Black British and Black Caribbean Women's Trajectories through the Wildernesses of Subordinated Spaces, (NHS workplace) and Unfamiliar Places (Higher Education): An Autoethnography

"When talking about their lives, people lie sometimes, forget a lot, exaggerate, become confused and get things wrong. Yet, they are revealing truths. These truths don't reveal the past 'as it actually was' spiriting to a standard of objectivity. They give us instead the truths of our experiences. Unlike the reassuring truth of scientific ideal, the truths of personal narrative are neither open to proof or self-evident."

(Personal Narratives Group 1989:261)

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To the ten stalwart Black women who made this study possible…I salute you! I am indebted to you for your willingness to share and bare so much of your experiences which had never been told. YOU made this project possible. My hope is that your experiences of pain, disappointment and injustices as well as your accounts of overcoming, pride and resilience will contribute to more positive educational experiences for the future generations of Black people working in a National Health Service (NHS) context.

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Abstract

In 2014, the NHS Five Year Forward View (FYFV) set out new models of care and care strategies. Amongst them was the introduction of the role of Assistant Practitioner (AP). The AP role was positioned at Band 4 (of 9) on the NHS Careers Framework, gained through the successful completion of a foundation degree (fd). Those already in employment accessed the fd through day release to university and work-place clinical skills development. A qualified AP would work under the supervision of a registered nurse.

This thesis examines and centralises the experiences of ten Black British and Black Caribbean women's experiences of the fd programme and its impact on their personal and professional identities. It (re)tells, (re)captures and (re)presents their accounts of getting in, moving on and getting through Higher Education. This study disrupts the silence of Black women in the NHS. Black Feminist Methodological Stance is put to work to centre and privilege Black women who transitioned through the research process unearthing, examining and unapologetically speaking their 'truths'.

The analysis is intentionally theoretically provocative, it uses performative autoethnograpy to present the voices of the women through characters in fictional settings. The characters use the works of predominantly Black philosophers to critically reflect on their experiences of education. Their exposures to philosophies and their sharing of life leads them to Black feminist epistemologies. This study demands engagement, it challenges all who access it, to come and reside in our spaces… to feel the discomforts… to rethink the stereotypes… to speak of the biases… then to co-align with us… it questions… challenges… and seeks honest approaches to fairness in nursing education and professions; two areas, where for seven decades Black women have been professionally subordinated and exploited.

This thesis demonstrates the courage of the author to engage in research which breaks the silence of Black women in NHS and makes the theorised assertion of our 'right to write' as Black women about Black women. The presentation of the data as performance autoethnography, renders this work accessible to the contributors, as well as significant and important for academic scholarship. This study strives for engagement, it resists recommendations which, historically are ineffective liberatory tools of the master's house, in that they fail to make a difference to the Black women's assigned subordinated space. Finally, this work challenges Black women in the NHS to become active agents of their professional emancipation.

New Knowledge Contribution

This thesis contributes the following new knowledge:

The production of a literature review which resists the normative approach to the production of a thesis, it utilises oral accounts which work to both contradict as well as illuminate accounts presented in written text.

It retells the stories of ten Black female Health Care Assistants (HCAs). Because of their low professional status, HCAs are generally invisible and voiceless in research studies. This study centralises their experiences, making them visible, therefore providing a partial illumination of their educational experiences.

The literature provides Black nurses of the 21st Century with an example of how Black nurses in the past coalesced to redress the inequitable nursing education provision they experienced during colonial times. Black nurses of the Caribbean broke the nursing profession's class ceiling securing positions previously solely reserved for Caucasians. The unearthing and presentation of Black Caribbean women's nursing education history provides Black nurses with a positive self-liberatory learning example from Caribbean nurses of the past.

This study demonstrates the courage of the author to present the data analysis as performance autoethnography, in so doing, it renders this work accessible to the contributors, the academic as well as ordinary members of the Black community. This thesis strives for engagement and discussion asking questions of institutions rather than being prescriptive and autocratic (making recommendations). It also challenges Black women in the NHS to become active conduits of their own professional emancipation rather than awaiting 'redemption from those using the tick box tools of the 'master's house'.

Introduction

I decided to undertake this project following three separate but interrelated life occurrences. First, my firm determination to teach from the standpoint that pedagogy should be life transforming. My approach to teaching has been influenced by the works of: bell hooks, Audre Lorde, W.E.B. Dubois, Paulo Freire, Booker T. Washington and others who advocate that, for education to be meaningful, it must be a reciprocal process which leads to social or economic liberation for oppressed groups. I wholeheartedly agree that education should lead to some form of liberation.

Secondly, the puzzling professional regression of some of my Black Caribbean and Black British mature colleagues. Let me explain, several women working in low-skilled, low-paid roles in the NHS demonstrated their competence to access Higher Education (HE) and shared with me and others their aspirations to engage in professional development. However, over half of the Black Caribbean and Black British women who commenced a part-time, two-year foundation degree (fd) in Health and Social Care 'failed' to gain the full qualification and initially they were unwilling to discuss why they did not complete.

Finally, my acknowledgement of these 'failures' coincided with a visit I made to Ghana in 2008. On the side of a very busy street in Accra, I met an elderly woman who was a stranger to me. This stranger told me little things about myself, for example, my Akan name and the day I was born and she was resolute that she could direct me to the village of my ancestors. Observing my surprised laughter, exasperatedly, she dismissed me with the Akan word, 'Sankofa'. Following research, I came to find that Sankofa literally means: 'return to the past, learn from it and move forward'. Since then, I have embraced the spirit of Sankofa and used the Sankofa concept, when it came to trying to make sense of what was happening to my Black British and Black Caribbean colleagues as students. My values, reflections and the unanswered questions precipitated this somewhat unintended PhD journey.

This thesis will be presented in two parts, the first section will comprise of the literature review, the chosen methodological stance and the arguments for the presentation of the data as performative autoethnography. Section two contains the autoethnographical performance which is portrayed through eight scenes followed by a postscript.

The Structure of the Thesis

This thesis comprises of two distinct sections.

Section One

The literature review in **Chapter One** contains several sub-sections which provides an overview of literature relating to the differing journeys of Black Caribbean immigrants to the UK since the post war times. Chapter One includes accounts of Black Caribbean people's trajectories through UK's education institutions and workplaces. It provides insights into the struggle Black Caribbean people faced that led to their self-identification in the UK. The latter sections of Chapter One unravels Black women's experiences of, not only nursing education but of nursing professions in England.

Chapter Two makes my argument and justification for using Black Feminist Methodological Stance (BFMS) as the most appropriate methodological approach for this study. It outlines the importance of centralising Black women's voices in studies about themselves. This chapter uses the works of predominantly Black feminist academics who advocate that the combination of a dialogical approach with reflection and self-critique leads to a form of self-identification and liberation. What results from my BFMS was Black women's epistemology.

Chapter Three introduces autoethnography, the political approach used to present the data from this study. This chapter makes critical arguments for the exploration and use of concepts such as truths and storytelling. It further examines my positional shifts as well as my arguments for the presentation of the data using performance autoethnography. Autoethnography enables the reader to 'get into the skin' of the storytellers and could contribute to a co-aligning of activists working towards redressing inequalities.

Section Two

Section Two comprises of the performance autoethnography which consists of eight scenes and a postscript.

Scene 1 The Dreamers in Jamaica and an Introduction to the Characters
Scene 2 Session 1. First Meet Up
Scene 3 Session 1a. Getting In
Scene 4 Session 2. Moving On
Scene 5 NHS England's Conference - July 27, 2013 - The Drum Birmingham
Scene 6 Session 3. Getting Through
Scene 7 Session 4. This is how it was for me…Messages
Scene 8 Sankofa Reflects
Postscript

My PhD journey has been somewhat messy, challenging and punctuated by interruptions in my thinking as well as my ways of being and doing. A non-traditional approach has meant that my approaches to writing this thesis were often interrupted. Some of the messiness will be relived here and have been incorporated into the text. The reader will find that deviations or moments of questioning and doubts will be introduced by what Mirka Koro-Ljungberg, (2016) describes as 'irruptions'. These 'irruptions' intentionally disrupt the text and somewhat mirrors the messiness I lived. The term 'irruption' will forewarn the reader of the shift in thinking, the thought shifts will then follow in italics.

Part One

Chapter One:

1.1 Literature Review Overview

> "The term 'research' is inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonisation. The word itself, 'research', is probably one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world's vocabulary…it stirs up silence, it conjures up bad memories, it raises a smile that is knowing and distrustful" (Linda Tuhiwai Smith, 2012:1).

Review of Literature including Oral Histories

This review explores literature and verbal narratives on the following principle areas:

- Jamaicans' immigration to post war Britain.
- How immigration to post war Britain resulted in Black people's self-identification
- Nursing education in Jamaica during colonial times (written by Caribbean nurses).
- Nursing education in Britain, the shifts towards professionalisation and the impact on Black Caribbean nurses.
- NHS reforms and the Widening Participation (WP) agenda.
- The educational experiences of mature women utilising work-based learning opportunities to raise their profiles professionally and economically.

I commenced this literature review traditionally. However, it soon became apparent that the libraries' resources could not facilitate the breadth of reading that I considered necessary for this study. Neither did it surprise me that rich data shared by the oral tradition, which I had heard over decades with nurses had been omitted from written literature.

I accessed a range of African American authors because the Black Caribbean and Black British experiences were heavily influenced by the African American experience. There was also very little literature written by Black authors about Black Caribbean and Black British people's experiences as employees in the NHS. Therefore, to get the breadth of information, I themed my reading and it wasn't hard for me to ascertain where the gaps in UK-based literature were. Personally, I had huge knowledge gaps of the Black experience in Britain. You see, I was born in the UK but had lived outside of it for a decade. The decade of my absence, from the mid-70s to the mid-80s was a socially and politically significant one for Black people in Britain.

It was challenging to find literature which provided me with insights into how the nursing hierarchies operated during my parents' generation living in British colonialised Jamaica. Learning from the past was important to me, so a key aim of the review was to unearth learning opportunities from history. I wanted to find examples of learning for Black nurses working in the UK from the experiences of their Caribbean predecessors.

My frustration with the prejudiced accounts (Sen 1970 and Rivett 1998) accessed in British libraries, which failed to really acknowledge Black women's contribution to the NHS, led me to Jamaica, the birthplace of my parents and the island that significantly influenced the person I am today (I lived on the island of Jamaica between age eight and eighteen). I visited the Jamaican National Library in Kingston where I accessed archives on nursing education in Jamaica during colonialism. The visit to Jamaica exposed me to literature that illuminated my understanding of Black nurses' professional journeys, resilience and strength. The unearthing of what for me, was new knowledge bolstered my aim to redress the accounts of Jamaican's colonial history. I have also engaged in conversations with three generations of Black nurses, from those who are now retired, I gleaned stories that I've heard orally numerous times yet seldom seen in documentaries and rarely read in literature.

My reason for exploring the above areas was the fact that I had worked alongside aspirational Black British and Black Caribbean mature women engaging in government funded 'upskilling' programmes which promised to facilitate professional promotion. Black women are over-represented in my local National Health Service (NHS) workforce and many had engaged and were successful in gaining qualifications through work-based learning (Warren 2008). In contrast however, there was a high 'failure to complete' rate amongst the Black British and Black Caribbean women on the two-year, part-time undergraduate foundation degree course. The Black British and Black Caribbean group was a cohort of interest to me as I wanted to try to make sense of their experiences, in doing so I used the questions in the following section as a guide to my exploration.

1.2 Research Aims and Questions

The aim of this study was to explore and gain insights into the educational experiences of the Black Caribbean and Black British women in a Midlands NHS Trust who undertook a foundation degree (fd) in health and social care. Black women in low-skilled and low-paid roles in the NHS are generally muted, their voices are not represented in the dominant discourses within the Health sector and on the very rare occasions they are represented, they generally have others speaking for them. This study centralises Black Caribbean and Black British women. The study aims to more than share their accounts, it aims to explore the relationships between Black women and their mutlitple education providers. This study is small 'p' political in that, Black women were encouraged not to merely 'name' their injustices but to question the education providers, thus opening dialogical opportunities for reciprocal learning and improved inclusion and fairness. The aims of this study will be driven by the following research questions:

- What were the educational experiences of a group of mature Black British and Black Caribbean women who accessed a foundation degree to upskill and enter a new tier in the nursing hierarchical structure on the promise of better remuneration and professional recognition?
- What was the impact of the educational exposure on their professional and personal identities?
- How did these mature Black Caribbean and Black British women build resilience?
- What questions would Black British and Black Caribbean mature women ask of the principle collaborators of their work-based and HE experiences?
- What message or advice would they give to another mature Black woman considering a work-based learning and HE 'opportunity'?

The contributors to this study (who will be discussed in Chapter Three) are adult children of post war Jamaican immigrants to Britain. Our parents arrived in the UK predominantly by invitation through recruitment drives. The 'cry for help' from the colonies was to join the British in rebuilding the 'motherland' (Phillips and Phillips 1998). From my personal experience of hearing the stories from within Caribbean communities, as well as through my reading for this section, (Steele and Prescod-Roberts 1980, Phillips and Phillips 1998 and Cumberbatch 1998) my parents' generation believed that their response to the 'cry for help' would prove beneficial for them. They hoped it would enable them to gain a better standard of life for themselves as well as secure a prosperous future' for their children (Phillips and Phillips 1998).

This thesis delved into literature as well as listened to oral accounts. My review of UK 'literature' revealed that only a very small proportion of academic publications which included the trajectories of Black women from student to qualified nurse status had been written by Black academics (Baxter 1998).

My observation is that stories shared with caucasian researchers during the earlier post migration times were less detailed than those shared with Black authors.

Several Black authors, (Sewell (1998), Phillips and Phillips (1998) and Cumberbatch (1998) produced rich data in their commemorative work on the 50th anniversary of the landing of the ship Empire Windrush on British waters (see Appendix 2). In the latter accounts, retired nurses reflectively and confidently shared the inequalities and challenges they faced on their journeys towards and within the nursing profession in Britain's NHS.

Imbo (2002) postulates that education provided under colonialism was not neutral, but rather a way of transferring colonial countries' dominant modes of knowledge production. The work of Kramer (2006) and Jones and Snow (2010) assert that nursing education was no exception, it was for many Black women, a means of keeping them professionally subordinated (this assertion will be further explored through the works of the Jamaica General Trained Nurse Association (JGTNA) commencing on . Woodson (1933), Fanon (1967) and Dubois (1973) argue that the presentation of education deemed appropriate for Blacks was 'contradictory' to their traditional practices in that, the oral conveying was discredited whilst giving legitimacy to written literature. In academic work such as this, I understand that orally conveyed works are considered subordinate to written literature but I am determined to include oral accounts as a means of resisting the colonial hegemony which dictate how literature is defined and in so doing relegates important aspects of my Black cultural epistemology. In this thesis, oral accounts will be given the same level of importance and acknowledgement as written accounts. Those in my culture will generally resonate with the orally conveyed stories, whilst those in academia may consider such knowledge tacit and therefore not credible. This small 'p' political work aims to ensure that as much as I can, I remain 'culturally true' and for me, that means including stories which are more circular that the linear format of written text. Tuwe (2016) offers an insight into the 'circular' way of telling when he states:

> "Our stories offer explanations of natural phenomena, teach moral values, provide us with a sense of identity and are entertaining as well as instructive. Storytellers repeat words, phrases, gestures and verses or stanzas…the audience actively participates as they learn important aspects of their culture… storytelling is a mode for preserving our history and traditional culture" (Pgs. 2&3).

Oral storytelling, is an integral aspect of my culture's mode of disseminating and cascading information. Therefore, integrating oral narrative accounts into what is traditionally deemed to be a 'literature review' is an attempt at ensuring that I am honest to my heritage, self, audience and community. In addition, this study is a Black feminist epistemological study which aims to centralise Black women's ways of being, knowing and doing. Tuwe (2016) philosophies my view when he argues that:

> "the history of a people is re-constructed through oral testimonies and cultural data supplied by individuals or communities, …the use of storytelling as an African paradigm has the benefit of empowering African communities…as they share their personal and collective experiences and suggest solutions to these related-challenges" (p. 9).

This study strives to make sense of Black women's conversatiions about their nursing education and working lives within Britain's NHS. Black Caribbean and Black British women's contribution to the NHS in text is inexplicably understated. The written histories of the NHS often fail to recognise Black women as pioneers in the establishing of Britain's NHS (Kramer 2006). The prodigious contribution Black women have made and continue to make in Britain's NHS is uncontested. (Jones and Snow, 2010) This review of literature and oral accounts will provide insights into Black British and Black Caribbean women's lived experiences of nursing education and nursing as a profession from my parents' generation (those who came from Jamaica to live and work in Britain between the late 1930s to the mid-1970s). In addition, this review presents insights into Black Caribbean and Black British women's lived experiences as second generation Black women navigating the nursing profession in Britain's NHS.

To set the context for this review, I commenced by examining Black Caribbean women's experience of student nursing and the nursing profession in Britain. Black student nurses of my parents' generation were generally categorised using 'the deficit theory model' (Sen1970, Thomas and Williams 1972 and Kramer 2006). The 'deficit theory model' of education posits that students who differ from the British 'norm' in a significant way (which could include dialect, learning style or language) should be considered deficient and education interventions should correct the deficiencies. Literature (Coard 1971, Pryce 1979 and Andrews 2013) assert that many Black males of my generation were also 'victims' of the 'deficit theory model'.

As an educator with decades of teaching experience in a range of educational contexts both in the UK and overseas, I became suspicious of, as well as frustrated by, Britain's reliance on the 'deficit theory model' to explain the educational underachievement of 'people like my brothers and me'. Britain's nursing education history, the little that makes any reference to Blacks, generally gives the impression that our mothers were incapable of achieving State Registered Nursing (SRN) and that became the justification for Black women being significantly over-represented in the State Enrolled Nurse (SEN) tiers of the UK nursing hierarchies (Carter 1998, Kramer 2006 and Jones and Snow 2010). The forthcoming section will continue the exploration of the impact of the deficit model theory on Caribbean migrants who transitioned personal and professional identities decades after their arrival in Britain.

1.3   From Jamaica to England - 'the motherlan'

> "Many rivers to cross, but I can't seem to find my way over; wandering I am lost as I travel along the white cliffs of Dover. Many rivers to cross and it's only my will that keeps me alive; I've been licked, washed up for years and I merely survive because of my pride" (Jimmy Cliff: Many rivers to cross: 1975).

Sewell (1998), King (1998) and several others (Cumberbatch 1998, Goulbourne 1998 and Phillips and Phillips 1998), share some of the challenges faced by migrants travelling from colonised islands to support the rebuilding of Britain, the country they referred to as, 'motherlan'. Cumberbatch (1998), Kramer (2006) and others describe the multiple layers of oppression faced by Caribbean and other immigrants. Above, Cliff metaphorically captures the struggle immigrant Blacks faced with work, life, their identities and housing. Historians, Segal (1995), Foner (1998), Goulbourne (1998) and Shepherd (1998) argue that migration from the Caribbean to Europe has been occurring since the seventeenth centuries. However, my interest for this case study are Jamaican migrants who came to the UK after the second world war and their descendants. Jamaica is an island situated in the Caribbean Sea, comprising the third largest island in the Greater Antilles. The island is the fifth largest island in the Caribbean. According to the 2001 census, most of Jamaica's people are of African descent. Jamaica was first ruled by the Spanish from 1509 to 1655. The British then conquered the Spanish and ruled the island from 1655 to its independence in 1962 (Black, 1965). Jamaicans in Britain are a diasporic people.

Goulbourne (2002) describes Diaspora as: "the movement, whether forced or voluntary, of a nation or group of people from one homeland to another country" (p.1). Mirzoeff (2000) further develops my understanding of the term when he asserts that the 'scattered peoples':

> "engage in the development of a broadly social and political consciousness or interconnectedness, *sharing* identifiable factors such as language, religion, distinct past historical or mythical events or colour. They create *a* sense of community belongingness that transcends the nation-state community; a sense of angst because of the absence from 'home' or absence of a notional communal wholeness" (p. 4).

Several authors, (Phillips and Phillips 1998, Sewell 1998, Kramer 2006) and several British Broadcasting Corporation's (BBC) programmes re-tell oral accounts of Jamaican immigrants simultaneously encountering multiple layers of hardship including: racism, poor housing, inequitable labour experiences and educational opportunities. The oppressions the Caribbean immigrants experienced endeared them to each other and somewhat synchronised their approach to survival in an overtly racist Britain of the early to mid-20th Century. Cumberbatch (1998), Phillips and Phillips (1998) and Kramer (2006) re-tell accounts of employment inequalities, citing examples in nursing for example, where Black people were given the 'dirtiest' and 'hardest' tasks to perform for less pay than their white counterparts.

There are also numerous narratives of the disparate education experienced by Black immigrant children. In the literature which recounts the lives of the immigrants from the Caribbean, almost without exception, Black people's stories convey their dismay at the unwelcome signs displayed on vacant accommodations which read:

"no blacks, no dogs and no Irish" (Kramer 2006).

Reflecting on the half century since the landing at Tilbury in June 1948 of the Empire Windrush with passengers from Jamaica, Foner (1998), Goulbourne (1998) and Cumberbatch (1998) reminisced that in addition to helping the motherlan', Caribbean people were motivated to migrate in search of security and to ensure that they provided an educational and economic legacy for their children. The stories captured by Black authors, were very much harmonised and mirrored throughout the commemorative works. Black Caribbean migrants shared their desire to contribute to the rebuilding of the motherlan' as well as their hope and expectation that future generations would circumvent the hardships they had experienced whether in their birthplace under the colonial system or in the motherlan' where they faced multiple oppressions but later claimed as home. Goulbourne's (2002) forthcoming assertion needs no explanation for those of us in the Black Caribbean communities:

> "'Babylon' (*used here to mean Britain or the motherlan', a term used predominantly by Rastafarians and in Reggae music genre to mean an unwelcome place synonymous with oppression*) has been oppressive and uncomfortable, but Babylon has also been the site of liberation from past entrenched encumbrances, the site at which new identities are forged" (p. 8) (Italics mine).

Hall (1992), Cumberbatch (1998) and Phillips and Phillips (1998) suggest that many immigrants who travelled to the so called first world have done so and continue to do so, to seek a new life and new experiences. Paradoxically, the narratives of those who the above writers interviewed generally state that, making England home was not part of their original plans. Many of the early settlers from Jamaica and other parts of the Caribbean had plans to return 'home' to the Caribbean after five years of education and or employment in the UK. In his account, Cumberbatch (1998) asserts:

> "The only reason blacks left the Caribbean was in pursuit of work, the three to five years stint they had envisaged was thought to be enough for their purposes. Put simply, those who were single could earn enough money to move away from their parents and build their own houses and those who already had houses could build extensions to these… others could establish their own businesses or just enhance their bank accounts" (p. 18).

What the post war invitation did was provide the opportunity to mobilise a whole generation of oppressed people.

A people who assumed that in the motherland they would gain acceptance, after all they were going to offer much needed labour (Sewell 1998).

Goulbourne (2002) suggests that sometimes, 'mobilisation', in this case moving from one country to another results in the deliberate promotion of a dominant group over more vulnerable groups. The British government then, and subsequent governments, had plans to recruit 'cheap labour' to rebuild the country during the austere post war times (Rivett 1998). Cumberbatch (1998) asserts that many of those who migrated, assumed that following a half decade in Britain, they would return to their countries to secure senior positions or pursue self-employment. The reflective narrative accounts of Windrush and post Windrush migrants from the Caribbean shared with Sewell (1998), Phillips and Phillips (1998) and Cumberbatch, (1998) explain that they had not expected to be subordinated in British educational or employment institutions. Goulbourne (2002) argues that, the invitation to join motherlan' for those from the British Caribbean islands generated the hope of, "improvement, self-improvement and improvement of the race" (p. 45). He describes that 'hope' took several forms which could be categorised in three expansive themes which included: a search for the finances to secure land in the Caribbean, an insatiable hunger for education and the desire to experience and grasp international opportunities.

Education, however, came in diverse forms as aspirational Caribbean migrants accessed a plethora of educational institutions gaining professional qualifications. Nevertheless, their racial characteristics were often used to categorise them (Jones and Snow 2013) and subsequently their children (Coard 1971) using the 'deficit theory model' previously discussed. It is argued that Britain's lack of preparation for the complex and multiple differences of migrants provided justification to assign them to subordinate positions in all aspects of life, social housing, employment, education and health. Ironically, these expectant, hopeful immigrants had real 'eye-opening' experiences when they realised that some whites were illiterate. Listen here, to a Jamaican immigrant sharing the disparity between his expectation and lived experience with Phillips and Phillips (1998):

> "I'd been a colonial all my life here in Jamaica and, in fact, not even in the City of Kingston, in the country. So, the view of the colonies was that the white man is on top in every respect…after Buckingham Palace comes Heaven, that's the order of things… you are used to seeing white man as boss. When you go to England, you find that it is not like that. You get a sudden shake-up when you find an Englishman that can't read and write, you know, it shakes you" (p. 45).

The power dynamics experienced by the colonised Jamaicans at the hands of the British led some to believe that illiteracy could not exist in Great Britain.

However, the psychological shift experienced by this and many other immigrants at the knowledge awakening is not explored at all in the literature I accessed.

One of the recurring declarations in the literature however, is that the people of the Caribbean were a very patriotic people who wanted to help their 'motherlan'. Lord Kitchener, one of Trinidad's best known Calypsonian, shared in an interview with Phillips and Phillips (1998):

> "but entering England, when the boat had about four days to land in England, I get this kind of wonderful feeling that I'm going to land on the mother country, the soil of the mother country. And I started composing this song: London is the place for me" (p. 66).

The 1998 narratives shared with Phillips and Phillips and several authors who wrote commemorative accounts told how the colonial offices on the islands advertised for the islanders to help with the rebuilding of the 'mother country'. Those who travelled to the UK were generally aspirational young people who were motivated to travel, to support others left at home whilst learning from life and other cultures (Goulbourne 2002). Adverts placed in Jamaican papers advertising for student nurses and nursing assistants in Jamaica generally carried age classifications. An advert in the 1960 Gleaner showed the variances in salary for the under 21 year olds and the over 21 year olds.

Cumberbatch (1998) asserts that:

> "there was a myth circulating through the Caribbean in the post war time that the Britain that had invited them to come to help, was the Britain they had read about in literature; a place of equality and fairness. A place where we were bound to fit in" (p. 12).

For many migrants, racial tensions were a daily part of their existence (Goulbourne 2002). The immigrants' dreams of self-improvement were re-echoed in interview after interview in the accounts given to Kramer (2006) Phillips and Phillips (1998) and Sewell (1998). Poet James Berry's (OBE) interview was included in the work of Sewell (1998). Berry shared that his father possessed what he described as 'plantation mentality,' explaining that his father asked him to remain in Jamaica and support him on his farm. Berry, as a young man, aspired to engage with and benefit from academic stimulation and in his desperation to explore and experience education overseas had to sever ties with his father. His youthful focus was on forging his way to building a legacy for his own children. Berry described his father as one who was 'symbolic of a culture of acceptance' (p. 11). This 'acceptance culture' was the norm for most of the 'older' generations who had lived their lives under colonial regimes.

The 1998 commemorative literatures predominantly written by Black authors captured the reflections of two generations of Black Caribbean people living in Britain.

The authors, (Phillips and Phillips (1998) and Sewell (1998) met and shared stories with immigrants and their children. These stories were then produced in books whilst others were serialised for television. They all provided insights through relived tales of how Caribbean migrants' hopes and aspirations were dashed by the realities of racism, hardship and oppression. Yet, after settling in the UK, family after family invited their loved ones to join them. In striving to make sense of why an oppressed group would invite loved ones to join them in oppression. I remind you of Goulbourne's Babylon statement. Babylon may have inflicted multiple layers of oppression and discomfort on Caribbean immigrants over a fifty-year period, yet, the same Babylon became the birthplace of personal and community identities. I also gained insights from Cumberbatch (1998) who suggests that, on arrival Caribbean people did not possess an in-depth understanding of the social or economic life in Britain. On realising that their five-year plan was unachievable, many were too ashamed to share their subordinated positions with folks back home. As a result, out of pride and personal dignity coupled with their desire of having the family together they wrote home outlining that all was well in the motherlan' and eventually sent for their loved ones to join them.

