella Bromfield 04:35**

That's really funny you say that Mahalia because I had a similar experience at school where I wasn't allowed to do A level Geography because it was a long story but they miss-marked my GCSE paper! Yeah. I ended up. They messed up two papers. Got a formal apology and everything but because of that, my school would not let me do the A level because my grades was too low. So, I ended up doing A level geography but I started in like November so I had to catch up all over. It was a nightmare. I was actually behind the entire time and had to catch up in summer. But um, so I had a weird experience as well, where I've always felt like I couldn't do geography because I was told I couldn't. And I then I was doing maths for a bit and then I was doing economics because I didn't know what I wanted to do other than that. So, I had a weird experience there. But, about coming across the internship, I actually was sent it by my university, which was great. And they sent kind of, there was the lady who would send kind of emails with opportunities to all the third years, which is really helpful. Never really read them.

And then one came up, and the sub-heading was, 'Black Geographers'. Oh, that sounds interesting. Like I'd said to these guys, the deadline was the date of my dissertation. So, I got the email the week, maybe like three days before for my dissertation was due. I was still editing. I thought I was done. And then, you know when you're doing something, it looks done. And then you're like, hang on a minute, I haven't done this, this, this. So, I ended up handing in my dissertation on the 29th of April. Like, I'll never forget it. Handed it in at midday. Went out with my friends. Came back and then had to finish this application. I was, in my heart, 'I won't do it, I won't do it'. Because, you know, this is obviously a sign not to do it. And then I ended up being like, 'No, no, you can do both'. And I stayed up until I finished it. Handed it in. I'm so glad I did because I looked at the opportunity. Having just written my dissertation, I think came a lot easier to me the application, because I knew exactly what to say, because I've just been saying it over and over again. And I kind of based my wishes, it was 100% true, because it is actually my interest, obviously. And I based my application on my dissertation. So, it actually, although it came at the wrong time, it came at the right time when it was still fresh in my mind. So yeah, it was really funny that I stumbled across it like that. So, it's actually because of my university that I managed to see the opportunity.

**Bryce Mathurin-Lindsey 06:48**

And I actually stumbled across it from following the Black Geographers' Instagram page, I've been following them for quite a while. And it always sort of kept, you know, a mental note on some of the opportunities and things that they posted. And so when that sort of popped up, I read it and I was like, 'oh', but what I didn't realise, what took me by surprise was that our cohort would have a particular sort of Caribbean focus, which I didn't realise that was actually going to be a theme. So when I did see Black Geographers post that, I actually remember exactly where it was, when I came across the post. I'd just come back from like a geography social at Kings. I was with one of my friends, another you know, fellow Black undergrad that's now graduated. And I was reading the post, I was like, oh, yeah, you know, as someone who wants to, you know, at this stage of my life, hopefully pursue a career in academia, who has an interest in economic geography but particularly as it pertains to the Caribbean, you know, any way to get involved in Caribbean research, you know, for me. And I showed it to my friend. I think I took my phone and I was like, here, like, 'what do you think of this, I'm thinking of applying to this. I was like, This sounds really cool'. And she looked at it, she read it, and she was like, 'Oh yeah, this is you! This is 100% you'. She was like, 'You love talking about the Caribbean and you know, academic geography type things.' She was like, 'Yeah, you should 100% go for it!'

**Rita Gayle 08:12**

So I mean, obviously, we come together to talk about the Fi We Road experience. So obviously, I've been looking through. You've been doing quite a number of things. So it talks about, you have obviously been doing some internships. And also I'm very interested, I'm reading this from the information about the.. You developed, I believe, you designed and developed the Black Research Futures Fair.

**Bryce Mathurin-Lindsey 08:36**

Myself, and Reagan McDonald, who was another intern at the time. We were tasked with liaising with and reaching out to possible speakers. So whether they be creatives, PhD students, or established academics. So that's sort of what we did. And sort of on the side with that, we were also tasked with sort of decorating the fair space. We had our academic space, where there were those speaking and presenting and that we had our fair space which was for activities. And I guess, for those of us who are on the internship, and those of who asked you to actually organise this academic fair to kind of have casual conversation with those who are attending.

**Isabella Bromfield 09:19**

So I did social media with another of the interns, Maia Linley-Adams. So we were kind of tasked with reaching out to Unis and the ACS's and people who might be interested in the area and also kind of creating a social media presence. And over the summer trying to gain up a following of people who went to the Uni, 1<sup>st</sup> Years because we were kind of aiming the fair at 1st Years because we were thinking if they come.. if we did it in the Freshers Fair, we'd get a whole new group of people, and it would have a lot of foot fall, which actually worked out for us on the day. So I was kind of following people and searching people that might have University of Birmingham in their Instagram bios, that kind of thing. And regards to the fair space, Maia and I were in charge of kind, of looking after that space. We kind of came up with, as a group with activities that related to the Caribbean, that related to Africa, related to how people feel, freeing up space in Black Futures, maybe what that would look like. So it was a very interactive space and kind of a space, like Bryce said, where everyone could discuss and kind of come together after they'd heard people speak. So it was actually really nice to have it kind of split it into two, and give people the opportunity to listen and then use their voice at the same time, in the same space.

