

Liberation Conference 2020 Election Hustings Transcript

Welcome to the National Union of Students Liberation Conference 2020 Election Hustings for Vice President Liberation and Equality.

I'm your host, Keme Nzerem and joining me today are your election candidates, we will be hearing from all of them in alphabetical order by surname, everyone is going to get a chance to answer a question first turn by turn. But first,

I want to introduce everyone. In first Sara Khan from the University of Manchester Students' Union. Say hi.

Hi Keme, lovely to be here.

Next, Nelly Kibirige. London South Bank University Students' Union. She's joining us by phone because unfortunately her Internet's down. Say hi, Nelly.

Hi everyone, nice to be here.

Amelia McLoughlan from Durham Students Union. Say hi.

Hello

Joining us in fact from Singapore Hamsavani Rajaswaren who studies at Queens University Belfast Students Union, she's representing them.

Hi everyone, really good to be here.

And Joshua Williams, who is joining us from Birmingham, he is at the University of Birmingham and he's representing the Guild of Students

Hello everyone, pleasure to be here.

A big Welcome to you all. But before we get to the questions that

You students want to ask your NUS liberation and equality VP hopefuls. We want to hear from the candidates themselves to open proceedings. Why, why does each of them wants to stand as a candidate. We are going to hear first from Nelly Kibirige.

Nelly, over to you.

Thanks Keme.

Hi everyone, my name is Nelly Kibirige and current two-time president at London Southbank SU. I am running to be your VP of Liberations, because not only do I represent our liberation groups from BMA to LGBT,

I've also focused wholeheartedly on liberating our students, working with them and ensuring that the oppression stops.

I've been a successful campaigner from fighting and equal treatment by institution, to collaborating with students unions nationally to fight the problems of student finance, ensuring that fit for purpose for all students.

I run for LSBSU president on one key promise – inclusivity, because no one wins if we have to exclude someone, no one's liberation if someone remains oppressed.

I am here today, asking you to please choose me as your VP liberation and equality, because I am someone who has proven through the years that the fighting is worth it.

Thank you.

Nelly. Thank you very much indeed. Next up,

Amelia McLoughlan. Why are you standing as a candidate.

Hi, thank you. I'm Amelia McLoughlan

And I believe in collective action, that our movement needs to come together with all communities and solidarity, to get discrimination of our campuses and out of our unions.

To centre our liberation activists and truly be inclusive of our students, whether that's HE or FE

Covid- 19 has only further highlighted the risk to the lives of our communities and the barriers that we face.

And that's why I am campaigning heart and soul for no education without liberation. I've worked on both national platforms, winning the disabled students activist of the Year award, but I'm passionate

About supporting and lifting up on the ground activists across unions, across this country, and by transforming my own unions approach to liberation.

I've seen so many of the barriers that I've heard from all over the UK, both in the nation's and in

England from sabbatical officers because of their identities being blocked from doing the campaigns that they feel are important to part time officers be ignored.

From this experience, I really feel that NUS needs to be a union, the students over factions.

And that whatever your political beliefs, whether you're a liberation student from one camp or this should be your home, this should be based on a collective action.

And we should be fighting against the oppression that our education system is propagating within society. So that's why I am standing on no education without liberation, please consider voting me the VP liberation and equality. Thank you.

Amelia McLoughlan, thank you very much indeed. Next up Hamsa Rajeswaren, why are you standing?

Hi everyone, I'm Hamsa, so for the past six years I have been organizing as a student activists for liberation and one of the most repressive regimes in

In Western Europe and that's Northern Ireland. My passion and those six years has been making sure that students from our communities have the tools

And the networks and navigate in education system, which was never built for people like us.

As a part time officer I organized against the exploitation of international students and as a school rep, I fought for Accessible education.

As a rep on the NUS black students campaign, I protested our race politics and as my own unions VP equality and diversity, I lead a historic, successful student movement for marriage equality and abortion rights.

And so now I feel like I'm ready to take that experience and build those moments across the entire country as your VP liberation and equality.

Because covid-19 has proven what everyone from a liberation background already knew, that the status quo was broken, that normal wasn't working for us.

Together, If you elect me, We will never go back to that status quo. We will never go back to normal.

Because together as a movement. We will never go back. We will build a new normal and a new society.

A society where health care and education is liberated, our universities de-colonized and our students empowered, a society where we recognize our global liberation struggles are interconnected.

A society, driven by passionate grassroots people-power campaigns that we will ignite, built and led by students.

And so I'm asking for your vote to help build that society together because one VP will not do that alone. It will take all of us to reclaim our power to empower and to transform our movement.

Hamsa, very good to hear from you there, indeed times are a changing. Next up, we've got Joshua Williams. Joshua, why are you standing?

Hello everyone. It gives me great pleasure to be standing for the first vice president liberation and equality role.

I've spent my entire life fighting injustice in Birmingham, the West Midlands and at the national level as well.

And along the way, at the heart of that has been liberation and inclusion, and this is something that I'm ready to take to the national level now.

But it wasn't always this way. So coming from a council estate and the care system after unfortunately being made homeless,

I felt firsthand the difficulty of what social mobility, and it often meant I had to fight to even feel like I was worthy of having a voice and fight I did.

But I want to ensure that no one ever feels powerless or voiceless, and everyone has the tools, the support and the resources to be able to have their own right to self determination.