From the oral accounts that I and others of my generation have been exposed to, we know the above to be true, because during the 70s and 80s my generation became the letter writers for our parents corresponding to our grandparents. Mature women of my age and I could recite word for word the opening of each letter written to our grandparents in the Caribbean, as our parents' common approach would commence each letter with: 'we hope that when these few lines reach you, they will find you in the best of health.' Many of us learned the art of visualisation through the letter correspondences of those times. I invite the reader to join me in visualising as we revisit the metaphorical lyrics of Jimmy Cliff's (1975) song:

> "Many rivers to cross, but I can't seem to find my way over, wandering, I am lost as I travel along the white cliffs of Dover. Many rivers to cross and it's only my will that keeps me alive; I've been licked, washed up for years and I merely survive because of my pride".

The above is the analogy of the Black immigrants' experience of post war Britain however, in the NHS context they never travelled the 'white cliffs' as the 'peaks of the professional cliffs' could only be attained if one was white (Kramer (2006) and Jones and Snow (2013).

1.4 Caribbean People's Self-Identification in the UK

Phillips and Phillips (1998) and Goulbourne (2002) remind us that Black Caribbean people in the UK have transitioned through a plethora of identification labels ranging from the negatively imposed: 'niggers, darkies, colored, West Indians, through times when all Blacks were Jamaicans, to the self-selected 'Black'. Hall, (1997) a Jamaican born sociologist, political activist and cultural theorist asserts:

> "perhaps the most significant development over the last half century in the Atlantic world is that Caribbean people of African backgrounds in Britain have come to define themselves and be accepted as African Caribbean and sometimes the African qualification is left out of the reckoning because it has become unnecessary to state. It is understood that Caribbean means African...Caribbean diaspora must be understood to be a new dimension of a wider diaspora, principally the African diaspora" (p. 17).

This self-identification as 'Black' is significant socially, culturally and educationally as it facilitated shifts that would support the pursuit of social justice for Blacks in the UK. bell hooks (2010) offers us a thought to support us in making sense of the identity shift processes, she suggests:

> "in the ongoing critique of dominator culture, thinkers and or activists dedicated to changing society so that everyone can have equal access to basic human rights called attention to the 'colonisation' of the mind and imagination. They emphasised the various ways individuals from oppressed and or exploited groups had been socialised to be self-hating and consequently could not begin to grow and become responsible citizens without first undergoing a shift in consciousness" (p. 61).

Jamaicans journeying from an island with colonial control were understandably dismayed by the behaviors of their British hosts. In a 2016 BBC documentary entitled, 'Black nurse: The women who saved the NHS', there were numerous oral accounts of the racism experienced by Black nurses at the hands of their colleagues as well as their patients. Midwives shared how caucasian women refused to have them as their assigned midwives because they 'didn't want their black hands on them'. They shared how they were assigned heavier and 'dirty' tasks for much longer periods than their white counterparts. Identities were generally imposed and rarely genuinely positive or affirming (Kramer 2006).

The whole concept of identities for the Caribbean immigrants and their descendants has stimulated much emotive discussion and debates in the field of academia, and especially amongst Black academics including sociologists, Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy. To paraphrase a view of Hall 1997, there can be few political challenges that can be "compared to the complexities entailed in the process of trying to represent a diverse people with a diverse history through a single hegemonic identity" (Hall 1997:57).

Those who came from Jamaica to the UK in the mid-20th Century felt British from birth given that Britain was a country they had come to know as the 'motherlan'.

Jamaican servicemen (another relatively forgotten group) who served in the war described the respect they received from their fellow British servicemen during their time in service. Some shared that all men were comrades and there was an absence of racial tensions Phillips and Phillips (1998), King (1998) and Sewell (1998). Conversely when they entered civilian life, they experienced oppressions on many levels. King (1998) and his fellow Black comrades recalled in a documentary that as civilians, they were consistently reviled and asked: "darkies' when are you going back to your country?" Many of the ex-servicemen described the hurt but more so, the confusion they felt about being 'good enough' to fight for the country but not welcome to reside in it (BBC 1 Lenny Henry – National Treasures August 2011).

Gilroy (1987) and Hall (1992) explore three concepts of identity: enlightenment, sociological and postmodern. Enlightenment identity, they suggest, derives from the concept that an individual is born with an identity which is formed in relationship with others. Therefore, this conceptual view is not static or singular but rather fluid and sometimes even conflicting and problematic as it can be other, co, or individually constructed. These tensions, Hall (1992) purports, result in what he calls the 'postmodern subject', "conceptualised as having no fixed essential or permanent identity", but one which is ever changing, temporary, somewhat like outfits which can be chosen to suit occasions and audiences. This postmodern concept of identity is what Black academics ascribed to people of the Diaspora during the 1970s and 1980s when the communities were working out their own identities and making sense of their position in the Britain they were starting to call home. Hall (1992) describes the postmodern concept as 'pluralisation of identities' (p. 277). This notion of identity is generally used for all people today.

Sociologist Gilroy (1987), in Hall (1997), asserts that understanding cultural identity as fluid is useful for those of us with a colonial past, accepting this fluidity will enable us to make sense of the 'otherness' as well as the power dynamics we navigate and experience. Hall (1997) considering his own Jamaican upbringing and subsequent migration to Britain as well as the experiences that followed, suggests:

> "It was only in the 1970s that the Afro-Caribbean identity became historically available to the greater majority of Jamaican people, at home and abroad. In this historic movement, Jamaicans discovered themselves to be 'Black'… just as, in the same moment, they discovered themselves to be sons and daughters of slavery" (p. 55).

Hall (1992) further asserts:

> "there are at least two different ways of thinking about cultural identity. One way is for us to consider that cultural identity is shared; there is a sort of collective self, 'one true self' hiding inside the many other… artificially imposed selves', which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common" (p. 51).

Cultural identities are therefore undergoing constant transformation. Hall's (1997) concept helps me in making sense of Black Caribbean identities, he 'frames' the concept of 'cultural identities' between two simultaneous routes: the vectors of difference and rupture:

> "Caribbean identities always have to be thought of in terms of dialogic relationship between these two axes. The one gives us some grounding in, some continuity with, the past. The second reminds us that what we share is precisely the experience of a profound discontinuity: the peoples dragged into slavery, transportation, colonisation, migration came predominantly from Africa" (Hall 1997: p. 24).

For many Caribbean immigrants to the UK, our identities were constructed by others as subordinated and fixed but following the 'shift' that bell hooks alluded to earlier, we were propelled into activism. It has been highlighted through the narratives of Black nurses Baxter (1998), Kramer (2006) Jones and Snow (2010) that the UK's nursing hierarchy 'fixed' Black women's professional identity. This 'fixing' proved problematic for the psyche of Black women who were journeying simultaneously through a range of personal identities. One example of the 'fixed' identity bestowed on Black nurses in the NHS was that they were generally described as: 'good bedside nurses'. On the surface, the 'good bedside nurse label' seems complimentary, but the implication was they were 'good' with patient care, but 'not good enough' to take charge or lead a ward or team. Baxter (1998), Carter (2003) and Jones and Snow (2010) suggest that, the 'good bedside nurse' fixed identity was also internalised by Black nurses who usually 'claimed' it, once they were denied professional developmental opportunities or promotions.

In my conversations with Black nurses over the decades, I concur with Baxter (1998) and Carter (2003) that Black women who generally share their experience of being denied promotion often concede that, 'I'll stick to what I know, as there is no denying that I am a good bedside nurse'. I can link the 'fixed' labelling of Black nurses as 'good bedside nurses' to what Gilroy (1987) described as, creating a relationship of 'sameness and difference'. Gilroy asserts that, "the thresholds between sameness and difference are not fixed: they can be moved; and that identity-making has a history, though its historical character is often concealed" (p. 303). Viewing the 'fixed' identity here, I understand that the 'fixing' was a 'concealed' economic and political imposition by successive governments (Carter 2003). Black nurses may have accepted the 'fixing', but they interpreted it differently to those who had 'fixed' them. Black nurses made it positive, maybe as a means of surviving the injustices of nursing education of the time as well as to 'claim' for themselves some professional respect. Fixing the professional identity of Black nurses was part of the UK's strategy to prop up the economy as the cheap labour the immigrants provided contributed to meeting the labour demands of the growing NHS.

The fixing of Black women's professional identity also preserved the 'snowy white peaks' of the nursing profession (Kline, 2014). As I write this, the NHS has just celebrated its sixty ninth birthday and, especially in the field of nursing, accounts today assert that the stereotypes and impact of the 'fixed' professional identity live on; much to the professional detriment of Black nurses (Dhaliwal and McKay 2008).

This section highlights the fact that Black Caribbean immigrants transitioned a plethora of identification 'labelling'. The political situations, social injustices and their reluctance to remain in their subordinate 'fixed' spaces professionally and in society propelled them to research and claim their own identity in the UK. Their 'self-identification' as Hall (1997) asserts, resulted from a process of 'self-discovery'. Herman's (1983) lyrics helps me to convey the complex and ongoing identity trajectory of Black migrants and their children in the lines which states:

> I am what I am, I am my own special creation, so come take a look, give me the hook or the ovation. It's my world that I want to have a little pride in, my world and it's not a place I have to hide in. Life's not worth a damn till you can say, I am what I am. (Jerry Herman:1983)

I'll conclude that for Caribbean Blacks self-identification was one aspect of the process of releasing the 'hook' of 'fixed' labelling and claiming the 'ovation' of self-identification. The process contributed to a new-found sense of pride and self-esteem in a land many were resigned to call home (Carter 2003 and Kramer 2006). Identities are complex, but accepting the fluidity concept will contribute to Black women finding and using our voices to expose and challenge the multiple social injustices experienced in both education and employment institutions which advocate equality. For Black women to assert ourselves in our professional and personal spaces, we need to highlight some of the myths and stereotypes that white men and women use to exclude us, thus retaining the NHS's 'snowy white peaks' reported by Kline (2014). The forthcoming section will focus on two ways that Black women's identities are fixed through stereotyping in the NHS context.

Stereotyping Black women has been an effective method of ensuring their professional subordination. Boylorn (2014) asserts:

> "Missing from larger hegemonic narrative and (mis) representations of black women is an acknowledgement of discrimination, exploitation and oppression" (133).

How Black nurses are socially constructed within Britain's NHS, as well as in wider British societies, will be the feature of the following section.

I am compelled to explore what Hall (1997), Boylorn (2014) and others (Lorde 2007 and Harris-Perry 2011) describe as stereotypical representations of Black women. Though Black women are stereotyped in multiple ways, for this study I will focus on only two examples which are predominantly linked to their role as 'helpers' and 'carers'. Hall (1997) suggests that the dominant representation and stereotypes of the Black woman by slave owners and colonisers was that they only found contentedness under the tutelage of a white sovereign. He further argues that in the view of the colonisers those over whom they had power were:

> "An othered group that was to be subordinated in status and only fit for service. Blacks were considered primitive and for women, their biology was their destiny" (p. 245).

Hall (1997) defines stereotypes as: 'reduced to a few essentials, fixed in nature by a few simplified characteristics.'

Gillman, in Hall (1991) presents an alternative definition for consideration, he suggests:

> "stereotypes are a crude set of mental representations of the world… they perpetuate a needed sense of difference between the self and the object which becomes the other" (p. 284).

Much of the stereotypes attributed to Black women originated in the US under slavery and are much debated within Black feminist movements. The stereotypes that follow are ones usually linked to Black women generally as well as in health sector employment.

'Angry Black Woman' is a generalised term used to 'silence' Black women who are passionate or stand on principle when they challenge others or convey their views and experiences. West (1993) and Harris-Perry (2011) suggest that when Black women strive to establish their own professional identities rather than passively accept the identities imposed on them, they are often stereotyped as being 'angry' and / or 'aggressive'. Harris-Perry (2011) suggests that 'white accusers' rarely seek to understand the trajectory of the Black woman and the inequalities and oppression which make up her lived experience. Instead, the accusers use the 'angry Black woman' and other stereotypes which, 'renders sisters both invisible and mute' (p. 88). It would be depressing for me as a Black woman if I felt that there was no escape from invisibility and muteness. I do however acknowledge that several Black women, especially those working at the lower tiers of our NHS's hierarchical structure, feel that escape from 'silence' is not an option.

Currently in my role as educator, I deliver monthly 'Assertiveness Skills Workshops for staff with supervisory responsibilities'. I'm intrigued by the fact that I often have Black women presenting themselves for training informing me that they have been 'sent' on the course because their behaviour was interpreted as 'aggressive and intimidating'.

It is often the case that as Black women share the experiences which resulted in them being 'assigned' to the workshop that many were simply 'standing their professional grounds' (often advocating for patients or colleagues) and frequently only after periods of unaddressed accounts of unsafe practices or injustices.

In many cases when Black women consciously make the shift from being 'silent (silenced)' to 'voicing' their views, they are inevitably 'branded' with the 'angry Black woman label' and 'sent' on the Assertiveness Skills Workshop. Now, I am not denying that on a few occasions I have not needed to work with the Black women to address issues around 'time, tone and place' when responding to injustices, but the frequency and numbers of Black women referrals have yet to be fully explored. However, I can share personally here, having been labelled myself on several occasions when I was calm and managers (yep, more than one manager as well as several colleagues) were the ones with raised voices and sometimes even 'banging' hands on tables in an intimidating manner. On questioning their conduct, I have had responses including: "I'm not shouting…I'm just loud. That's who I am." It's often the reality that that is how they can be, but I could never conduct myself in such a manner and still be deemed professional.

In my work context, Black women often feel strongly that the 'angry Black woman stereotype' is used when those in 'power' are really probing, 'how dare *you* question *me*? The Black women who are 'sent' to the workshops are often coached by me through thinking about how acts of silencing erodes their confidence potentially leading to lower self-esteem and self-belief which could eventually lead to less work productivity and enjoyment (Boylorn 2014). The women I see are often 'damaged' professionally as they find themselves isolated within professional teams. However, they are more than victims as they are generally resolute that the values of 'standing up' for themselves, patients and colleagues will always be the appropriate stance to take. Attending the workshop also provides them with exposure to a facilitator who will empower them and be a contact for professional support. West (1993) suggests that the shift from imposed to self-identifying can often be a painful process, as it involves a struggle for equality and inclusivity. This struggle for equality and inclusivity has inevitably been a perpetual one for Black women working in Britain's NHS, and in the field of nursing specifically (Dhaliwal and MacKay 2008 and Kline 2014).

As much as I accept that stereotyping is often imposed on Black women, I feel I need to look at how 'we' through being self aware can circumvent the negative stereotypes amongst ourselves. Boylorn (2014) argues that, "stereotypes are effective and pervasive because they are sometimes reinforced by *'our'* lived experiences and not challenged in *'our'* everyday lives" (emphasis mine) (p.141). I work alongside Black women who are often deemed to be assertive amongst their Black women peers and those in their social circles.

The way these women assert themselves, however, are very rarely challenged within those social circles. It is often said that Black matriarchs are strong and vocal, but within the Black community their approaches to voicing are cultural. What is often unaddressed is the fact that one's approach to assertion in the hegemonic community as well as amongst males may need to be adapted for use in the workplace, for me the adapted approach is more about knowing your audience and less about not being yourself. The 'cultural community' understand and accept the oppressions and therefore understand the passions linked to the verbalisations. The hegemonic community often do not understand, or do not want to admit that there are layers of oppression therefore dismissing the legitimacy of the 'concern', choosing rather to focus on the 'process' of verbalising the 'concern' therefore stereotyping the advocate as, the angry Black woman. An example may support this point.

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Judy, a young Black woman pops into her parents' home on her way from work. On arrival, there are other senior Black women present. Judy shares her experiences of her day with the group of matriarchs. She was inappropriately challenged by a white colleague who bullies her and, not for the first time, reported her of leaving work early. The report was proven to be false, but no attempt made to exonerate Judy. Judy, then relives the account of 'backing' the liar up in the stationery cupboard and shouting at her that she needs to stop telling f...ing lies on her. The colleague cowers, cries, apologises and then avoids Judy for the rest of the day. Judy claims victory!

Judy's account was understood and most probably experienced by several the matriarchs who admonished her, 'not to take no s…t from these people, show 'em girl, meck 'em bawl, what dem a tell lie pon yo' fa.' However, none of the matriarchs challenged Judy to consider if she could have chosen another approach or explore with her that, though they understood the lived injustice which led to her reaction, she needed to reflect and think about the potential consequences of using that approach consistently as in so doing she could be disciplined for harassment and bullying within a work context. That omission, our community can no longer afford… we need to challenge each other during our private conversations to think and challenge injustices differently so we avoid falling into the stereotype trap. Even as I write this, I acknowledge how difficult what I am advocating is…how many times have white women in my work context unthinkingly just shelled out the stereotypical labels on me for merely questioning…it's as frustrating as hell. However, I feel I owe it to myself and to get them thinking, I never let the labelling go without a challenge and a request that they substantiate the accusation with clear descripts of my behavior, they generally retract and with the retraction comes their tears… but I never feel a winner...because in 2017 there should be no need for this…!

Through reading, I have come to understand that in the UK during the 1980s there were vibrant Black women's movements in our inner cities (Ware 1992 and Sudbury 1998). There are accounts of women's groups and self-empowerment groups where Black women were willing to engage in politics to gain influence and get their voices heard. In these political settings women could guide and support each other. Oftentimes, support meant challenging explicit behaviors which could play into the hands of the hegemonic community providing them with opportunities to stereotype conduct thus relegating the importance of issues raised. Black cultural orators deliver with passion, often the passion had to be 'tamed' to suit a wider audience and to ensure the message was heard. Harris-Perry (2011) argues that, "the angry Black woman stereotype does not acknowledge Black women's anger (passion) as a legitimate reaction to unequal circumstances; it is seen as a pathological, irrational desire to control…" (p. 95). The fear of being stereotyped presents deeply entrenched challenges for Black women.

After all who 'enjoys' conflict that sets out to disparage? And what are our choices when we want to address issues that we feel passionately about? Paradoxically, in the cases of Black women who are 'sent' to Assertiveness Skills Workshops at work, the outcome of both speaking, then labelled angry and not speaking at all, are synonymous, meaning that they are labelled either aggressive for speaking or passive aggressive for not speaking! A no-win situation.

The final stereotype I want to explore is linked to Black women's roles as carers represented through 'Mammy'. The 'mammy figure' characterised by Hattie McDaniel in films like, 'Gone with the Wind' (1939) and others was a docile Black woman. Mammy was a heavily built Black woman who was generally well loved by the Caucasian occupants of the manor house she served. She was granted a level of authority over the white infants of the household but she knew her place; knew how to be obedient and mammy accepted her subordinated position unquestionably (Harris-Perry 2011). Mammy could be characteristically summarised as a trusted confidante who could turn her hand to anything in the domestic realms. A real servant who would readily neglect the needs of her own family to serve the needs of her masters. She was asexual, unassuming, dark skinned, matriarchal, a domestic goddess, unparalleled in service, unfeminine and loyal to all (Hill Collins (1997) Harris-Perry (2011) and Boylorn (2013).

In Rakovski and Price-Glynn's (2009) contribution to the discussion of Black women and stereotypes, they focus on Black women working within the UK's and United States of America's (USA) care sectors. The authors identify similarities between the treatment and positioning of the fictional 'mammy' character and modern day Black women working in the care sector. They provide examples of Black women who are recruited from third world countries to be exploited for their fortitude, caring and selflessness. They also expose organisational structures and practices which were introduced and sustained to not only keep Black women in professional subordination, but to ensure that they understand and accept that those subordinated spaces were the only spaces they would ever occupy. Rakovski and Price-Glynn (2009) suggests that:

> "like historical counterparts, contemporary mammies are quintessential beings designed to, invisibility and uncomplainingly support a social order that regards them as an exploitable source of labour" (p. 29).

In the UK, Black immigrant student nurses recounted numerous disparities between the kinds of work they were regularly assigned which were never undertaken for the same durations by their white colleagues.

Hall (1997) suggests:

> "stereotyping is part of the maintenance of social and symbolic order. It sets up a symbolic frontier between the 'normal' and the 'deviant'…it facilitates the 'binding of those who are 'normal' and 'sends into symbolic exile' those who are not" (p. 258).

Stereotyping has been maintained for the continuation of social power inequalities. Thus, ensuring that the dominant group places an economic levy on the subordinated or othered group. Dubois (1973) articulates what I propose we see in the care sector in both the USA and the UK who recruit from so called third world countries. He contends:

> "equality of human beings is merely rhetoric, especially as it is evident, and has been known for generations that some are relegated to and kept in subordinated places. Places which result in meagre provisions and a reliance on others for those meagre provisions cannot be called the equal of the man with sufficient and assured income and security of status" (p. 171).

As I write this, I pause to quietly reflect on the professional journeys of Black nurses in the UK who commenced their nursing career from an assigned 'fixed' subordinated position. The professionally subordinated positions, which according to Jones and Snow (2010) they were 'duped' into. What is even more distressing however, is that even six decades after the introduction of legislation (Race Relations Act 1965) aimed to 'protect' them from professional inequalities, there are still too few pockets of evidence of how things have significantly changed for Black women in the NHS.

The section above has explored how stereotyping negatively impacts the professional careers of Black nurses. It highlights that Black women need to 'strategise' how to convey their passions and emotions in 'non-cultural' settings. I have also explored the dichotomies faced by Black women who want to advocate for themselves and others, and the fact that they often feel 'trapped' as their attempts to advocate as well as their silence generally has the same outcome, meaning, nothing changes. Another important point raised by this section is that within Black communities, we Black women need to be challenging each other, not necessarily because our conducts are wrong but because we are aware that the hegemonic community can deflect from real situations if we don't strive to intentionally negate behaviours that can be placed into stereotypes. Finally, narratives explored highlighted the impact of stereotyping on 'Black women's work in the care sector' and how internationally Black women have been subjugated and oppressed to meet the first world's agenda of 'first class health care' cheaply.

1.5 Post war Black Caribbean's experience of Education in British Educational Institutions

> "The term 'institutional racism' has been around for a long time. Stokley Carmichael and Charles Hamilton (1967) famously used the phrase to describe how white interests and attitudes saturate the key institutions that shape American life. Recent years have seen the phrase move from the realm of political activism and academic debate into popular usage." (Gillborn, 2001:1)

Colonial nursing education was not impartial, in that it placed and kept Black women in the lower tiers of nursing (Rivett 1998 and Kramer 2006). Neither was it appropriately disseminated when Caribbean islands were colonised (Hewitt 2002). Black women were not exposed to training or education which would enable them to ever work in the role of nurse Principal or tutor in their own country (Swaby 1980 and Hewitt 2002). Yet, Black women from all over the Caribbean didn't allow their partial education exposure to limit their career prospects. Many Caribbean trained nurses utilised contacts and overseas opportunities to pursue their academic development. For those socially mobile Blacks, education was a liberator. Though disseminated in a manner which facilitated only partial professional development, (meaning, Black student nurses would never be exposed to enough of the science of nursing to equip them for senior positions) education (maybe even nursing education) was considered one of the few positive contributions of colonialism (Hall 1997). The pursuit of HE was the driving force behind many of the people who travelled from the colonies to the UK. Goulbourne (2002) argues that, "the presence of the British changed the course of history in all the colonies and perhaps nowhere was this marked than in the field of education" (p. 39). Education has always been a strong focus for the people of African Diaspora.

Because of the partial education meted out to Blacks in the colonies, academically aspirational Blacks could only access HE by either travelling overseas or via correspondence courses. Therefore, the invitation to help rebuild the mother country was also an opportunity to develop themselves academically. Narratives from Caribbean immigrants from the late 1940s onwards seem to indicate that the expectation was that they would gain a first-class standard of education in the UK (Hall 1997, Goulbourne 1998 and Phillips and Phillips 1998). For those who expected to be welcomed by the British education institutions as equals, there were rude awakenings and levels of frustration. Those who nurtured the dream of study and work found that social pressures linked to housing, employment as well as challenging inequalities and racism, relegated their learning on their list of priorities. Cumberbatch (1998) suggests that it took an average ten to twelve years before most Black adults could apply themselves to learning. The preceding years, he suggests, were spent working out survival strategies.

The assertion that Britain's education system was inequitable for Blacks from the 1950s was publicly revealed through a hard hitting and controversial book authored by Bernard Coard, a Grenadian teacher. The book was entitled: 'How the West Indian Child is made Educationally Subnormal in the British School System.' Coard's (1971) work exposed the educational experiences of 'West Indian' children who had travelled to the UK to join parents; parents who were now living and working in the UK. Coard's (1971) study identified four key issues: 1. There were 'very large numbers of West Indian Children in schools for the Educationally Sub-Normal' (ESN). 2. That the children had been incorrectly placed in the schools. 3. That once the children were placed in schools for the 'educationally subnormal' they were rarely re-integrated into normal schools. 4. That the children suffered academically in their job prospects and lives because of being placed in these schools. Coard (1971) also affirmed that he could evidence that the authorities were doing very little to stop the scandal.

Coard's (1971) study found that the curriculum itself was racist as it rendered Black children invisible. Teaching resources were void of Black representation which, his study demonstrated, contributed to the poor self-image and self-esteem of Black children. He also identified that teachers had low expectations of Black children, a factor which he was convinced would be a destructive force on the Black children as they transitioned into adulthood. The focus of Coard's (1971) work was schools for the 'Educationally Sub Normal'. It was Coard's (1971) view, (views that were backed up by policy documents he accessed) that teachers were ill-prepared for effectively educating Black children with differentiated languages, culture and practices. Many Caribbean children at the time spoke a combination of English and patois. These children were 'dumped' into schools designed for the educationally sub normal. Coard's (1971) book provided a wakeup call for Black parents, many of whom had trusted the education system to equip their children for professional lives in the UK. Black parents united and became proactive making a shift from trusting the UK's educational system to challenging and informing it. Andrews (2013) suggests that Coard's (1971) findings precipitated the creation of the Black communities' resistance to educational inequality. One of the long-term outcomes of the Black parents' awakening was the Black supplementary school movement. The movement mobilised Black parents and activists into educating Black children in community settings on Saturdays. In these 'Saturday schools' Black parents and activists used culturally appropriate material and addressed issues of self-esteem, self-awareness as well as academic subjects, including the sciences. In a piece reflecting on the four decades since the publication of his book Coard (2005) recalled the institutions' response to his book at the time of its publication. He summarised:

> "the reaction of the 'establishment took two forms. The first was to rush out their spokespersons to deny everything. At first, they said on radio and TV that the book was 'a pack of lies'. Within days, based on the feedback they were getting, and the fact that I would read directly from their 'internal' reports on the electronic media, they amended their position to: There is some truth in it, but most of it consists of lies" (p. 3).

He further discussed that by the end of a six-month period the 'establishment' conceded that the contents were 'accurate' and his book: 'How the West Indian Child is made Educationally Subnormal in the British School System' was suggested as a recommended read for student teachers.

For many Black parents, the shift to equity of education for their children did not manifest at a fast-enough pace after Coard's publication. In (1979) Ken Pryce who wrote extensively on the life of Black Caribbean people in post war Britain stated:

> "…the obstacles confronting the West Indian child in the British classroom are tremendous and are the chief cause of the notoriously slow progress he makes. Mainly because of his mutilating colonial heritage, the West Indian child is severely handicapped…it is unrealistic to think, for example, that unaided, without sympathy, compassion and the provision of extra special facilities to facilitate the transition - the young West Indian can overcome all the shortcomings of his inferior educational upbringing and colonial origin and suddenly respond to the considerably different and more difficult demands placed on him by the British school system" (p. 120).

Those who reflected on the experiences of the post Windrush migrants (Cumberbatch 1998, Phillips and Phillips 1998 and Andrews 2013) recall that young children who either came with, or to join their parents, bore the brunt of racism in education where white educators devised strategies for dealing with them. One such pervasive strategy was being stereotyped as ESN.

Campbell's (2015) untold stories, as well as a video launched in 2014 entitled 'Look How Far We've Come', unearthed accounts from now mature men who had either been labelled ESN or were amongst the activists who 'rescued' Black children from schools for the ESN. In the 'untold stories' using the oral tradition, Dr. Charles shared stories of 'rescuing' Black kids from the ESN schools and securing them in 'traditional' schools where they could demonstrate their capabilities before the education authorities' administrative processes caught up with them. Black students and Black parents used the freedom that Civil rights and capitalism had created to create spaces and opportunities for young aspirational Black young people to thrive.

Whenever I read about the lives of Black people during the decade I was absent from Britain, I can't help thinking about how my brothers and I would have fared and how different our lives could have been if we had not left Britain for the Caribbean.

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Though I was born in the UK, I lived in Jamaica for a decade between the mid-1970s and mid-1980s so it wasn't until I came to work with mature Black women in an NHS context in 2005, that I was exposed to the concept of ESN schools that several Blacks of my generation had been exposed to. It wasn't long after I started working with Healthcare assistants, many who were Black British or Black Caribbean that I realised I was working amongst tangible examples of Pryce's prognoses that the ESN experience would potentially impact the 'victims' employment for life. My MA thesis, (Warren 2008) explored the impact of work-based learning on mature Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) women's educational trajectories. I have selected two of the education experience narratives provided by mature Black women working in low skilled and low paid, healthcare assistant's role to highlight some of the issues linked to the poor education of members of the Black communities during the 1970s and '80s.

