

# Jaida's Story

*Jaida was in her second year at Bath Spa University when she did the 'Empowers' programme for Black, Caribbean, Asian indigenous and Arab heritage students*

It was eye opening! It was liberating! I'm seeing things in a completely new way. Grit made me see that my voice, my opinion is valid. That what I have to say matters. Everyone in the workshop was respectful. No-one interrupted, everyone listened, everyone was appreciated. Everyone respected each others' boundaries. Everyone was able to be vulnerable, speaking their stories and supporting each other, sticking together.

Grit enabled me to connect with people in a way I hadn't done before. I was seeing people in a different context. We connected on the day-to-day – about finance, housing, mental health. And we connected especially on what is like to be in a city that is so different from anywhere that any of us had lived before.

It had been difficult for me being in Bath. There is such a lack of diversity. For example, you get random stares when you go out shopping. You really notice that you are the odd one out. I got lonely. I had met one Black woman on my course at the start and we stuck together; and I met one other Black woman at the end of the first year. Covid had really set us back. It had been a struggle to get to know classmates and other students.

Grit gives me that extra push to deal with the difficult conversations, to deal with difficult situations. Through Grit I can understand and accept what's beyond my control so I can focus on what is in my control. Like when I wanted to explore ideas of people outside of those normally studied on the course. I found a new way of presenting my work, of presenting with a look and feel that was authentic for me.

I was President of the Afro-Caribbean Society and I wanted it to be about more than just partying and clubbing. Grit gave me the courage to find different ways to bring people together. We ran an arts and crafts event, movie nights, events to raise money for charity. Different ways of getting together, ways to relate to each other in a more powerful way. It created a sense of home, a sense of belonging, of having a community of people we can all turn to.