**Rita Gayle 10:43**

Thank you.

**Mahalia Marsh 10:45**

I did a lot of the digital stuff. So I was doing a lot of admin, going through the call for contribution forms. And uploading those on to our spreadsheets, and then also on to the digital space that we had. So very much the online aspect of the fair, where we still have papers on the website so very much updating the website and things like that. And I couldn't be there in person, but I have vowed to be there for next years.

**Rita Gayle 11:20**

So actually, speaking of that, because obviously I was able to dip in a little bit (online). I wasn't able to be there in person, unfortunately. So, who did turn up on the day? I'm just curious on that. So I know you initially when you were developing it, you were thinking about those Year One students who were you know, Freshers, I guess, but who did actually turn up, you know, on the day.

**Bryce Mathurin-Lindsey 11:42**

So on the day, it was, you know, understandably, a lot of like, first year students, you know. So it was brand new students exploring campus, getting involved in other Freshers' Week activities. There were many who I believe had seen it sort of advertised via social media but then there were those who actually just stumbled across it on the day. We tried our best to kind of like run around campus to leave like a trail of posters so people kind of follow it as like a trail. And I did stand at the door for a portion of the event to try and like scout any Black students I saw casually walking past. So mostly 1st Years, was sort of a mixture of those already knew about it, and sort of had it in their plan to check it out. And then those kind of just luckily stumbled across it.

**Isabella Bromfield 12:33**

I was just thinking how, what was quite nice is that because Mahalia had worked on the website and done the 'calls for contributions'; we then reposted onto the Instagram. And there was actually a group of about three guys who'd come all the way from outside of Birmingham, some from Coventry, and they all came down and it was so nice. And they actually came to kind of see what it was about and kind of get in contact. And yeah, so people actually travelled from quite far in some instances. And like Bryce said, there were some young girls who were in 1<sup>st</sup> Year, they were international students. They had come because they were interested in this what this meant? Freeing up Black space in Geography or Black Futures? And they were there for the whole day. So some people came for one session for about an hour, half an hour. Some people were literally there for the entire thing. What was really nice, they could keep coming in and out. Because there was enough space, people could either stay do one session. So actually, we had a really good turnout in the end.

**Rita Gayle 13:33**

It looked like it. Mahalia, do you want to add anything?

**Mahalia Marsh 13:37**

Um, yeah, it was really great to go through every single paper that I put online. I think the fact that I was able to really read them and get to know what they're about meant, I felt like I didn't miss much. I had to go through these things. I kind of picked out a few favourites and really felt like quite connected to the experience despite not being physically there.

**Rita Gayle 14:01**

And can I ask as well, actually, as you were looking through the papers. Were there any particular themes that were kind of resonating? Were there particular themes that people were submitting? Or was it sort of anything and everything.

**Mahalia Marsh 14:15**

There was a range. There was a lot of resistance, I think, themes of resistance within the papers. And I think that means a lot for a kind of moment that we're in now where people are entering academia, authentically and kind of not pandering to the expectations of the academy, and very much doing what they feel called to do. I think that was definitely a theme that was empowered through the internship and through the fair.

**Rita Gayle 14:45**

This is just music to my ears, as you can imagine, you know! This is the kind of conference that I needed to be at basically, you know. So moving on from that. Obviously, you worked on this incredible conference, fair as well, which I think is a really interesting aspect so people weren't just listening to people talking all day. It can be like that. Let's be honest! That you had like people can interact, and also, I guess, follow up and create this kind of network. Because you know, Birmingham is quite spread out, like a lot of universities, they can be quite sprawling. So it can be quite difficult to just kind of work out what's going on. But I'm also really interested in the work that you did with the Society for Caribbean Studies. So, I believe that that was Dr. Kesewa John, and Dr. Janelle Rodriguez. If you could talk a little bit about your relationship with them and what happened. What you did as part of your experience with the SCS.

**Bryce Mathurin-Lindsey 15:47**

One of the first things we did in terms of us working with Society for Caribbean Studies was actually moderating the Society for Caribbean Studies (2022) Annual Conference which was thrilling for me, because I'm a geek for absolutely everything pertaining to the Caribbean, and absolutely everything pertaining to geography. So having them sort of combined, of course, it wasn't exclusively geographic work at the society, but a lot of it was inherently geographic, just because of how geography is. And then we also underwent oral histories training which is where we actually got the chance to not only train and be trained in how to conduct oral history interviews, but we then actually got to conduct them with those who were either current members of the society or who had been members of the society. And that was quite insightful to kind of just get an inside look at sort of the history of the Society for Caribbean Studies. What it meant to people. Why were they so eager to get involved with the work that they were doing and the lasting thing impressions it left them with.

