

Case Study

Private Screening of "Blacks Can't Swim – The Sequel" Documentary at St Mary's University Twickenham



Introduction

At St Mary's University Twickenham, a distinguished institution known for its commitment to academic excellence and a diverse community, the core values of Respect, Inclusion, Generosity of Spirit, and Excellence play a crucial role in guiding its mission. As part of the ongoing 'Values Talks' series, the university hosted a private screening of the documentary "Blacks Can't Swim – The Sequel," featuring a thought-provoking question-and-answer session with guest speaker Ed Accura. This event aimed to address the critical issue of swimming participation rates among ethnic minorities, particularly focusing on the underrepresentation of Black and Asian communities in swimming activities.

The screening not only highlighted disparities in sports participation but also aimed to foster an inclusive dialogue that encourages all students to feel valued and empowered. By integrating this subject matter into its educational agenda, St Mary's University fulfilled its social responsibility and contributed to broader discussions around inclusivity in sports. Ultimately, this initiative reinforces the university's commitment to creating an environment where every student can thrive.

The Shocking Facts (Current Key Statistics)

According to a survey conducted in 2024 by **Sport England**, **97% of Black adults and 82% of Black children in England do not swim. 96% of Asian adults and 79% of Asian children in England do not swim.** (Sports England Active Lives Survey 2024)

Black Children are seven times more likely to die from drowning than their White peers, prompting experts to encourage them to learn how to swim. Children from African and Caribbean backgrounds have been held back from learning the life skill because of fears about water, hair protection and financial means which has left them at a greater risk.

The World Health Organization (WHO) reports that, on average, 236,000 people drown globally every year, with 90% of these deaths occurring in low- to middle-income countries. Africa has the highest drowning rate, while Asia experiences the highest number of drowning incidents.

The Event

The in-person screening of "Blacks Can't Swim – The Sequel " was followed by a 45-minute Q&A discussion with Ed Accura, addressing the critical issue of swimming participation in diverse communities. The event confronted uncomfortable truths and fostered vital conversations about generational barriers to swimming within diverse communities.

Benefits to St Mary's University

For institutions like St Mary's University Twickenham, hosting events such as the screening of "Blacks Can't Swim – The Sequel" closely aligns with their core values of Respect, Inclusion, Generosity of Spirit, and Excellence while fulfilling their social responsibility objectives. By addressing generational disparities in access to swimming and engaging in initiatives that encourage open dialogue, the university demonstrates its unwavering commitment to fostering an inclusive environment that values diversity. The event not only served as an educational tool but also enhanced the university's reputation as a leader in promoting diversity and equality, living up to its values of Respect and Inclusion.

Organisations in the education sector and beyond can benefit significantly from similar engagements, as they facilitate community outreach and provide vital insights into the challenges faced by underrepresented groups. This kind of collaboration can inspire initiatives that promote swimming as an enjoyable and accessible activity for all. By embodying the values of Generosity of Spirit and Excellence, institutions can create meaningful connections within the community and contribute positively to societal change, furthering the overarching goal of creating a more equitable society.

Audience Engagement and Benefits

The audience, regardless of ethnicity, stood to gain valuable insights from watching the documentary and participating in the Q&A session. Ed Accura encouraged participants to ask questions, highlighting the importance of open dialogue about uncomfortable topics. This interaction not only fostered a richer understanding of the issues at hand but also empowered attendees to reflect on their roles in addressing these long-standing disparities.

Audience Feedback

Audience feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with many attendees sharing their personal takeaways from the screening. Several viewers expressed how the film inspired them to explore their own swimming journeys and reflect on their experiences with water. They appreciated the sense of community portrayed in the documentary and were particularly moved by the stories of resilience shared by participants. Many felt motivated to support local swimming charities and were inspired by the documentary to create a swimming club in their area.

One attendee noted that the film provided them with the opportunity to openly discuss a topic they had previously felt uncomfortable addressing. The documentary sparked meaningful conversations among viewers, highlighting the importance of family support and diverse perspectives in the realm of swimming. Attendees acknowledged the film's role in raising awareness about representation in sports, which empowered them to challenge existing stereotypes surrounding swimming. Overall, these reflections illustrate the documentary's profound impact, showcasing how it fostered contemplation, inspiration, and a strengthened sense of community among viewers.

Personal Testimonial

Dr Elizabeth Parker, Student Engagement Officer at St Mary's University Twickenham, shared her reflections on the screening, stating, "We did a special screening of Blacks Can't Swim followed by an exclusive interview with Ed for one of our University 'Values Talks.' It was such a great event to be a part of. Students really engaged with the film and asked lots of questions afterwards. Ed was very accommodating and made sure the event fitted well within the

remits of what we were trying to achieve with our talks. He is a charismatic and engaging speaker and I highly recommend his work!"

Conclusion

The screening of "Blacks Can't Swim – The Sequel" at St Mary's University Twickenham not only raised awareness about critical issues surrounding swimming participation among Black and Asian communities but also provided a platform for meaningful dialogue. By addressing uncomfortable truths and encouraging open discussions, the event underscored the university's commitment to its core values of Respect, Inclusion, Generosity of Spirit, and Excellence. Through this initiative, St Mary's University demonstrated its social responsibility and reinforced its role as a leader in promoting diversity and equality within the community.

Furthermore, the event served as an educational tool that inspired reflection on the challenges faced by underrepresented groups in sports. By fostering an inclusive environment where all voices are valued, St Mary's University not only contributes to broader societal conversations but also encourages similar organisations to engage in community outreach and develop initiatives that promote swimming as an enjoyable and accessible activity for all. In doing so, the university exemplifies how educational institutions can play a pivotal role in driving social change and embodying their values in meaningful ways.

For organisations interested in hosting their screening, private packages including a Q&A session are available via the link below, furthering the documentary's mission to raise awareness and advocate for aquatic justice.

About the Documentaries

The **Blacks Can't Swim** and **Changing the Narrative** documentaries have provided crucial insights into why a disproportionate number of people of African, Caribbean, and Asian heritage do not swim. These documentaries offer valuable perspectives through the lived experiences shared in the films.

These documentaries are essential for anyone who would like to better understand how a lack of diversity and inclusion in aquatics has impacted individuals within ethnically diverse communities. By participating in these screenings, viewers will gain insight into the complex barriers to aquatic engagement, the opportunities and benefits that being able to swim can provide, and how participation can be promoted within African, Caribbean, and Asian communities.

The screenings offer a comfortable and safe environment for individuals to reflect on their views and address these issues. Additionally, the documentaries delve into important topics beyond swimming, exploring mental health, physical health, dietary choices, and other areas that can benefit from aquatic activities.

For organisations or communities aiming to align with their strategic priorities and focus on reducing inequalities, especially those with a diverse workforce, these screenings offer an opportunity to engage with important societal issues and encourage positive change. By fostering discussions around inclusivity and water safety, organisations can contribute to enhancing community well-being and collectively work towards changing the narrative surrounding swimming participation.

If you are interested in hosting your screening, private packages including a Q&A session are available via the details below, furthering the documentary's mission to raise awareness and advocate for inclusion in aquatics regardless of ethnicity.

Contact info@changingthenarrative.film to initiate change in your workplace and community.

For more information, interested parties can visit www.changingthenarrative.film