

Femi's Story

Femi was his second year at Bath Spa University when he did the 'Empowers' programme for Black, Caribbean, Asian and Arab heritage students

Some people just don't get it. There was this time at work when someone just reached out and touched my hair. The only way I thought I could make myself understood was to give an extreme response: "That's the same as touching a woman's breasts!" But that really isn't me. I felt I'd somehow been forced to act like someone I'm not.

All I want to do is be a successful student. But now, in my second year, it feels like there are many more micro aggressions, places and situations where people feel free to make racist comments.

In Bath you don't generally see many people of colour around. When you do see another Black person, on campus or in town, there's this sigh of relief, "I'm not the only one." Apart from the Afro-Caribbean society, where I met a couple of students of colour, I didn't really know any others. I only found out recently that there is another Black person on my course. Until then I thought it was just me.

When I go to something where there are a lot of people of colour I feel at peace. So it was great to connect with other students of colour in the Grit workshop. A lot of us are still in touch. We still have a group chat, see each other around, chill out. I feel like I've got a great support network so that if one friend doesn't get it, there will be another who can.

At the time I did Grit I was just starting a project on my course: I'd decided it was going to be about Black identity. But I was having doubts. Did I really want to go there? Isn't this something people will just expect me to do? I want to be known for more than the colour of my skin. I wasn't sure this was something I wanted to be doing.

Grit gave me the confidence to do the project. It gave me the impetus. It had me see that if it needs to be talked about, then I should talk about it. With Grit behind me I was committed. I was able to say what I needed to say, in a way that really shows who I am.

And I got a really good grade!