**Rita Gayle 16:57**

I'm gonna come back and talk a little bit more about the content of the oral histories, but I just want to open it up to Mahalia and Isabella.

**Mahalia Marsh 17:05**

It was super empowering for me. I think, being in that proximity to Caribbean Studies is something that I had never done before, you know. It's outside of appreciating the Caribbean in terms of my culture and my family, but really getting into learning about the Caribbean in an official kind of setting. I think it afforded me something that I hadn't been given throughout my entire education. These are very much things that I would need to seek by myself. I think just being in a community of people that studied the Caribbean and had genuine passion and interest in all these, like a variety of areas to do the Caribbean, I think was really empowering.

**Isabella Bromfield 17:52**

Yeah, same for me. I'd kind of done research on my own, on a very basic level about Jamaica in my final year of studies. And one of the sessions that I was able to moderate they were talking about, not just Jamaica, but they were talking about, they were talking about water. And it was about construction, and how that can change the space and the influence of China. And that was just something that I had heard about in a very simple context. But to hear about the academic discussions and hear about how

people had all written their own papers on the same topic was just amazing. And actually following on from that, not to go off topic but the RGS conference, just being in a conference space is something that you don't get to experience until I think you're at that level. So being at this level and be able to listen to it and hear people's perspectives and hear people how they discuss their work. I couldn't even comprehend how you summarise, you know, years of research or a whole paper and so to be able to witness that, and actually be able to sit there silently. If you wanted to ask a question you could but you wanted to just listen and learn which I did most of the time. It was actually.. I felt really lucky to be able to do that. So I thought was a really great idea that we were given the opportunity to kind of listen in and just be a fly on the wall. Something that I guess not many people get the opportunity to do.

**Rita Gayle 19:19**

So I mean, in that sense, because obviously you've done a number of conferences. You were talking also Bryce, you raised the issue so I wanted to go back to that before we moved on, about these oral histories. You know, those interviews as conversations that you had, what themes came up and, you know, your reflections on the people that you had these conversations with?

**Bryce Mathurin-Lindsey 19:42**

So it was a lot of sort of gradually delving deeper into the part that they played in helping the Society for Caribbean Studies sort of run. So the questions tended to begin with sort of just detailing what their role was, how long they worked in that role, how long they've been there. You know, people that they worked alongside, etc. And then it gradually delves deeper into sort of their passions and ambitions behind their relation to the Society of Caribbean Studies. How they view research as it pertains to the Caribbean, how they see that landscape of Caribbean research. When I say Caribbean research, I don't just mean by Caribbean researchers, but by those who are studying the Caribbean, how that has changed and grown and more, as the years have gone by and, and sort of left it off what they think the future of the Society for Caribbean Studies would be, and what they feel that is needed in that future. And as well as things that are that are looking very, very promising. And they were very enriching interviews. I think as much as the interviews themselves, were just as enriching as actually moderating the conference, because the interviews in the conference, I think, did a very similar thing in that they allowed you to engage with individuals who take academic interest in the Caribbean. And Rita, it's actually something that you said that led me to remember that I needed to bring that up. You mentioned that us in the UK, we get a particular image, we fed a particular image of the Caribbean, even if we are Afro Caribbean ourselves, and that's that it's a region of fun and partying and fetting and etc, etc. but seldom do we get an academic view of the Caribbean, a view of the Caribbean in which intellectualism is prioritised, and which causes us to want to learn about the culture and the history and the politics and the geopolitics of the region a bit deeper. That it's not just Sandals, beaches, and resorts for people to have fun in. It's a place with deep history and culture. So yeah, the oral history interviews, I think, allowed us to gain a greater appreciation for what the Society for Caribbean studies actually does.

**Rita Gayle 22:18**

Anyone else? Mahalia.

**Mahalia Marsh 22:22**

My interview I think, might have been slightly different because I had interviewed Dr Karen Wilkes and Kesewa sat in on my interview. So there was a space with three Black women speaking about, yes, the Caribbean aspect, but particularly the aspect of being a Black woman in academia, and the obstacles that that you can face, whether it's to funding or just general interest in what you're studying. And I think, for me, it was really affirming to, to be in that space. And although it was an oral histories interview, it really felt like a string of motivational speeches for me. And it really let me know that what I'm doing now and the interests that I have academically are important, and they're valuable. I think I had never felt that before conducting that interview. And just knowing that there are people out there with my identity, with my academic interests, that are achieving great things, and that there are obstacles, but they are overcomeable.

**Rita Gayle 23:38**

Thank you. But did you feel that this is something that you can participate in later on in your career or sooner in your career? Would you want to return to the Society for Caribbean Studies, either as a presenter or, you know, to continue moderating or, or even more, you know. Do you feel that you, there's something that you would like to be involved in the future?

