

## Black Lives Matter article

### **Did someone say, Equality??** written by Shola Adewale Sandy

We say our kids are our future, but who shapes them outside of the family home? For most, it is in school, where you will find the most amazing people, who support, nourish your kids minds and help them to find the best version of themselves.

Most inner city schools have a high percentage of Black and ethnic minority students and you would think that staff reflected those numbers, but in my experience, this is sadly, simply not the case. Why is that? Don't we have enough competent Black people to fill those roles.

These students want to see themselves reflected in the staff and believe me, they are so shrewd and observant of who is part of the Senior Leadership Team and the way they treat the staff with less responsibility. You realise those students are just not mature enough to form the words to express what they are seeing playing out in front of them.

Those Black staff who are hanging on in there are highly relied upon to do the difficult pastoral work or the behaviour management, without the proper recognition or pay. The few that do make it on to the Senior Leadership Team, have to be constantly looking over their shoulders trying to stay afloat. Scared to help any other Sisters or Brothers up the ladder, in case it jeopardises their position and pay. To be honest, can you really blame them?

Black teachers and Educators bring some sort of special essence not only to white children, but black children too, these students need to see themselves in us and visibly see that we are paid and treated equally as our counterparts. Having the same opportunities to thrive, whether that be through career progression or on to the Senior Leadership Team, without barriers constantly being put in our way!

Right now, Black teachers and Educators are becoming a dying species that needs to be protected! Unfortunately, I see it all around me in the research and statistics. The education system to me is sadly broken. Most of the experienced, dedicated Black practitioners are leaving the profession in droves, some forced, some by choice, that's so sad to witness, as it's the future generation that's being robbed of the richness of their experiences.

I do not mean to generalise, but from my experience, for every Black person who has made it up the ladder, there are literally ninety-nine others trying to get on the rungs to progress further. They are either thrown off, or assisted into a false sense of security, just when they felt as if they had got a real firm grip. Honestly, what a way to gamble on the passionate career, you hold on to so dearly!

As one of my close allies recently said,

“Why can't we just go to work without having to wear armour, it gets so tiresome to have to do battle on a daily basis!”

She was so right! It does get so tiresome having to deal with micro aggression, overt or covert racism, while just trying to do our job to the best of our abilities and have some meaningful sort of career progression and pay, along the way.

Yes, we have annual performance goals, and somehow at the end of the year, if you meet your targets by doing all the groundwork, it is simply not reflected in your pay, but your line manager's pockets!

...let me not get started on that, that would have to be another article!

They are those, that say,

"Equality, we have equality, we can vote, can't we? What more do you want??"

Yes, as Black people we have Equality Laws to protect us and allow us to thrive at work, but that, my people is just simply an illusion, all is explained in my new memoir about my experiences working in inner London secondary schools over the years.

We have pages and pages of policies and procedures but in the bright light of day, those laws we all highly rely upon, unfortunately are not being enforced. Clever ways are found to get round them, quite simply, when push comes to shove, it is all a gamble!

Still, like many other educators despite the lack of Equality, we do the job the best way that we can, day in and day out, but how much longer do we have to wait for true Equality to come about for Black members of staff in our Education system??