

Winning Nomination for Yasmine Fosu, Postgraduate at College of Life & Environmental Sciences, Penryn Campus, University of Exeter Overall Student Employee of the Year 2022 at Exeter University.

Nomination written by Deborah Mitchell – CEO, RJ Working, Redruth, Cornwall

“I know Yasmine will be genuinely surprised to have won this recognition, -this endearing modesty and her strong ethical principles, are two of the reasons she is so respected and influential in the RJ Working team.

Yasmine’s contribution since she joined the team as an Intern in October 2019 has spanned innovation, collaboration and community development, so improving our commercial position.

Our company RJ Working runs training courses, in person and online, for disadvantaged young people and for adults who care about them. Restorative means ‘making things better’ and Restorative Justice is a way to resolve conflict and value differences.

Between 2019 and 2022 Yasmine has been central to our development into an organisation which champions young people’s leadership (previously, we served and supported young people). She achieved an influential role, led the design of a new training "Tackling Racism Restoratively", then its development and delivery through 2021. In October 2021 Yasmine accepted our invitation to join RJ Working’s Board of Directors, becoming a Trustee when RJ Working was registered as a Charity in January 2022.

As an intern, Yasmine was not expected to be a leader, but she swiftly established herself as a highly respected member of the team. By 2021, so successfully, that by August -September time she was involved in the vital process of recruiting new staff. Three were successfully appointed, with Yasmine part of the shortlisting and interviewing panel. Early in 2022, now an Exeter Masters student, Yasmine used her understanding and experience to support the induction of three University of Exeter undergrad student interns. Yasmine’s leadership has impacted on groups of young people and supported their development of community. One responded *“It doesn't matter where you come from...you can be from the smallest power and the smallest place in the world. You can still make a difference; you can still be someone and do something massive.”* Yasmine has shared her experience and been a role model to benefit young people’s learning. One said: *“I will remember everything Yasmine said about racism, I never realized how it was. I understood it’s a terrible thing, but I never saw.. how big it was .. I've never heard anything like this”.*

In the Autumn of 2020 Yasmine led the innovative design of original training “Tackling Racism Restoratively”. She drew on experience of her voice having been published by national newspaper The Guardian, as part of a collaboration with others inspired to action after George Floyd’s murder and the raised profile of Black Lives Matter.

She enabled our company to reach and engage more people in this vital conversation - extending training participants’ knowledge, language and capabilities for facing up to harms caused by racism and doing something about these, both personally and systemically.

Alongside Josh, a young white male colleague, Yasmine generously referenced her own experience to support discussion of different aspects of identity, to encourage new questions about racism, and ways of talking about the harms it causes. Yasmine and Josh created and recorded an original conversation between them to promote our company’s mission which is in pride of place on our website.

All this had a significant business impact: Yasmine worked directly with our CEO adapting Tackling Racism Restoratively for participants from various professional backgrounds, for example in September 2021 delivering training to Cornwall Councils Social Workers, a new customer segment and income stream.

Yasmine now leads as a Charity Trustee, so cannot earn income from RJ Working. Her business legacy is the adaptability of Tackling Racism Restoratively training course: recent customers include the Minack Theatre staff team. Through Creative Kernow the innovation is being successfully marketed to creative networks and arts venues including the Hall for Cornwall. Yasmine’s capabilities also helped develop a new business offer based on the principle of “concern not complaint” which she articulated due to the serious limitations of the adversarial win/lose model. This approach increases problems being reported and addressed, its reputation has attracted new business contacts for RJ Working, most recently the University of Dublin.

In summary, our company feels extremely fortunate that Yasmine chose to apply to us for work experience, and we are absolutely delighted that she is being recognised by the University of Exeter in this way. “