**Mahalia Marsh 24:04**

I think for me, most definitely. And more as like an immediate reaction, kind of like, yeah, I would, because there wasn't really a bad experience. I feel like it's, I don't know, I feel like when we're in academic spaces, it's kind of easier to pick out things that that you would change. But I think this is maybe the first time that I had an experience where everything just went well and was kind of plain sailing from my perspective. And I think, you know, even getting onto the mailing list has been really helpful because you can actually see all the events that are happening, see the positions that are available, see any like calls for contributions, so I think, entering that world, even if it was just during In the internship is kind of one: made me realise that it exists, but two: make me realise that it will continue to exist that I can continue to be in contact. It doesn't like start and end with the internship, it can go beyond that. And I look forward to what in whatever capacity I have, in terms of my involvement with the Society for Caribbean Studies. I just.. I look forward to it.

**Bryce Mathurin-Lindsey 25:26**

Yeah, my answer is an immediate yes too so I wholeheartedly agree with everything Mahalia just said. In fact, I believe after I'd done my last conference session, or it may have been a meeting that we had after to kind of review our experiences. I'm pretty sure I said to both Pat and Kesewa like, can I come back next year? So I can like, do this!

**Rita Gayle 25:54**

Just off the back of that. Prior to you being on this, you know, the Fi We Road internship, had you heard about the work of Society for Caribbean Studies?

**Bryce Mathurin-Lindsey 26:07**

I had not. No.



**Mahalia Marsh** 26:09

I had no clue.

**Isabella Bromfield** 26:10

No.

**Rita Gayle** 26:13

Wow, wow. That's interesting, isn't it? So okay, well, there you go. So it's done its job, hasn't it? So moving on. When did your internship, this part of it, when did it sort of conclude?

**Bryce Mathurin-Lindsey** 26:27

I believe that and I say I believe because my brain is like a sieve, and I forget absolutely everything. So I've got Master's assignments at the front of my brain. So I forgotten everything that's happened during summer. I believe the Black Academic Futures Fair actually marked the very end. Isabella and Mahalia, do correct me if I'm wrong, but I believe that that marked the end. And that was on the 21st of September. So I believe that's when our internship formally finished. I think we might have had like, one last wrap up meeting like a week or two later, but it's sort of finished around that time frame.

**Isabella Bromfield** 27:07

Yeah, I would say in September.

**Mahalia Marsh** 27:08

I was definitely in my Masters by the time we wrapped everything up completely.

**Rita Gayle** 27:14

Okay, good, good. I guess you've had a couple of months now to kind of, you know, reflect on it, and obviously get back into, you know, work and study and things like that. I mean, now that you've had a couple of months since that time, what are your reflections upon the experience of Fi We Road? What do you think about that journey that you took from the time that you applied and started and went through all of the experiences to now? How was it? How has it shaped your experience as an academic, as a researcher, you know, and your relationship to geography in general. Just jump in. Whoever wants to answer.

**Mahalia Marsh** 27:54

I'm a different person, like completely. I think I was, you know, really shy on a personal level, but really, on an academic level. Like, I knew that I was smart, and I had the capacity to research and knew what I was talking about in like my niche interests. But I felt like the confidence to kind of go for things academically, and state my opinions wasn't quite there yet. And I think it really pushed me out there to be confident in my abilities. And I think it made me more comfortable in academic spaces. I hadn't experienced the academy outside of just seeing my professors give a lecture. Maybe see them in office hours, if I could kind of build up the courage and that was about it. So I think being able to do this internship, being around everyone at the Society for Caribbean Studies and at The RGS and having a mentor that introduced me to a world of people, I think without that, I would have struggled at my current university and I would have continued to struggle with reaching out. But now, I have friends that

didn't do the internship but have similar academic interests. And I'm like, 'oh, you know, what I can introduce you to so and so. They're really interested in that'. And I just, I feel like I really want to pay it forward, because it's done so much for me.

**Isabella Bromfield 29:29**

Mmm, yeah.

**Bryce Mathurin-Lindsey 29:30**

Essentially, jumping off what Mahalia said, it's a confidence boost. It's Black academics and PhD students helping Black undergrads and master's students with their sort of introduction into the academy and showing them that they do have a space within that and that you yourself can create your own space within that. It's a huge confidence boost. I think the under-representation of particularly of, I'm saying of Black academics, of Black people in general and Black people within higher education, but particularly on an ethnics level, the under-representation of Afro-Caribbean people in higher education means that the Fi We Road internship and particularly this one, the cohort that we were within that a Caribbean focus was more needed than I can ever emphasize. And so having older Afro-Caribbean people show you that they have had amazing careers and they you can have amazing careers in geography as a discipline, or other related disciplines, is incredibly empowering. So yeah, it's done nothing but boost my confidence, and actually make me feel at home in a place that can actually feel quite alien.