Every single student is different and every experience is different and that diversity can and should be utilized to enrich our own lives and the lives of those around us.

I was told, quite simply that I would amount to nothing for being a council estate kid.

And there's so many people across plethora of intersections across the whole of this country that feels the exact same,

We need to empower our student body. We need to empower our student unions.

And we need to ensure that we are having a full understanding of how the intersection of our identity makes it harder for us to thrive.

And stop with a one size fits all approach and really take an intimate basis of how to uplift all students.

But I will take this fight for liberation equality into every classroom and every boardroom by building tools and resources for liberation groups on every single campus.

And I create a national strategy for liberation inequality that secures this new rights, puts underrepresented students front and center, and wins back autonomous liberation campaigns for NUS.

But we are currently in a global pandemic and this is not for the short term, this is for the long term.

And the normal is broken. We need to build a society and a world that starts with our educational systems that is truly representative, reflected and uplifting of all students.

And I promise you if I'm elected, I will fight with every ounce of my being, to be able to do that. So please consider voting Joshua number one for vice president liberation and equality.

No one size fits all solution for Joshua Williams, thanks for that Joshua at the last of our candidates, but certainly by no means the least Sara Khan. Why are you standing?

Thanks Keme. And hey, again, everyone. I'm Sara, my pronouns are she/they.

I'm the current liberation and access officer at the University of Manchester Students Union, the largest student union and the UK.

Where I've been representing all five liberation campaigns and leading a team of liberation volunteers for the past two years.

I'm running on a platform to embed liberation throughout the movement, to support liberation officers, volunteers and activists and to lobby for a free accessible and liberated education for all.

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For the past three years, NUS' liberation campaigns have been really formative for me, as I'm sure they have been for so many of us.

Which is why it's so heartbreaking for that for the next two years, those autonomous campaigns won't be led by full time, fully resourced, fully paid officers.

But for the next two years. It's vital that the legacy of those campaigns lives on, and that your VP liberation does them justice.

I believe that I have the track record, the commitment and the vision to deliver that

I founded a Decolonize campaign on my campus, alongside the NUS LGBT plus campaign I've developed and delivered training and resources to student activist and societies across the UK on building anti racist LGBT+ spaces.

And both nationally and locally, I've led liberation volunteers and I've organized with UCU, BDS FemSoc, disabled students socs and more.

I've got the tireless commitment to intersectionality and to decolonization that doesn't reduce these terms to just buzzwords, so please consider voting for me because together we Khan.

Thank you very much, everybody.

A huge amount of experience there, and I'm sure the entire student electorate will agree that we have a really strong field standing here.

And now we go on to the questions. The questions from you, from the electorate and I'd like Amelia to respond first to the first question.

Which comes from a number of students' unions from across the country. It's a long one. I'll read it out.

How will you go about ensuring the representation and voice of all liberation groups and ensure that campaigns are inclusive enough for all students have different backgrounds and political views.

Let's put that another way. And let's be more specific, how will you go about supporting post grad, international, black, trans, LGBT plus, disabled and female students. Or a bit simpler,

How will you connect with students on the ground and make NUS campaigns relevant to them so they all feel included and included is probably the key word there. So, Amelia, a big question. To start with, over to you.

I think this is what I love about liberation. The fact that there is so many different people with different experiences with different political beliefs.

That we can all learn from. I think, I would want to build the movement from the ground up to involve as many people as possible.

I think one of the issues has been outreach to students, outreach to unions that are not affiliated that wants to be affiliated.

And to make sure that every student named out whether they're in one liberation camp, or all five, feel that they are valued included and have a voice and have a structure to make their voice heard.

I think I would work with my volunteer committee on how those structures, need to be modified. I would use my in a

Neuro diversity, the way I can look at problems with three dimensional and perspective, think about them without even consciously being aware of them, but use my voice to lift up the voices of

on the ground activists, of the voices of communities that I'm not a member of, and to ensure that everyone is learning from each other, that we have the structures.

And that we just have more communication. I think the first part of if I was to be elected.

Would be to spend a year literally reforming, rethinking, communicating with students on the ground with the unions and more importantly with part time offices to make sure that whoever you are, whatever your representation that you have a space.

Amelia. Thank you very much indeed for that a lot of food for thought, your 3D perspective, I'm sure we'll hear more about that later. And you spoke about using your voice. Hamza to you next. The same question. How will you use your voice?

So I think first of all, it's a collective responsibility to centre liberation in the student movement. We cannot allow in the context of defunding

autonomous liberation officers for the VP liberation to be the only person to be doing the liberation work.

Practically, the way that we are going to have to centre liberation in NUS' work is to build it into every single NUS campaign.

Liberation cannot be sectioned off into one small part of the organisation. The next two years needs to be making

our work on building a national service for education reflective and decolonial, making sure our work on the cost of living is actively championing

the interest of disabled students and our work on healthcare's recognizing health inequalities across society starting off with the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on black communities and communities of colour.

I've campaigned to save liberation, I've campaigned to save the trans officer last year, and I fought against turn around changes that were going to jeopardize our liberation campaigns.

And someone who found their home and several of the campaigns in NUS. I will be the candidate who will do everything in my power to bring back

Dedicated offices for each liberation group with fully funded and autonomous campaign budgets.