Cicely and Janet (pseudonyms) had left Jamaica to join their parents in the UK but found settling into school in the UK 'took some time'. Cicely reported that she was teased for not being able to 'speak English properly' and this, she felt, was a hindrance to her reaching her potential in school. Both these women, and others, shared that their teachers' low expectation of them left them 'disillusioned and unmotivated.' Cicely recalled:

> *"In Jamaica, the schools were strict, there was a consequence for not doing your work, but in the UK when I went to school, there was no consequence for not engaging and no encouragement to engage. Teachers weren't bothered, so I didn't bother" (p. 8).*

The fact is that Coard (1971) and Pryce's (1979) forewarning that the inequitable education experience would continue its impact in their adult working lives became a truism for so many of the mature Caribbean women I work with. At the time of my 2008 study several of these mature women had moved from low paid catering roles to healthcare assisting and felt 'trapped' in their low skilled, low paid, subordinated, shift working roles.

In conclusion, this section illustrates that inequitable education experienced by migrant children of the 70s and 80s was most probably contributory to their professional under-development. As for their parents, their hope of equitable education access for both themselves and their children failed to materialise for far too many (Campbell 2015). Generally, education for migrants and their children failed to be 'transformative'. Education was overly concerned with the institutional and structural 'norms' such as exams results and less concerned with enlightenment, empowerment and engagement. The negative experiences, though painful and despite the long-lived consequences, were not all futile in that it fueled Black parents and community groups to step up politically, becoming less passive recipients of education and more proactive informants of the education they wanted for their children Coard (1971) and Pryce (1979).

One of the positive legacies of this travesty of justice is that Black parents of the Windrush and subsequent generations have seen the need to become the 'true and holistic' educators of their children at home as well as through the supplementary school movement. Politically, the supplementary school movement is as necessary today as it was in the 1970s (Andrews 2013).

1.6 Post War – Caribbean Women's Student Nurse Experiences in the United Kingdom

This section will start by focusing on the generalised views of nursing education of the 'first wave', post war, Black Caribbean student nurses. These experiences, retold and presented in documentaries: Look how far we've come (2014), Untold Stories (2015) and BBC 4 (2016)) expose the multiple inequities experienced by Black Caribbean women in the NHS from training and throughout their nursing profession (Dhaliwal and Kay 2008). However, as a social action piece, I did not want to merely focus on highlighting the struggles and oppressions (Jones and Snow 2010). So, I looked for areas which were positive and we could learn from (Hewitt 2002). Hence, this section will showcase how Black women in the Caribbean during the colonial times gained professional recognition and successfully accessed and operated in what was formally the 'snowy white peaks' of nursing in the Caribbean. Audre Lorde's (1984) thoughts below can contribute to raising our consciousness. She asserts:

> "Institutionalised rejection of difference is an absolute necessity in a profit economy that needs its outsiders as surplus people. As members of such an economy, we have all been programmed to respond to the human differences between us with fear and loathing and to handle that difference in one of three ways; ignore it, and if that is not possible, copy it if we think it is dominant, or destroy it if we think it is subordinate" (p.115).

The UK-based literature (Baxter 1998, Rivett 1998, Carter 2003 and Jones and Snow 2010) was unanimous in their acceptance that the nursing education accessed by Black student nurses in the UK was not an equitable provision. The literatures suggest that the UK government and colonial office intentionally entrapped Black nurses, thus providing a constant stream of cheap labour for the NHS. Kramer's 2006 government funded study highlighted that:

> "In 1949, the ministries of Health and Labour, together with the Colonial Office, the General Nursing Council and the Royal College of Nursing, began a deliberate policy of recruiting from the British colonies, particularly the West Indies. Recruitment was aimed at three main categories of workers: hospital auxiliary staff, nurses or trainee nurses, domestic workers and laundry workers" (p. 16).

This recruitment drive appeared to be an ongoing strategy for decades. Rivett (1998) suggests that:

> "…after 1974, health authorities had many local authority members, some of whom saw political as well as practical reasons for recruiting widely from ethnic minority groups… often they funneled these recruits into auxiliary grades" (p. 256).

Thus, the government then and subsequent governments have used the staffing issues within the NHS to covertly justify the sustained confined, subordinated professional spaces for Black women who work within it.

The professional progression of Black nurses in the NHS has been far from significant. (Baxter 1998, Carter 2003, Kramer 2006, Dhaliwal and McKay 2008). Sen's 1970 study found that several of the 'West Indian' student nurses expressed resentment at having to train for the subordinate State Enrolled Nurse (SEN) role. One of Sen's (1970) researchers captured the following from a recruitment event where the student in question was placed on the subordinated enrolled nursing programme:

> "this nurse is a superior type of girl and the matron may recommend her to proceed to the course for State Registered Nurses (SRN)" (p. 66).

Another observation captured a participant's response at a recruitment drive:

> "girls should be told before coming to England of the educational requirements for the SRN course, as many of us had to the do the SEN or pupil nurse which does not have the same status as a student nurse" (p. 66).

Both the literature and orally conveyed narratives illustrate that Black women's recruitment and placements was politically divisive and their nursing education was not equitable to that of their white counterparts. Carter (2003) and Jones and Snow (2010) further reveal that, Black nurses initially accepted to do SRN training were not secure as even during the training, every attempt was made by nursing tutors to channel them into the SEN route before they completed their training. The above findings contribute to the debates about education inequality experienced by generations of the Black community and nullifies the rhetoric often shared amongst us, that if we work hard and it is good enough we will succeed. Dubois (1973) in his wisdom warned Black people against believing such generalisations; he asserts:

> "we tell only but half a truth to young men and women when we say: do well and you will be successful. They are apt to interpret success in terms of the world's applause and it's not true that the world applauds all well-doing…" (p. 45).

What Dubois was saying is rarely heard amongst the guidance given to Black children by their parents and though it is understandable I question whether how we educate our children within the community should change. For generations, Caribbean parents generally advocate that to attain academic and professional heights, Black children will need to work at least twice as hard as their white counterparts. They rarely state 'the other truth', that inequality and social injustice often negates hard work.

The narratives from Black women found they were generally asked to work night shifts which were unpopular with their white British colleagues. They were over represented on placements in mental health hospitals where the work was more physically demanding.

Almost without exception, immigrant Black nurses were exposed to racism from their seniors, peers as well as their patients (Sen 1970 and Thomas and Williams 1972). Baxter in 1998, and a decade later, Dhaliwal and McKay 2008, assert that Black nurses are still waiting for equality with British nurses. They suggest that Black nurses seeking to hold positions above the base tiers of the nursing hierarchy have faced a plethora of problems predominantly around racism and stereotyping, issues, they argue, that these issues are yet to be addressed by the NHS. Baxter (1998) further argues that the injustices continued from one generation to another. She states:

> "it appears that black girls born and brought up in the UK were also more likely than their white counterparts to end up as enrolled nurses, though unlike their immigrant parents they were aware of the differing levels of nurse training" (p. 27).

To further evidence the above assertion, a Black mature nurse who had risen to a sister's position and found that she could not professionally progress further recalls:

> "My mother (who was an SEN) made me promise that if I did nursing that I wouldn't become an enrolled nurse… she said, if you become an enrolled nurse you do all the 'donkey work' and you never get a chance to get into management." (Dhaliwal and McKay 2008:27)

This second-generation Black nurse shared that though she had five O levels when she applied for the SRN programme, when she went for her interview she was asked by the careers advisor: "why don't you do the two-year programme, because it is just as good as the three-year course, it is just shorter" (p. 27)? Another participant in Dhaliwal and McKay's (2008) study stated that she:

> "met loads of black nurses who had done the enrolled training who had even more O levels than I did at the time but they were encouraged to do the enrolled training and they didn't know any difference" (p. 27).

Life is complex and immigrating to a country which had colonial power over your people could never be an easy or arguably an equitable transition. However, as I read and listened to the accounts of my parents' generation as well as my own, I can not help but question whether there were examples of professional emancipation that our mothers', our own or future generations could learn from. This led me to delve into the Black nurses' movement in Jamaica where I saw a pattern that I think is worth revisiting as we strive to redress the imbalances Black women face in the nursing profession here in the UK.

Before I move forward, please permit me to ask you to really concentrate on the quote below from a study on BME group's contribution to the NHS. Jones and Snow's (2010) study asserts that:

> "Many of the nurses who came to the UK from the Caribbean in the 1950s expected to achieve the internationally-recognised State Registered Nurse qualification which would allow them to return home and gain employment. Nevertheless, nursing authorities at that time argued that their racial characteristics limited their intellectual capacities and motivation to achieve that level of training. Thus, many overseas nurses were forced or even duped into State Enrolled Nurse training rather than the more prestigious and more highly valued SRN qualification" (p. 9).

I just want to leave that quote hanging there for a while as I remind myself of the hopeful aspirational young people who answered the humanitarian call to help rebuild the motherland as well as support a newly formed NHS. Here, their racial characteristics and intellectual capacities are called into question, interpreted as inferior and subordinate. Now I may need to inform or remind the reader that Jamaica and the Caribbean islands were under British colonial rule until 1962 so, nursing education in the 1950s in the Caribbean was facilitated by British nurses from the UK.

In an earlier section (p. 24) I discussed Hall's (1997) concept of fixed identities and how they were imposed on Black nurses, Jones and Snow's (2010) study found that:

> "Racism and discrimination have been universal experiences of health workers migrating to the UK especially around training and career progression. Many of the nurses who came to the UK from the Caribbean in the 1950s expected to achieve the internationally-recognised State Registered Nurse qualification (SRN) which would allow them to return home and gain employment… The longer-term consequences of this were significant as the SEN was not an internationally-recognised qualification and limited overseas nurses' options for returning home" (p. 3).

Black women's labour exploitation in the NHS was often governed through politics, Rivett (1998) and Carter (2003) suggest that the economy heavily influenced the decision to engage in the recruitment of immigrants. Furthermore, Rivett (1998) states that:

> "Not only were auxiliaries making major contribution to patient care but they were increasingly holding positions of responsibility, carrying out a wide range of nursing that registered nurses were either unable or unwilling to do in some areas of the country. After 1974 health authorities had many local authority members, some of whom saw political as well as practical reasons for recruiting from ethnic minority groups and the pacific rim; often they funneled these recruits into auxiliary grades" (p. 256).

For many Black women, the SEN programme somewhat halted the professional mobilisation they sought, but simultaneously Britain's NHS benefitted from a steady flow of 'cheap' workers (Rivett 1998 and Carter 2003). This knowledge of exploitation gathered momentum when I tried to make sense of the recruitment processes for migrant nurses which I will explore further.

Thomas and Williams (1972) and Carter (2003) found that during the early post war years' Black Caribbean women found that the recruitment process for UK student nurse places lacked clarity and sufficient information to enable them to efficiently complete applications. In Sen's (1970), Thomas and Williams' (1972) and Carter's (2003) studies, Black Caribbean women shared their experiences of being subjected to tests on the day of their arrival at the recruiting hospital. Tests would be administered, though the women had just completed both a long flight from Jamaica and long road journeys from airports to the recruiting hospitals. Some of the women shared that they had no warning that tests would be undertaken.

Having linked the deficit theory model of education to the Black experience in both compulsory and nursing education, I felt a compulsion to further explore whether it was possible to make a correlation between teachers placing Black children in schools for the ESN during the 1960s and the way their parents were perceived a decade earlier when:

> "…nursing authorities at that time argued that their racial characteristics limited their intellectual capacities and motivation to achieve that level of training. (Jones and Snow 2010:3).

I could find no study that had delved into correlations. There has been very little information (Pryce 1974) that I was able to locate which even alluded to the issue of the correlations and issues faced in Black families. Black parents on vocational programmes and their children in compulsory education simultaneously experienced inequitable education provisions. These combined issues would make an interesting future study.

Except for Jones' and Snow's (2010) work, which was commissioned by a Black and Minority Ethnic group, most of the literature relating to Black women's experience of nursing education in Britain, that I've read in the UK, was either written by white authors or funded by political parties.

So, I went to the Jamaican context to see what lessons we could learn from the experiences of the nurses during the times when Britain was recruiting from the Caribbean. I learned that Caribbean women had a history of inferior nursing education even whilst they were in their birth countries (Hewitt 2002). I wanted to explore whether there was a time when Caribbean women 'fought' or made a political stand against the inequalities and professional limitations imposed on them. On a visit to the National Library of Jamaica I accessed archival material on nursing education covering the period of the 1940s to the 1970s. The Jamaican literature was sparse too, but I gained new and interesting insights as well as possible learning examples for Black nurses in Britain to consider.

Though newspaper archives were useful, the works of Caribbean trained nurses, Swaby (1980) and Hewitt (2002), were extremely illuminating. Hewitt's (2002) work looking at nursing education between 1946 and 1986 posits:

> "For as far back as before the turn of the present century, young women have been prepared at the Kingston Public Hospital (Jamaica) to practice nursing. The apprenticeship model which had been used solely in the past, began gradually to give 'probationers' some degree of 'student' status. Although nurses trained during those early years gained a high degree of practical competence, their theoretical knowledge lagged behind" (p. 8).

The 'lagging behind' that Hewitt alludes to here was the fact that Jamaican qualified nurses could not gain nurse status in 'first world' countries because the syllabus they were taught omitted aspects of theoretical and scientific knowledge which would equip them to apply for registered nurse positions in 'first world' countries. Hewitt (2002) asserts that the theoretical knowledge deficit in the nursing curriculum hindered those who aspired to engage in further professional development overseas or seek promotion in their own country. Both Swaby (1980) and Hewitt (2002) argue that the practical approach to nursing education delivered in Jamaica rendered the Jamaican nurse capable of providing 'good bedside care' to patients. However, when Caribbean nurses wanted to undertake courses or work in the UK, Canada or the USA, they were obliged to undertake further training leading to theoretical competence before they could meet the criteria to access courses targeted at qualified nurses.

It was only through my reading of Swaby (1980) and Hewitt (2002) that I linked the 'good bedside nurse' term used by Caribbean nurses in the UK. I was disappointed to find that the good bedside nurse label in the UK based literature interpreted as a status of pride for Black nurses was in fact implying that Black nurses were incapable of being leaders. The term was a depiction of their fixed professional status. When I coupled this new knowledge with the way I perceived that Black nurses wore the 'good bedside nurse' rank as a mark of honour, I became quite frustrated that many Black nurses who I had spoken to appeared to have internalised and proudly owned the 'status'. I started to wonder, in fact hope, that Black nurses would journey with me to understanding the origins of the 'status' then expand it, replacing it with, I don't know… something like, 'I possess the skills, knowledge and ability to be more than a good beside nurse'. Hewitt (2002) provides names (Ruth Nita Barrow, Gertrude Hildegarde Swaby and Julie Symes) of Caribbean nurses who travelled to Canada, America and the UK to undertake and successfully complete postgraduate nursing courses. These Caribbean 'change agents' were politically astute and utilised change in legislation as a conduit for professional liberation, not only for themselves, but for future generations of Caribbean nurses. I wanted to seek out opportunities for learning and I think this section provides insights into the courage and unity required to facilitate change. It also highlights how influential Black women can be, even when they appear to have little authority.

The contributions made by the women named above in Hewitt's (2002) work showcases how significant change in the nursing profession was instigated by Caribbean nurses during colonial times. Caribbean nurses coalesced giving them the momentum to use constitutional change to propel them to professional liberation. Jamaican historian Black (1958) informs us that Jamaica, in 1944, before the UK's NHS came into being, and whilst still under the colonial system, had a constitutional change which gave Jamaicans and women the right to vote. Hewitt (2002) argues that Jamaican nurses embraced the opportunities that suffrage and voting rights empowered them with. She contends that once women gained rights through voting, Black Caribbean nurses became professionally empowered. Senior nursing positions on the islands during times of colonisation were reserved solely for white nurses from the UK. Here, we see that the snowy white peaks of Kline's 2014 work have been perpetual in the Black nurses' experience. Following the constitutional change of the 1940s, a group of nurses from various islands of the Caribbean came together with a primary aim to improve the standard of the nursing education they experienced. Hewitt (2002) argues that this group of Black Caribbean nurses were dissatisfied with the image that 'first world' nurses had of nurses trained in the Caribbean. The Caribbean nurses' professional dissatisfaction coupled with the freedom they were given through constitutional rights empowered them to form the Jamaican General Trained Nursing Association (JGTNA).

The aim of the JGTNA was to gain reciprocal registration with the nurses of England. Hewitt (2002) highlights the group's intentions which included:

> "state registration for nurses', reciprocal of nurse training with reputable nursing bodies abroad, especially the General Nursing Council of England and Wales. National and international recognition of the association as the professional organisation for nurses in Jamaica" (p. 16).

The British literature made no mention of this radical movement of Caribbean nurses who engaged in postgraduate nursing education to repudiate their colonised fixed nursing identity. What the Jamaican accounts highlighted was the fact that Black nurses wanted to be liberated from the colonial nursing curriculum which was lacking in theoretical rigor. They also wanted to be free of the dominance of white nurses who themselves wanted to be liberated from the dominance of male doctors (Swaby 1980).

So, what gaps in knowledge did the Jamaican literature fill and what learning opportunities are there for 21st Century Black nurses? Hewitt (2002) posits that in 1943, the Rushcliffe Committee recommended that colonial nurses should undertake nursing examinations.

The exam recommendation supported the JGTNA's aim to raise the standards of nursing education in the Caribbean. The development of Caribbean nursing education was led by Nita Barrow and a small team. Ms. Barrow was the first Black public health nurse in Jamaica. In 1950, the JGTNA wanted to ensure that Caribbean nurses could compete internationally. To achieve this, they recognised that amongst other things, the nursing curriculum required a greater level of scientific knowledge. It was the JGTNA's vision to devise a nursing programme which would equip Jamaican qualified nurses to confidently meet the criteria to directly access postgraduate courses in England, Canada and the USA (Hewitt 2002).

Hewitt (2002) quotes Barrow who, in 1950 at the beginning of the Caribbean nurses' journey for professional respect and recognition asserted:

> "The concept of self which the nurse of the Caribbean has inculcated in her, was by the status afforded to her. For the first part of the century, it was difficult for her to aspire to a very senior position in her own country. The preparation provided within training schools was not designed to so prepare her. Finally, when these positions were opened it was stated in government regulations that the aspirants had to be holders of a qualification outside the area" (p. 20).

I re-read Barrow's quote of the 1950s and wondered if the very strategy that had been used in the Caribbean of the 1950s was replicated in the UK. What I mean is that Caribbean women travelling to the UK were, as Rivett (1998) and Jones and Snow (2010) suggested, 'funneled' or 'duped' into the subordinate tiers of nursing from which only a very select group could become leaders. In addition, for as long as the NHS has been in existence, Black women have been positioned to accept that they will always look up to the 'snowy white peaks' (Kline, 2014). I must say that if I concluded on the point made above, I would be discouraged, but the JGTNA women have left us with a legacy for learning. They demonstrated that it was possible to be liberated from fixed professional identities. We also have a clear vision of what Black women can accomplish when they become politically astute and unite in their quest for change.

The JGTNA accomplished both their primary and secondary aims and their achievements were acknowledged by the colonial Chief Nurse of the time. The Jamaican Gleaner, Jamaica's national newspaper, (see Appendix 3) reported the chief nurse's address, Miss Udell declared:

> "the nurses in Jamaica had been working hard for three things. Registration, reciprocity with England and Wales and recognition internationally. The group's success was evident, as in five years all three aims had been accomplished and the Jamaica General Trained Nurses' Association had been accepted as a member of the international council of nurses" (Jamaican Daily Gleaner, 1956).

The news report stated that she concluded her speech by stating that there were not many countries that could have achieved all three aims in five years.

The aims were achieved because the nurses in Jamaica worked were commited and focussed. Jamaica was the first colonial territory to achieve this recognition (Jamaican Daily Gleaner 1956 and Hewitt 2002).

In 1953, the Jamaican Gleaner reported that a selection committee was introduced to recruit student nurses from Jamaica to work in Britain. However, the introduction of the selection committee's recruitment process was heavily criticised by both potential student nurses as discussed earlier, but also by recruiting hospitals in the UK (Gleaner 1956). Hewitt (2002) reported that securing references and verification of qualifications was 'shambolic and chaotic', because the processes were almost impossible to govern. As confidence in the process waned, UK hospitals decided to place adverts and recruit directly rather than through the colonial office. The ineffective selection process was then abolished in 1956. Here is an interesting observation: the selection process to recruit nurses from the colonies was abolished the same year that Jamaican nursing education gained equal status with the UK (Hewitt 2002, Gleaner 1956). Unfortunately, I couldn't locate literature which discussed how the new status achieved in Jamaica impacted the recruitment of Jamaican student nurses to Britain. In 1956, five years after Jamaica's nursing education gained status reciprocal to the UK, as well as the abolition of colonial office recruitment, the National Advisory Council of nurses and midwives sanctioned direct hospital recruitment (Gleaner 1956 and Hewitt 2002).

As the records are not explicit, I wondered whether recruitment from the colonies became more challenging as Jamaican nurses could undertake the same qualification in their home country. Though the press accounts were often uncorroborated by the experiences and narratives of Black nurses in the UK, the Gleaner suggested that recruitment drives were successful. In 1956, the Gleaner reported that the Chief Nursing Officer stated that she received thousands of applications from Jamaicans who were motivated by a desire to 'serve suffering humanity' (Gleaner January 26th, 1956). Letters home however, told Caribbean women's experiences of subordination and racism in nursing education in the UK (Sewell 1998, Phillips and Phillips 1998). Paradoxically, the Gleaner of the period (see Appendix 4) carried the following quote in 1956:

> "The present practice whereby colonial girls train in British hospitals is good. It benefits the students themselves for the training is excellent, the experience of being in Britain is educative and the girls themselves gain self-confidence by working on a basis of complete equality with British nurses" (p.19).

Complete equality with British nurses has not been an assertion heard in any of the narratives or literature which carries the perceptions of Black women as student nurses in Britain during those times and it could be argued even today.

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I was really buoyed by the findings that informed this section. I accept that the Jamaican historical view was heavily reliant on Hewitt's (2002) work and the Jamaican Gleaner. However, for me the limited texts are not problematic. Hewitt delved into archives and has provided us with important insights into the tenacity, discipline and professional commitment of Black nurses of the 20th Century. Hewitt's work also provides a significant example of what can be accomplished when Black women strategise, possess a clear vision, unite and work against the odds to fulfil their aims. The findings from this section makes me want to shout a call to Black nurses saying, look, things can be different and you can make that difference. Listen, you do not need to be reliant on the 'snowy white peaks' for morsels of hope of promotion and acceptance or for affirmative action to make you tokens. You are significant in number, your contributions in the UK's NHS may be understated, but that does not equate to underrepresentation or weakness. Surely, your numbers afford you a level of strength and influence. Where is the spirit of Nita Barrow? How long will you live with the discontent of the inculcated concept of professional self? When will you accept that though aspiring to very senior positions in your own country is tough, you need to consider your own contribution to making this possible? Finally, Black women, what can you learn from history so that you can impact your own futures?'

I want to encourage Black nurses to read the quote below slowly so it can be fully digested!

Asking themselves,

    is the statement

        below possibly as true for me today

            as it was for my ancestors in 1950?

                Reflect for a while, then ask…

                    what will be my commitment

                      and

                        contribution to change?

> *"The concept of self which the Black nurse of the UK ~~Caribbean~~ has inculcated in her, was by the status afforded to her. For the ~~first~~ most part of her professional life ~~the century~~, it was difficult for her to aspire to a very senior position in her own country. The preparation provided within training schools was not designed to so prepare her Finally, when these positions were opened it was stated ~~in government regulations~~ amongst covert interview panelists that the aspirants had to be ~~holders of a qualification outside the area~~ not like us" (p. 20) (italics mine to bring history into the present).*

We can talk about context and timing, but I want to remind us all, of a couple of things, in the 1950s several of the Caribbean islands were colonised. Caribbean women from across the islands converged in Jamaica and supported each other educationally, professionally as well as socially to make professional reciprocity with the UK as well as breaking of the 'glass ceiling' possible. Black women often say, we have no or too few role models, sometimes we need to search our histories because the UK's histories have not been written by people like us. However, here is an example of stalwart work undertaken and achieved by Black nurses who freed themselves from their apportioned fixed and subordinated professional positions. I close this important section and will now proceed with the literature and oral reviews by exploring some of the professional transitions of UK's nursing profession.

1.7 Nursing Education in the United Kingdom

This section will commence with a brief history of nursing education in the UK and will highlight some of the ways Black women were professionally impacted as nursing education transitioned from vocational training to a graduate programme. The Health Care Act of 1919 preceded the NHS and though the act permitted unregistered nursing assistants and auxiliaries to work, their roles were not formally recognised until 1955 (Bradshaw 2001). The Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) registered two categories of nurses, the State Registered Nurse (SRN) and the State Enrolled Nurse (SEN). To access the 3-year SRN apprenticeship, applicants had to possess 5 O levels. To access the 2-year SEN programme applicants needed 2 O levels. Baxter (1998), Rivett (1998) Carter (2003) as well as Jones and Snow (2010) all highlight and discuss the complexities, injustices and exploitations of immigrant, Black women's labour. A recurring observation was that Black women in significant numbers were 'funneled' (Rivett 1998), or 'forced or duped' (Jones and Snow 2011) into SEN roles. However, a clear omission from the literature is the professional impact on Black women when the SEN 2-year programme was discontinued following the introduction of the Project 2000.

Bradshaw (2001) suggests that since the inception of the NHS in 1948, the structure of nursing has undergone a series of radical changes. She outlines that prior to 1972, the hierarchical structure of authority in nursing was clear: Matron, Sister, Staff Nurse, SRN, SEN and nursing auxiliaries. Influenced by fiscal and nurse recruitment challenges, the UK's nursing education's shift was introduced in the Queen's speech of 1978. Nursing apprenticeships conducted solely in hospitals would be terminated. Future nursing education would be delivered through a combination of HE modules for nursing theory with placements in hospital for practical skills acquisition and development. (see Appendix 5) The clear nursing structure would also change as the State Enrolled and Nursing auxiliaries would be abolished and new roles introduced, for example, the unregistered HCA and the Assistant Practitioner's (AP) role which will be discussed later.

The changes in nursing education in the UK included a shift from a solitary apprenticeship model governed by the General Nursing Council (GNC) in hospitals, to incorporate work placements in hospitals with theory taught in Higher Education Institutions (HEI). This new approach meant that the certificate in nursing was replaced by a diploma for most, though a degree route was also available. Significantly, the student nurse was given trainee status and therefore had to be supernumerary to the shift team. Nurses had longed for a more robust academic nursing programme as it was deemed essential to pave the way towards specialist roles with greater autonomy (Freshwater 1998). In 2013, the diploma route was also abolished and nursing became a solely graduate profession.

Like many of the issues affecting Black women in nursing, the end of the SEN role and its impact on Black nurses has not been discussed much in the literature. Baxter (1998) argued that the shift seriously affected the Black migrant SENs and the generation that followed them, as they too were significantly overrepresented in the SEN contingent.

The shift in the nursing hierarchical structure and education presented Black SENs with additional professional challenges as their transitional development was controlled by their professional seniors. Baxter (1998) asserts:

> "it is only through an instinct for survival that many younger enrolled nurses felt the need to take up the conversion courses finally leading to registration… however, the opportunity to undertake the conversion courses was dependent on recommendations and references from ward sisters and managers" (p. 29).

The Black SENs' career progression was primarily in the hands of the dominant group who had for decades restricted them to subordinated and peripheral spaces in the NHS. Carter's (2003) study suggested that there was a concerted effort on the part of white nurse managers to ensure that the demarcation between 'types of nursing' continued; which had in effect become Black nurses on the lower tiers 'being good bedside nurses' and white nurses in management no longer supporting patients with personal care needs. Black women found themselves fighting structures which appeared invisible to everyone but them. Hill Collins' (1997) encapsulates their experience:

> "even when the political and economic conditions that originally generated controlling images disappear, such images prove remarkably tenacious because they not only keep Black women oppressed but are key in maintaining interlocking systems of race, class and gender oppression" (p. 68).