**Isabella Bromfield 30:56**

I think the same for me, and I think slightly different to Mahalia and Bryce, because I kind of always wanted to do a master's but I've always like had confidence issues and don't believe I can do something until I get the result. And I think it came at a good time for me because it was when, like I said, I'd just handed my dissertation. And I think I had a few very supportive lecturers but I just wasn't quite sure like how.. My dissertation was very related to the internship and being Black and people and space and gentrification and things like that. So I wasn't really sure how to, I think a lot of people I was discussing it with really thought was a good idea but couldn't relate or understand what I was actually speaking about. And so being able to be in a room and be on zoom with my mentor, who was amazing. She's a scholar at UCL. That really helped and being able to discuss what master's I should do instead of. I was very close to just doing one and it sounds good but I was so I'm so grateful I didn't do that. So grateful I paused, did the best I could do in my degree, which for me, I just was struggling to do both at the same time, and make a good decision and having that confidence and having someone say that's a good idea. And basically guidance in how to best take the next steps has really helped me. And I think I kind of was going to shy away from doing a master's because I didn't think that I could do it in terms of like, I knew that I'd get the grades to do it but whether or not I could actually mentally take on the challenge. So hearing people's different paths, seeing people even hearing about the different degrees that you guys are doing are like, 'Oh, I could do that'. And I found it quite overwhelming to use Google. And there's so many things you could do. And although you can be blessed to have a good grade or a grade that's standard to get into a Master's, sometimes it can be overwhelming, being able to have all this choice. So being able to being told by people like Professor Pat Noxolo and Cynthia Anyadi (Black Geographers) and saying, 'Oh no, you could do that, you could do this'. That's really, really helped me. And having people even on our internship now. Reagan McDonald went to the same university as me.

And he did the master's that I was considering. So even having an actual person who I know, you can say 'oh, it's like this'. That's really helped me. So yeah, I'm so grateful. I don't think anything else could have had the same effect as the kind of structure of this internship. So yeah, it's been great.

**Mahalia Marsh 33:12**

They had so much faith in us. I think that's so important. And I think like you. Professor Pat Noxolo did the same master's as I did. And I think even I went for the Master's, I applied for it and I saw everything through, I think I was still thinking, I don't know if I can do this. That was still very much in my mind. And on our first meeting, she (Pat Noxolo) said to me, 'Well, you know, a good undergrad dissertation, also makes a good master's dissertation'. And I think after hearing that, I was like, you know, yeah, I did really well on my on my undergrad dissertation. And I think now that I'm doing my Master's, I'm thinking, yeah, it's not that it's exponentially more difficult. The workload is ridiculous but like, it's not necessarily harder work. And I think if that helps you make any decisions about the future as well, like, I will definitely say, workload is ridiculous, but it's manageable. But it's not like a jump away from the work that you've already done in your degree before.

**Isabella Bromfield 33:12**

Yeah, it's been really helpful and actually, that kind of reminds me how I was. The thing about university is that when you finish, you get your grade back from your dissertation, your overall grade, and you don't get to discuss it with your lecturers after so people help you so much. Or they say this is a good idea. This isn't a good idea. I had in my feedback. I had one of my supervisors said, 'don't put this in' and she had cut this whole chunk out and I cut it but then I felt like it should be in and one of the people said that was amazing. The other person said you shouldn't put that in. And so it's just really interesting how it'd be great to go back and talk about it. And I think this internship coming at the time it did especially for all of us, most of us being in our third year. It was good for me anyway, got to discuss things I've written about. Things I was interested in. And I guess if I go on to do a master's afterwards, it will really help having, like Mahalia said contacts and people who've done the similar thing. And, yeah, so it's actually been really helpful. Because I don't know if I'll go into academia as such but they were very open to whatever path you take kind of just helping you at this point, which was good.

**Rita Gayle 35:20**

Wow. I mean, I think the energy, you will sound really excited that it really energised you, really gave you confidence. Because I think, you know, coming off the back of an undergraduate, you're kind of just pushing to get through it, you know, it's kind of a rush. You come straight off your A levels. You're at Uni: bam, bam, bam! It just feels like you don't even have time to think, right! And I guess the internship, in a way for all of you, feels like it was very much the whole thing was a reflective practice that came at a time of your life where you were really able to take, I guess, advantage of that space to kind of think about put it in context with all of your kind of previous educational experiences. And also, and I'm glad you raised it; that this whole issue of being of Caribbean heritage, you know, I think it's interesting, because in Britain, there's this kind of narrative that Caribbean people are not interested in education, which is bizarre, really, because in the Caribbean, they're obsessed with education. I mean, like ridiculously obsessed with it. When you're in a space like this, it kind of affirms those things, because it's sometimes can be quite difficult to get that validation from elsewhere. Let's be honest. But one of the things I wanted to ask you, I guess, coming off the back of that is the research that you're

doing, having done Fi We Road - the internship. How has it impacted your research, the actual topics and the themes and, you know, I guess your methodologies? Has it impacted that? Has it expanded it? Has it kind of reminded you or encouraged you to stay on track with what you're doing? How was it? How was it affected it or not as the case may be?