As well as ensuring a full return to autonomous liberation campaigns by the end of a two year term. And therefore, providing sufficient national leadership.

The key thing to ensure here so as to build and broaden our movement, is that our volunteers and part time liberation officers on the ground are sufficiently supported empowered and valued.

Liberation work is extremely rewarding but it can also be incredibly taxing and mentally exhausting.

And for too long, part time officer positions have just been a tick box exercise but institutions and sus have been complacent and sought to dilute liberation through the guise of representation.

Representation is not liberation, a seat at the table and my identity alone is not enough in ensuring that we rid our spaces of sexual violence, racism, transphobic hate crime and ableist inaccessibility.

My plan to support volunteers on the ground, alongside plans to put into place nus the activists boot camps, where student activists were brought in to help shape and deliver national priorities and campaigns.

Would feel lobbying for SUs and institutions to provide that autonomous resource for PTOs.

Hamsa, a lot of thinking has gone into that, interesting that you mentioned both collective responsibility and autonomous budgets so interesting there. Joshua Williams. Next, the same question to you, what do you propose to do?

So I think with this question, I'd like to break it down a little bit more. And so I think the biggest single thing about the vice president liberation and equality role is that regardless, where I sit, intellectually,

I cannot and should not speak on behalf of all minority groups. I am not in a position to be able to do that. And I think it will be irresponsible to do so.

Instead, we must ensure that we bring visibility to different intersections within our community, pass the mic to them, and lift them.

And this understanding allows these groups come to the forefront of the movement engage and discuss, acknowledging our privilege, and our ignorance and aiding providing the tools for them to rise.

Specifically here, a big niche area and a big passion of mine is the elevation of care leavers and estranged students, which falls across intersections and does not fit into one nice little category.

So with this, the practice and the policy has been very underdeveloped in issues and NUS, and within governments, and with this and took the

Liberty of being able to reform the care leaver officer within my own institution, to take this through to NUS for the first time, as it has not been spoken about at that level before, whilst also lobbying the government on this point as well.

But do I think that candidates are wrong for never raising this within my own issue or in NUS about the plight that needs students face, no.

So it's difficult to understand, if you are not within this group or have relevant experience and it can be seen as a very niche issue.

But what I did here, was use my experiences and my privilege in a position that I'm in now to highlight something that wasn't visible to so many people. And in turn, bring it to the forefront of our movement.

So, in reference to international, black, trans, LGBT q plus, disabled, women and postgraduate students in particular.

My track record is one that is very diverse, but one that is also at its very, very heart, set in uplifting all groups, regardless of whether I identify within them or not.

So if this, for instance I launched the black voices campaign and the first Black History Month. My Students Union.

And with this, it's not about a buzzword or tickboxing exercise. There were some key tools that I was able to learn here.

So one is ensuring you are effective when it comes to communicating with the groups that it represents, whether you are part of it or not, a diversity of experience can be so enriching, and it should be championed.

But trust. How do you build trust with people who are constantly being burned out by those in power.

As an authority figure within this role, I must build trust communities that have since been left behind.

But often issues shared by oppressed people about by marginalized groups and about part but unequally.

Is not a one size fits all response. Again, for example, toxic masculinity and the gendered cultures of harassment, our campuses and in institutions.

I fall into three of these liberation groups. Yet, I would still not try to advocate for my own personal experience. And said, Bring people in engage, discuss, get out of the NUS

Bubble and create a movement that is truly representative reflective and uplifting of all the people that represents.

Joshua Williams. Thank you very much indeed, from black history to the invisibility of leaving the care system. Sarah Khan, your next, how would you approach this.

I would absolutely echo the sentiment of some of my fellow candidates that,

One of the key principles of liberation needs to be the autonomy and self determination of liberation groups, but this is often interpreted by

Students unions and by activist groups as saddling all of the labour of liberation work on to those activists.

Those activists who have to contend with their own experiences of oppression, who might have part time work, who have degrees to contend with.

So it's all about on the ground support for those activists, to me. Not only do we have to listen to their voices and to platform their voices exactly as Joshua said, we need to give them the tangible support that they need.

Everywhere that's possible. This takes the form of financial support, mutual aid networks,

Political education and more.

So I would actively seek to communicate with students on the ground.

Both in terms of on campus visit and online drop in, zoom calls and so forth, to listen to them and platform their voices. But most importantly, to build a safe space where they can communicate what their needs are, what support they need.

So that we can understand that it's our collective responsibility to centre liberation work.

Sara Khan, I'm sure everyone would agree change doesn't happen

Without support on the ground. So thank you very much indeed for that. Last on that first question, Nelly Kibirige, how will you address it.

Thanks Keme. Hi, everyone. Um, I have said over and over again, over the last two years, that there is no one size fits all approach

To education, liberation, representation, anything. And so firstly using my experience, my personal experiences from being homeless at 16

From sofa surfing, living in hostels all across London, not having access to funds, holding down two jobs while attempting to do my a levels.

Being a single mom at a very young age, you know, trying to juggle work and responsibilities, I can guarantee you that experience speaks louder

Than just talk. It's one thing being able to say that I can do this. But when you've actually lived it, There's certain empathy that cannot be bought.