Hill Collins' (1997) words reinforce my new-found desire to engage with my past. Not to become a victim of it, but to proactively encourage Black women to critically engage and scrutinise our situations using our histories. Primarily because it is through knowing our histories that Black women realise that we may have internalised stereotypes of ourselves, therefore, potentially become effective conduits for perpetuating our own oppression. Black Caribbean women working in the NHS for over six decades have predominantly orally conveyed their dissatisfaction with their experiences of nursing education and the nursing profession in the UK (Sen 1970, Baxter 1998, Kramer 2006 and Dhaliwal and Mackay 2008). There is very little literature written by Black women of their own experiences. Yet, they have been retelling their stories for decades, having their narratives written by others, or captured through television programmes (Baxter 1998, Phillips and Phillips 1998, BBC Windrush series 1998, Kramer 2006, Jones and Snow 2010 and BBC Black nurses 2017).

At the beginning of this thesis, I made a case for the inclusion of the oral, the storytelling which is prevalent in my culture. I stressed that though the oral tradition was subjugated by white patriarchs and academia, this study was somewhat political and is therefore reclaiming and validating our oral traditions. Below I have captured a second-generation Black nurse's experience of the SEN conversion practice. My colleague and I were having a 'catchup' over lunch when she started to share and I asked for permission to capture and retell our conversation.

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Though my colleague did not mind if I used her name, I have decided to use a pseudonym for her. She is VCW and I am Sankofa.

VCW.   *"You think nursing is a nice profession…no love… I could tell you a few stories…"*

Sankofa.   *"I'm interested in nursing education, especially issues around Black women and SEN training and then how they got through their conversion courses. What can you share with me from your experiences?"*

VCW.   *"My first nursing qualification, I was an enrolled nurse."*

Sankofa.   *"Tell me about that, how you became an enrolled nurse?"*

VCW.   *"I completed the application form and went to be interviewed. At the end of the interview, I was told I had a place but when I got the paperwork it was for State Enrolled, not State Registered. State Enrolled was a two-year programme and less academic. While State Registered was more academic.*

Sankofa.   *"So, tell me about the process, tell me about the interview. Who interviewed you?"*

VCW.   *"Back in the days recruitment teams were all English, middle-aged veterans of nursing.*

Sankofa.   *"And so, you went in and you were offered…?"*

VCW.   *"State Enrolled training."*

Sankofa.   *"You were offered State Enrolled?"*

VCW.   *"Uh-hu"*

Sankofa.   *"You had applied for…?"*

VCW.   *"State Registered!"*

Sankofa.   *"And when you went for the interview was it a State Registered…?"*

VCW.   *"To be honest, it wasn't obvious what I had been interviewed for, not until afterwards when I was told in the letter that I got the job for the State Enrolled. My letter informed me that I was successful to enter the pupil nurse training not the student nurse training. That's how I knew."*

Sankofa.   *"And did you question that?"*

VCW.   *"No"*

Sankofa.   *"Why not?"*

VCW.	*"Don't know… youth… naivety… excitement that I got a job. That I got in to do my training."*
Sankofa.	*"But you didn't want to be an enrolled nurse, did you?"*
VCW.	*"No, but to be perfectly honest, when I did start the course and I was there in the classroom and they were telling us the difference between the two roles, they made it sound like there wasn't much difference. But as time went on that was clearly not the case."*
Sankofa.	*"What was the case?"*
VCW.	*"It's rather like having a matron and having the ward manager on the same ward, that's what it was like with the registered nurses and the enrolled nurses. The enrolled nurses could give the hands-on basic care. And coordinate that level of care amongst the none-qualified staff, students and auxiliaries. But the overall running of the ward would be the responsibility of the Registered nurses. We couldn't give drugs, nothing as important as that. After all we couldn't calculate, we didn't know how to do maths or read. Not until THEY needed us to." (She placed emphasis on the word in block capitals).*
Sankofa.	*"Okay so where did that come from?"*
VCW.	*"What?"*
Sankofa.	*"That we didn't know how to do maths and read bit?"*
VCW.	*"Oh, it just came from me."*
Sankofa.	*"And what made you come out with that?"*
VCW.	*"Because that's how they made you feel really because they could do drugs and you couldn't. And like I said unless they wanted you to… they were always officially in charge. However, we were often left in charge of the ward without a registered nurse."*
Sankofa.	*"Give me some insights into the training."*
VCW.	*"Oh gosh, it was so long ago. Assignments, assessments, I didn't fail anything. Pride kept me going…. "To be honest, at that time most of the Black nurses would apply for SEN because they never thought they would get SRN full stop. I applied for SRN because I knew I could do it. You see, my father was the kind of man who talked about education a lot. He was highly educated and so it seemed like a natural thing for us to do… to aim high. Though I started on the SEN, I later went on to do the conversion course and then to do the diploma, then the degree and the Masters."*

Sankofa.	*"Tell me about the conversion course, what it was like for you?"*
VCW.	*"The approach was that the nurse trainers seemed to leave us feeling that we were not as good as or as clever as others…I didn't dare question anything, even if I wanted to, because of fear. A Black history course is what impacted me. It was a course I did for leisure and it was while I was doing that course that I found I had a voice…white nurses back then were not the friendliest of people. Those who were already qualified were not the friendliest or most supportive. The nursing officers and matrons generally just looked down their noses at you. They barely said anything to you."*
Sankofa.	*"Have you got specific examples?"*
VCW.	*"You would pass them in the corridor and they would just ignore you. I remember one time I was doing my stint in theatres and this nursing officer had come in and I was standing behind these drapes changing my clothes from theatre scrubs into my uniform. What she said to me would never be accepted now. She could see my legs from behind the screen and she said at the top of her voice: who is that wearing black stockings?"*
Sankofa.	*"Did you have stockings on?"*
VCW.	*"No... So, then she said, come, come out from around there… when I went out, she went, oh I didn't see your face!"*
Sankofa.	*"Did you respond?"*
VCW.	*"No, I wouldn't dare".*
Sankofa.	*"Was that a one off?"*
VCW.	*"That stands out, they weren't very supportive at all, with anything. I didn't feel I could go to them apart from one ward sister. There's only one that I feel that I could ever go to and, you know, really share. I didn't have much confidence at all in them days, very little. I never use to talk I never use to challenge. It just wasn't done…it was also the fear element there was this fear element. I was worried that if I opened the mouth I'm going to say the wrong thing…"*
Sankofa.	*"Tell me a little bit more about your transitional training…"*
VCW.	*"I did the conversion course and this is quite interesting really. I had applied to do it, and it was several years before I did… before I finally did it. For years, each time I was supposed to start, someone else was given the opportunity and I wasn't. I couldn't understand it. They just wouldn't give me the opportunity to go, right. Then it so happened that one day, I can't remember now how or when but I went into the then nursing officer's office and I saw some papers on her desk. Anyway, the top sheet of paper… had got my name on it in pencil, and there were lots of other scribbles on the page but my name was quite clear. It read, conversion course no! Do not let her on…"*

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Sankofa.	*"Really! What did you do?"*
VCW.	*"Nothing at first and then when I had enough courage, I went to my manager and told my manager about it. You see the nursing officer would've had to allocate you a place on the conversion course back then. I am convinced it is only because I formally complained about it that… the next opening I was on the conversion course."*
Sankofa.	*"What year was this?"*
VCW.	*"95. Things were different it's only because I made a noise. Let me tell you, there were loads of loads of black girls who applied …and had a fight on their hands to get on the conversion course some of them waited longer than I did… years!"*

Though that was not the end of our conversation, the section above provides insights into one Black woman's experience and her experience is supported by the generalisations in the literature. This lived experience also corroborates Baxter's assertions, that it was instinct and survival that got many second generation SENs onto and through the conversion courses.

I will close this section with wisdom from W.E.B. Dubois (1973) who postulates:

> "If we are to be trained grudgingly and suspiciously and not regarding what we can be, but with the sole reference to what somebody wants us to be, we will simply be trying to follow the line of least resistance… And as a result, teachers will fail in their attempt to raise a Black race to its full humanity" (p. 35).

Generally, Black nurses working in Britain's NHS were trained 'to be what the UK's NHS needed them to be' and as a result, in significant numbers, they have occupied the lower tiers of nursing and been 'kept' in subordination through imperceptible but pervasive structures.

1.8 The shift from State Enrolled Nurse to Healthcare Assistant

With the abolition of the SEN role came what some considered a poor replacement, the role of the Healthcare Assistant (HCA). Unlike the SEN, the HCA required no training, neither were HCAs on the NMC's register. Wareing (2012), Cavendish (2013) and Edmond et al. (2012) argue that the Healthcare Assistant's role mirrored the role of nursing aids which date back to the Crimean War of the mid-19th Century. The first HCAs primarily provided personal care support for patients, though now many undertake training which enables them to have basic clinical duties delegated to them.

Wareing (2012) argues that one implication of the development of the nursing role is the perpetuation of the division of labour within the nursing team. Qualified nurses take on the 'clean' aspects of nursing whilst healthcare assistants' tasks are restricted to the 'dirty' jobs of personal care. The NHS, as an employer, treats HCAs and registered nurses who supervise them as separate workforces. One example would be the clear failure to consider how the shift from a diploma to a graduate programme would affect the career prospects of HCAs. Historically, aspirational HCAs could transition from the HCA role to a student nurse after engaging in level 3 vocational qualifications coupled with evidence of updating their literacy and numeracy skills to level 2. With the elimination of the diploma qualification, many HCAs find it impossible to gain the academic qualifications to access the degree programme whilst working varied shift patterns (Cavendish, 2012).

Cavendish (2012) suggests that HCAs who make up approximately a third of the caring workforce in hospitals generally spend more time working at patients' bedsides than nurses. Other reports, Kessler and Heron (2010), suggest that HCAs spend twice as much time on direct patient care work compared to registered nurses. In Thornley's 1998 study, HCAs reported feeling undervalued and overlooked by nurses and medics alike. Yet when HCAs' commitment to patient care was discussed in Reed's (2010) study, Reed found that though they felt undervalued, they were dedicated to their role as patient advocates. HCAs described themselves as, 'the backbone of the NHS: the silent workforce that provides personal care for patients' (Cavendish 2012: 512). For HCAs, an area of contention which contributes to them feeling undervalued is the fact that they are not governed by registration.

The debate on HCA registration has been ongoing for over two decades (Parr 2012). The NMC, the UK regulator and the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) hold contrasting views on statutory regulation for HCAs.

The RCN consider the need for mandatory regulation, whilst the NMC opposes. In March 2010 Baroness Emerton proposed a bill in Parliament for all health care workers in England to be regulated. The bill was withdrawn without a vote but due to be reconsidered. Until 2008, HCAs were not required to hold formal qualifications to gain employment. Kessler, et al's. study findings (2012) is supported by my own Master's study (Warren 2008), which illustrates that many HCAs transition from retail or factory work either directly into the NHS or to private nursing homes where they gain experience before applying for roles within the NHS.

Prior to nursing becoming a graduate programme, the Strategic Health Authority allocated funding for HCAs to engage in professional development. Though hospitals had funding to offer limited secondment student nurse places to HCAs, this was an exciting additional provision. Funding became available to support allied health professionals' upskilling through the newly devised foundation degree in Health and Social Care which was the conduit for a new tier within the nursing hierarchy, the role of the AP.

The fd programme was facilitated through Work Place Learning (WPL) for the development of practical skills with the theoretical aspects delivered through HEIs. Though this approach which replicated nurse training seemed a great concept initially, the differences soon became apparent. Walmsley (2010) suggests that though many HCAs rose to the challenge of WPL, the fd students shared that the WPL approach did not manifest in practice because of a lack of time to develop clinically and a lack of supportive mentors. I think it is worth defining WPL. Walmsley (2010) suggests: "work place learning is learning organised in, or by the work place, that supports employment role and progression" (p. 2). Her report identified that despite consistent policy messages since 2001, significant barriers still prove to hamper strategic and consistent development of WPL for HCAs.

Walmsley's (2010) report identified the following areas which warranted redress: inconsistency of funding, funding restrictions and funding which did not cover backfill costs. WPL students were mainly non-traditional learners who required differentiated approaches to support because they were transitioning from vocational to academic programmes. Walmsley (2010) and Gasper's (2010) works contribute to the discussion on WPL by suggesting that if Widening Participation (WP) was to be an equitable provision then specific, tailor made support needed to be an integral component of each WPL programme. WP was very much a Department of Health (DoH) initiative to support the NHS' modernisation plan. Kessler and Heron (2010) argue that the government's aims were to achieve the following through WP: 1. To increase the pool of workers, by offering local disadvantaged groups training opportunities linked to the work place. 2. To facilitate the professional progression of those currently working in low-skilled, low-paid roles.

In the case of HCAs this meant that on completion of their two-year seconded workplace learning programme they would gain a new professional status with additional responsibilities as well as improved pay and conditions.

Some will recall the significant political shift from 18 years of Conservative government to Labour in 1997. In preparation for the premiership, the then opposition party leader, the Rt Hon. Tony Blair promised that should Labour gain power, the government's top three priorities would be: 'education, education, education' (Tony Blair 1996). A plethora of education reports followed the inception of the New Labour Party, Kennedy (1997), Learning Works: Widening Participation in further education, Dearing (1997), Higher Education in the Learning Society and Fryer, (1997) Learning for the 21st Century. Tight (1998) asserts that:

> "Lifelong learning was adopted as a master concept by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO)"

further offering the explanation that:

> "…lifelong learning argued for a rejection of a model of learning and education which is confined to childhood, adolescence and early adulthood. Instead, learning was portrayed as a process which everyone is involved throughout life" (p. 474).

Whilst Kennedy's (1997) report recognised that:

> "there were many providers and locations, including home and workplace where training and education could be provided enabling those who had not previously engaged to 'expand their horizons and extend their capabilities" (pp. 7-8).

Tight (1998) suggests that the simple directive at the time was that,

> "learning was central to economic success and social cohesion… all those who were not fulfilling their potential or who had underachieved in the past, must be drawn into successful learning" (p. 475.).

The WP provisions enabled those from lower socio-economic backgrounds, minority groups, those with disabilities as well as those who were trapped in low-skilled, low-paid roles, to access HE. New Labour's WP initiatives were introduced in the 1990s however, history illustrates that the concept of WP goes back to at least the early post war era. Tight (2012) asserts that WP has been a continuing concern for policy makers and HEIs in the UK since 1945. He presents similarities between the post war education initiatives and the ones rolled out under new Labour's WP. To support his claim, Tight (2012) highlights the similarities in target groups between Labour's WP and the 1940s post war policies, both had: women, lower socio-economic groups, mature adults and ethnic minorities amongst their key target groups.

The concept of lifelong learning could be viewed as a leveler for the social inequalities experienced by many within the target groups. However, Tight's assertion that:

> "it has to be recognised that the possibilities for Widening Participation in Higher Education are constrained by what happens to potential students before entry: in school, in their families and in society at large" (p. 212).

was an issue that has challenged the formal education providers throughout the decades. I choose to make a contextual connection here, as my readings of both compulsory and nursing education above Coard (1971) and Price (1979) corroborate Tight's assertion. Coard (1971) and Price (1979) discussed that education policies with their blind spots would most certainly negatively impact young Black children throughout their adulthood.

When the Blair government made the commitment to increase the opportunities for under-represented sections of the population to access HE, concepts such as diversity and equality which undergirded the WP policies were controversial and politicised. David (2009), Reay, Ball and David (2010) as well as Archer and Hutchings (2010) argue that WP opportunities may serve the interests of disadvantaged sections of society but the dominant benefactors are certainly the most affluent as they not only possess the knowledge base to access HEI, they generally have the resources to mobilise and therefore can access wider choices. David (2010) and Hutchings (2010) found that most 'non-traditional' mature learners, were restricted to attending universities close to their homes and because of economic reasons could only access courses which were vocationally linked. Carter's (2003) work conducted with migrant Caribbean nurses from the post war era, provides an example of Tight's (2012) assertion that WP was not a new idea. In the quote below, Carter (2003) was speaking of post war Caribbean migrant student nurses'…:

> "groups who were excluded from professional spheres (or educational institutions) have been allowed entry, but only at the periphery. That is, socially dominant groups still retain positions of power within professional groups, but are able to point to the fact that previously excluded groups have now been allowed entry without being held accountable to explore their experiences" (p. 78).

How can I avoid the obvious question? How far has education come in the last five decades and where is the evidence of sustained positive change for the so called 'non-traditional' learner HEIs claim they strive to reach? There is no denying that from post war times to the present day, HEI opportunities have been widened. It may even be argued that big shifts have been made since 1997, but in far too many studies it is evident that the equality both the institutions and policies purport seem to be not much more than rhetoric (Rhamie 2007, Bowl 2010 and David 2010).

bell hooks (2010) asserts that:

> "in reflecting on aspects of educational democracy, even those involved in the forefront of efforts to make a site where democratic ideals would be realised, were divided in values. In theory, they expressed the belief that everyone should have the right to learn and yet in practice, they helped to maintain hierarchies within educational institutions wherein privileged groups were given advantage" (Pg14-15).

hook's assertion suggests that the challenges with 'educational democracy' are universal and historical. I now question whether educational democracy can ever be achieved in places where injustice and inequalities are systemic. Dubois (1973), an African American education influencer of the post slavery era, made the following observations of education provision.

> "They say, we are interested in the submerged classes of those poor people who are struggling up out of the depths. Such people we want to help, but on the other hand, while theoretically we would be glad to help all people to a broader vision; yet because of limited (resources) we are obliged to confine ourselves to cases of pressing necessity, therefore we cannot …" (p. 50).

The end of Dubois' quote has been intentionally omitted, because the context he wrote of was different and the time was different, but the issues of making quality education accessible to all is still the key issue.

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I would like to challenge you the reader to add an ending to the quote from your perspective or lived experience of WP policies and WPL. As I intentionally write to audiences in the worlds of academia, work places and the community, I envisage that one day each would hear the others' completion of the above thought, and as a result collectively forge a way forward to the educational democracy they would like to see, authentically offer and experience.

In 2005, an NHS WP steering group was set up under the leadership of Professor RH Fryer. The group's primary aim was to facilitate the mobilisation of learning and widen participation in learning within the health service; an aim which was to form an integral part of health service reform and planned transformation. The report identified five key success measures:

> "Learning should: 1. Have direct or indirect benefits to patients, service users as well as the public and carers. 2. Contribute to the planned transformation of healthcare systems and reform. 3. Contribute to improved productivity and demonstrate value for money. 4. Contribute to making the NHS a model employer and the local employer of choice for those seeking work and careers. 5. Contribute to upholding and furthering the core aims and values of the NHS" (Fryer 2006: 1).

Edmond et al. (2012) expounds that the fields of education and the NHS were transitioning through modernisation and professionalisation plans simultaneously. They highlight some of the complexities associated with the introduction of the new, assistant or associate roles. They argue that:

> "the development of assistant practitioner roles in education and nursing were subject to (at least) two competing and to some extent contradictory strands of the modernisation policy drive and discourse, 'workforce remodeling' and 'workforce development. Workforce remodeling emphasises flexibility and efficiency in the existing workforce and prioritises notions of competence developed through work-based learning and standards of performance demonstrated in work. Workforce development on the other hand, draws on a more traditional professional learning discourse of improvement in performance through formal learning and development and accreditation of expertise" (p. 1).

Work-based learning is a complex endeavour, made so partly because of the interagency approach through which it is facilitated. Assistant and Associate roles required both HEI and workplaces to work seamlessly to provide a positive and empowering professional development experience for students. What Edmond et al. (2012) failed to do, was draw a distinction between the aim of workforce development and the shortfalls of it. What do I mean? Studies (Beaney 2006, Edmond et al. 2012) show that Trainee Assistant Practitioners (TAPs) were funded to access HEIs but there was no funding to provide cover whilst they were away from the workplace. This omission of backfill funding negatively impacted the students' workplace learning experience.

Students oftentimes found themselves working in both the role they were emerging from as well as the role they were training for and the former responsibilities were prioritised because of issues with staffing (Selfe et al. 2008, Edmond et al. (2012).

This section not only highlights that WP is not a new concept, it also showcases that WP policies are complex as well challenging to implement equitably. The arguments in this section explore the challenges of striving to use policy to address issues of equality, exposing the fact that often whilst WP policies create opportunities for underrepresented targeted groups; the policies' greater beneficiaries are those who traditionally access and are better equipped to navigate HEI spaces.

1.9 The Foundation Degree (fd) and the Assistant Practitioner's (AP) role

Within the WP policy provision was the creation of new undergraduate qualifications. Foundation Degree Forward's (fdf) 2008 report outlined that:

> "the newly established foundation degree (fd) award was an ideal skills development framework for the newly designed role of Assistant Practitioners (AP). Fds were set up to meet exactly the kind of vocational need identified by the health service" (p. 2).

Fds were proposed in 2002 and were very much fueled by economic and personal development agendas. In 2000 David Blunkett, the then Secretary of State, argued that the fd was to be a complete package; creating opportunities for vocational development through the acquisition of professional skills underpinned by theory. Blunkett (2000) further admonished:

> "Foundation degrees will be designed to develop key skills and employability, and offer clear routes into the labour market or further learning. There will be active links between a student's work experience and academic study. Students who take foundation degrees will be fully equipped with the skills and abilities they will need for effective engagement in the knowledge economy - so that they are enterprising and creative, familiar with the world of work, and possess a sound base of ICT and other key skills as well as specialist knowledge" (Point 35).

This new undergraduate qualification was the answer to the WP policy's new education provision in the fields of health and education. Parry (1996) discussed that for post compulsory education institutions the expectations placed upon the qualification created a sense of unease. The institutions' concerns primarily focused on the weak demand for sub degree courses as well as concerns around the quality of HE accredited courses delivered through colleges. The disquiet was felt outside the educational realms, as the fd qualification also stimulated much debate in workplaces which became joint developers (alongside HE and FE providers) of new professional tiers within established professional hierarchies.

'New Professionalisms' within the NHS context, suggests Evetts (2011) had two approaches, the occupational and the organisational. The former focuses on individuals and groups and creates opportunities to improve occupational status through education and skills development. The latter focusses on the hierarchical structure which includes elements of bureaucracy, output and performance measures through specific styles of management. In response to the need to modernise the NHS and to address the significant economic challenges as well as the shortage in nurses, nationally, the NHS has combined both approaches. The fd qualification, a work-based and HE programme, is a two-year, part-time course delivered through day release.

To contextualise, I will provide insights into the professional adaptations some HCAs underwent as they temporarily transitioned to student status. Firstly, the HCA title and name badge was substituted with the title of, 'Trainee Assistant Practitioner' (TAP). TAPs were assigned workplace mentors. The mentor, who was generally a qualified nurse, was to support, teach and assess the clinical aspects of the training. TAPs worked in a dual capacity (HCA and TAP) they were not given 'student' status. Student nurses were supernumerary to the ward safe staffing numbers but TAPs were not (fdf Case Study Report 2008). In addition, TAPs were provided with new uniforms which is significant in the field of nursing as uniforms are a quick way of identifying a person's position within the hierarchy.

The lack of a clearly defined 'student' status was not the only challenge for the TAP in the nursing context. Daykin and Clarke (2000), Law and Aranda (2009), Rakovski and Price-Glynn (2010) discussed the tensions created in the nursing profession by the introduction of the AP role. The uncertainty the new role created, precipitated a reverting to a hierarchical division of labour (Beany 2006). The design and delivery of the fd programme was another area of contention for TAPs. TAPs did not have student status, as a result, when wards were short staffed, they failed to have a real student experience where clinical skills could be learnt and practised sufficiently to generate the confidence to be assessed as competent.

1.10   The Voices of Non-traditional, Mature and Black Students in Literature

Only a small number of publications focus on the education and integration of APs in the NHS and an even smaller number within that group provides insights into the distinctions between the experiences of so called 'traditional' and 'non-traditional' students. Rarely were Black students specifically mentioned in more general education discussions. Beaney (2006) asserts:

> "…it is confounding to find that the learner's experience of engaging with foundation degrees is so under examined. If foundation degrees are to be successful and genuinely transformative…we need to understand how students respond to them and how they can best utilise their learning experience over time to engage in lifelong learning" (p. 3).

Bowl (2003) and Rhamie (2007) are two authors whose work focused primarily on Black students' educational experience, though not specifically on fds. Selfe et al's. (2008) evaluation of fd programmes found that mature women were the dominant group accessing fds. They found that over eighty per cent of those studied were thirty-one years or older, with forty five percent aged between forty-one and fifty years old. Martin and Munro (2010) quote Hoskins et al. (1997) who found that mature students were often well motivated, demonstrating that motivation was probably a better predictor of success than traditional entry qualifications. Black students informed researchers (Bowl 2003 and Rhamie 2007) that motivation often provided the impetus to work through barriers and build resilience. A very small representation of mature Black female students' voices was identified in the work of Archer and Hutchings (2010). They found that Black Caribbean women shared the social significance attached to passing a degree, and how academic failure was translated into social failure. One Black Caribbean woman shared:

> "…and I think, another thing, my mum, she boasts man, oh and say if I mess up… she's like, 'you can't mess up because she knows them people are just waiting for you to fall, blah, blah.' So, if I mess up, all these people I can just imagine people looking down at me laughing, and so you know she just rammed it in my head like…" (p. 561).

Making mum happy was a key motivation for the Black woman. This is not surprising, especially as earlier on in this review I outlined that those immigrants who came to support the motherland also had dreams of their children gaining a high-class education and within our community we often remind the 'communities' children of the need to engage in education. Though the history of compulsory education for Caribbean Blacks in the UK was a predominantly unequitable one, my generation understood the sacrifices of our parents and grandparents. Although we probably possess a more comprehensive understanding of educational complexities, still we cling to the lie, that if we work hard enough, twice as hard as the white person, we will succeed. So, we strive to 'soar like eagles' (Rhamie 2007) thus making our parents and grandparents proud (Bowl 2003).

Most of the studies accessed are not explicit on whether salary increase was a primary motivation for mature women accessing HE, but I question whether the mature students were aware of the economic promise of the WP policies which fueled the 'opportunities message'. David's (2009) study showed more generally that, "mature women learners had an appetite for high-quality work-related and employer-supported provision and for recognised qualifications that offered economic and social returns" (p. 12). Archer and Hutching's 2010 study found that:

> "Black Caribbean women were the only group to talk about the benefits afforded by an increasingly degree educated workforce. This demonstrated that they understood the political / economic importance attached to Widening participation and Higher Education" (p. 564).

Paradoxically, Archer and Hutchings (2010) identified that in some cases the upward mobility promised by WP opportunities was an illusion and the only protection that the WP student's education offered was against downward mobility. Not many studies (Rhamie 2007 and Mirza 2008) have been undertaken by Black women examining the mature Black students' experience of HE. HEIs possess wide ranging statistical information which states that Black women specifically are over-presented in HE (Bhopal 2015). It could be argued that the 'numbers' speak so there is no need to explore the experiences. The overly simplistic explanation (I've heard) is, after all, if the numbers are good, that says it, if the experiences of Black students were negative the numbers would not be good.

Gillborn (2009) found that the structural and attitudinal barriers that nontraditional, including BME students face are rarely addressed in policy discourses. This point was also addressed in the work of Sissel (2001), she asserts that using labelling such as 'non-traditional' defines students as marginal, needy and 'othered'. She summaries that the 'labels' indicate, no power and no privilege rendering the student invisible and one who is invisible she argues, cannot effectively resist or contest the unequal distribution of resources. Gillborn (2009) discusses examples of educational injustice that are historical, yet still prevailing, his illustration used here was also discussed in the works of Coard (1971) and Pryce (1979). Gillborn (2009) found that:

> "many minority groups are systematically disadvantaged by teachers' routine assumptions and actions". In the case of African Caribbean students, he found that, "teachers' expectations of Black students typically underestimate their academic ability…" (p. 8).

Gillborn's (2009) relatively recent findings mirror the findings of the work of Jones and Snow (2010) of the 1950s cohorts of Black nurses, in that the abilities of Blacks were stifled by low teacher expectation coupled with inequitable pedagogical practices.

Gillborn (2009) furthers his discussion by highlighting that both in education policy and in aspects of wider political remits, race is no longer deemed to be an issue. Gillborn (2009) argues that class is now the dominant issue that is discussed as a contributor to education inequality. Furthermore, he asserts that:

> "the overwhelming focus on social class tends to obliterate any concern with race equality and provides the conditions for race inequality to actually get worse" (p. 8).

Race, gender and class are dominant areas in education policy discussion generally. However, in my decade of providing work-based learning with cohorts of predominantly Black students, I have never had a conversation with a Black person about education where he or she perceived 'class' to be a barrier to the quality of their education experience. To explore this absence, I introduced the subject of class contributing to inequality in a conversation with a Black nurse ward manager.

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What immediately follows is an oral account which provides insights into one Black woman's perception of class and its link to the inequalities she faces in the context of nursing.