**Bryce Mathurin-Lindsey 37:00**

I think you put it brilliantly there, Rita, right at the end, when you said has it convinced you to sort of stay on track with what you're doing? That it's done. I always liked my essays to have like a Caribbean focus. It didn't matter what facet of geography it was in; whether it was like climate science, whether it be economic geography, historical geography, biogeography, ecology or whatever it is, for quite a few of my assignments. Not all, but for a large chunk of them. I always found a way to like spin it and make it about the Caribbean, like somehow! Whether it was through a case study, or looking at a particular regional, particular community or wherever it may be. Or looking at a particular like climatic event in the region. And there definitely are times do you think, oh, you know, will people kind of think I'm kind of crazy or nuts for this? Or, you know, will this hamper me when it comes to marking? Will there be lecturers who were like, 'oh, you know, you only kind of focus on one region', whether it be lectures with biases, who don't like you focusing on majority Black populations and regions. But again, coming into contact with people who have established careers focusing on the Caribbean and people who are very geeked out about the same thing that you're geeked out, it gives you more fuel to do that. Because, you know, within geography departments in standard UK universities, you know people who have geeked out about like, plate tectonics, and you know people who are super nerdy about biogeography, or geopolitics, and people who are super nerdy about more well-known parts of the globe, whether that be you know, Western Europe, or South Asia, for example, or even large Latin American countries like Brazil. This was the first time ever in my life that I'd come across academics who were extremely passionate about the Caribbean, and had shaped their careers around it. So they gave me the confidence to continue doing exactly what I wanted to do. Sort of a reminder, as you said, to stay on track. Don't get dissuaded. Don't lose confidence. Don't, you know, feel that you don't want to ruffle any feathers because you don't look to Black. You don't want look to Afro-Caribbean or look like you're hyper focusing. But no, I do want to look like I'm hyper focusing, because I am hyper focusing on a region that I'm deeply connected to.

**Mahalia Marsh 39:22**

I couldn't agree more. I mean, like Bryce, I've been pushing my agenda but it's been a long time in the making. I remember being an undergrad and I'm like, 'oh, you know, everyone's talking about 'decolonizing the curriculum'! When are we going to learn about some Caribbean scholars?' You know, there's a rich academic history and like, finally being able to learn about Franz Fanon and Walter Rodney in the context of either like global politics or even now with development studies, I'm like, okay, yeah, that's cool. What about the Caribbean perspective? Because there's always like loads of diversity in like the case studies that people use but it's within the same like one or two continents. So I think being able to kind of just sprinkle the Caribbean perspective in, even if it's just a little bit, even if it's just from my kind of Black British diaspora perspective, it's something. It's some progress. And now I think a lot more people are kind of asking, yeah, what about this? What about that place? And I think in terms of my research, yes, it's affirmed what I'm researching and writing about. It has meant that I want to continue and feel empowered to continue on that path. But also, it's really strange in a good way to be

reading these papers and thinking, Oh, I know that person! Yeah, I met that person this summer. That so strange and I'm still kind of coming to terms with that. And the fact that these academics are real people, and I've met them, you know. They're not robots that just keep churning out these papers, you know, that they are people and the people that we've met, the people that have mentored us. I just really still wrapping my head around it. But I think that is kind of that constant reminder and that push forward. That motivation. That drive.

**Bryce Mathurin-Lindsey** 41:23

It didn't seem real before. I can attest to that. People like Pat, like, did not seem real. Like that's so far removed from me.

**Mahalia Marsh** 41:31

Right? Like, I'm seeing Byron (Professor Margart Byron) on citation. I'm like, surely not a real person? She was my mentor!

**Isabella Bromfield** 41:39

Yeah, that's the same as me. I remember meeting Pat and being like, what, like, that's, that's Noxolo! It's so funny.

**Rita Gayle** 41:47

What about your research, Isabella? Do you feel that it's affirmed the research path that you were previously on? Or has it added other aspects now that you want to add to it? Or how do you feel at this time?

**Isabella Bromfield** 42:03

I think it has, yeah. I think kind of like the other two said, I specifically remember researching something right at the end of my degree. And I was like, the other side, always trying to make things pertaining to the Caribbean. And I was talking about Jamaica, about Kingston (the country's capital), and I was trying to work the colonial structure of the city. And there's just hardly any writing on it. And I went to my lecture, and I said, I'm trying to make this essay about this. What can I do? And I was kind of comparing the structure to the favelas in Brazil. And anyway, and basically, there was nothing on it. And there was just one scholar who'd written basically everything on it. I think the internship has, especially being in the Society of Caribbean conference, has shown me that people are discussing things. It's just not in the realm that we're introduced to. And sometimes we're having to go around the fact or, yeah, it's really helped. And I think, actually, for me, on the next journey I'm taking, I'm applying to master's now. And like I said, it's really made me confident in the stuff I'm picking like, there's really interesting, masters, I'm considering called postcolonial studies. And I just didn't think I could do that, as in, I didn't know where it would lead to. It doesn't have a clear career path. But it's kind of reassured me that the kind of way that you research and what you research can be, well, is justified, and there is a space for it. So obviously, this is something that people are kind of making space for in these big institutions here. And they should have been doing it a long time ago. But yeah, so it's been really helpful in that sense.