You know, living in places where your next door neighbour's son just got murdered and you still carry on as normal and you're not sure what's going to happen to you or your children, you know, so

Coming forward in my role as SU president over the last two years, I have run mainly my campaigns on liberation

Without intend to because, like I said your experience kind of pushes you in a direction to ensure that your aims and objectives are actually aimed at ensuring that nobody ever has to face any of the things you faced, from racism. So on my campus I initiated the first ever racial equality training and awareness.

You know, and then I spread that across the university and the union. We're currently working on developing it and making it mandatory for all staff, new and future.

And on top of that, I have managed to introduce liberate, gender pronoun for all staff and students on my campus that is to ensure that we remove the stigma and

Allow people to be able to identify as they are, and also to avoid those awkward conversations where an individual is called a she or he,

Regards to disabled students, I cannot understand how we can allow for our students who apply to institutions, all the

Fancy one to start with. And then after they've started their degree to discover that they're going to have to wait half an hour or 45 minutes to attend the lecture because of access problem.

Because the links are broken, because there are no way to change over 100 year old building that we can not adapt.

You know, there's no reason, I have a national union we can work on ensuring that nationally universities are able to offer access to these students before they take them in, you know,

Right, when it comes to international students and I have worked with embassies and our own international officers to ensure that their issues and listen to, with regards to Visas to support available to them.

To international students and

The challenges they face later on in the discussion, but we must move on and I'm sure

Everybody listening will be very impressed with wide range of both professional and lived experience that all our candidates are bringing to bear with the roles that they perform at the moment and of course the application their wish to be VP liberation from 2020.

We must move on to question to which comes from Herriot Watt university students union.

Hamsa will respond first to this one. Here's the question. Have you been involved in campaigns for national nature before. And how would you bring this experience to the role. Hamsa.

So the liberation campaign committee will be essential in both laying out the priorities.

As of each liberation caucus, as well as holding to account the work of the only full time elected representative for liberation currently, key to this will be creating a safe space for discussions.

Organizing and campaigns planning, where each representative from the committee's empowered enough to prioritize and you need, as well as shaping

Our national priorities and direction. Having been a volunteer in one of the nation's I fully know the constraints of working with budget cuts.

And limited resources. It's no secret that our Union is facing financial constraints.

This, combined with the fact that covid- 19 has emphasized how we drastically need to rethink the way we organize,

For methods to be accessible to everyone NUS has already taken steps to move lead and change online.

Which is the annual trainer for SU officers and other conferences, as well as making the step.

efforts need to be made to rationalize and bring us together on issues such as sexual violence and the attainment gap.

which transcend our institution so efforts need to be made at a regional level from our national union to ensure that SU officers and volunteers feel empowered, supported and connected.

Hamsa thank you very much indeed for that, and I must clarify that question in fact, came from Queens university students union Belfast, national campaigns. Have you been involved. That's the question we're answering right now we've just heard from Hamza Joshua,

On the PDF that was sent. That was the second question was not the one from Queens.

The national campaigns question is from Queens.

But nonetheless, Joshua will go to you next. Have you been involved in national campaigns before. And how would you bring your experience to this role.

Thanks for this question. So this is actually a really exciting question for me because within this role is elevating the voice and experiences that we've had on the way within our own students unions and taking that to the national level.

And behind that you do need the experience to be able to make sure that you can engage with both the nations and key stakeholders, in being able to achieve that really effective change.

So I spoke a little bit about care leavers earlier but I'd like to go back to this. Because that's normally working with government and pushing for national legislative change and has since been adopted by NUS too.

And I think that's really, really exciting for me it's allowed me to get insight into the policy areas and how we're going to make a legislative and structural changes, we have to uplift minority students

But away from this. I think it's really important to take apart the skills that you learned from these kind of national campaigns and national activism, and that he's been able to negotiate influence different stakeholders and secure that buy in.

And make sure that they are as committed as you, in being able to assure that change and putting liberation and equality issues at the National forefront is a hard task.

However, I have the knowledge and experience of how to achieve this, and I can get people's attention.

So it's about acknowledging my privilege and utilizing this uplift other groups, so good example here would be, I work as press at Birmingham pride and have for a few years now, which is absolutely fantastic. I would really recommend it.

But with that, at the last Birmingham Pride Parade, It was led by queer muslim community groups for the first time.

And it was my press release that broke that story international press and in turn uplifted that group to be a national visibility.

And that was really exciting for me because it was something that had been omitted by the mainstream, predominantly white centered media.

And the fact that I was able to acknowledge my own privilege and lend a voice and pass the mic over to them. Makes me incredibly proud and incredibly happy.

And that's what I want to continue to do as well. I've mobilized student activism volunteers. I brought visibility, but this is our fight and it's one that will continue.

And I'm so excited to have the opportunity to be able to take these skills sets I've learned from different areas national campaigning and embed this into a strong, effective and accessible and VP liberation and equality role for the next two years.

Joshua. Thank you very much indeed. Sarah Khan, national campaigns, how will you bring your experience to this role.

Over the past couple of years, I've had quite a lot of experience working with national campaigns, particularly the NUS LGBT plus campaign.

And the UK BDS or Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions campaign. So as a committee member of the LGBT plus campaign.

I've developed political education and resources on building anti racist LGBT plus spaces.