This is a shortened version of a conversation between myself and a mature Black nurse who had success in 'acting' matron roles, but had 'missed out' on three occasions to secure the permanent role. She is convinced that her post interview feedback was scripted as each time she was told: "You did a really good interview, but you just missed out on the scoring as you could have elaborated on your responses a little more". On all three occasions, she had 'just missed out' to a younger Caucasian nurse with no previous matron experience.

Me: (using my academically informed knowledge) "Do you think 'class' is an issue because the researchers in education see class as a significant contributor to education inequalities and would I be right in thinking that most Black nurses are… working class…whatever that means?"

Black nurse: (laughs) "What class issue? It's racism Peggy, it always has been. I don't see class, in fact if the truth be known most white nurses are working class… gone are the days when nursing was a middle-class profession and that's what makes the injustices more difficult to stomach. We are now being oppressed by working class peers who are determined to close ranks. P…. me off, some of them grew up and went to school with us and our kids… many of them are only in nursing because of the bursaries, they couldn't afford to go to university otherwise. The issue here has nothing to do with class."

I have had the above conversation on numerous occasions with both nurses and HCAs over the past decade. This issue of whether to focus on class which was dominant in the literature or omit it because it appears not to be a dominant issue for Black women in my context occupied a lot of my thinking for some time. Academic education researchers (as previously discussed by Gillborn) universally see class as a dominant inequality driver. Black women in my context do not! So, as I progress in this study, I will need to consider whether I 'enlighten' the women of the study with the white man's understanding on this subject? Or, do I stick to and be true to our journey, our lived experiences, our way of interpreting? I have wrestled with the issues above, I have reflected on my own personal experience and my own challenges as a mature Black woman working in the NHS though not in the field of nursing. I also find that the individuals I generally constructively challenge and assert myself with are also working class. It is my view that a little contextual background may be useful here.

Historically, middle class is denoted by education and economics but identification of varied social classes can be problematic. Tomlin, Wright and Mocombe (2014) state that:

> "One categorisation … used by many academic writers is the simple distinction between 'manual' and 'non-manual' backgrounds where the former can be used as a marker of working class and the latter middle class" (p. 40).

Yet, quite interestingly, Gregory's (2006) Black specialised work stated that for Afro-Caribbean women, "the primary characteristics of class were defined by most respondents as race being a 'physical thing' and class as determined primarily by family heritage and skin colour" (p. 359). Unfortunately, I was unable to locate literature that expanded or explored Gregory's findings further.

Nursing has only recently become an all graduate profession and an observation would be that perhaps the distinction of class operates less visibly in the NHS than in the field of education.

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I have a range of unanswered questions that I need to 'out' and who knows, maybe some will be answered during the study. How then do Black mature students get their views understood when the policy discussions have moved on from seeing race as an issue in favour of class but the women don't even recognise class as an issue for them? Does this disparity between the positioning of 'race' and 'class' in educational discussions require re-exploring and rethinking by informed academics who truly want to gain the perspectives of Black students? Do Black mature students need to 'understand' the class discussion so they can 'speak the language of policy influencers?' To demonstrate that the lack of seeing 'class' as dominant is not restricted to Black women in the NHS. Let's explore dialogue by African American feminist academic researchers:

Barbara and Beverly Smith (1983)

> *Beverley: "I think for purposes of analysis what we try to do is break things down and try to separate and compare but in reality, the way women live their lives those separations just don't work. Women don't live their lives like that… well this part is race and this is class and this part is to do with women's identities, so it's confusing."*
>
> *Barbara: "And Black women and women of color in particular don't do that. We also often find it difficult to separate race from class, from sex oppression because in our lives they are most often experienced simultaneously" (p. 116).*

My decision moving forward into the study is that if the women raise the issue of class during our conversations, we will explore it. However, if they fail to raise class as an issue for them, I will not add the issue to the discussion as what I aim to explore is our lived experiences and perceptions. As this work will be using the Black Feminist stance, I will only centralise the views and perceptions that emerge from the women during our conversations, discussions and retellings.

So, I'm moving on to the subject of failure, again there is a paucity of research which explores how Black British and Black Caribbean women view educational failure. Reay, Ball and David (2010) as well as Bowl (2003) found that lone mothers were the largest constituents of students dealing with the complexities of work, parenting and social responsibilities. When lone mothers 'failed' to complete their courses they regarded that "their failure was because of institutional structural inequalities rather than individual failings" (p. 15). Some studies (Bowl 2003 and Rhamie 2007) showed that amongst Black student respondents emphasis was placed on the family and social consequences of failure.

Reay, Ball and David (2010) found that for Black mature students, 'failure' was constructed in economic, social and personal terms. For Black women, family networks provided strong encouragement towards HE participation, although the very same networks were a source of retribution for 'it' (p. 561).

So, what were amongst the factors that contributed to 'failure' amongst non-traditional learners? In the exploration of barriers or disappointments for students, Macdonald and Stratta (2010) found that students felt that 'attitudes' of the tutors did not correspond with either the students' anticipation of the undergraduate study, or the institutional strategy and promise. In other words, the rhetoric and the practice were disparate. In general, staffs' perception was that mature students did not enjoy their studies. Staff felt that students tended to get quite anxious and needed assistance in learning how to cope with contextualising their academic studies and placing them within the framework of their life. Tutors also felt that students were needy and required a great deal of support with academic elements of programmes.

Another area which was not significantly covered was how the educational experience could have been better for both the tutors and the students. Reay, Ball and David (2010) found that students reported that they lost their nerve between the first and second year of their study. Some shared how they lost confidence in their own abilities and how the strain of 'juggling life' made them stressed and depressed. Though students did not share much about failure, Skeggs' (2004) study suggests that shame and the fear of shame haunts 'working class' women's relationship to education. Archer and Hutchings (2010) found that students talked about the experience of university in less than positive terms, HE was an experience which 'had to be endured and suffered', 'was boring', 'very hard work' whilst 'involving lots of pressure and stress' (p. 560). For non-traditional, mature students, participation required greater investment and carried more risk of failure when compared with students with family histories of participation. In the studies listed above, there was no exploration of where these students went when they felt pressured and struggled to understand lectures, concepts or the structures of the university. Some of the studies also found that 'dropping out' was very much linked to the unreconciled difference between expectation and experience of university life. The differences between the expectation and the reality of the lived experience were found to have a significant impact on the number of mature students who 'dropped out' of their programmes of study.

This section showcases the fact that the Black mature students' voice is sparse in the literature. It highlights a range of issues and barriers that mature women face as HE students. It explores some of the perceptions of what is considered the dominant contributors to education inequalities and differences and questions whether the differences and how they are viewed, for example, how class and race are considered in educational discussions should be revisited within the disparate groups.

The section above also highlights that mature Black women's accounts are infrequently represented in research data on issues around the student's experience of HE and that there is much room for Black women to be the authors of Black women's experiences.

1.11 The Lived Experiences of Students on Foundation Degree Courses

I found the few studies which captured the fd student experiences illuminating. As much as I can, I want to use the students' responses from the literature here. In Beaney's 2006 study, students identified that there was a lack of joined-up working between Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and workplace practitioners, managers and mentors. Students found working in the dual roles overwhelmingly challenging and in some cases impossible. HCAs transitioning to the TAP role found combining HCA / TAP responsibilities left them struggling with boundaries and some felt exploited by nurses who would only see their 'student' status when wards were short staffed and nurses wanted to delegate tasks. Many felt that the TAP role was only partially understood by managers and mentors but the wider clinical team had no understanding of the role. As a result, TAPs felt they were treading on the toes of the registered clinical staff when undertaking tasks delegated to them by their mentors.

TAPs identified that the fd programme would have been enhanced if there was a stronger correlation between theories and the practical pathways. Students suggested that stronger connection could be achieved through increasing and protecting practical training time and reducing in the number of assignments they had to complete. In almost all studies, TAPs identified that there could have been improved integration between the employers and the university. (Tierney and Slack 2005 and Selfe, et al's. 2008)

Some students felt that their TAP role was sabotaged by qualified nurses as well as the failed communication between the training partners. Edmond's et al. (2012) study found that TAPs were:

> "confronted by nurse mentors using their professional judgement (in accordance with the Advice on Delegation given in the Code of Conduct (NMC, 2008) to preclude them from access to certain practices" (p. 5).

In Wareing's (2012) study, TAPs shared their frustration of not being on the same shift with their mentors whilst others recalled feeling devalued by the very mentors who were assigned to support them professionally. TAPs also shared that there seemed to be much discussion amongst qualified nurses that the AP's role was simply a reintroduction of the abolished SEN role. One TAP in Wareing's (2012) study shared:

> 'there's a lot of staff nurses, especially the ones who trained a long time ago who feel that we aren't an A' grade *(the old SEN role)* or staff nurse *(the registered qualified nurse)* but something in between. So, I felt they thought I was trying to be something I was not, or that I'm trying to be a staff nurse but cutting out the bits…' (p. 37) (italics mine).

The perception of clinical staff that the AP role was a replacement of the SEN role seemed to be a recurring theme, as another student shared:

> "Some of the other people who are the same grade as I, were a bit sort of funny about it, and then some of the staff nurses who had been there years were sort of 'oh they're bringing the SENs back again" (p. 38)!

TAPs found that their trainee role was the root of new tensions amongst fellow HCAs who were often unsupportive and obstructive in their behaviours, they shared that HCA colleagues seemed resentful that TAPs were allotted time off the wards for training because they were on a day release programme. (Henderson-King and Stewart (1999) and Wareing 2012).

Reay's (2002) work identified that a 'troubled educational history' was a point of commonality across her study group (p. 407). Some students felt that though their (academic) support needs were identified by both the HEI and the workplace prior to starting their course, there was little or no accessible support in place for them once they were on the fd programme. Some mature students had specifically flagged up their lack of confidence in commencing the course as their writing skills were underdeveloped because of the lapse between compulsory education and accessing the fd programme, yet no efforts were made by either of their supporting institutions to provide additional developmental support. In Tierney and Slack's (2005) study participants though inexperienced in HE, were very self-aware and made recommendations of how their HE experience could have been enhanced. They identified that their HEI experience would have been significantly enhanced if they were exposed to: specific career guidance; accessible tutors; differentiated teaching styles as well having fun whilst learning. Buchan (2002) cites the work of Benson (2007), which identified that mature students felt they would have benefitted from a pre-foundation degree course which would have enabled them to build and develop general learning skills, including: study skills: time management skills and IT skills and more specific academic introductions to referencing and literature searching prior to embarking on the fd programme. In Reay's (2002) study, she found that the absence of the pre-entry programme often meant that mature women took longer to complete their courses, citing fd students still being on their programme up to six months after the programme had ended.

This review of literature supported by oral accounts has been an innovative and culturally informed way of compiling a review. The inclusion of the oral accounts and irruptions adds lived experiences and musings to findings from literature. Thus, giving credence to my native mode of investigating, sharing and learning. This review provides insights into more than the inequalities of education provision for the migrant Blacks and their children. The trajectory of this review commences with exploration of issues around Caribbean people's journeying from the Caribbean to England 'motherlan', where over time the people proactively engaged with the complexities of their imposed identities and then formulated their own.

It revisits the educational challenges and inequalities experienced by two generations of Caribbean people, showcasing that though educational experiences were generally inequitable, it was a Caribbean researcher (Coard 1971) who exposed the travesty and the Caribbean community rallied and established supplementary schools to redress the deficits of the pedagogy systems. The review then changes direction and returns to history where it explores the professional inequalities experienced by Black nurses during colonial times in the Caribbean and questions whether the experiences and accomplishments of the JGTNA has any lessons for 21st Century Black nurses in the UK.

Moving on, studies in this review provides insights into educational experiences of mature students and acknowledges that the Black mature woman's voice is not prominent within the literature. Though from the meagre representation we identify that mature Black women see the link between HE qualifications and economic uplifts. As a group, they generally find that their support groups are often their harshest critics therefore 'failure' is not generally personal.

The fd course and associated AP role have been heavily criticised by students who call for: further clarity of the role, more cohesion between the education providers, the support 'rhetoric' to be actualised enabling the mature students the opportunity of a positive education experience both in the classroom in HEIs and in their clinical areas in the workplace.

This review has incorporated questions and musings signifying the messiness and unravelling that occurs when one deviates from the 'known traditions' into the 'unknown, culturally appropriate' where boundaries are grey, blurred and in some cases unexplored.

Chapter Two

2.1 Ontological Musings

I sit here at my table in the conservatory knowing what I want to do, what I think I ought to do for me and the participants of this study, yet I still feel somewhat chained to tradition. I thought I had experienced 'freedom' from my non-conformist anxieties. However, the dominance of positivist conditioning, a position acquired from my undergraduate and Master's experiences still dictates what is 'right' and 'wrong'. You see, I want to write, I want to write stories, using the tools that come naturally to me, like 'sayings' and poems and lyrics from songs that 'speak' to me deeply, challenge and move me. What I really feel I need to write is, our recollections of our stories… (Jackson and Mazzei 2009) aspects of our lived educational trajectories, you know, those facets we're not sure we want other people to know about and until now, we have only shared amongst ourselves.

For a decade, I have worked with women who identify with my migrant Jamaican history, language and culture. This study is informed by the experiences of Black British and Black Caribbean women, some who were born in the UK to one or both parents of Jamaican origin. Others were born in Jamaica, but joined parents here in the UK between childhood and adolesence. Over the past decade, we have been sharing what Denzin (2014) describes as 'recalled versions of our stories'. I now want to retell my interpretation of these accounts. In fact, I not only want to retell some of these experiences, I want to retell aspects of my story too, therefore producing a compilation of 'our stories'. The process of 'story telling' has had us accessing each-others' lives, homes and families. In some cases, we have met in the workplace, generally squirrelling into small discrete rooms attached to clinics.

We have chatted, sometimes for hours and during our sharing, we've laughed, cried, relived injustices, were sidetracked, reminisced, commiserated and celebrated. In each of the encounters, I have related to some of the women's experiences as well as being shocked by some of the injustices they have lived through. In line with our Caribbean legacies, we have shared stories and food; shared stories whilst cooking, shared stories hastily, in hushed tones as well as utilising coding through our non-verbal manifestations. Our codes needed no explanations during our times of sharing!

During this research journey, I have kept a reflexive diary in which I recorded my version of our experiences, not with all, but some of the participants. My diary has been my space to chronicle my frustrations with myself, the participants, the 'systems' as well as the institutions I study and work in. As I consider how to use aspects of my diary recordings,

I am reminded by Reed-Danahay (1997) that, even the diary accounts will be no more than a retelling. I am also reminded by Denzin (2014) that "a story is always an interpretive account, but of course, all interpretations are biased" (p. 57). As I reflect on the work of Reed-Danahay (1997) and Denzin (2014), I am choosing to be free. The latter quote liberates me to admit here right from the outset that I have an emotional investment in this case study, so, for this autoethnographical study I will not be claiming objectivity. This work acknowledges that I am investing and invested and as a result, I the author am biased, this as well as other cultural factors will determine what I include and omit.

It was my perplexities that propelled me on this journey, let me explain. I thoroughly enjoyed my job teaching Literacy to mature women who did not get English and Maths qualifications during their compulsory education. My role as a work-based educator rewarded me with a great deal of job satisfaction. I worked with women who were somewhat excluded from 'traditional post compulsory education' because their roles required them to work differing shift patterns.

The NHS Trust that employs us is in Birmingham. In the 2011 census, 42% of Birmingham's population were from BME groups. So, it was not surprising that for a while, each level 2 cohort I taught in the Trust was dominated by Black and minority women. I recall some of the initial challenges I had with Caucasian colleagues who could not understand why I was 'deviating' from the Skills for Life curriculum, by introducing resources and topic areas that was not included. This was work-based learning, I could not comprehend how they could not expand the 'curriculum' to suit the context! I recall having to justify my approach to teaching and was 'threatened' that my 'pass rates', not learning experience would be closely monitored to ascertain whether my 'deviation' affected retention, programme length or pass rates. To be frank, looking back, I was employed because the alliance between the NHS Trust and the local college was untenable. The 'pass and retention' rates were poor; therefore, I was confident that my approach would be an improvement on what was in place prior to my appointment. So, what was causing the 'tension'? Though I acknowledge that I had a curriculum to work from it was important for me to make learning relevant to both the working context and the students, I am also a great believer that adult learning should be non-hierarchical and enjoyable. Paulo Freire and Booker T. Washington were amongst the educators of adults who influenced my approach to teaching and learning. bell hooks (1981) encapsulates the approach to pedagogy that I strove for, she asserts:

> *"when everyone in the classroom, teacher and students recognise that they are responsible for creating a learning community together, learning is at its most meaningful and useful" (p. 11).*

I felt privileged to be working with colleagues who were eager to engage in a reciprocal approach to learning.

The evaluations of literacy sessions clearly demonstrated that those who engaged in learning felt empowered and inspired by the learning experiences (Warren 2008).

In the literacy sessions, I introduced students to the works of influential Black authors including: Maya Angelou; Bessie Head; Beryl Gilroy; the Delaney sisters as well as Booker T Washington and Nelson Mandela. Reading the work of Black authors was new to almost all the students, including the minority white students.

Most of the HCAs I worked with had held secret ambitions to become nurses. Ambitions they never allowed themselves to believe could be realised. Their doubts were founded in the fact that they did not possess the qualifications to access the nursing diploma at university and were 'trapped' by shift pattern work which prohibited access to 'scheduled' college courses. During my programme planning, it was my intention to stretch the students. I set them tasks to conduct research as well as plan and deliver presentations. I aimed to create an environment and opportunities for the women to become upskilled beyond the curriculum.

A decade on, I meet women of all cultures, but predominantly Black women in the hospital corridors, who stop me for a quick catch up and they now recommend Black authors and films to me. I recall with amusement, the excitement followed by weeks of discussion at the start of the literacy sessions when a book entitled 'Ugly' was published by a woman of Jamaican heritage, Constance Briscoe. Following the students' engagement with that text some of them suggested we run a book club…

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Oops, I'm having a confidence wobble! You see being bold is a position I find difficult to sustain. I now feel a need to justify. I know I shouldn't need to but I can hear the accusers and I need to silence them so here it goes! I feel I need to clarify here, we didn't only read the works of Black writers, neither did I isolate the non-black members of the classes, the evaluation of my sessions was positive right across the board. (Okay, so, I've said it!) I include the cultural aspects of what we did in the classroom here because within our context of adult, work-based learning there was no written text presented that minority students could culturally relate to at that time.

As part of my preparation for life as well as teaching in the work-based context, I had exposed myself to the works of W.E.B. Dubois. Dubois' (1973) work included his perception of the differences between vocational and academic disciplines and his work really challenged me to contemplate some of the considerations for my vocationally situated students. Dubois suggests that:

> *"the aim of higher education is the development of power, the training of a self whose balanced assertion will mean as much as possible for the great ends of civilisation. The aim of technical training on the other hand, is to enable the student to master the present methods of earning a living in some particular way" (p. 29).*

Dubois' idea of the development of power, resonated with me and influenced me to strive to juxtapose the 'academic' and 'technical' in my working context. I'm aware that my aim here may seem idealistic and simplistic. I like to consider it transformative as it was my hope that the students, who aspired and were now working towards meeting the entry criteria for university, would be equipped to access either the nursing diploma or foundation degree courses which would lead to the professional respect, recognised presence and the better wage they told me they desired.

Here, I wish to remind the reader that my colleagues who contribute to this study are Black British and Black Caribbean women whose immigrant parents had held a desire that they would be recipients of a 'good British education' and subsequently 'good, professional jobs'. The women in this study range in age from late 30s to early 50s. Each has self-defined as Black British or Black Caribbean and each is employed by a Birmingham NHS Trust.

Todd's (1998) presentation of Lacan's work helps me in making sense of 'desire', he states, Lacan's most well-known maxims can be understood in two relatively straightforward ways:

> *"Man's desire is the desire of the Other? Firstly, that desire is essentially a desire for recognition from this 'Other'; secondly that desire is for the thing that we suppose the Other desires, which is to say, the thing that the Other lacks… Lacan verifies that desire is fundamentally a desire for recognition… desire pushes for recognition" (Seminar XI, p. 235).*

Todd's (1998) work supports my thinking as I try to make sense of the concept of desire in the conversations I have with Black women. I understand as discussed in the literature review that our parents, before most of us were born, desired a 'good' education for us. The groups I taught in the earlier years of my employment in the Trust comprised predominantly of women, BME women and a significant number worked in the HCA role, though many desired to become nurses because they lived with the notion that their parents desired them to be recognised professionals.

Though I wanted to have a non-hierarchical classroom, I was aware that this had to be intentionally created as often students perceived educators to be conduits of knowledge and therefore powerful. I feel the urge to retell an account from my reflexive diary which showcases that the non-hierarchical positioning had to be negotiated:

(April 20th, 2005) This was the first session of my second cohort…I entered the room which was not a traditional classroom. I arrived with all my resources and commenced making the room a little more conducive to learning. I had just started writing, 'Welcome to Literacy Level 1' on the whiteboard when three Black women walked past the room. I went out and asked: "are you looking for the Literacy session?" Once they confirmed that they were, I said: "Welcome, you are in the right place." They do say, first impressions last!

The women entered the room and chose seats at the back, initially conversing in hushed tones, but as their discussion progressed their voices grew louder. I had my back to them, busily organising my resources but I could clearly hear their conversation. The first topic for discussion was my attire, followed by their assumptions of my background. One mischievously suggested, "meck wi gi' 'mi 'ell." I can only deduce from the volume of her voice that she either assumed I did not understand Jamaican patios, or she didn't care whether I heard and understood what she was saying. I checked the time and realising that we were getting closer to our one thirty start, I decided to challenge her before the class commenced. I slowly walked towards their table, as I reached, the conversation ceased.
"Don't mind me ladies, keep talking" I said.
They started laughing, then one of them whispered:
"yo 'no sey, mi a go hab fun wi da one ya."
I bent over then speaking in a volume that the others could clearly hear, I said:
"A so it a go, go 'no!"
For what seemed like minutes, there was complete silence, followed rapidly by widened eyes, hands over mouths, then an awkward outburst of laughter. After the laughter subsided, the speaker, looking directly at me, nervously asked, "do you understand patios?"

To which I replied, "I not only understand it, I speak it fluently and I read and write it." Do any of you read or write it? No one answered, but a barrage of patois 'sayings' emerged from them, including:

"you si, mi granny always tell wi, nebba judge a book by de cova."

"eh, eh, 'tan an see no 'poil market, a fass mouth."

We all laughed, with me advocating:

"uno si, uno shudda listen to uno grannie."

I considered the above our 'cultural ice breaker'. My ability to understand and speak patois whilst being a Literacy teacher, seemed to contribute to my gaining the Black women's acceptance. I somehow felt that they were testing to see if I was 'culturally credible' not just a 'detached' Black woman, who couldn't relate to, what was for them, a natural / important aspect of their culture. Though I'm only making assumptions myself here, I think that my ability to comprehend and respond in patios meant that I was no longer or probably less 'othered' by them. I can say something else, for the first couple of years I never really had to advertise Literacy courses, those women became the most compelling marketers of Adult Literacy. I found mature Black women to be courageous, caring, resilient and in most cases incredibly hardworking students. These women (with support and encouragement) had been committed to personal development and they were willing to share their lived experiences with me.

Bizarrely, I could not get the women together as a group outside of the scheduled class. They often encouraged me to set up reading and personal development groups. However, each time I canvassed groups to agree times, dates and venues to meet, efforts proved futile. Curiously, they would ask, who's coming? When I told them who I had invited, they disengaged. Our internal suspicions of each other linked with our inability to see the bigger picture often frustrated me beyond words. Nevertheless, over time, some of our relationships transitioned from colleagues to friendships.

This study interviewed and 'harvested' the stories of ten mature Black British, Black Caribbean women who accessed the fd programme through WP work initiatives. Earlier in this section, I outlined that I commenced this study because of my perplexity about the women's educational journey. You see, several of the women who had completed the work-based package of Literacy, Numeracy and National Vocational Qualifications at levels 2 and 3 had secured places on the new fd programme. It transpires that I had taught every one of the Black women who accessed the fd course. My observation was that most the women 'made it' through year 1. Struggled, yes! Wanted to quit? Yes! Had negative experiences with workplace mentors, in classrooms and with work colleagues? Undoubtedly! Found out that they had been 'sold a lie' and that the course was not going to lead to definite promotion with increased remuneration? Yes, for many of them! Having said all the above, they got through year 1.

I recall that in the earlier days of our student, teacher relationship, I was consciously trying to 'narrow' the educational distance between us, so when I commenced my Masters in 2006, I consciously decided not to make a 'big deal' of the fact that I was back at university. So, when I had to go off to taught sessions I would simply say to the students, "I'm going to college". However, subconsciously when the women commenced their fd programme some years later, I hadn't reversed my psyche so I would inadvertently ask: "so how is college?" I smile now as I recall that without exception, I would be corrected. "Uni, Peggy uni!"

For many of the women on the two-year foundation degree, it was in the second year that the withdrawals seemed unavoidable. It was during the second year that I identified that for a small number, the visits to see me for a chat increased to almost weekly. It soon became obvious, that for many, attempts at resilience were waning and oftentimes I felt that I was their sole social support.

"It is life." They would say…
"We ain't got a life and things are falling apart."
"There's no work-life balance."
"Uni isn't all it is hyped up to be."
"Why can't you teach us?"

Kids were not conforming, partners were feeling threatened and displaying this through a resistance to undertake household tasks they would have previously engaged in. Some of the women reported that relationships at home had become strained, added to that, relationships at work were equally tension filled. Some felt that nurses resisted them by refusing to provide support and, to top it all, they often felt that their fellow HCAs resented them. Some of the issues the women revealed to me in our 'catch up' conversations were true for mature female students in other studies I had accessed: Reay, Ball and David (2010), Skeggs (2004) and Archer and Hutchings (2010).

For many, though challenging, the first year was somewhat enlightening, the university experience energised and stimulated them and each assignment resulted in a sense of achievement and pride, even if they only achieved the 40% pass mark. For about three years, each year, two new cohorts would start the fd programme. On numerous occasions over that three-year period, I would meet 'the second years'. I recall having several emotionally charged conversations as some of the women would inform me, not that they were thinking of quitting, but that they had quit! I often found myself trying hard to conceal my disappointment and frustration when they would say: "my tutor said, I can still go to the graduation and pick up my cer-fi-ticket."

From some, I concealed my annoyance, disappointment and frustration. However, for those who had become friends, I found myself assertively challenging them with several questions.

"Did you go to uni, just to attend the graduation?"

"Wasn't this about getting the qualification?"

"About getting a pay rise?"

"About getting some professional respect?"

"About re-calibrating the scales of NHS injustice?"

"Being an example for your kids?"

"Wasn't this about getting one step closer to the nurse you told me you desired to be?"

"Why do we give up so easily?"

"Why didn't you access support before?"

"Is it too late to re-join?"

I clearly recall the day I saw three Black women who I was encouraging to keep going,

"It ain't worth it Peggy, one said, there are no Band 4 jobs anyway, it was an empty promise, so even if we finished, they would have us doing the Band 4 roles without paying us. We ain't going back to slavery." As I repeat the word desire, I reflect on my reading of Todd (1998) which forces me to question, whose desire were the women really wanting to fulfil? Was it their own? Their parents? Mine? Their children's? A combination? Here maybe Todd's (1998) work on Lacan offers a viewpoint that may illuminate the actions of the women.

Todd (1998) suggests that our desires are directly ours or others. I question whether my generation are haunted by the aspirational voices of our parents' generation. I say the voices that haunt us because in several cases parents are no longer alive but even so their voices remind us that we are never too old to learn. Todd's (1998) explanation of Lacan's articulation around the manipulation of desire helps me to see that the women may have had a desire to progress professionally and that desire was intertwined with the aspirational desire of their parents. Yet, once they identified that the NHS Trust was likely to develop them for exploitation and for the Trust's own gain, then the desire was subordinated by actions of resistance.

Until my acknowledgement of the above, the focus of the questioning had been about me. The real question which was unasked in my barrage was, had I been complicit in setting you women up to fail? Had I not done enough? Had I adopted the position of 'slave in the big house' to use an analogy from slavery which denotes that the slaves who worked closely to the slave masters 'othered' the slaves out in the fields. Following my reflection on my own attitude, the women's responses, and a great deal of reading I started to look beyond my perception of 'failure'.

