

# **The Honorary Graduate: Alex Raikes MBE**

## **The Orator: Mandy Bancroft**

### **Alex Raikes MBE is to be awarded the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Laws**

Alex Raikes MBE is Director (Strategic) of Stand Against Racism & Inequality (SARI), the charity dedicated to tackling hate crime and promoting equality and community cohesion across Avon and Somerset. SARI provides a specialist casework service – dealing with circa 500 new cases a year ranging from incidents such as verbal abuse or property damage to murder – education and training initiatives, young offender reduction programmes, restorative justice approaches and offers consultancy support to a range of services on equality and cultural competency.

Alex has been an integral part of SARI since 1991 when the Charity started. Alex has thus fought racism and hate crime for 27 years. She took the baton of running from SARI's founding director, Batook Pandya MBE DL (BA Hons) when he tragically passed away 5 years ago. Alex delivers SARI's strategic and operational functions working round the clock to keep victims of hate crime and communities safe. She has the unwavering support of her co-Director Agnes Yeomans who has worked quietly in the background also since 1991 keeping SARI's finances and internal processes running smoothly.

Having graduated from Bristol University in Social Policy and having worked with children with learning disabilities in care, Alex began working at SARI as its first caseworker in 1991. She took up her current role of Strategic Director in 2014. Alex is now working to take SARI to the next leg of its journey as a growing, successful, increasingly recognised human rights local Charity.

Alex has gained specialist and practical knowledge on all forms of hate crime and on delivering services to victims of such incidents. She has an extensive knowledge of other equalities and support services in the region. Alex has led on designing pioneering specialist collaborations for tackling hate crime, facilitated many complex situations involving conflict or community concerns which need addressing by public bodies or to invoke crucial learning for local services and sits on a number of local strategic partnerships. She is renowned for challenging and championing the rights of those facing the highest levels of hate and discrimination and of being a fearless critical friend to those agencies that have a statutory duty to tackle inequality as part of their services to the public.

Alex was awarded an MBE for her contribution to community relations in 2009.

Crucially, as a dual heritage individual, growing up in a single parent household and a deprived rural based town and then as a single mum of 4 teenaged sons, Alex has first-hand experience of racial harassment, of discrimination and of running a busy and lively household. She brings this personal understanding to her work.

The Honorary Degree is awarded in recognition of Alex's leadership and commitment to addressing racism and inequality on a local, regional and international level and to working with the University on this agenda.