**Rita Gayle** 43:35

Yeah. I actually did my masters in post-colonial studies as well. It's a really expansive subject. It's funny, isn't it? All these kinds of connections. One of the things I want to just talk about briefly rounding up. You know, obviously, the mentors that you all have mentioned, in brief, we want to sort of just say thank you to them, if you want to just mention them.

**Isabella Bromfield 43:56**

Okay, so I had Dr Caroline Bressey. And she was great. So she did Historical Geographies at UCL. And like I said, she kind of let me guide the meetings. And I said that I was not sure where to go next, and how I'd kind of put off my master's out of kind of fear. And so I thought she was a great support. And we kind of planned out the sessions really just to kind of give a nice introduction into it so I could slowly work into it. So I first of all, created a list and we went through them together, kind of eliminated things. And I kind of came up with two topics I'm very interested in: ESG (Earth System Governance?) and Post-colonial Studies and we kind of created it together, cut things out. And then the next week, I kind of fed back to her and said, I want to apply to these kind of grad schemes that relate to it kind of as a backup, and then the final week, I'd worked on my application, and she really kindly went through it with me on a zoom call, told me what how to add it kind of gave me any suggestions, improvements. So actually, kind of the biggest step, I guess, in a master's application is that kind of document that you submit. So for me from that, from the point of view, I was coming from not sure how to do it. And I've now left uni and don't have the support of my lecturers. It was great and so now I've got a structure on how to base other applications off of. So I'm really grateful for all the help. And she put me in contact with another one of her students if I ever want to reach out. So yeah, I'm really grateful. She was lovely. And really, really, let me kind of choose my path and make sure it was really helpful to me in all of our sessions. So yeah, she was great.

**Bryce Mathurin-Lindsey 45:44**

My mentor was Professor Margaret Byron, who's at Leicester, but was actually at Kings' for a very long time which was extremely helpful to me because it meant that when it came to.. I'd already applied to do the master's course at Kings by that time but she could sort of brief me a little bit on sort of what I could look forward to in terms of just the way in which Kings' runs at the post grad level, because of course, I had only been an undergrad there up to that point. And we had extremely interesting conversations about her realm of research. The things that she finds fascinating about the Caribbean, as well as her sort of actual upbringing from the Caribbean. Hearing some of her stories throughout her childhood was incredibly enriching to me because I think personal stories are deeply intertwined with academia, research and the things that we research. And as well as Margaret Byron, I also want to shout out Patricia Noxolo and Kesewa John, because I also consider them mentors to me. They have been sort of a tremendous help. So yeah, getting their advice, as well as Cynthia's advice too, who works with Black Geographers has been more valuable than I could ever say, like not quantifiable at all. Yeah. They.. I think the unconditional support that they showed for us was incredibly heartwarming, because again, we're interns, which means they sort of were tasked with guiding us but I think throughout it, they went above and beyond to support us in what we wanted to do, and really dedicated themselves to try and to give us extra help outside of the internship. So when it came to applying to Masters or careers, etc, I believe one of our first meetings, they sort of made a big thing out of trying to connect us with people who may be in industries that we might want to go into after we finish our undergrads. And you know, that kind of stuff was like they didn't need to do but they did sort of out of

the kindness of their own heart and really, really wanting to see Black students within the discipline prosper. So yeah, those are things I will never, ever forget. And I feel like I owe each of them massive favours for the support that they provided all of us throughout this internship. So it was incredibly heartwarming.

**Mahalia Marsh 48:08**

My mentor was Pat Noxolo. She's great as we know! She's so warm, so smart, so bold, so supportive. We spoke a lot about our backgrounds and identity and how that kind of comes into play with our research interests. Spoke a bit about development studies since that's kind of where I'm at right now. And it's what she did her master's in. Really gave me a confidence boost. I felt like I had a mentor that was genuinely interested. And, you know, not that it's deliberate. But you know, all of the mentors do such great PR for the internship. I think, seeing how appreciated and honoured Pat is by her peers. And anyone that interacts with her is great. I don't think I've ever met anyone like her in my life to be fair. And I think, you know, I want everything for her. And obviously, big up Kesewa John every time. She's great. She's so open and I think passing the torch from kind of Pat to Kesewa, in terms of being the Chair for Society for Caribbean Studies is seamless. They're both so amazing. And everything I can say about Pat, I could then double down for Kesewa.

**Rita Gayle 49:41**

Exactly! You know, Kesewa is a really brilliant scholar and, you know, is continuing on the work of the Society for Caribbean Studies. So I feel that's really important and I feel like the future is really exciting for the research team there. So in closing, you know, we're getting to that time. I mean, I guess you know, this is what I asked before the previous internship group. Obviously, this research is very much had a little Caribbean, a CARICOM feel, definitely. And so where does that leave you? So you've all done the experience? What's the future for those of you who've been participating in this? I mean, are you guys gonna stay in touch?

