

Racism has no Place in our Society. What About in the Profession of Educational Psychology? Voices of Black and Ethnic Minority Psychologists Crying out During the Racism Pandemic Saying :“Let us Breathe”

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Description

Dr Shungu Hilda M'gadzah qualified as a primary teacher at Goldsmiths College in 1987 and worked as a teacher before training at the Tavistock Clinic in 1990 to become an educational psychologist. Her career as an educational psychologist began in the London Borough of Hackney before moving onto the London Borough of Waltham Forest in 1994. She has worked with a wide range of schools within the private and public sector across all phases including local special schools.

She was seconded to the role of academic and professional tutor/ senior educational psychologist at the University of East London from 1996-2005 teaching MSc in Educational Psychology trainees and undergraduate psychology students. During that time, she conducted research projects and set up a consultancy providing training to Local Authorities, Schools and other organisations. She acted as a national and international consultant and trainer in the areas of emotional intelligence and promoting greater equality and diversity working with a wide range of Local Authorities and Schools (e.g. Slough, Waltham Forest, Newham, Norfolk, Bromley, Surrey County Council), Children's services, Health Services in the UK, Latvia, USA, Australia (Western Australia School Psychology Service and Education Department) and Finland.

Shungu was one of the pioneers in developing training for Local Authorities and other agencies (including educational psychologists, social workers and health professionals) in the area of emotional literacy and emotional intelligence to promote emotional well-being and mental health. In 2005-2006 she worked as an education manager for an independent care provider for Looked After Children and Young People; working closely with social care managers and leading the education provision across the Company's schools.

Shungu joined Surrey County Council in 2006 first working as a senior educational psychologist from 2007-2012 and then as an Area Lead for Psychology and Assessment (2012-2017) leading and managing teams of educational psychologists, special educational needs and portage. She has worked as a Special Educational Needs and Disability expert supporting Local School Improvement teams and Higher Education Accreditation of MSc and Doctorate level Courses.

More recently she has worked for the London Borough of Bexley as Principal Educational Psychologist/ Strategic Manager for Early Intervention & Specialist Teachers. She has also worked as interim Head of SEND for Buckinghamshire County Council.

Shungu is a long-standing member of the British Psychological Society (BPS) and has held high office in the profession of educational psychology. She has Board level experience both within the British Psychological Society and the Division of Educational and Child Psychologists (DECP), and the International School Psychology Association (ISPA). She was the first black Chair of the Division of Educational and Child Psychologists (DECP) Committee (1999-2000). She also served on the British Psychological Society (BPS) Press Committee for 4 years and ISPA Leadership Committee. Shungu was also previously Chair of the Association of Black Psychologists and has been co-opted onto several Boards to foster greater inclusivity.

She is passionate about equality diversity and inclusion, working with diverse communities- assessing and understanding the impact of race, cultural and socioeconomic factors. Considering issues of diversity and equality and inclusion and how these effect children and young people and the impact of their learning disability and mental health needs on the family and the community.

Shungu is Director & Lead Consultant at Inclusion Psychologists Limited. The Company provides assessments and interventions as well as support and training for organisations to become more inclusive. As a result, organisations are supported to explore the current challenges and barriers they face in being more inclusive and to find solutions to take that next step towards greater inclusivity. She is committed to working with organisations to foster greater community engagement.

Dr Shungu completed her professional doctorate at the University of East London in 2011 on emotional intelligence 'Exploring the experiences of recently qualified educational psychologists in the area of emotional intelligence and applications in practice: an interpretative phenomenological analysis.'

Shungu has recently published her thesis as evidence in the Government's Green Paper on Children and young people's mental health. Evidence to Children and Young People's mental health- the role of education Health: Number 51 Dr Shungu Hilda M'gadzah (CMH0094).

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In 2018 she wrote an article entitled Psychologists on Boards: Promoting Greater Inclusion.

Quote: The time has never been more right for Boards of charities, services and organisations to engage in conversations around diversity and inclusion, exploring the benefits of, and the barriers to inclusion. It appears to be an urgent need to explore to assist Boards to achieve greater participation from diverse and under-represented groups of people.

Summary

Following the murder of George Floyd, thousands took to the streets around the world to force the conversation on race injustice, many including children seizing the opportunity to call for change. All over the world, mamas of all colours were hearing the cries of children marching the streets saying let us breathe.

Many professional groups posted position statements on anti-racism. The Association of Educational Psychologists (a professional union) quickly posted Racism has no place in our Society.

One discussion thread on a professional forum (EPnet) was started by a colleague and was largely met with silence. Attempts to ignite conversation about racism, inequity and justice within the profession fell on deaf ears. I wrote two letters to the Educational Psychology Group sharing my experiences of the Profession and calling for change.

The letters received a wide response from educational psychologists in the UK and one colleague wrote Shungu, your post is the most important email I can ever recall reading on Epnet. It is a challenge to the establishment and a call to arms for us liberal whites who think we don't need to engage in the continuous process of confronting and coming to terms with our complicity in white supremacy. And I don't mean right wing extremism here. Being silent is not good enough.

These letters the subject of this presentation explore the issues I put to the Educational Psychology Group. The issues fall within the area of Managing difficult conversations to foster professional resilience and mental health.

It is hoped that sharing of these letters and discussions will encourage a broader discussion of racism, inequity and justice in the professions of psychology and psychiatry. It is only in the having of these conversations that our professions and society can truly achieve meaningful and measurable change.

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