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Me and My Job: Helping people find their voice

Conrad Gayle is not only an HR manager in the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), but also finds time to be a vocal coach and help run choirs, including the campaigning B Positive Choir, which reached the Britain's Got Talent final. He's just been made an MBE for his services to law and order, including his activities as a PCS rep and vice chair of the National Black Crown Prosecution Association (NBCPA).

Tell us about your job

I'm an HR Diversity and inclusion manager. From my PCS work, my mindset has always been equalities. I enjoy the variety. I feel proud when I can highlight things – via stats, communication or awareness events – and they are then taken seriously by the department.

One of my responsibilities has been to oversee gender equality issues. I help run events for International Women's Day. It's about bringing awareness and highlighting intersectionality. We also organise mentoring. It enabled me to see women were facing barriers when, for example, they came back part time after having children and didn't feel they could develop their careers. That shouldn't stop you from progressing. Four out of five women were promoted after I mentored them, as their manager.

What was your path to it?

I've always had a strong sense of justice. I studied law at Nottingham Trent University. When I came to the CPS, more than 18 years ago, I joined PCS and became a rep after a year. I did that full time for six years and was an equality officer on the GEC and branch chair. I became a national learning coordinator and drafted a learning agreement with CPS and PCS, which was hailed then as the best in the civil service. I then went on to become the PCS National Black Members' Committee chair. When facility time was reduced, I went to the CPS

complex casework unit which deals mostly with organised fraud and drugs cases, and murders. I then became a business manager and managed 28 people for three years, before this HQ job came up.

What's your MBE for?

I was so shocked when I heard the news. At first, I thought the email was spam. The citation said that I inspire people and "...develop others to lift them to higher grounds". It said: "Your work supporting your colleagues through PCS and the NBCPA has been unstinting and has led to positive changes for individuals, better processes and policies for all, and has helped support cultural change at an organisational level. Your activity outside of work should also be recognised... your dedication to supporting others, through your involvement in choirs, has helped promote and campaign for blood donation from minority ethnic communities and has helped support your local community."

Are you still involved with the NBCPA?

I've served on the committee for seven years and am still active, as the vice chair. It's a staff network that tries to encourage and support BAME colleagues to speak their truths. We're involved a lot in influencing policy with the CPS, with the aim of achieving a level playing field for all staff to achieve their potential. We organise forums and events to help make people more aware of what some colleagues go through when they bring their whole selves to work.

What part does singing play in your life?

My family background is in the church. I travelled an hour each day to a comprehensive school in London because it had a music annexe. Music was not a proper job, according to my parents. But I'm still living it alongside my work. While in CPS West Midlands, I was training to be a vocal coach as well as running a staff choir and a community choir. People would leave buzzing from those sessions. In my current job I have set up well-being singing sessions in other parts of the business. I'm a regional director for the B Positive Choir. It raises awareness of sickle cell disease and the need for more blood donors from the black community.

We went on BGT in 2018 just to spread our message. It was an amazing experience. We made it to the finals on Simon Cowell's wild card. The atmosphere was incredible. We have since performed all over, including in Westminster Abbey, York Minster, Las Vegas, Denmark and Boston.