**Bryce Mathurin-Lindsey 50:22**

They better stay in touch! I'm hoping that they don't all run away from you once this is, like done. But no, I think I mean, guys, I hope you reiterate this. I do believe that we will stay in touch. And I do hope that whatever the future brings for us that we're able to collaborate in whatever way that is, whether it's research, or something outside of research. We're all still in a group chat together. So we also have each other's, you know, numbers.

**Mahalia Marsh 50:53**

I can't let you guys go! I think we need to keep building, you know. We can just like, keep, keep, like bringing everyone in. And you know, as the years go on, we can expand and get bigger and bigger and bigger until we're just a humongous network of Fi We Road alumni. And I just, yeah. I think it's so important to know people when it comes to the Academy and I think a lot of that is founded in elitism. I would love if that could just be founded in genuine interest. But I'd like to think that, because of this experience, we became friends authentically, and that we do have the crossovers in our academic interest, and that all of those things together will keep us together in the future.

**Isabella Bromfield 51:48**

I second that. I think also, I think we are meeting up next week which is nice. And because obviously, when the internship finished, these guys had just started their masters so there wasn't a natural break. It was kind of like, that's why Mahalia couldn't make it obviously to the conference. So it was like the busyness of everything. So I reckon that we haven't had a good chance and maybe over Christmas it'd be really nice to get together. Because the first time we met actually, the first day we ever went in June. I don't know if you guys remember? It was really hot. It was like 30 degrees, and we were sitting in the park and we all kind of discussing our interests and stuff like that. And we all got along really well straightaway, and we all had lunch together. We haven't actually had the chance to talk outside of the internship, like properly in kind of conversation in real life. So I think we'll first get the chance to do it properly next week so that's already set. And then we should definitely set another date in the diary. So we will get along so well. Setting up for the conference that brings you together you know, organising things and having responsibilities and Bryce and I doing decorations. Like, that's funny. And like, it was good. Yeah, so we definitely have to stay in contact because we've got along so well. And yeah, I'd love to read like your dissertations. Read your work. Like we haven't even had.. We haven't even.. because I don't think we know properly other than the kind of brief outline you give to each other. I think we have a lot to share and a lot of discuss. It feels weird doing it academically because we're so young, but that's the path everyone's going on, isn't it? So yeah, yeah, that'd be really nice.

**Mahalia Marsh** 53:10

Yeah, I need to get to editing my dissertation. I did well, but in my opinion, now it's a mess!

**Isabella Bromfield** 53:16

You come back with fresh eyes? Well, I'm not going to know I haven't even started a master's yet. I wouldn't have any judgement. Yeah, I think we must do it. We're gonna, let's say we'll set a date next week when the others are there. And we can maybe find a time over Christmas or something. That'd be really nice before everyone gets back to work and uni.

**Rita Gayle** 53:36

Yeah.

**Bryce Mathurin-Lindsey** 53:37

Absolutely have to, I think we had a lot of fun bantering on the day of the actual fair. And I didn't realise some of you guys were so funny. You guys have got jokes, man. So yeah, we definitely have to get together again.

**Mahalia Marsh** 53:52

Yeah, for sure.

**Rita Gayle** 53:54

You know, I would say, you know, on networking, you know, you're the second group now. So there's a little group of you now who've completed The Fi We Road Project, you know, and together obviously with the members of the Black geographers group as well. And I want to give a big shout out to Black Geographers Groups', Cynthia: the kind of organiser here. She's here in spirit. She's the one who set this up, as you know, with all the emails and she's doing a lot of work whilst doing a PhD. It's just kind



of incredible, really, and they've done amazing work. And they're also young, you know, so they're gonna have a lot more years in the academy and in industry as well, doing what they're doing. So we want to thank them. And, yeah, so thank you so much. I want to thank, obviously, everybody involved particularly of course, Professor Patricia Noxolo, Kesewa John and Janelle Rodriguez, who were involved in that. Thank you again for giving me the opportunity to do this wonderful.. I guess reflective practice conversation with participants. Thank you, Isabella, Mahalia, Bryce. We got there! Good to see you. And I look forward to catching up with you again. And listen, big up the Caribbean! Yeah! Because it looks like it's a Caribbean thing. Yeah, right! Right. Okay. Come on! Come on! Switch on your mics!

**Bryce Mathurin-Lindsey** 55:20

Come on!

**Mahalia Marsh** 55:22

Absolutely!

**Rita Gayle** 55:24

Yeah! Let's not to be shy about it!

**Bryce Mathurin-Lindsey** 55:26

You know!

**Isabella Bromfield** 55:28

Thank you for your time, Rita.

**Mahalia Marsh** 55:28

Thank you.

**Bryce Mathurin-Lindsey** 55:30

Thank you, Rita. Thank you, so so much.