These have been digital and physical resources where I've gone on the ground to Students unions and trained LGBT plus society committees and students on how to embed anti racism in their LGBT plus activism.

For the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions campaign, I've done similar work going on the ground to campuses.

And providing digital resources on pink washing and Palestine, once again focusing on the intersection between anti racist work and LGBT plus

Activism. So that kind of centering of political education on the ground support for activists.

Etc that I talked about my manifesto is something I've had a lot of experience working on over the past few years, and I'd absolutely bring that experience to the role of VP liberation.

And continuing the work of focusing on intersection political education and support for activists on the ground.

Thank you Sara.

Nelly, Liberation and equality on a national scale.

How are you gonna bring your influence on this.

Thank you Keme, I think it's very important for everyone to be open, honest and transparent especially me.

And with regards to how I'm going to work with these individuals, nationally and in the nations, I already have done, for instance, I've worked with JSOC presidents across the country to ensure that

Our Jewish students and listen to it, fairness and tolerance and particularly during election, I have worked with our BME individuals to ensure that

Racial Equality, on campus is key. And I've also UUK and other officers nationally to respond to the national racial harassment on campus report.

I have worked nationally with officers on student funding to ensure that it is fit for purpose for our students.

I have worked with our international students officer to ensure that graduation is now going to be moved to summer to ensure that our international students don't have to pay the extra amount of money to go home and then come back and graduate.

I've also worked with our LGBT society to ensure that we fundraise the most money for a youth charity locally in London.

I am currently working and have worked with our university executives to ensure that our evolution and press of facilities are fit for purpose.

And that they're going to be embedded into the new building, including a much more efficient disabled access.

So I feel that as VP liberation. Like I said before, you need to listen to the volunteers and the officers, because they know these

Communities best, you know, they're the best place to answer these questions. So you cannot be an officer that that will not work with them.

And I'll reach out to the elected committee to ensure that we're together and come up with a national structure that will ensure that no liberation is left behind.

In the past we have seen that liberation have been in addition to, they should be included in every space on every conversation on a national level with political leaders in Parliament, there's no reason why we can't have an APPG on inclusion.

You know all the passion and all the campaigns that I've managed to win in the last two years, I will ensure I apply the same principle, if I'm elected as VP liberation and equality.

Thank you, Nelly.

Amelia McLoughlan. National challenge. Tell us your thoughts.

I think this is a really interesting question. I think from my experience, I've gone to Parliament and spoke on behalf of like mental health issues.

And how universities are just failing to have cultural competency, failing to look at the intersection and liberation issues that affect students and I'm being really blunt with MPs and told them that you know the the

Concept of like zillions and that whole conversation around how like the structural oppression is putting the pressure on individuals and not actually where the pressure and the stress is coming from is really important.

But I would also like to point out, and it's probably a controversial thing to say, but I think we need to acknowledge that in national campaigning. It's not an even playing field.

I think we need to acknowledge that some unions are more political, are more open to national working than others. And for a lot of part time offices and sabbatical offices, no matter what they do try and engage with that work,

They're facing barriers on a daily basis, pushing them back to not do that work. And I think if I was VP, I would use that experience that I've had, of having those experiences of having the National

Community being the only support that I had as a part time officer, to really open up that conversation and look at what barriers

We can break down and how we can support, especially on the ground to is to actually access these campaigns, because I think we need to look at our structures and look at how students are

actually able to engage and whether that's, whether you are an affiliated union and unaffiliated union, a member of your community. A FE college that you know doesn't even have staff or

An SU resources, like I think we need to focus on what is going on on the ground and set some expectations, actually what we expect from our membership, to support and respect liberation activists on the ground.

And and then take that national because I think we need to look at the National and overarching oppression that our education system is propagating,

And that cuts across, it impacts differently on different communities, obviously. But I think from the cash cows that international students are being taken for, to international

To disabled students rather, being denied and education, to people of colour being racially abused on a daily if not hourly basis across campuses across the country. I think national work really needs to come from the ground up and not the top down.

And and really important that you reference there, that different SUs in different institutions to have very different resources and very different ability to influence themselves. So thank you.

All of the candidates for your responses, I know Hamsa would like to come back in to that first question before we move on to the, to the next one. Hamsa.

Yeah, I'm so sorry I got confused by the

Institution. So in terms of national campaigns. I've been involved in several national campaigns before. So, including campaigns which has spanned two nations.

Throughout my time in the student movement. I have been proud to empower the voices of activists on a national level, but was helping to lead the student campaign.

For repeal in the south of Ireland, building the NUS-USI BAME campaign or playing a pivotal role in the NUS-USI women's campaign, I've always believed that the voices of students to drive positive change in society should be at the core of our movement.

From the hashtag my races campus campaign to Black History Month and from home to vote to repeal,

I have a wealth of experience in designing, leading and supporting national campaigns and importantly empowering local activists to deliver them.

In the role, I will use my experience of successful, grassroots organising to empower our activists to shape and lead campaigns.

I know what it's like to lead a successful national campaign which will deliver for students.

And make the change we want to see. But I also know what it's like to be an activist on a campaign without enough support.

I will prioritise volunteer support and activists development. So we can empower all our supporters in every corner of the country, to liberate the health care and education. And if we want to truly liberate our society one voice and NUS cannot do it alone.