I eventually decided that it was imperative that I laid aside my 'westernised, colonial influenced' perceptions of viewing educational failure. After engaging in much discussions and reading around educational inequalities and exploitation generally as well as in the NHS, I decided to attempt making sense of 'our' educational and professional experiences. I have used the above space to 'out' my relationship with the study participants. I have done this not only because reflection is an essential aspect of my research journey, but because I need to demonstrate that with the emotional investment in this case study, I will not be making claims of scientific 'truth'. What I retell will be truth only as 'they / we' recall 'our' experiences. This thesis will not make a claim of objectivity. For a fifth of my life, I have invested time, skills, resources as well as shared life with several of the participants of this study. Throughout our decade, I have occupied shifting positions on the insider / outsider continuum.

I intentionally separate roles and identities because for me, they are not synonymous and are sometimes dichotomous. I am Peggy, a Black woman born in Birmingham, England. However, at an early age I travelled with my father and UK born siblings to Jamaica where I accessed a Jamaican education and was undoubtedly influenced by Jamaican culture. I have worked predominantly in the field of education in the UK, a field which is dominated by Caucasians. I operate professionally from an institution where primarily, nursing is problematic in the way it systematically reserves its secondary pedagogical practices and subsequently, subordinated professional spaces for Black women. Finally, the NHS' 'invisible' structures were contrived to exclude Black women from the upper levels of its hierarchies. I self-identify as Black Caribbean, I cannot recall ever feeling British, yet I am aware that because of the passport I hold and the place of my birth, others may identify me as British. Yet, I cannot claim to be fully conversant with the holistic issues of Black women or even the women in this study for multiple sociological reasons: including the fact that my decade out of the UK was a decade in which the lives of many in Black communities were significantly impacted by racism. I did not live through those experiences though I now have insights gained though listening to others who did, as well as my reading.

I was absent from the UK for most of the 1970s and 1980s. During these times, there were a range of Black consciousness initiatives. Carby (1999) reminds us that during this period there was a 'workforce movement' which rose from the professional groups within the community including, Black lawyers, teachers, educators, social workers and police self-interest groups. The '70s and '80s saw the so called, 'Bristol and Handsworth riots'. A time when Black as well as socio-economically deprived white youth protested about oppressive policing and harassment as well as a society which systematically deprived them of equal access to education, housing and employment (Solomos, 1986). That decade was also the period when Black communities became proactive in their consideration of self-identification as they grew increasingly politicised and strove for equality.

The Black community were aware that policy-led conversations about them were changing and the active language of exploitation, disadvantage and disaffection was shifting to the passive: social exclusion and disaffected (Sudbury 1998). During the 1970s and 1980s Black communities realised that the political discourses about them was shifting from institutional and structural inequalities, to blaming them for their 'state' (Reid, 2015).

On May 14th, 2015, I travelled to London for the launching of a DVD entitled: Look How Far We've Come: commentaries on British society and racism. In evaluating the 50th anniversary of the Equality Act, the project's director had visited several prominent Black activists engaging in dialogues and compiling commentaries on the Black community's trajectory towards equality since the act of 1965. The contributions on the DVD had a profound impact on me, as, not for the first time on this academic journey, it dawned on me how 'privileged' I was to have escaped the 1970s-1980s decade in the UK. The commentaries on British society and racism of that era, which most of my participants lived through serves to support my acknowledgment that I cannot claim the same lived experiences as my study group. At the launch, I was privileged to meet Dame Joycelyn Barrow who shared her account of coming to the UK to undertake postgraduate studies in the 1960s and on seeing how the Black community 'existed,' committed herself to activism which resulted in the equality bill which was passed in 1965. As I journeyed home I had a deep appreciation of my own journey and was so thankful that I had been spared the experiences of Black Britain of the 1970s-1980s. I was also quite heartened that the organiser had sent a thank you email acknowledging my attendance, especially as I had travelled from Birmingham on a wet and cold evening. Below is a section of my response.

Hi Kwaku,

Thanks for acknowledging my attendance. I would like to congratulate you on an incredibly informative evening. I was impressed with the timing and the output. Most importantly, I learnt a great deal from the presented discussions which was my aim. So well done!

Thanks for your commitment to raising the profile of Black issues. I was born in the UK, but in my formative years, my father returned to the Caribbean and took us with him. Viewing the video yesterday as well as through my reading I am constantly reminded of what my siblings and I were spared.

Look after yourself and tend to your health please, we need folks like you around for a long time and the rest of us will take our place to share the continued resilience of people of the African Diaspora.

My 'escape' from the Britain of the 70s and 80s meant I was significantly influenced by Jamaican culture and language. This has resulted in me being a bit of a mystery to new people I encounter and sometimes even amongst my peers. I am often questioned about the ease with which I seem to navigate both British and Jamaican cultures. Work colleagues are often perplexed by the variance between the social (patois speaking and culturally passionate) and professional (and somewhat understanding of British culture) me.

To help explain this I will use a recent encounter. Last Saturday I went to visit a colleague in her home. She is a mature Black woman who migrated from Jamaica to join her husband. They have been living in the UK for over a decade. This mature Black woman (not one of this study's participants) has just embarked on a degree programme and I offered to help her to navigate her newly acquired iPad and laptop. As I entered their home, she exclaimed to her husband, "Here is the British, Jamaican mi a tell yo 'bout. she a summit else, mi still no figa 'ar out yet!" I still haven't figured her out yet, is a comment that is often used about me. Yet, I can't offer information which would support the attempts to 'figure me out' as it comes 'natural' to me to transition language and culture when the context requires.

When I read the works of Coard (1971), Pryce (1979), Bryan et al., (1985) and Sudbury (1998) I was perturbed. I recall feeling physical pain in my gut as tears flowed down my cheeks. I was burdened with questions. How is it I hadn't heard of ESN and its associated issues before? Did my father know of educational subnormal labelling of Black children in the 1970s? Did that influence his decision to take his children to Jamaica for their primary and secondary education? Undoubtedly, the above situations have challenged me to think differently about racism in established institutions. It is my belief that the work of Dame Joycelyn Barrow and others was to name racism and rightly so.

However, times have changed and institutions as well as caucasions who are less commited to equality now hide behind policies, often using the term 'unconscious bias' racism is much more covert and so my thoughts are, do we as Blacks need to find other modes to challenge our oppressors. Instead of naming injustices as racists, should we be presenting our organisations and oppressors with the facts and asking them to help us explore and expose our experiences? This thesis will not be naming behaviors or practices as racists, but will present facts and invite dialogue and reflection and hopefully in so doing the identification of racism and redress will be revealed to both the oppressed and the oppressor leading to increased dialogue and understanding. Here, my aim was to set the context for my methodological stance and paradigm.

2.2 Case Study

Yin (2009) expounds that: "the term case study is often taken to carry implications for the kind of data that are collected and perhaps also for how they are analysed" (pg. 3.). Case studies are sometimes considered to be somewhat exploratory and amateurish, used as a precursor to the 'proper' study, therefore considered to be 'less rigorous and lacking in credibility'. This case study is not concerned with distance or generalisations, or 'absolute truths'. Its focus is to explore, unearth make sense and retell aspects of lived accounts, thus contributing new data to HEIs, the NHS, mature Black students as well as Black communities.

This single case study will explore the lived experiences and perceptions of a group of mature Black women who accessed a fd through a WP provision. The women are employed by the NHS. The majority work in the role of HCA. All, except the author, were seconded to undertake a foundation degree programme in Health and Social Care in a local HEI. Aspects of my own journey will be included in dialogues. I am employed by the same NHS Trust and I am a self-funding PhD researcher. Yin (2009) describes a case study as:

> "a single holistic case which explores one group situated within a particular context" …as well as "an empirical inquiry, in which focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context and boundaries between the two are not clear" (Pgs. 7 & 18).

This is a concise description of the study I will be undertaking and therefore confirms that this project will be a case study. In this case study, I will 'harvest', by which I mean that I will let the women tell their stories, and I will decide and theme the aspects to retell and I will have the final say on how to present them. Though the women have self-identified as Black British or Black Caribbean, their heritage and cultural identities may be more complex than their self-representation indicates. For example, participants in this study may have a white British mother and a Black Jamaican father but describe themselves as Black British, others may have been born in Britain but self-identify as Black Caribbean. My methodological stance encourages my case study participants to self-define. Lorde (1984) asserts, "if we do not define ourselves for ourselves, (and not only ethnically) we will be defined by others - for their use and to our detriment" (p. 26). Black communities in the UK have had decades of being defined by others, it will not be so for this study.

The narratives from this case study will provide new knowledge on the experiences of a group of mature Black British and Black Caribbean women's educational journey to a newly created tier in nursing. Cohen, Mannion and Morrison (2007) suggest that, "case-studies strive to portray 'what it is like to be in a situation, to catch the close-up reality and 'thick description of participants' lived experiences, thoughts and feelings for a situation" (p. 254).

This case study will be exploring Black British and Black Caribbean women's own perceptions and lived experiences of their educational trajectories probing what impact the educational experiences had on their personal and professional identities. As the researcher, I will also be reflecting on aspects of my diary recordings and my own experiences of 'journeying' alongside them as well as journeying alone with this project. I aim to engage reflexively, examining how my own contributions and assumptions as a Black educator shaped my engagement with the women and informed my reactions to what I initially perceived to be (their) / (our) 'failures'.

My motivation for using a case study is that it works seamlessly with both my chosen methodology and my chosen approach for the presentation of our stories. I have worked with the women in this study for several years before, as well as during the times they were on their fd course. It is my firm belief that each woman could get through an undergraduate programme of study. Though I understood the challenges of transitioning from 'vocation' to 'academic' study the women had met the HE undergraduate programme criteria and were promised full support from employers. The women and I had anticipated that they would successfully complete their foundation degree. As colleague, educator and friend, I 'desired' their success. During my time of working alongside the members of this case study, I had heard their accounts of injustice and structural subordination. As I reflect, I realise that the participants and I never discussed what would be considered success or how success would be measured.

My assumption was that success would be measured by the completion of the two-year programme and a subsequent appointment to the role of an AP. I assumed success would be measured the same for them. On reflection, I question my supposition and feel the need to share, critique as well as explore what influenced my criteria of success? I believe that what 'drove' me was the education 'policy' agenda. I had internalised the WP policy agenda which I interpreted quite naively: HE opportunities are available to you and if you work hard, you WILL succeed. Yet, I had enough lived experience to know that the above sentiment was only partially true. I knew that the covert practices of both HE and the NHS had often negated Black women's hard work. In my discussions with the women during their preparation for university, I informed them that they would have to be disciplined, be prepared to appropriately challenge support staff both at work and in their HEI. I encouraged them to put in place social networks as 'life happens' to mature learners and whatever life throws up, the work will still need to be done and timeframes adhered to. In addition, I generally shared some of the 'wisdoms' of our ancestors: "ef yo waan good, yo nose haffi run… an uno tan dey, uno haffi wuk twice as 'ard as de white man fi succeed yaso."

The second half of the patios thought conveyed above is academically translated by Smith and Smith, (1981) who asserts: "Race is a concept of having to be twice as qualified, twice as good to go half as far" (p. 13).

Therein lies a thought that most children of Caribbean immigrants would have had re-echoed in their ears. It was our parents' admonition for those who desired to do well in education and employment and achieve above menial jobs in the UK. On reflection, I can see that in preparing the women for HE, what we all lacked was an in-depth understanding of the history of Black people and education generally and Black women and nursing education in the UK specifically. So, I return to Yin's quote on case studies. I aim to explore the perceptions and lived experiences of a small group of Black British and Black Caribbean women working in the NHS. This case study will focus on the women's experiences of HE as well as the impact of the educational journey on their personal and professional identities. In conclusion, this group of mature, Black Caribbean and Black British women are the conduits of the rich data gained through their lived experiences. As an 'untapped' group their accounts have never been shared the way they have been for this study, neither will the narratives ever be told in the same way again. Therefore, this is a unique case study where a specific group of women working within a context will be sharing their experiences of education within their work as well as the HEI context.

2.3 Black Feminist Methodological Stance (BFMS)

For this case study, my methodological theory will be Black feminist stance. Hekman (1997) in her review of Nancy Harstock's work on feminist theory asserts:

> "the original formulations of feminist standpoint theory rests on two assumptions, that all knowledge is located and that one location, that of the standpoint of women is privileged because it provides a vantage point that reveals the truth in social reality" (p. 349).

Living in a world where the male voice is generally privileged, feminist stance was developed by women as a means of redressing the silent female voices in society at large. Hekman, (1997) argues that:

> "the concept of a standpoint rests on the fact that there are some perspectives on society from which, however well-intentioned one may be, the real relations of humans with each other and with the natural world are not visible" (p. 343).

History is filled with examples of groups suffering from multiple oppressions. These macro oppressions are meted out generally because of the differences of race, gender, religion as well as class. If I use the Civil Rights movement of the USA as an example, when Blacks and women fought for equality, it soon became evident that gender in and of itself was a flawed foundation on which to build feminist stance (Ware 1992). In its infancy, the feminist movement assumed women to be a homogenous group led predominantly by white women. It was not long after the establishment of the feminist movement that Black women were problematising feminism because for them, in the power relationships, white women were amongst their oppressors (Carby, 1999). Hekman, (1997) asserts one of the major problems thus:

> "original feminist standpoint claimed a monolithic concept of 'woman' which placed the ruling class at the 'centre' and 'other' on the periphery. As the concept evolved, there was a dissention of black women who felt that their differences which were theoretically and practically different were not considered in the melting pot of the heterogeneous group" (p. 352).

During the Civils Rights in the USA for example, Black women contested that they were not only oppressed by white males and Black males, they were also oppressed by white women whose homes they kept and children they raised yet white women forbade them to use their washrooms or to acknowledge them in any other position but to serve them. "We were black women in a world that was as sexists as it was racist. And all we had was each other" (Boylorn, 2017: 73). Disengaging from 'white women's feminism,' Black women commenced a movement where their specific needs would be highlighted and addressed. From the monolithic movement, several feminist movements were birthed.

The more general view of feminist standpoint can be found in the work of Hekman (1997) who states:

> "Feminist standpoint expresses female experience at a particular time and place, located within a particular set of social relations… feminist standpoint allows us to go beneath the surface of appearances to reveal the real but concealed social relations…women's lives therefore make available a particular and privileged vantage point male supremacy" (p. 344).

The complexity of women's positioning in differing parts of the world resulted in a plethora of women representations highlighting their own oppressions and seeking their specific spaces on the feminist circuit. Haraway, (1998) says of feminist theory:

> "there is no single feminist standpoint because our maps require too many dimensions…but the feminist standpoint theorists' goal of an epistemology and politics of engaged, accountable positioning remains eminently potent" (p. 590).

From Black women's experiences, Black Feminist Stance (Hill Collins, 1991), Third World Feminism (Moraga, 1981) and Womanism (Walker, 1983) to name the more prominent ones, were birthed. Black feminist standpoints aim to create a politic where the power dynamics are shifted, where the 'knowledge' of the ruling class are placed on the peripheries and 'othered' thus centralising the experiences and knowing of Black women. In so doing, Black women reflect, critique and reject the internalised psychological oppressions and use their own 'self-defined consciousness' to make sense of their worlds and their experiences within their worlds (Hill Collins 1999:159). Black feminist thoughts are positioned on the following pillars or 'truths' as linked to many black women's experiences. 1) Oppression is either part of their legacy or their realities. 2) They are generally othered in a racist society. 3) They are a complex and diverse group and as a result share a collective standpoint. Black women researchers use Black feminist stance(s) to explore and critique black women's experiences. Black feminist stance(s) are also political approaches, therefore work produced from Black feminist thoughts must be accessible, relevant and juxtaposed with social praxis. The aim of Black female researchers engaging from the stance(s) is to empower, liberate, and restore esteem as well as internalised respect and power to black women (Hill Collins 2009 and Boylorn 2017).

Hill Collins (1986) asserts that:

> "black women have a unique standpoint where the goal is to articulate the unique aspects of black women's standpoint without denying that there is a difference amongst black women…though black feminist standpoint(s) are rooted in everyday experiences, they are constructed by the theorists who reflect on their own experiences. One of the aims of black feminist standpoint(s) is to theorise and define the common experiences of black women" (p. 352).

Intersectionality theory (Crenshaw 1999) offers a way of investigating how gender joins other identity factors to influence how women experience oppression. It is grounded in the idea that people live layered lives and often experiences overlap, making it possible to feel oppression in one area and privilege in others. An example would be a Black woman positioned on the periphery because of her race and gender but privileged because of her class. (Boylorn 2017)

Boylorn (2017) suggests that a Black feminist stance exploration can lead to: "The group's vision though partial and perverse…" (p. 345). This acknowledgement of a partial knowing is supported by Hekman (1997) who argues that those undertaking works from black feminist standpoint(s) accept that: "a black woman's standpoint is only one angle of vision, a partial perspective" (p. 352). What Black feminist stance(s) offer are another story, another perspective what Haraway (1998) describes as, "a fiction and a fact of the most crucial, political kind" (p. 191).

This thesis aims to retell the educational experiences of a group of Black British and Black Caribbean women who have accessed education whilst linked to two of the UK's institutions that have been historically known as seats of oppressions for Black women, the NHS and HEIs. Within the NHS, nursing education as well as the nursing profession have failed to give credence or prominence to Black women's contributions. In more recent times, there have been sporadic attempts at acknowledging their work, but generally their stories are told then theorised and made sense of by the dominant groups who undertook the research. It is my intention as both contributor and writer of this thesis that this work will be accessible to a wider group than those in the academy. This is a political piece which I intend to see performed within settings for audiences of all cultures and backgrounds. Boylorn (2017) suggests that:

> "Feminism is theory and praxis that aims to set us free, we understand the political risk and reward of black feminist praxis which gives visibility to our issues… as our stories and feminist analyses are generally met with understanding, enthusiasm and affirmation by readers" (p. 19).

Further on reader, (p. 117) you will read of the impact Frazier's work had on Black people, when people from places he had never visited thought they could identify the characters in his study, presenting this work in a format that is accessible to the Black community is integral to the success of the project. This work centralises the self-defined selves and retold experiences of Black Caribbean and Black British women and as Boylorn (2017) asserts: "helps me to articulate the nuances of 'our lives as black women', as well as combating social constructions of what being a black woman means, whilst making sense of our interrelated oppressions" (p. 74).

As a Black female researcher, I am committed to ensuring that I use the wealth of knowledge from the Black women's stories of the past, coupled with our current experiences as learning opportunities for my own and future generations. The point I strive to make here is much better articulated by Boylorn (2017) who states that Black feminist methodological stance(s) create opportunities to:

> "learn how to use personal and inherited family stories alongside the storied legacy of black feminists to politicise 'our' experiences and compare them to other black women. Black feminism provides a platform for black women to define themselves instead of relying on the problematic and skewed representations offered to 'us' about 'us' by others" (p. 74).

Black feminist stance provides me with a framework to centre and privilege the everyday lived experiences of eleven Black women as significant and important data for academic scholarship (Boylorn (2013). As a Black woman undertaking this study with Black women, Black feminist stance for me is a natural way to approach this small 'p' political work. This work must centre our experiences, our knowledge, our perceptions. This work must centre us! It must be about us and for us primarily. Of course, this work will invite others to hear us, join us, hear about us from us. A self-defined and courageous us and that is just what this work will do. Notwithstanding, I have also considered that being so close to my work with Black women will present me with challenges. Boylorn (2017) argues that:

> "there are some potential challenges for black women primarily studying their own lives as they will have biases that could influence their interpretations. In addition, we may dismiss or overlook important information or findings, because we perceive it to be normal and not out of the ordinary. It is also possible that we disregard important details" (p. 359).

I acknowledge that I do have biases and that this is very much a partial retelling of our lived experiences from a Black feminist standpoint and I will approach the stories with the awareness that I also need to theorise the 'taken for granted' aspects of our shared experiences.

Another reason for my choice of Black feminist standpoint as my theorectical framework is that it synchronises well with my methodology of performance autoethnography, the method I have chosen to present my research. Boylorn (2017) asserts her experience of blending feminism and autoethnograpy as a method for theorising and presenting research about Black women:

> "Autoethnography, coupled with black feminist stance, provides an opportunity for black women to embrace their truth, examine their lived experiences through a cultural lens using creative writing techniques and research methods to situate, interrogate and critique our experiences while making sense of cultural phenomena. When autoethnography came into the picture it made sense in the context of my black feminist politics" (p. 74).

I resonated with Boylorn's assertion because this work is not merely an academic piece, it is a genuine inquiry into the lived experiences of Black women with a view to not only making sense of our journeys but that others can also consider them, critique them, contribute to them and share them.

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On a deeply personal level, I am using these approaches because one of my persistent angst, as I journey towards the end of the written thesis, and actively prepare for my viva is the knowledge that on completion I will be able to use two letters in front of my name or three letters behind it which have known currency amongst the hegemonic groups.

The lives of the other ten women of this study to date…remain unchanged!

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This work must be presented to the institutions we work and study in to commence conversations about redress. This work must be accessible to the women who contributed to it. They must be able to (re)live it, to own their part of it, to share it, to (re)build on it and hopefully one day to (re)tell the end of it…

Lal's (1999) words will provide my final justifications for my Black feminist stance choice, she states:

> "the combined approach of black feminist stance and autoethnography *(which is my chosen method of presenting this data)* "brings visibility and voice to marginalised populations and those that are 'relatively powerless in the academy'… to raise awareness around social injustices and make black women's lives more accessible" (pp. 77 & 80 & 100) (italics mine).

This study will present partial stories in the women's own words, from their reflections of their lived experiences. Black women's accounts in the NHS and particularly the voices of Black women who are on the lowest scales of the hierarchical structure are invisible and voiceless. BFMS and performance autoethnography will centralise, give voice and visibility to the Black women in this case study.

2.4 Interviews and Plotting the Autoethnography

This study used predominantly open-ended interviews. Silverman (2011) argues that open-ended interviews are: "commonly used to elicit life histories…to achieve rich data." (Pg 162). He further suggests that during open-ended interviews the researcher must be an active listener allowing the interviewee the freedom to talk whilst ascribing meanings and striving to keep the conversation focused on the broader aims of the project.

Silverman (2011) further suggests that the open-ended interviewer must resolve the following issues:

1. 'deciding how to present self'.
2. 'gaining and maintaining trust so sensitive questions can be explored.'
3. 'establishing rapport with respondents gaining insights into their viewpoints.'

I have known the women in this study through differing relationships over a ten-year period. I have taught each one of them on work-based Skills for Life courses. In several cases our relationships had transitioned from colleagues to friends. All the women had shared their intentions of applying for a place on the fd 'Band 4' programme. To make sense of this it is important to say that the NHS's pay structure is governed by bands. Band 1 is the lowest on the pay scale and the structure goes beyond Band 9. The women, except for myself, were working at Band 2 and a new professional identity and a shift, two tiers up the pay ladder, was promised to some on successful completion of their programme. This shift from the top of pay Band 2 to the top of pay Band 4 had a financial value of approximately £1,000 per annum for four years. I wrote to every Black woman in the Trust who had attended or attempted the fd programme inviting them to join a group to share their lived experiences of the fd programme. I followed up the initial letter with several other letters as well as phone calls. After approximately four months, with only three responses, I called each one asking if I could meet with them individually. Though I had to do a lot of follow-up phone calls and letters, ten women eventually responded. Initially, I drafted some guiding questions with a view to using semi-structured interviews, however, when I piloted the questions the whole experience felt contrived. Following the pilot of the interview questions, I asked the participant, who I knew very well and had lived through several significant 'lows' during her study what happened as she had left out all the challenges and emotions we had shared and lived through. She asserted when I probed her that: 'I told them what they want to hear'. We discussed who she perceived 'them' to be and discussed some of the perceptions of sharing our stories 'warts and all' with those who we perceive to be our oppressors. I then decided to adapt my approach to use open-ended interviews and the only structured questions were the ones which asked the women to send messages to the funders, NHS Trust, HEI and another mature aspiring Black female student. I also commenced our conversations outlining that these conversations were primarily for us, about us and should benefit other women like us.

At the start of this study it was my desire to get the women together as a group to share our accounts. I had hoped that we could meet and share in a space where we felt safe. I had planned for much interaction and interweaving through conversations. I made attempts at arranging a meeting for us to assemble to share. Throughout the first two years of this study all my attempts were futile. When I met with the women individually, I agreed days and times that would 'work' for each and offered several dates, yet, nearing the agreed dates I would get calls asking: "who will be going?" Though I gained a level of agreement, withdrawals then pursued a day or so before the meeting. After several attempts, I conceded that meeting as a group was not going to materialise. Each woman knew me and most of them were only vaguely acquainted with each other, but the consensus was, each was happy to share with me, but they were not interested in meeting as a group. On a personal note, I felt that the women denied us all the opportunity to experience my mentally conceived space where we could share, make sense, build and action plan together. Within my envisioned space 'we could relive intimate aspects of our lives with critical intention, breaking the fourth wall of an assumed objectified teacher student engagement' (Alexander 2003). Because the women were not willing to meet as a group to engage I had to rethink my approach to both collecting and presenting their stories.

Between 2015 and 2016, I had read the work of Carolyn Ellis and attended the Qualitative Inquiry conference in Chicago where I was exposed to research data performed powerfully. The perfomances appealed to me because they engaged me mentally, emotionally and the physical performance pulled me into subjects I had no knowledge of, as well as subjects I previously had no interest in. I saw performance autoethnography as a legititmate alternative methodological approach to managing and presenting my data. Performance autoethnography provided me with the platform to make my unfulfilled aspiration a reality. What I could not achieve in real life (assembling with the women to share and make sense of our stories) I created through my imagination by using autoethnography. In this performance autoethnography, I aimed to 'bring self and others together so that we could question, debate and challenge each other' (Conquergood 1985). Each scene is fictitious, but our blended accounts provided an overview of our dialogic engagements from the open-ended interviews which were deep, reflective and quite philosophical. The scenes showcased what Pineau (2002) describes as: "a body centred experiential method of teaching that foregrounds the active body knowing; where we acknowledge the inequalities in power and privilege and how we struggled through" (p. 41). It was important for me to capture the tensions, the angsts, the emotions and the silences as legitimate aspects or our lived experiences and incorporate them into the performance. These emotional aspects demonstrated our pain and there was a great deal of pain that resurfaced with reliving. I also included how, in the conversations, the women guided me to songs as they relived, so I incorporated both the playing of songs as well as the singing of Bob Marley's lyrics.

During the interviews, we discussed resistance and self knowing so the song in the perfomance created a platform for holistic release. The introduction to the university scene shows how the women are 'haunted' by returning to a site of oppression, pain and unease and for me highlights aspects of our discussion where the women shared that the university experience was not one some were ready to revisit any time soon. Consequently, the centalising of our views led us to shout out to the universe as well as to ourselves that we KNOW that, 'non, but OURSELVES can free our minds'.

Predominantly, the works of Black philosophers were used to theorise the 'sense making'. In each of the scenes the characters theorise and make sense by using philosophical ideas. The actual words from the women's conversations are recorded verbatim in blue text, the words in black text are attributed to them by me. The posters in the penultimate scene are also the verbatim words of the women, presented for ease of communication and were created as examples of the women finding alternative modes of presenting their stories. The posters showcased that the women acknowledged the value of differentitation and its importance when conveying messages to others. This performance autoethnographical approach is supported by Alexander (2003) who asserts that:

> "autoethnography is centered within the critical articulation of lived experience as a pedagogical engagement means there must me a deep philosophical commitment to encouraging students to explore how their experiences, in a wide range of social encounters and political happenings matter" (p. 542).

The characters are reflexive as they recall what happened to them, then they use their reflexivity to critically make sense of their experiences. The spaces were also important as historically Black emancipatory movements were conceived in homes, community halls and places of worship. Both the NHS Trust and the Higher Education Institution are West Midlands based.

The Mama B, Dr. Owo Adobe and Akoko Nan characters are fictional as are the characters in the dreamers' section. I got my inspiration for the strong female academic characters from my reading of African American feminist work where Black women, usually academics engaged in Black feminist epistemology and often in informal spaces like around a dining table. Akoko Nan's character was positioned as a reminder that we were building on the shoulders of those who have gone on before, however, they still very much have something to say through the legacies they have left for us. The NHS England conference scene was fictional, but the words of the character Mmara-Krado are a verbatim account from a professional interview between an NHS commissioner and myself. The character Sankofa is me and the retelling contains my personal views, lived experiences and reflections.

However, I have chosen not to make distinctions between retelling and the fiction as this whole study is about living out an aspiration, so for me this creative production is very much our, and more precisely, my 'lived' experience(s). The readings that the women were assigned are from authors whose values and approach to pedagogy have shaped the adult educator that I am today. They discuss approaches to education that women like me long to experience more of as we engage in education. The included authors are predominantly advocates of transformative education (Freire, Apple and bell hooks) and others were African American philosophers (Birt, West, Yancey and Gordon (1998) including post slavery educationalists (Dubois).

