Journalism Diversity Fund Reception, **Amber Haque**, Trainee BBC Journalist.

I'd just like to start by saying how it really only feels like yesterday that I was in your position- a whole year ago I heard JDF recipients speaking about starting BBC training schemes and working for national newspapers and I just remember thinking… wow, imagine… and now here I am, talking to you.

This whole year has been a whirlwind for me. Gaining an NCTJ has given me a solid foundation and massive amounts of confidence when it comes to the disciplines of journalism.
I've developed some invaluable digital skills for the future: learning how to tailor all my content, whether it’s for traditional TV or snackable size on multi-platform devices.

Not having the worry looming over me of where on earth I was going to find the money to fund my studies was SUCH a blessing- it not only afforded me an opportunity I would never have had otherwise, but the extra time to go out and film or chase up contributors was invaluable.

I've got a huge passion for long-form current affairs and without funding from the JDF, I just wouldn't have physically had the time to research pieces I’ve worked so hard on and I think it’s those original stories I had the space to develop that really helped me to stand out in the BBC recruitment process.

Growing up as a mixed Asian and English girl, I always felt confused why I didn't see many faces like mine on the TV or why the complex issues of growing up between two such polarised cultures just weren't being covered.
Thanks to the JDF, I’m now taking the first step into my new career and I’ve been gifted the chance to bring those life experiences and stories to my work at 5Live, BBC Leeds and BBC Breakfast.

So what have I learnt to pass on to you as you start your journey?

Firstly, that most senior journalists (contrary to popular belief) have actually been in your position before.
We all live in fear that our editors were born knowing the OFCOM code inside out, could probably source a contributor in Damascus at the drop of a hat and make the perfect cup of tea EVERY TIME, but really, they are just humans beings like us and you'd be surprised how much you can actually learn from each other!!

On this year of your NCTJ, don't be afraid of making some mistakes. Use this year to do that.

Soak up every opportunity you can- be inquisitive, ask questions and be willing to talk to everyone you meet.

Keep a trusted little black book of resources because you just never know where your next story might come from or who will be a crucial contact when the going gets tough.

You'll all be as bursting full of passion as I was a year ago- don't ever let anyone put a lid on that.
I'll be the first to admit that our industry can be very cut throat at times and you have to work really bloody hard!
It can be easy to get disheartened by the changing and competitive landscape of journalism, but always remember why you're here and everyone you represent at the JDF who is championing you.

Keep that passion, that anger, that thirst for the truth- whatever fuels YOU, keep it at your core.
I remember being stood last year with an itch to make things better in my little way through my journalism- it’s safe to say I haven't stopped itching.

Be an ambassador for your diversity in every situation journalism throws at you- be proud and embrace it, but be willing to be critical of it when necessary too.
Something I really stand by is that your diversity doesn't have to define you- your ability as a journalist transcends your skin colour or your postcode- it’s an invaluable asset, but it isn't all you amount to either.

I feel incredibly privileged to be addressing you here at the Journalism Diversity Fund 10th Birthday.
10 years’ worth of journalists have passed through the fund and are no doubt now helping our newsrooms to reach out to those silenced communities and enriching our understanding of how society works.

This country is such a wonderful patchwork of colours, cultures and classes and our media has a duty to represent that.

Let’s play our little part in keeping Britain's journalism one of the best in the world by making sure its newsrooms are as wonderfully diverse as its streets.

And although you might not earn as much as your mate who did finance at Uni… trust me when I say there’s just no better feeling than immersing yourself in days that are never the same as the last- exposing wrongdoing, fighting for the unheard in holding the powerful to account and showing the incredible abilities of human beings.

People, stories and ideas become your life and I can’t personally think of a more priceless career than that.

Best of luck and have fun!