Thank you very much indeed and empowerment. You're absolutely right is so important.

So from a, from a kind of general question to a very specific one that comes from Aquinas students council and Joshua is going to respond to

This question first. And it's about if FE, further education, which is often ignored in liberation campaigns. Joshua, how are you going to include FE, further education in your work.

Thank you for that question. And so I think there are some inherent issues in FE that really needs to be addressed. And I think the NUS needs to stand united and in full support of our FE colleges

That often seen as left behind, to be completely honest.

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From a governmental structural issue. The issue is with funding minimize the ability for them to be able to partake in fully funded, fully resourced and fully supported liberation work.

And that's really disappointing when compared to the HE counterparts and

When it comes to this. It's really important to be able to lobby, both at the governmental level but to also work side by side, united with the Vice President further education, who's just been elected.

To ensure that the depleting resources and capacity of FE does not inhibit their ability to be able to fully and effectively engage in the NUS campaigns.

But on the flip side of that structural issue. I'd also like to look into the workings of NUS in itself.

So I followed the national conference results. And I was very, very excited the entire time and the voter turnout was released afterwards.

But why is voter turnout so low for FE candidates when they outnumber HE.

And how do we effectively mobilize champion and support at FE activism and ensure is heard at every level of the organisation.

We need to consult with them, bring their voice into that and I want to act as a champion to this, making sure that is how we've been all elements of my liberation work.

And when it comes to FE in addition to that, it makes me quite

quite sad to be completely honest, that were there is so much diversity within our FE institutions. Yeah, that is not reflected within NUS.

And I think NUS had such a focus on HE at the moment that FE sometimes left behind, and we need to make sure there is parity, to ensure that all voices across all of our membership can actively mobilize upwards and make sure that it is represented.

Thank you very much indeed for that. Obviously a tremendous opportunity in the in the FE space if you like. Sara Khan, your thoughts on how you will engage with colleagues in institutions in the FE sector.

I think that, first and foremost, I absolutely agree that funding for FE is such a vital issue.

For a lot of colleges. They don't have liberation officers and liberation campaigns because funding, resource and support, and also the safe spaces to have conversations about liberation issues.

Just don't exist in FE so the same principles of providing grassroots supports and building mutual aid networks in FE and creating accessible political education for people in FE would definitely outline my approach.

Equally, like the NUS has done some incredible work over the past year supporting UCU and supporting strikes and HE, I think it's vital that we support strikes in FE and that we support staff.

and colleagues and FE to have like fair working conditions to eliminate the gender and ethnicity pay gap.

Etc. Because as we know our teaching conditions and learning conditions.

I'd also fight to abolish the predicted grade system which statistically has been proven time and time again to disadvantaged students of colour and disabled students, who are consistently under predicted. I think the current crisis,

With covid-19 has only served to highlight that young people are going to have their young people of colour and young disabled people are going to help their future completely

Just up in the air right now because of the predicted great system. I think it needs to. It needs to end and a fairer system needs to be in place. So those would be some of my specific policies about FE but

As always kind of centering autonomy and self determination and providing the financial support, the physical support, the education and the resources for people and FE would be at the centre of my approach.

Sara, thank you very much for that. And indeed, we will presumably know or begin to know in a few months what the outcome of predicted grades and covid-19 the

Desperate, desperate decisions that have been made in many parts of the sector, to come to terms with education ending in such an abrupt way for so many students in so many institutions.

But time will tell on that case next Nelly Kibirige, how are you going to engage with colleagues.

Thank you keme. Thank you for the questions. And firstly, I am one of the very few officers nationally from an FE background.

I went from FE to HE, attended several FE colleges across, across London and in every single one of those I face different challenges.

So along the way I have learned the challenges that people face in FE as opposed to your traditional HE route for instance.

During one of my journeys in FE I started, I built my own union simply by being active and proactive and involving students, I planned a trip to Paris for business students to

European, national, European stock exchange market. And with that, in a group of 15, I had five international students

I immediately sent an email to the French embassy to ensure that they've got their visas, so that they're able to participate, something that would have usually taken a long time.

Fast forward now as a SU president at London South Bank. We have a bunch of colleges in our group, including Lambert college and the UAE. These are south London colleges

To be precise, so being from an FE and in South London 90% of our students in those colleges of BME or ethnic minority or as

The challenges they're facing and the I see. I've done outreach work with these pupils to ensure that those who are less likely to advance into for further or higher education not let slip through the net.

And most recently, I worked as a lead officer and in ensuring that we built Lambert college union to a level.

That is nationally acceptable and nationally representative and that has seen the recruitment of a full time staff member and has also made

SU officers there one a few handful around the country who are paid pro rata for the hard work that they do.

As VP of operations. I will continue to do this because I believe that coming from an FE background and having seen

via my work experience that they are just as important. And yes, you're right. They make up a huge percentage of our national union. So there's no reason why they have voices should be any less louder than ours.

Right.

Indeed, and

I'm sure lots of people will be interested to hear that it is possible to get funding to pay officers.

Next on the FE question, Amelia McLoughlan. What's your view.

And I honestly think there's no excuse for how we treat FE in NUS.