I conducted the open-ended interviews with the women of this case study in a range of agreed spaces, their homes, my home, on wards at the hospital or in training rooms of our NHS Trust. All the inteviews were conducted in our own time. Whenever possible, when we met we shared food, drinks and stories. I opened each dialogue with a broad question, tell me about your foundation degree journey. I had some prompt questions, about asking questions of the three institutions who made the opportunity possible. One of my greatest challenges was keeping us focused. All the conversations were taped. Once we started talking, our conversations weaved in and out of so many dimensions of our lives. Our conversations covered all of what encompasses life, we shared of inequalities, death, children, parents, illness, stress, the navigating of multiple relationships and their challenges. There was laughter, anger, regret, tears, joy, pride and longing.

The theming of the stories was a real challenge because I had so much data. For about a year, I listened to the stories repeatedly, (they became my companions on my daily walks) trying to distinguish recurrences for themes. One of the biggest challenges of using open ended interviews was the fact that the average conversation lasted seventy minutes, with four of the ten interviews exceeding two hours. The interviews yielded a great deal of data, but I had seriously underestimated the cost and time of transcribing. I experimented having my shortest conversation transcribed by a qualified medical secretary (see Appendix 6). It transpired that the patois elements created a challenge for her. The use of patios meant the process of deciphering and typing demanded more time. I then decided to transcribe the conversations myself. Though the transcribing was labour intensive and hugely time consuming, the transcribing process created opportunities for me to relive the shared stories and in time clearly identify recurring topics which resulted in the identification of dominant themes presented in the performance.

Each woman was given a pseudonym from the Akan tribe in Ghana, the pseudonym was discussed with each woman and I justified my choice by aligning each woman with the characteristics associated with the name (see page 131).

To further protect the women, I had to remove identifying personalised nuances and identifiable conversational mannerisms, for example, repetitions of 'you know what I mean, or you know what I'm saying' were removed from interviews where women would be identified because of their regular conversation patterns. On completion of the first draft of the drama, I met up with a friend, an experienced script writer as well as several of the women. The script writer supported me with advice on laying out the text to improve clarity and flow. When one participant saw what I had done with her character, she beamed and enquired when it would be published into a book so she could get copies for her daughter and her social groups. Her words through her broad beaming smile were: "This is great…we've waited long enough, we don't have another two years to wait…get on with it, we want to hold it and share it!" My humble reply was the same that the temporarily mute Marguerite gave to her teacher Mrs. Flowers in Maya Angelou's book, 'I know why the caged bird sings'. 'Yes ma'am'.

I have thoroughly enjoyed, just getting on with this political piece. Spry argues that,

> "Performative autoethnography views person as inherently political, focuses on bodies-in-context as a co-performative agent in interpreting knowledge, and holds aesthetic craft of research as an ethical imperative or representation… it has been about dropping down out of the personal and individual to find painful and comforting connection with others in sociocultural contexts of loss and hope" (Spry 2011:498).

Finally, this quote from Alexander (2013) captures the passion and vision I feel about this work. "Critical performative pedagogy autoethnography is a rehearsal process for actualising possibilities outside the classroom" (p. 67).

This section illustrates how I moved from the position of one with a dashed dream (my inability to get the women of the study together as a group) to being the originator and creator of a performance autoethnography. This small 'p' political work showcases as Spry asserts my / our painful as well as survival experiences of HE and work-place learning.

Denzin (2014) reminds us that stories can be complex lived experiences which take in every part of the person engaged in it. Stories carry history, recollections, emotions, truths, recalled truths, half-truths and lessons. Components of an autoethnographical story includes:

> "people depicted as characters, a scene, place, context where the story occurs. An epiphany that provides dramatic tension around which employed events depicted in the story revolve and toward which a resolution is pointed. A point or moral to the story which gives meaning to the experiences depicted" (p. 4).

With Denzin's description, I set about creating this performance autoethnography.

As this piece utilises the theorectical framework of BFMS, when speaking collectively, I will use inclusive language such as, 'we' and 'our' to speak of the eleven as a research community. It is my hope that someone, somewhere will create a space for 'rehearsals' that lead to an actual performance in real space and time.

Chapter Three

3.1 Autoethnography

> "Autoethnography is an expression of the desire to turn social science inquiry into a non-alienating practice, one in which I (as researcher) do not need to suppress my own subjectivity, where I can become more attuned to the subjectively felt experiences of others, where I am free to reflect on the consequences of my work, not only for others but also for myself, and where all parts of myself - emotional, spiritual, intellectual, embodied and moral can be voiced and integrated in my work…it's a response to an existential crisis - a desire to do meaningful work and lead a meaningful life" (Bochner 2013: 53).

I ask the reader to spend a moment or two reflecting on what you have read thus far. From the outset, I have shared my frustrations with academic traditions, my desire to be true to myself, to explore women like me using all of me. I have agonised over my unease with protocol and have despaired over my lack of confidence coupled with my instinctive motivation to do things differently. I have wanted to include oral sayings when literature reviews generally give credence to written work. I have used patios without English translations because I perceive that with some time and effort deciphering meaning is achievable by most non-patios speakers. The above inclusions and deviations from the norm results in a thesis which is…messy…but I hope you will agree interesting…somewhat courageous…maybe naive…more than likely honest…frustrating to compile…yet enjoyable to create and read. My desire for this thesis to be accessible to my participants and my communities without being 'watered down' was one of the challenges that contributed to many sleepless nights on this journey. I had what others told me were grandeur ideas about producing a thesis which would simultaneously satisfy my participants as well as my examiners and supervisors. During one of my supervisions, Professor Joyce Canaan mentioned the work of Carolyn Ellis, one of the the co-originators of autoethnography. I could hardly contain myself as I read Ellis' book, the Ethnographic I. Ellis and her partner (Art Bochner) had been 'good' social science academics until they explored and experimented with a new way of writing research. Chang (2013) asserts:

> "autoethnography uses different processes and is produced in various formats and writing styles…it enables writing as a holistic way of thinking and processing without delineating data collection, analysis and interpretation as distinctive stages of the ethnographic process" (p. 109).

Chang's explanation of autoethnography interested me as I wanted to share our narratives in a very unconventional way.

As I delved into the method of writing further I came across the work of Jones, Adams and Ellis (2013) who argue that:

> "the characteristics that distinguish autoethnography include: 1. purposefully commenting on/critiquing of culture and or cultural practices. 2. making contributions to existing research. 3. embracing vulnerability with purpose and 4. creating a reciprocal relationship with audiences to compel a response" (p. 22).

Having read about performance autoethnography, I knew I had found my approach to writing up my study. This approach to creating meaning completely resonated with my desires, intentions and goals. My work needed to be more than just another thesis that achieved its aim once the author gained her academic credentials. This thesis needed to be different, meaning it should be accessible to non-academics and academics alike; it should boldly assert the fact that it was subjective, but no less academic. It was also imperative that my work contributed to social activism:

> "interpretative autoethnography has a political component; a commitment to a social justice agenda - an inquiry that explicitly addresses issues of inequality and injustice in particular social movements and places" (Denzin 2014: p. x).

This non-traditional approach offers me the platform on which to build through the retelling of our stories; what Dillard (2014) portrays as 'the practice of resistance'. An opportunity to engage in what Walker (1983) describes as:

> "stripping bark from [our] self…" through the creation of a space where… "our strength arises through developing the personal and social power through questioning, from acting up, from jumping into conversations to learn the lessons vital to transforming structures and systems meant to oppress and silence" (p. 261).

What Dillard (2014) suggests above generally only occurs in relationships. My case study narratives will be building on an established relationship with the women. African American Boylorn, (2016) describes her autoethnographic approach as blackgirl autoethnography. She defines it as:

> "a praxis for black and brown women to do the home/work of self-construction, absent the influences of racist, classist, misogynistic culture. Blackgirl autoethnography celebrates the merge and emergence of race and gender/sex specific experiences at home… offering a way to be at home with oneself resisting the stereotype notions" (p. 46-47).

The space I wanted to create was most certainly a place where we could feel at home, a place where we could lose the label 'minority' where we could just be. Autoethnography, suggests Boylorn, (2016) "has significant potential for helping to voice marginalised and maligned lives" (p. 47).

The stories for this case-study will be retold by aspirational Black women who currently work in low-skilled, low paid roles. They were asked to share their experiences, their perceptions, the impact of the educational experiences on their different identities. Bochner (2014) asserts that:

> "The goal of this kind of evocative storytelling is to put meanings into motion, to show how people cope with exceptional and difficult crisis in their lives. How they invent new ways of speaking when old ways fail them. How they make the absurd sensible and the disastrous manageable. And how they can turn calamities into gifts" (p. 1).

If I get the context right, the women will feel free to not merely share because that's not the purpose of this study; we will share, interrogate, retell, and chiefly strive to make sense and learn from our experiences.

To further make the case for the use of this non-traditional method for creating and presenting research, Jones, Adams and Ellis (2013) assert:

> "the following are what make autoethnography as a method unique and compelling. 1. it disrupts norms of research practice and representation. 2. works from insider knowledge. 3. maneuvers through pain, confusion, anger and uncertainty and making life better. 4. breaks through silence (re-claiming voice and 'writing to right', and 5. makes work accessible" (p. 32).

There you have it reader, autoethnography encapsulates so much of what I previously shared about shifting from the norms, creating disruptions, centralising Black women's experiences, making their experiences heard as well as producing work that will be accessible to non-academics. Autoethnography is also "a form of writing wherein the ethnographer is the native and the writer does not adopt the objective outsider position" (Denzin 2014). I could clearly see how autoethnography and BFMS could be synthesised as a combined approach to unearthing, making sense and presenting our stories. Autoethnographic writing breaks silence therefore fulfilling my aim to have my work contribute to activism. I think Bochner (2014) provides a summary of the amalgamation of BFMS and autoethnography when he states that as autoethnographers:

> "We don't see a split between theory and story but rather understand the aim of stories of putting meanings into motion. Rejecting the received traditions of imperialism in favour of a relational dialogic qualitative and collaborative conception of enquiry. We are less concerned with representation and more concerned about communication. We give up the illusion of transcendental observation seeking instead to make autoethnographic enquiry a source of connection contact and relationship between tellers and listeners. By eliciting conversation and communication about the personal, political, moral and institutional values associated with lived experience" (p. 1).

In this study, using BFMS and performance autoethnography, Black women characters come together to make sense of what was handed to us as 'opportunities' and the characters' approach for doing this as Dillard (2014) suggests is to:

> "engage in deep watching, seeking and critical reasoning that is the process of coming to wholeness, reconnecting fragments as the process of education and (re)search for freedom. This is our way to critical consciousness, to an expanded, multiple 'whole' narrative of our individual and collective histories (and herstories). This is our way to become wholly and fully ourselves" (p. 258).

It is important to say here that our aim is wider than what we achieve for ourselves; autoethnography is a must for this study because we also have messages to convey, lessons to teach and amongst our challenges is the question, how do we influence without authority? Well BFMS enables us to gain authority and autoethnography creates the vehicle to convey our stories, as well as invite others to dialogue, centralising us provides us with a level of influence, even if it is temporary.

Finally, autoethnographic writing makes work accessible, Bochner (2014) articulates the importance of engagement, he asserts:

> "Autoethnography assumes the standpoint of the storyteller, seeking to activate subjectivity and compel emotional responses from readers. The authors want the stories to be used rather than analysed, to be told and retold rather than theorised and settled once and for all. To offer lessons for further conversation and dialogue rather than truths without any rivals. They promise the companionship of intimate details as a substitute for the loneliness of abstracted facts" (p. 2).

This work aims to be a social praxis piece for which a performance autoethnographical approach works well. Boylorn (2016) reminds me that autoethnography creates opportunities to 'rebel against and shift narratives from theories on the page, to theories in flesh and bone'. We, through retelling, legitimise, make sense, share and invite others to dialogue. Of praxis Lather (1986) argues:

> "For praxis to be possible, not only must theory illuminate the lived experience of progressive social groups; it must also be illuminated by their struggles. They, adequate to the task of changing the world, must be open-ended, non-dogmatic, informing and grounded in the circumstances of everyday life" (p. 262).

The 'flesh and bone' characters will theorise our experiences, we will take ownership, we will engage, we will use the range of resources available to us (including literature) but we will not be dependent on any one way. We will do what 'feels right'.

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Can you, see why autoethnography works for this study? I hope you can see that what Jones, Adams and Ellis (2013) describe as a unique method will be appropriate for this non-conventional study which aims to reject a traditional social scientist approach, freeing myself to write subjectively, creatively as well as liberating me to connect with my culture and my communities. Autoethnographic writing empowers me as an author of my communities' work to be "the indigenous ethnographer, the native expert, whose authentic first-hand knowledge of the culture is sufficient to lend authority to the text" Denzin (1989). Autoethnographic writing in this case study will contribute to the purging of the long-held colonial, disparaged representations of Black British and Black Caribbean women as merely subordinated groups. Rather than being positioned as silenced or dismissed 'subaltern' voices, using BFMS and autoethnography will give 'us', the previously subjugated voices, centralisation and authority in this study. I am resolute that Black Feminist Stance and performance autoethnography combined are undoubtedly the most appropriate methodological and presentation approaches. For this study, it is imperative that Black women's voices are central and are clearly heard and the stance and approach facilitates that.

3.2 Autoethnography is Storytelling BUT with a Purpose

> "Autoethnography requires that we observe ourselves observing, that we interrogate what we think and believe, and that we challenge our own assumptions, asking over and over if we have penetrated as many layers of our own defenses, fears, and insecurities as our project requires. It asks that we rethink and revise our lives, making conscious decisions about who and how we want to be" (Jones, Adams and Ellis, 2013:10).

To encapsulate what autoethnography strives to achieve, I will draw on a range of views from research experts in the field. Denzin (2014) asserts:

> "The aetiology of a story should be, people depicted as characters, a scene, place, context where the story occurs. An epiphany that provides dramatic tension around which employed events depicted in the story revolve and toward which a resolution is pointed. A point or moral to the story which gives meaning to the experiences depicted" (p. 4).

The thought of creating a performative piece incorporating the women's stories was one of the most straightforward and natural parts of this thesis. I had spoken to each woman, I could not get us together in one place as I had planned and the challenge was for me to create a story featuring Denzin's descriptions. Surprisingly, this was less challenging and messy than the other sections of this thesis. Denzin (2014) also reminds me that it is important to note that, "the story is never 'told' finally, exhaustively, completely" (p. 8). Rather, all stories are 'always incomplete literary productions' (p. 14). Neither is there 'a simple telling of lived experience' (p. 40). As I reproduce 'our' stories, it is my intention to, "connect the autobiographical and personal to the cultural, social and political" (Ellis, 2004: xix). In so doing, Boylorn and Orbe (2013) admonishes me to:

> "begin with an ethical responsibility to address processes of unfairness or injustice within a lived domain, where the autoethnographer acknowledges the inevitable privileges we experience alongside marginalisation and to take responsibility for our subjective tenses through reflexivity" (p. 15).

I think that an important feature of this approach is that the characters need to unearth lessons about ourselves. Autoethnographies are complex, they enable the researcher to incorporate their lived experiences therefore explain their approach to interpretations. The combination of personal and collective insights contributes to interpretation of social and cultural experiences (Boylorn 2013). Autoethnographic writings are interrogative and require the telling of stories to position the accounts alongside the accounts of others whilst asking crucial questions about why and how and what difference will it make? What is new about the issues as well as who cares and who should care (Bochner 2014)? The responses to the above questions are presented in a manner which some will find illuminative and others resonate with and seek out opportunities they can learn from. Finally, autoethnographic writing contributes to knowledge whilst accepting the knowledge is neither generalisable or objective.

To critics of storytelling autoethnographers Bochner (2014) inquires:

> "If we experience our lives as stories… why should we not represent them as stories. Why shouldn't social sciences represent lives as temporary unfolding narratives. And researchers as vital part of the action" (p.2)?

This approach unquestionably fulfills my desire for the accessibility of the work. I reiterate, I do not want my thesis, which amounts to half a decade of my life, missed holidays, lost times with family and long periods of isolation, risks, messiness, frustrations, anxieties, tears and more tears, hope, excitement, purpose, passion and vision to be relegated to a shelf in an academic institution. Again, Bochner (2014) so ably conveys my vision and aim when he states:

> "… autoethnography seeks a social connection between writer performer and reader audience inviting others to think and to feel. To achieve this goal, we must depart this safe and comfortable space and comfort of conventional academic writing. Unfortunately, the conventions that regulate academic writing do not encourage forms of communicating research that can build a personal connection between the text and the reader audience member. Normally we don't expect the academic text to make our heart skip a beat but if our research has something to do with human longing desire, fulfilment, pleasure, pain, loss, grief or joy; shouldn't we hold authors to some standard of vulnerability" (p. 3)?

I want to impact a much wider group than academics, I want people like me, who have never put a foot through the doors of a university to be able to engage, identify, accept that maybe we are not so different after all. In my community, I want this work to narrow the gap and for others who may 'other' me because of my degrees, to explore the perceived gaps between us. To acknowledge that our gaps are probably more about exposures and less about abilities if the truth be known. I want young people to feel hopeful, and those who ask: "what's the point?" To have 'sparks' of hope that ignite into transformational fires. I hope transformation will commence from within the Black communities. I accept that maybe this is a big ask for a thesis, but the project and everything associated with it has been a big ask and I believe that I stand much more of a chance of achieving at least some of my aims because the approach is unconventional. I am not sure I would even have the aspirations above if I had taken a traditional approach to writing up this study. Bochner (2014) argues that autoethnography was birthed from thinking and questioning differently. Some of his initial reflections are outlined in this quote:

> "Can my work achieve importance? Can it matter if our authors aren't willing to show their faces? Should one of the standards by which social science enquiry is judged be the extent to which readers feel the truth of our stories. So, seeking to open a space for this kind of enquiry…" (p. 4).

Bochner and Ellis (2014) relived many of the challenges they faced as 'traditionalist' experienced academics seeking to do things differently. Newness is only achieved through some level of pain.

The final section of this thesis will be presented as a performance autoethnography. Denzin (2003) defines its purpose thus:

> "Performance (auto)ethnography simultaneously creates and enacts moral texts that move from the personal to the political, from the local to historical and cultural" (p. x).

This creative work will privilege the 'embedded' and 'embodied' experiences of Black women. Be assured that this non-traditional work will be messy, the data riddled with gaps, contradictions and discontinuities. Our stories will be ongoing and constantly open to revision (Ellis 2009). I expect that 'truth' will be down to interpretation and will be framed in our culture, as well as impacted on by our values. Finally, whatever 'truth' emerges from this study, it will be partial and evasive (Bochner 2014).

3.3 Performance Autoethnography and Activism

> **"**Performance ethnography is literally the staged re-enactment of ethnographically derived notes. This approach to studying and staging culture works toward lessening the gap between a perceived and actualised sense of self and other…Practitioners of performance ethnography acknowledge the fact that culture travels in stories, practices and desires of those who engage it. By utilising an experiential method such as performance autoethnography, those who seek understanding of other cultures and lived experiences are offered a body-centred method of knowing". (Alexander 2008:75)

This work aims to intentionally elicit and encourage dialogue, I often hear throw away comments from non-black groups describing Blacks ranging from: 'having a chip on their shoulder', 'harping on about the past' to tokenistic audiences where Blacks who share their injustices are appeased with what often results in 'empty' promises or 'ill thought through, under-resourced interventions'. This project's big aim is to strive for a deeper knowing, a walking in the shoes of the other, of seeing self in relation to others. This performance autoethnography work will, I hope, to 'illuminate cultural politics and instill understanding with the potential to invoke change and have a positive effect on the lived conditions of self and others' (Alexander 2008). I understand however, that striving for reciprocal understanding that is more than superficial and which will lead to social action will ask both the participants in, and the audience of, the performance to see and own their own behaviours as they reflect on relationships with others.

Reed-Danahay (1997) states, "The autoethnographer translates 'home' culture for audiences of 'others'" (p. 127). Though I agree with the explanation provided by Reed-Danahay, (1997) I would like to make it explicit that I consider the 'others' to also include those in the home culture. The Caribbean is made up of several islands with similar as well as differing cultural stances; there is no one 'Caribbean culture' (Hall 1998). Therefore, those within the wider culture will benefit from knowing as much as those in 'other' cultures. I recently read E. Franklin Frazier's, 'Black Bourgeoisie' (1962). Franklin shared a story that I perceive captures the whole ethos of autoethnography and activism and I would have succeeded in my attempt at autoethnographic writing if I was able to replicate the kind of feedback Frazier received. I will be using a long quote here, but I think it justifies being in this text because of the point it conveys. Franklin Frazier (1962) shared:

> "Let me begin by stating that it would be difficult to secure a more reliable validation of this study about patterns of behaviour and style of life and values of the Negro middle class, than that which has been provided in the letters and comments which have come to me from cities all over the country. These letters have stated, first, that they did not know that I had carried out research in their community until they had read the book which provided an authentic picture of the middle class in their city. In many cases, they explained that the picture was so true to life that they could recognise the people by their behavior and verbal statements and their relation to the rest of the community. As a matter of fact, in most cases I had never made a study in their community" (pps. 12-13).

As a Black woman, I very rarely read accounts in academic publications that I can personally relate to. However, it could be argued that even those who write about people from the minority communities do not seek the communities' validation. The differing responses to Frazier's work has not eluded me either, his work was heavily critiqued by bourgeoisie Black as well as White academics and politicians. Yet, the very same work deeply resonated with working class Blacks and Whites in the USA as well as wider a field in Europe, parts of the Caribbean and Africa.

Frazier's writing was accessible to the groups represented in his studies; so much so, that his 'community' readers felt they knew the characters presented in his text. Thus, Frazier describes the account outlined above as a process of gaining 'reliable validation'. Denzin (2014) admonishes that the goal of autoethnographic text production is to create a safe space where writers are willing to take risks to move back and forth between the political, biographical and historical. Within their safe spaces, they push against racial, sexual and class boundaries in pursuit of liberation. Painful experiences are disclosed as the participants' journey to new places, new identities and new epistemologies. E. Franklin Frazier's, Black Bourgeoisie (1962) provided a premise from which other, perhaps silent voices of the time, could emerge empowered because of engaging with his text.

For me, this work as Alexander (2008) suggests, is less about reflecting on the self in a public space and more about using the public space and performance as an act of critically reflecting culture, an act of seeing the self, see the self through and as the other.

I have mentioned the fact that I would like this project to contribute to activism. But what do I mean? Well, activism is a stance of being active in achieving a political or social goal. Using an autoethnographical style of writing makes this study accessible to a wider audience than those in academic settings, in addition, it presents itself as a foundation on which to build dialogues. It centralises the views and experiences of a silenced group and it encourages the silenced and the silencer to coalesce for the abolition of educational disparities. I hope this performance autoethnography will be 'performed' in a range of academic, professional and community spaces. However, it is also my aim that our own political stance will emerge, we (Black women) must become politically 'savvy' to engage and influence change. Leith Mullings (2000) argues that:

> "Sceptics raise questions about issues of… objectivity, validity, and partisanship - problematised by the feminist critique of traditional methodology. Proponents of participatory research argue, however, not only that this approach combines research education and action as a powerful tool to empower people to improve their social conditions, but that it also produces much more profound understanding of social problems" (p. 21).

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A significant part of the learning of this study is self-learning which results in self re-positioning and it is hoped that as other women are exposed to this case study of lived experiences, they will be encouraged to interrogate their own positioning with a view to owning or rejecting and rebuilding. But the audience has some engagement too and I strongly believe that a performance autoethnographical approach to writing up this study will:

> "allow audiences to see others in relation to themselves; to come to know, to contemplate on how they came to know, to signal ways of being, and to see possibilities for their social relational orientations and obligations to others… a means of providing sparks which provides a template on which audiences begin their own processes of critical reflection" (Alexander, 2008:77).

'We' will be informants, sharing aspects of our existence that, for the greater part, have not previously been shared outside of our 'safe' spaces and I will produce a performance autoethnography which invites others to read, explore, learn from, engage with as we simultaneously challenge ourselves and each other to rethink, re-strategise, accept where we are, articulate where we desire to be and plan who and what will be required for the transition. This performance autoethnography accepts that,

> "for research to be transformative, the subjects of the research must become actors in the transformation of their own environment, as well as interpreters of their own space and place. In the end, the change agents of history are social movements in which every day people, in their own language and from their own experiences, collectively work to change their world. Culture then, becomes a weapon of struggle" (Mullings (2000: 27).

HEIs and the NHS have policies in place which should have made this case study of Black women's lived experiences an impossibility, but they failed. Therefore, it is imperative that the community become a force which holds the institutions accountable, acknowledging that social action is everyone's responsibility and we must each play our part. Finally, I remind the reader of the self-imposed cultural weight I carry and how that weight has demanded that I produce this work differently. In the words of Alexander (2008) it is my hope that this:

> "performance autoethnography can help us to understand the lived cultural experiences of others, *as* well *as* help us to claim joint culpability of history's legacy. It can then help us to strategise possibility, ways in which collective social action might lead to a more compatible human condition" (p.106).

Again, though I fully understand that this is a big ask for a thesis, I consider that the publication of the thesis and the future performance of this drama either on a stage or dramatised for radio will be no more than the commencing of dialogues in a range of diverse settings.

3.4 Positioning and the Trouble with Activism

> "Interpretive ethnography is partially about self-disclosure. It is autoethnographic, vulnerable, performative, and critical… It is about articulating one's views and perceptions. It is about detailing experience and offering "storied histories of sacred spaces" (Denzin, 1999:510).

I will use an autoethnographical account to illustrate some of the challenges of positioning when involved in activism. Denzin's quote above provides a framework for me to partially disclose and critique aspects of my frustration of working in this context with this group. Bishop (2011) admonishes researchers who may be able to co-construct with their participants to reposition themselves relinquishing the desire to 'empower' or to 'give voice' or 'emancipate'. It is my aim that the participants are agentic, having their own authentic voice (Bishop 2011:18). In this section, I will use examples of my lived experience to partially demonstrate some of my shifting positions when working alongside my community women. I will also include some of the challenges, frustrations and joys that we encounter as we seek to 'know and do' life differently within our work context.

I recall a conversation with a Black nurse who requested some support in composing a letter to the Trust's Chief Executive Officer (CEO). Following a brief initial conversation, we met at her home to plan the draft. When we met, she shared how she and fellow Black nurses, with over thirty years' experience in the Trust, had very few problems being assigned 'acting matron' roles on 'failing' wards. She argued that before long, with their interventions, knowledge and skills the wards would be 'turned around' and positively audited. Generally, following a positive audit, the permanent matron's post would be advertised. She agonised over the fact that Black nurses were, to date, never successful in their application for matron positions. She shared that managers appeared to have a script for Black nurses who were unsuccessful in interviews. The script included, "you were really good in the interview, really good, you just missed out because you did not expand on your answers." It was this nurse's view that often experienced Black nurses 'just missed out' to inexperienced white colleagues. The Black nurses would then be expected to support and develop the appointed inexperienced white nurse so she could operate in the matron's role. Similar accounts of this Black nurse's experience can be found in the studies of Dhaliwal and McKay (2008), Carter (2003) and Baxter (1998).

When I asked the Black nurse about her approaches to challenging these injustices, emotionally charged she questioned, "What's the point? Nothing changes! Everyone knows what's going on, and if you say anything you get placed on the troublemakers' list."

On exploration, it transpired that being on 'the list' meant that the nurse's performance would be scrutinised and very minor errors were punished by being placed on 'capability' (meaning you are not performing as one who is competent in your role). She then went on to ask me, "Have you seen how many Black nurses are on capability?" The early retirement of two of her trusted Black colleagues, who did not want to 'fight the system anymore' was her motivation for wanting to write to the new Chief Nurse who was male and new to post as well as the relatively newly appointed CEO.

This Black nurse with over three decades' experience who had never worked under the leadership of a male Chief Nurse, wondered if, as well as hoped that, the Chief being male (a 'minority' in nursing) would have a more equitable approach than the white female leaders she had experienced for all her professional career. She hoped that these individuals would initiate change. I had no confidence in individuals as I saw the issues faced by Black nurses as structural and institutional. I would have been so happy to be wrong. I shared in depth my findings of the mid-20th Century JGTNA nurses who mobilised themselves to gain professional liberation from the colonial 'branding' of 'good bedside nurses' and recommended Hewitt's (2002) book.

