



Let us Breathe

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Abstract:

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.

Biography:

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.

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