I think, I'm echoing what the others have said, I think, also coming from an FE background of someone that spent almost two years in a coma to come to HE as FE and then HE

As a mature student that the difference between the two stages, I'm going to put it of education is night and day. I think this is why I platforms. This

Like issue in my manifesto specifically to prioritize FE because there are hundreds of thousands of FE students, your journey into LIBERATION doesn't start when you enter HE.

And if we're going to be really, really honest about why there is a discrepancy. It's privilege.

Like HE institutions have more money, they want to keep their money and even if there are big cities that have multiple FE colleges and HE colleges. HE doesn't want to share

And I think we need to look at this from a collective action, whether you're a HE student facing Transphobia or HE student facing racism.

In the same city, normally using the same local resources, we need to come together on these issues. So I would want to put together regional networks connecting HE institutions with FE

To make sure that they have the support and probably more pertinently is to go to NUS and as an officer of NUS, any support, we are giving to HE, we also have to give

To FE and other learning institutions because there shouldn't be a two tier system. And I think we need to stop thinking

About our education system in the way that it is framed, because it is framed with increasing oppression and increasing different levels and increasing tiers. Oh, we need to rethink how we think about the structures and how they are impacting individual students on the ground.

Amelia, on like by sharing is caring. Thank you very much for that.

On the FE question Hamsa Rajeswaren, how will you approach it.

And thank you to this SU for this question. I think our FE students and unions have been neglected by NUS campaigns for years, and this needs to change urgently.

FE students and apprentices at very heart of our movement and yet our FE unions are completely under resourced across the UK and we need to do so much better and prioritizing FE Union development.

We need to demand the increased funding for students. I want to work to equip our FE students and officers with the tools to fight local campaigns on that on campuses.

While ensuring that FE students and the issues they face at the centre of every national liberation campaign that we run, we need to demand that are FE apprentices.

Get paid and living wage and receive the on and off site training that they're entitled to. We need to build liberation networks between our, within our colleges

Create routes for advocacy and bring campaigns developed on the ground by our FE students into the central demands of our movement.

And often the most marginalized students exist within our FE structures. And so, in the aftermath of covid-19, we need to ensure

That they aren't harmed by an outdated system of predicted a level grades and awarded the opportunities that they deserve, free from discrimination.

And we need to fight to show our students have access to culturally competent health care and Mental Health Services coming out of this crisis.

And I want to fight to ensure that FE voices are heard at every level. And this starts by opposing the creeping marketization of further education system which only serves to create a hostile environment for liberation students.

Hamsa, thanks very much for that, and interesting that you of course mention apprentices, because the next

Question deals with, effectively, the world outside of education in the world of work and the links there in, question four comes from Leeds Beckett Students Union.

Sara is going to respond to this one first. How will you work with trade unions to make sure that NUS campaigns have the impact that they should, Sara, how will you work with trade unions.

I think this is a really, really important question, the NUS has already set a great precedent I think over the past year and the strong partnerships that it's built with UCU, which is so vital, not only because

As I've said before, our teaching like teaching conditions, our learning conditions, but also because it's vital issue for postgraduate students so many GTAs and postgraduate students are in precarious work most of those people

Are from liberation backgrounds. Most of them are migrants women of colour, disabled people, etc. So working with

UCU to continue to support strikes and to continue to fight to end the ethnicity and gender pay gap and to just

Fight for an end to precarious work and for dignity and equality in work is vital, as I believed to before I think that we need to work to build the same relationships with the

With apprentice unions and with FE to support a FE strikes and to support apprentice unions.

Because the gender and ethnicity pay gap exists there as well. Work is precarious, there's less funding etc, to just draw on the previous question.

And yeah, I think that's it actually.

Interesting that you mentioned the university and college union, and also bring up

A word that is so evocative, that of strike and strike action, or threats to strike. Nelly, I want you to take up this issue of working with

With trade unions and, anyone outside the education sector that you'd be particularly keen to work with. And what do you think about striking?

Thank you.

Absolutely, and rightly so, NUS has developed really good relationship with UCU. So I guess.

It's a case of maintaining that relationship. I'm also interested in working with UNISON

To be fair, I am not limiting myself because I feel that trade unions do a really great job in representing those less represented,

You know, they have the tools and the facts to back up. So if I was running a campaign and I needed you know kind of campaign body then they are one of the few people that I should

Be working with. Now one of the few things I do best is stakeholder engagement. So I honestly believe that collaboration is key because you cannot win a campaign on your own.

So in my role as SU president, my stakeholder engagement is exactly what has enabled me to win the campaign's I have done.

And in a very short space of time. So when I got in touch with or albeit not a trade union.

But when I got in touch with Standalone UK it took literally weeks.

From the beginning of the conversation, to my university signing a standalone pledge to ensure extra support for our estranged students, for example, there's many examples I can give but,

Absolutely collaboration is key, and being able to network and engage people on a long term basis so that whenever you need it, then you can call back on. It is an absolute must in any role, in a public role.

Sorry.

Thank you.

We are sadly, you guys have got so much experience to bear and you've got so much to share that time is not our friends. We haven't got a great deal of time left.

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Amelia, Nelly mentioned collaboration this challenge, working with unions is all about collaboration, how would you approach it.

I think we need to reach out beyond the education sector, coming back to the previous question. I think we need to acknowledge for fields like apprenticeships, there is an inherent class issue within students

And for the students having to or feeling pressure to go to apprenticeships because they need to work at the same time and study

And I think we need to stop the narrative is there is education over here and work on the other side.

