Move on Up

About 1000 meetings took place on 13 December at Congress House in London. Why? This was BECTU's seventh Move on Up event – another great success, says organiser Janice Turner.

More than 400 people participated in the 13 December at the Trades Union Congress headquarters – about 300 black and minority ethnic professionals and 100 executives from across film and television. Previous events have attracted members of BECTU, the NUJ, Equity and the Writers' Guild. The time the greater breadth of broadcasting executives drew Musicians' Union members to see two executives from the BBC orchestras. Members of the Professional Footballers' Association, also part of the Federation of Entertainment Unions, came to meet BBC Sport, ITV Sport and Sky Sports; footballers' careers fade in their 300 black and minority ethnic Congress headquarters – about.

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MOVIE ON UP CHANGED MY LIFE

One speaker who inspired the audience was Dhimitri Shabu, a broadcast journalist working in the BBC's Multimedia Newsroom at Television Centre in White City. She told the opening session: “I've been working for the BBC for three years and I always credit Move on Up for helping me get that first step in the door.” She was working in local papers in London when she attended Move on Up in Radio in 2006. “Although I had no radio experience whatsoever, I thought this would be a great opportunity to find out more and help me figure out what my next move could be.”

“I met senior editors from the BBC and commercial stations who gave me advice about how to tailor my CV and how to get more experience in a sector I was completely unfamiliar with. I went to some of the workshops and met people my own age who were in similar situations. I was really impressed by the sessions and how they had made me realise that I had valuable and transferrable skills. The whole event really motivated me.”

“The confidence boost I had received helped me in my day-to-day job and I was shortlisted for, and won, several awards.” She became acting news editor at her paper but decided to take a risk and applied for a short internship at an independent documentary company. She helped research a Newsnight feature that led to changes in several of the unions showing BME workers are underrepresented in the unions and almost non-existent on committees.

Support for minority members getting involved

Twenty black/minority ethnic (BME) members of the entertainment unions are being sought to take part in a trailblazing training course designed to give them the knowledge, encouragement and support to run for office in their union.

“Changing the face of your union” will be a landmark training course, designed by the Federation of Entertainment Unions’ equality officers in partnership with the TUC race equality department at the request of BECTU’s black members’ committee.

The course will run over four evenings in April and May, as a constructive response to surveys in several of the unions showing BME workers are underrepresented in the unions and almost non-existent on committees.

Faisal Qureshi is chair of BECTU’s black members’ committee and on the committee of the Regional Production Division and notes that “BECTU currently doesn’t carry out equality monitoring of committees (though we’ve proposed changes to this) but it’s pretty obvious that there aren’t enough black and Asian members getting elected onto committees,” he says. “Any BME member of BECTU who is interested in playing a more active role in the union should contact our diversity officer Janice Turner at head office.”

Winston Phillips is vice-chair of the black members’ committee and a member of the union’s National Executive Committee. Last year he was elected to the Trades Union Congress Race Relations Committee which represents black workers from across the British trades union movement. “Our Move on Up programme has changed people’s lives,” he says, “and it would never have existed without black BECTU members getting active in the union, and proposing the policies and initiatives that we consider important.

If you’ve benefited from Move on Up, consider giving something back – by getting more involved in your union. If you’d like to have a chat about it you can contact, Faisal or Janice Turner via BECTU head office. We urge members to take part in this course.”

The course is open to BME members of BECTU, Equity, the NUJ, the Musicians’ Union, the Writers’ Guild and the Professional Footballers’ Association and is on Wednesdays from 6-9pm, on 13 and 20 April and 4 and 11 May at Equity in St Martin’s Lane. Contact Janice Turner, email janice@stagegreensexandradio.org.uk