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### *Short Communication*

## **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.

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 & 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).

### **Recent Publication:**

- [https://books.google.co.in/books?hl=en&lr=&id=4qDWybdPVrYC&oi=fnd&pg=PA191&dq=Dr+Shungu+Hilda+M%E2%80%99gadzah+&ots=1-W8hoODTI&sig=kQzRvSfUgM10yY01pBYA6TMdB\\_w&redir\\_esc=y#v=onepage&q=Dr%20Shungu%20Hilda%20M%E2%80%99gadzah&f=false](https://books.google.co.in/books?hl=en&lr=&id=4qDWybdPVrYC&oi=fnd&pg=PA191&dq=Dr+Shungu+Hilda+M%E2%80%99gadzah+&ots=1-W8hoODTI&sig=kQzRvSfUgM10yY01pBYA6TMdB_w&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=Dr%20Shungu%20Hilda%20M%E2%80%99gadzah&f=false)
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- <https://www.linkedin.com/in/shunguhildamgadzah/>

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