And I think we need to bring those together and really work with not just trade unions, but actually the professional bodies that oversee some of this work to make sure that they're being inclusive.

That students are not facing discrimination and that they're not

Putting up with that discrimination because they don't feel like they have options, because they are not educated on their rights, because they have not been given access to this information. So I think it's

Very easy to be kind to our friends and hold our enemies accountable, but it's a lot harder to hold our friends account and I think we have to do that in our partnerships to make sure we're not just

paying lip service to political partnerships and letting our liberation students have the brunt of that experience where we're not actually holding them accountable to the standards that we actually want to see them perpetrate and implement within those basis.

A tricky balance to be found there. Hamsa, how would you deal with it.

Yeah, we're hearing you loud and clear.

Our relationship with, and the power of our trade union movement is more important

now than ever, to be honest. We've seen the contempt government has shown on trade union commerce during this crisis, neglecting safe working measures.

And placing millions of workers in harm's way with insecure financial support of profit.

Much like the disdain this government has shown for students throughout this pandemic, we need to be united in our fights ensure our students and workers are protected coming up with this.

I've been organizing with you to you for years in the North of Ireland to fight for better working and learning conditions, our students and staff.

And we share a vision for free, accessible and the liberated education system. We can only achieve that by engaging with our trade unions every step of the way.

I've also worked with multiple trade unions on building a coalition to fight the far right organizing that we faced in Belfast, a few years ago.

And so in saying that, I'll always be prepared to put our students first and and this means not working with abusers, turfs, those who try to damage our movement.

I would ensure that our students always feel

Safe in organizing spaces. And I also want to work to increase trade union membership amongst our own members and fight to protect student workers rights, through the expansion of employment rights and union education.

Upcoming NUS campaigns need to be more impactful than ever before and liberation needs to be at the heart of everything we do, and we can only achieve this by demanding radical changes for broken systems, united with our trade union movement.

Thanks Hamsa. Joshua Williams.

You get the

Last word on the last question, which is all we're going to have time for I'm afraid. Hamsa mentioned radical change, would you bring radical change to the relationship with other trade unions.

So I think this is a really interesting question, but one that needs to be understood with quite a complexity of understanding

rather than taking it at face value, and I would echo Amelia's point that we don't just pay lip service.

So when it comes to trade unions they are such an effective and impactful body that secures wins for those that would otherwise be silence. So we can look at UCU or we can look at the

The ongoing work of trade union in response to furloughing and the response to Covid.

But though there are some real big wins here, there are also some big issues as well. And we need to be a constructive friendly and being able to make a real progressive movement for everybody.

I have been that person on the picket line and I've been involved in activism since I was a child. I've also been the person that's received extensive racism from within this area. I think that's really important to say.

Trade unions are predominantly run by white men, every big one that's affiliated with labour, for example, such as GMB and Unite are all run by white men.

Smaller ones are run by women. And they, although they achieved progressive change, historically, it's women of colour who fought to be in those spaces and achieve that change in the first place.

It's really important that we can continuously go back to our roots and understand our past, our present and where we need to be.

Trade unions, just like our student unions are only as good as the people within them, at times, just like a student unions, they have let down marginalized groups, and that is not to

Take away from the successes that they have had, but we need to be that constructive and critical friend.

So we need to address structural issues. So why is it that people of colour, especially women of colour may not want to enter it positions and trade unions or come to the picket line.

It's because they are more likely to be victimized or harassed in the workplace in the first place. So as such. They're scared to be the repercussions and that needs to be discussed and I really understood

What was sure that we work together and campaigns have a big impact. We must engage them people in trade unionism and get them involved progressively

We need to ensure that like our own institutions, trade unions are reflective of their membership.

We need to address the structural issues that may disenfranchised individuals from joining

And we need to ensure that students know of trade unions on their campus, as much as their own student union and the active within now relevant ones.

Only together and united and reflective and having those difficult conversations can be stance that side by side in full solidarity to achieve a real progressive change.

Joshua Williams and indeed all the candidates for VP liberation and equality. Thank you very much indeed. And to echo Joshua's words, a movement is

only as strong as the people that are part of it. Well, I'm sure that whoever wins this election will take the position of VP liberation and equality in the National Union of students to

greater and greater strength, that is, I'm afraid, all we've got time for today in the 2020 election Hustings for VP liberation and equality. Thank you all very much indeed for watching. Thank you.

Before we go to all our candidates. First off, Sara, thank you very much indeed from the University of Manchester Students Union.

Thank you Keme, and thank you to my fellow candidates. Best of luck to all of you.

Thank you, Nelly from London South Bank University Students Union.

Thank you Keme and thank you to the candidates and all our delegates for having me.

Thank you, Amelia McLoughlan from Durham Students Union.

Thank you Keme and thank you for all the candidates. I wish you all the best of luck.

Thank you. Hamsa Rajeswaren, Queens University Belfast Students Union.

Thank you for having me. And good luck to all the candidates and thank you conference.

Thank you. Joshua Williams. University of Birmingham Guild of Students.

Thank you having me and a massive good luck to all of my fellow candidates you're all fantastic.

And finally, of course, to all the electorate, all the students watching this, all the Members. Please remember to vote.