We undertook research on areas of good practice in other NHS Trusts, drafted a letter outlining her experiences and made recommendations about how things could possibly change. Then with trepidation and resolution, the letter was sent to both the CEO and the Chief Nurse. The nurse was amazed when she received an invitation to meet with the CEO. She contacted me and we discussed her approach to the meeting. It was imperative that the meeting was more than an opportunity to complain, it was her opportunity to reinforce her recommendations and offer to be involved in the proposed interventions. She was prepared and armed with suggestions that could be easily implemented to commence the process of making equality more of a reality for Black nurses in this Trust.

I was puzzled when I was unable to contact this nurse for two weeks post her meeting. She would not respond to phone messages or emails. When we eventually spoke, she informed me that she was so overwhelmed that the CEO had given her an audience that when they met she just cried. "I let myself down Peggy, I just couldn't stop crying". Later that week we met, she then shared her reflections. Tears streamed down her cheeks as she shared, "Peggy, I have a box in my loft, which contains numberless letters to CEOs they are all incomplete. I have been writing letters for the past twenty odd years. I have never had the courage to finish them or send them. But I kept writing them. I know I let myself down when I met him because I didn't stick to the plan, so maybe there'll be no change. Strangely enough though, I feel a deep sense of personal pride in being acknowledged".

Incidentally, the new male Chief Nurse did not acknowledge her letter!

The above intervention resulted in me being asked to support other Black nurses and HCAs, in formulating correspondence. It very soon became apparent however, that when some Black women asked for my help what they were asking was, not can you do this *with* me, but rather, can you do this *for* me? This was not the kind of activism I wanted to be party to, as it was not 'involvement' if they were unwilling to be 'involved'. In my endeavours towards activism, I encouraged and coaxed Black nurses to work together as the JGTNA did. A few expressed a willingness for us to co-construct correspondences, arrange meetings and write articles, but the majority disengaged. (Sadly, to date, nothing tangible resulted from the meetings.) The above accounts were amongst my lessons on the challenges of small 'a' activism.

Whilst trying to make sense of the Black nurses' reluctance to engage I came upon a concept described as muted group theory. Muted group theory emerged from anthropological investigations, and reflects suppressed thoughts and silenced voices. Kramarae (2005) states that:

> "muted group theory suggests that people attached or assigned to subordinate groups (Black women in this case) may have a lot to say, but they tend to have relatively little power to say it… their speech is disrespected by those in the dominant positions. Their knowledge is not considered sufficient for the public decision or policy making processes of that culture. Their experiences are interpreted for them by others; and they are encouraged to see themselves as represented in the dominant discourse" (p. 55).

Through Kramarae's explanation I am better positioned to understand Black women's frequent exclamations of, "what's the point Peggy?" Though I must confess that the, 'what's the point' question frustrates and annoys me as it does nothing but chain the women to their inequitable and subordinated spaces. Yet, at the same time I understand that maybe I need to continue to use my somewhat privileged position to sojourn with them so together we can come to an understanding that there is and should be a point.

In closing, I return to Bishop's (2011) admonition at the opening of this section. As difficult as it is for me, I need to relinquish the desire to 'empower' or to 'give voice' or 'emancipate'. Until Black nurses are ready to rise, strategise and take responsibilities for their emancipation from professional subordination, emancipation will evade them. I also acknowledge that even if I decided to go against Bishop's suggestions, I could not, as I am powerless if the women remain voiceless. I am positioned as one who constructs a 'performance of possibilities'. So, what does that mean? I just love how Madison's description below encapsulates the vision of my project.

Madison (1998) asserts that the:

> "performance of possibilities as applied to autoethnography, a) invokes an investment in politics of self, other and self as other always negotiating tensions and tensiveness between cynics and zealots. It takes the stand that the articulation of the lived experience matters because it does something in the world and activating social consciousness. It moves away from prediction and control toward understanding and social criticism as both process and product. It doesn't accept being heard and included as the end point but only the starting point to present and represent self and others as products and producers of meaning. A performance of voice wedded to experience of critical thinking wedded to the emotionality of remembrance and of the power of invoking presence that moves away from facts pure and simple and toward meaning ambiguous and complicated (pps. 391-405)."

This performance autoethnograpy seeks to explore the possible rather than settle for what has been and what is now. Encouraging those who engage to make the critical connections between self-empowerment and subjective social justice.

3.5 Ethics

Murray and Dingwall (2001) introduce the same ethical principles for research as those used in nursing. The participants of this study, were introduced to nursing ethics on their fd programme. As a result, when we considered ethics as part of our discussion, they were very well versed in advising me on what I could and couldn't do (reciprocal learning). Though some of the women shared their initial misgivings about our conversations being recorded, we compromised, some didn't want to see the recording device and suggested that I covered it, they wanted to freely share and discussed that sometimes viewing the device could hinder free speech. For this study, the women and I had conversations around trust. Trust is often an issue in our community and I understood that trust had to be earned and I think I have earned their trust over the years. The aim was to be culturally loyal to our work.

As the creator of these relived, retold stories, I assume full responsibility for the chosen themes and how the stories are retold. A great deal of what I was told has not been included here, because the stories provided enough data for multiple PhDs. Yet, when I feel angst about what was omitted, I read the work of Denzin (2014) and I am reminded that, "the story is never 'told' finally, exhaustively, completely" (p. 8). Rather, all stories are 'always incomplete literary productions' (p. 14). Neither is there 'a simple telling of lived experience' (p. 40). So, I look forward to new opportunities, new spaces and more creative ways to relive the areas that have not been aired this time round.

It was only on revisiting the stories through the painstaking process of transcribing that I felt the weight of responsibility… what could and couldn't I tell? And that soon changed, to what should and shouldn't I tell. Boylorn (2016) helps me explain my dilemma:

> "while blackgirls are taught not to talk about what goes on at home with outsiders, autoethnography offers a way for public and private testimony and acknowledgement, but not without risk. Who was I to be putting 'our' business out on the street?... I had to give myself permission to tell the truth as I saw it…even if my truth doesn't always feel welcome" (p. 46).

The women were knowledgeable about the ethics of care so that was a useful framework from which to discuss my ethical considerations. We discussed the following:

1. Care – I would treat each woman and their accounts respectfully – protecting them as much as I am able to
2. Compassion – I would sensitively manage our narratives ensuring that I use our own words to represent us
3. Competence – I would demonstrate rigour and professionalism in my approach to the handling, storing and portraying of our retold stories.

4. Communication – I would convey our stories, with passion, honesty and integrity.
5. Courage – I would negate the approaches that have been mostly ineffective for seven decades and to use their accounts to strive for discussion and redress. To critique and constructively challenge ourselves.
6. Commitment – To bring our issues to light, encouraging and sustaining dialogue around the issues of education of the those working in subordinated roles within the work place.

In addition to the personal ethical considerations, I applied to our NHS Trust's research and development department for ethical approval and satisfied the committee that I had considered both the NHS Trust and the participants in the ethics process. The Trust acknowledgement is presented in the appendixes (see Appendix 7). My additional assurance to the participants was that they would be given the same level of ethical consideration as they would expect in a nurse, patient relationship. My commitment to the participants were that non-maleficence, beneficence, autonomy and justice would undergird my role as researcher (NMC 2015). Noddings (1984) admonishes that I 'build my ethics on care' and ensure that I linked care to my 'moral obligation' thus 'empathising as well as sometimes stepping into the shoes of the ones in my care' (p. 62). Each woman was given an Akan name represented by a symbol which was selected from Ghanaian archives. I felt the meaning of the name reminded me of the characteristics of each woman. With each participant, I shared a full and transparent brief of the study's aim and purpose as well as the groups I had anticipated the study to be disseminated to. The women were informed of their rights to withdraw partially or completely from the project at any time.

Signed consent was obtained for participation and for the conversations to be recorded. All conversations were taped and transcribed and all data and resources relating to the study are kept secured in password locked folders when not in use. I had considered the fact that we would be sharing life and in so doing, unexpected issues may arise at any point during the programme. I explored support services which I could signpost the women to if it became necessary. Within our work context participants could access the BDA counselling service. I also contacted an independent Black female counsellor who was willing to provide culturally sensitive counselling. In addition, the women could access the support of equality champions, union representation or chaplains. Fortunately, our kindred understanding proved to be the only therapy required both during and following our conversation sessions.

PART TWO – The Autoethnographic Performance

Scene 1.   **The dreamers in Jamaica and an Introduction to the characters**
The performance commences with a setting in a fictional scene set in Jamaica exploring some of the oral accounts of some of the conversations around migrating to the mother land. The interesting omission from this brief introduction is that the 'dreamers' never dreamt of racism or the range of social injustices they came to experience.
The **characters** follow this scene.

Scene 2.   **Session 1. First Meet Up**
This scene introduces a transformative educational space and provides an insight into the characters' educational legacies through self-introduction and insights into their parents' employment in the UK.

Scene 3.   **Session 1a. Getting In**
Here the characters discuss and agree an approach to the use of the space. Agreeing their personal commitment to a transformative approach to educaton. They also share their professional aspirations whilst reflecting on how they accessed the Health and Social Care fd programme.

Scene 4.   **Session 2. Moving On**
The characters agree to the use of the Active Centralised Empowerment approach. They are challenged by Mama B to consider the 'power relations' of their educational experiences. They reflect on and use theory to explore the subject of inductions for non-traditional students.

Scene 5.   **NHS England's Conference – July 27th, 2013 – The Drum Birmingham**
This is the verbatim transcription of an interview conducted by the researcher with a member of a commissioning team. The venue and date of the conference are fictional. The Drum was a venue predominantly used by the Black community until its closure in June 2016.

Scene 6.   **Session 3. Getting Through**
A Black feminist epistemological session incorporating the characters' evocative reflections and responses to the commissioner's interview as well as with a reflection on their principal areas of support, how they built resilience. Much questioning of the self.

Scene 7. **Session 4. This is how it was for me …Messages**

The final formal meeting introducing a range of teaching approaches, carthartic singing of Bob Marley's redemption song. A keynote speaker - Dr Owo Adobe. The presentation of posters which form the basis of reflection of the whole educational experience. (In a perfomed drama the posters would be created and positioned as well as included in a programme. For radio, the characters read the posters as prose or poems. The characters send messages to self then ask questions of the institutions which supported their fd.

- The University
- The Course Funders
- The Workplace
- Finally, to an aspirational Black Mature student

Scene 8. **Sankofa Reflects**

Sankofa, in dialogue with an ancestral spirit Akoko Nan reflects on the whole PhD journey. In keeping with her name, she returns to the past, revisiting the literature, critically questioning the provisions and how it was facilitated. Identifying key learning points for Black Women. She also explores learning which will inform her future praxis

Postscript.

Scene 1   The Dreamers in Jamaica and an Introduction to the Characters

Jamaica, February 14th, 1948.

On the sandy beach of Negril under the scorching sun, eight hopeful couples and two single men are discussing their future dreams. Though the motherlan' has been at war and times are hard, the earth still produces food for survival. Saltfish is sparse but they clubbed together their rations to get enough food to bring and share. Yam and saltfish are buried beneath the hot coals in de sand. The redemptive lyrics of reggae music invigorates the dreamers. Motherlan' calls and the pull is 'trong. As the gossip goes, motherlan' streets are paved with gold. The men lie face down on the beach, in unison they repeat the common dream that Ganja man has written in the sand.

"We go, we earn, we learn, we return."

Reggae beats are followed by the ballads of the blues. Brooke Benton, Ella Fitzgerald and Sam Cooke are amongst the great musical story tellers. Each story resonates with someone in the group. As the ballads resound, the men rise and 'drop foot'. The women look on and giggle. Everyone's happy. In the ice box is cool aid, rum punch, Dragon stout and Red Stripe beer.

The beer-filled men seem to unanimously agree that, for them, migration would be a win-win venture. The motherlan' gets her labourers, and we get work to help us escape the employment and education limitations of the colonial island.

Rupie: "Well, if I go to Englan', I can buy some land back here."

Cyrus: (Chips in) "I would love to build a house fi miself too."

Zekey: (Pipes up) "You know something, I always dream that one day I would travel and further my education. I'm an electrician now, but I would like to get into engineering and build something that I would be remembered for."

Ganja man: (Taps Zekey on the back) "Forever the dreamer eh Zekey?"

At the point of Ganja man's utterance, the women re-converge.

Jackie: "Hey there Mr. dreamer, you wanna know what I dream 'bout? That I will go to Englan' an' train to be a nurse. Mi a go hab four pickney who will all speak prop-a-lee. You know, like the daughters of the king."

Evelyn: "Yeah girl, mi wid yo'. I wan' be a nurse, bringing healing and health to the sick and wounded of Englan'. Mi a go marries a nice man an' have t'ree sons. Mi wi groom mi son dem fi love education. Dem wi get big job inna Englan'. An a dem a go be mi pension".

Laughter erupts. The women walk away to check the food. From beneath the sand rises the aroma of roasted sal'fish and yam carried by the sea breeze.

Jackie: "Uno cum get uno food, an' no meck mi haffi call uno again".

The men singe the banana leaves they carried from 'country' over the charred coals to make plates. The women stand in line mimicking the quaint British accents they hear on the British Broadcating Corporation (BBC). As each woman collects her food she curtsies and giggles. Together they sit in a circle on the sand, food on laps, drinks by their sides. Each woman takes turns in sharing her vision of working as equals amongst white women in de motherlan'.

Ida: "Huh, this is no joke, we better practise hour best 'nglish 'cause I've got mi letter from de British 'ospital."

(Then, with much excitement, there is an echoing…)

Jackie: "me to'."

Evelyn: "me to'."

(Cutie was quiet, so the women turn to face her expecting an explanation.)

Cutie: (Gingerly) "So have I."

Ida, the loudest of the group, stands up, slaps her thigh and starts a jig.

Ida: "Hell a pop… we a go a Englan' fi true".

Meanwhile, the men tame the fire water (white rum) with ginger beer and soda water. The sea breeze caresses their faces and carries the hubbub of chatter and laughter.

Denzil and Zekey under their liquor talk about getting with white women. These two, as the saying on the island goes, are young, free and single. Fearing the wrath of the women there present, Zekey stares directly at Denzil as he speaks.

Zekey: "Mi hear sey de white 'oman dem love black man, cause dem into tropical loving".

Denzil: (Responds at the top of his voice) "If dem hear so, dem hear right. Dem know sey we be lover men. (jiving his hips whilst struggling to stay on his feet.)

The women glare; that's all it took. Denzil and Zekey try to teck dem foot in dem han' but they can hardly stand, much less run. They fall flat on their faces in the sand. Laughter erupts and all is well again. As the group board the bus for home, the ghetto-blaster belts out Jimmy Rushing blues.

Over six decades later, the daughters of the Negril beach dreamers are all living in England and working in the NHS in the Midlands. Denzil and Zekey, married a Scottish lassie and an English rose respectively.

The 21st Century NHS transformation agenda created opportunities for those working in low-skilled, low-paid roles to undertake WP educational opportunities. As a result, a Midlands Trust internally advertised opportunities for allied health professionals working in Band 2 roles to undertake Band 4 training which would result in a promotion and a salary increase from *Band 2 - £15,251 - £17,978* to *Band 4, £19,217 - £22,458. A respectful salary for an undergraduate role.*

The new fd would lead to the new pay banding. The fd was a two-year undergraduate programme delivered through a local university, with clinical skills developed and practised through work-based learning. Overall, the failure to complete rate was quite high. Sankofa, was curious to explore why a significant number of her Black colleagues had 'failed' to complete the two-year programme. She had a vested interest. As a work-based educator, she had taught those who 'failed' to complete and in several cases relationships with the women had transitioned from colleagues to friends.

Characters:

Bese Saka - (Bunch of Cola nuts) This symbol signifies economic well being, affluence and authority over other people and nations.

Mate Masie (I have heard and kept it) This symbol teaches the importance of imbibing all forms of information prudently in order to acquire wisdom and knowledge.

Nsoromma (Star) This symbol reminds people to regard God as their father and encourages a sense of confidence and reliability.

Nsaa (A cloth used as a blanket) This symbol signifies that quality and durability should be a hall mark in their productivity.

Akoma (The heart) This symbol teaches the importance of tolerance in the face of provocation.

Aya (Fern) This symbol teaches that life is full if uncertainty, therefore the survival of mankind requires strong will to face all challenges.

SunSum (The soul) This is a symbol of spirituality

Akoben (Warhorn) This symbol signifies alertness and readiness to serve a good cause.

GyeNyame (Except God) This symbol reflects the supremacy, power and dominion of God over all situations and creations.

Dame-Dame (Draught) This symbol encourages the exercising of the brain in order for it to be reactivated

Mmara-KradoThis symbol signifies supreme authority, justice and equality of everybody before the law.

Sankofa ('Go back and take') This symbol teaches wisdom in learning from the past which helps building the future. It teaches people to cherish and value their culture and avoid it's adulteration.

Mama B (Sepo) This symbol encourages freedom of speech, but disallows 'speeches' which bring about strife.

Scene 2   Session 1. First Meet Up

At noon, on a very chilly November day in 2012, a group of mature Black women converge in a community room in Handsworth, Birmingham. The room is large with oversized radiators which effectively keep the chills at bay. Scattered around the room are comfy chairs. There is a small kitchenette to the left of the room. Before long the women are active in the kitchenette. Microwaves are pinging and the contents of the microwaves exude a plethora of fragrances from Caribbean cuisines. There is an array of Chicken: jerked, stewed and fried systematically placed on the worktop. Piping hot rice boiled with coconut milk is steaming in Pyrex bowls. On foil trays are giant fried dumplings and in a tupperware bowl next to the dumplings is Caribbean coleslaw.

Punch is poured from bottles and jugs. One punch has J. Wray and Nephew rum (fire wata), alongside it is a second jug with punch for the drivers, the lightweights and the faithful.

Scattered around the room is: Bese Saka aged 47, Mate Masie 50, Nsoromma 38, Nsaa 41, Akoma 50, Aya 41, SunSum 50, Akoben 51, GyeNyame 45, Dame-Dame 48 and Sankofa 45. Between them, they have given a prodigious fourteen decades and four-years' service to the NHS in the UK. The academic supporting the women in their Black feminist epistemological search is Mama B.

Mama B: (Stands tall and authoritatively summons)
                 "Alright ladies, teck uno food and come and jain we inna de circle. Uno no badda meck
                 mi haffi call uno again".

The women hurriedly assemble the seats into a smaller, more intimate circle. They snatch their plates and sit with food on laps and drinks at their feet.

Sankofa: "Okay everyone, let us start culturally. Firstly, as our parents taught us, let's bless the
                 food and the time we're going spend together. GyeNyame, will you do the honours?"

Akoben: "Meck it shart GyeNyame, ar' else mi a start 'it, faar mi caan 'it de col' food".

The women in chorus: "Amen". (There's pointing in Akoben's direction and giggling.)

GyeNyame: (Ignores the laughter) "Oh father God in Heaven, please bless this food to our bodies
                 and bless the 'ands that prepare it, I hope them was clean (chuckle) and bless our
                 time together. Amen. Short enough Akoben?"

Akoben: "No bad, no bad at tall… mi nah sey nuttun bout de clean 'ands".

Sankofa: (Walks to the centre of the circle) "Alright Akoben… done now! We from the African diaspora generally honour the ancestors when we congregate but let's bring it a little closer this afternoon and honour our parents. Each one will recognise their start, however humble, 'cause as they use to tell us; it's not how you start, it's how you finish. I'll start…today I honour my part Cuban / part Jamaican mother and my part Irish / part Ghanaian/Jamaican father. My dad, a 'professor of life' worked as an ambulance driver here in England. My mother was a factory worker. For their lives and contributions to humanity. I give thanks… Who's next?"

Bese Saka: "I give t'anks and praise for my parents who both came here from sunny Jamaica. Daddy did factory work and mummy was an auxiliary nurse… Gwaan MM".

Mate Masie: "A sending out spiritual vibes to mum and dad, from Jamaica. Mum was a seamstress and my darling dad was an electrician…teck it from yasso N."

Nsoromma: "I'm going to mix it up a little bit, dearly departed Jamaican dad…you worked hard on the British trains. I just wanna say, you left too soon, but when you left, I found my voice. I thank you for that. My beautiful mum from Scotland, no one makes a bouquet like you do, you bring fragrance and beauty wherever you go…follow that Nsaa."

Nsaa: (Laughing) "Well girl, it's not just you mixing it up. You know the Jamaican Motto: 'Out of many, one people'. One also brings diversity. Daddy was an electrician, a petite bourgeois, before he came here from Jamaica and mother, the English Rose worked in a factory. I honour you both for your values and love."

Akoma: "Today, I honour the absent father from the island where rum flows and music weaves us through our past, present and provides signs for our future. A mother who came to Britain, from Jamaica, who worked as an auxiliary nurse, then converted to a mental health nurse. Big up your resilience ma'am…Go Aya."

Aya: "I'm going to honour Jamaica for producing two beautiful people who then produced me. My father started work in the sugar factory, then came here to work in factories and my mother was a housewife."

SunSum: "Your mother was a housewife girl? Is how she lucky so?"

Chorus of laughter then chatter, which creates a buzzing in the room.

Sankofa: (Standing) "Alright ladies, let's keep going...SunSum!"

SunSum: "Sorry people, my fault … a little tinsy bit a envy ketch mi. How I would love to be a housewife! (Laughs) I better behave, you see how Mama B. looking at me. Okay, I honour my hard-working parents from Jamaica who came here and helped the Midlands industries through factory labour. Amen."

Akoben: "Sankofa, I must say, I've never done anything like this before… I like it…it feels so right…thanks for introducing this idea to us. It feels…cultural…Okay…Jamaica, island in the sun, you have produced my father and my mum. Daddy worked in factory but was a builder too…and mummy, there was nuttun in the kitchen that she couldn't do. RIP mummy. Give t'anks."

GyeNyame: "Waxing lyrical sister Akoben. Love it!…Okay, this one is tricky, because I know that both my parents were from JA, but I don't know my dad. Anyway, my mum was a hard working higgler, she's who I learned my work ethics from."

Dame-Dame: "Higglering was hard work mi girl…those 'before day' starts with the heavy baskets on yo' head…nuff respect to yo' mama girl. Anyway, my turn, Jamaica is my motherland, my mum worked in a Midlands chocolate factory while my father was a shoemaker. RIP both."

Sankofa: "Thanks all. Parts of our Caribbean culture is somewhat inseparably interwoven in the British culture which is so fast paced. It's good to just take time to acknowledge our parents…as we say in Jamaica…teckin' time ain't laziness."

GyeNyame: "Sankofa, so what about Mama B, she drop from sky or is the stork bring her?"

The room again erupts with laughter.

Sankofa: "Thank you GyeNyame! Sorry Mama B, go ahead."

Mama B: "I honour my father's Ghanaian ancestry and in the same breath, I acknowledge the Irish roots of the maternal side of me. I represent the dichotomy between the enslaved and the slave owner, which is very much a part of most of our realities. For our ancestral roots, mother earth, and father God, we give thanks."

Mama B: (lifts a chicken drumstick to her mouth.) "I have to ask this, Akoben, did you cook this jerk chicken? Your mother's skills have been inherited girl…very tasty, very, very tasty, seems like your marinade seeped right through the bones of this drumstick."

GyeNyame: "Sweet fi true."

Nsaa: "Yeah man…gal you can cook."

Akoben: (Fist to her chest, taking a deep breath, then exhaling slowly.) "So pleased you're enjoying it… I keep mummy alive through her recipes."

Sankofa: (Stands and walks to the centre of the circle.) "Thanks ladies, we're going to move on. Have a refill if you want, then we are going to have our first conversation about our lived experiences of higher education. These are story sharing and sense making sessions. Each time we meet, we will be looking at differing aspects of our educational journeys. We are going to challenge each other to think for ourselves, to speak from the heart, to try to make sense for ourselves. We want to move away from the banality of labelling and accepting, to the complexities of questioning and critically analysing."

                 (Pauses Reflectively)

                 "I need to say, that for some of us this journey will be an emotional one. But this should be a safe place to expose, deal with the hurts then build resilience to move forward. We'll see. Though we want others to know of our trajectories. First and foremost, we want to learn from and make sense of our own journeys!

                 That's one of the reasons Mama B is here. She has dedicated her life to studying people who tried to make sense of the world we live in. People called philosophers. She will be introducing us to a whole range of philosophers through reading material.

I hope that when we link the philosophical insights to our experiences we will see what aspects of our colonial mindsets and practices we need to reject and decide how we approach inequalities differently.

Mama B will be encouraging us to engage with the ideas of some who have gone before us, whether in life, academically, spiritually or emancipatory. You know what I mean? Those who are further down 'liberation lane' than we are at present."

Scene 3   Session 1a. Getting In

Mama B: (Stands in the centre of the circle, shuffling reams of paper) "So to commence, we are going to throw out a wide question. How did you come to apply for university and the foundation degree or the 'Band 4 course', who'll start?"

Bese Saka: "Shall I? When I heard about it, I thought… why not build up my skills and get recognised for what I do? It was an opportunity and a way to get closer to nursing. My manager though, she was like: 'Oh, I don't know if the Band 4 is going to work in this department.' Blah, blah, blah, she wasn't enthusiastic. She did everything to put me off. I had to phone the course organisers and ask them to tell me my rights 'cause I didn't want to miss the opportunity."

Akoben: "Girl, I thought it was just me, I also had to fight for my place…to be honest, a couple of girls on my ward had done it and I was like, so wha' dis course everybody a talk 'bout and a go pan…how come I never hear about it? So, it's like they selected who they thought…so I asked why wasn't I offered a chance to go? I spoke to my manager an' she goes: 'you have to wait two years until the others have finished.' I told her I would like the opportunity too! I applied and she informed me that she had someone else in mind. Someone who had just joined the team, but the person was off sick, so I said to the manager, I'm here, what's the problem? She said, 'Akoben, I don't feel I need to discuss this with you if you are going to take that attitude with me.' Because mi a tell yo' de truth… mi neva nice… So, I went over her head and then she completed the paperwork very reluctantly, really, reluctantly, that's how I got my place."

Nsoromma: "Listening to you two, I feel fortunate, because the ward sister pushed me into it really. 'Cos I was confident at doing things on the ward, she thought I would be good at it."

Mate Masie: "When my manager came and said: "Mate Masie, I think that this course would be good for you, I'll get the information and you should apply. I was chuffed, I thought, oh good, someone is interested in me…then I just wanted to big up myself, do something better, you know? And earn more money as well…"

(Interruptions: kissing of teeth and the mumbles of 'damn lies' and other undecipherable mutters.)

Sankofa: (Stands for a few moments then leaves the room allowing space for the women to exhale. She knows the issue of earning more because of gaining the qualification is a very sensitive subject.)

Sankofa: (After a few minutes re-enters the room) "Okay ladies, can we continue please?"

Mate Masie: "I guess I touch a RAW nerve, but as I was saying. "I also wanted to be a role model for my kids, even though they've got kids of their own now."

SunSum: "Like you, MM, my manager came and said, 'I saw this course and er, I think you should go for it. I think you'll do well.' I thought, you know what, I've got nothing to lose, so I'll have a go. I was getting brain dead in my role so I looked forward to the challenge. Some of the other seniors weren't pleased. I'll tell you something…I do think sometimes these people think we're dumb…I once wrote a formal letter to complain about the conduct of a colleague and when the matron got it…she called me in, not so much to investigate my complaint…she kept asking me who wrote the letter? Who wrote the letter? …I then asked her, is something wrong with it. She said, well the way the letter is written, it doesn't seem like it was written by a HCA. That's what she said to me…that account has never left me…it's what she didn't say that plays with my head. That letter could not have been written by someone like you. You're only a HCA. So, I thought about all that and I thought you know, these people, they don't think we are worth anything so that encouraged me as well to go on the course."

(Her words stun the women, at first there are faint groans, then absolute silence. The silence is weighty…)

Sankofa: (Rises from her seat and interrupts the silence) "How are we feeling? You are in charge here, do you want to go on?"

(Undecipherable mutters drape the room.)

Akoma: (Slumps into her seat, voice broken) "Sankofa, we live it. We know how they think of us, we're not fools, we know that a lot of them think we're stupid. We just never talk about it openly, not even amongst ourselves.

So, we need to do this…we need to hear each other's experiences, including the pain, and we need to tell our own. We need to start making sense of the subordination and unfairness. It may be too late to change things for us, so maybe what we're doing here is for our children. What do you all say?"

(In hushed voices)

Nsaa: "Eh, eh, alright, let's gwaan…"

SunSum: (Nods… No words)

GyeNyame: (Makes eye contact with Akoma, raises her chin and pushes it forward indicating that she should continue.)

Akoma: "Well in my case, I heard about the course from colleagues on the ward. I then spoke to my manager who said: "Akoma, you are a very caring person and your patients get on well with you. You work well amongst the team, you are capable of pushing yourself to get a few more qualifications." She then helped me to complete the application form. Wha' 'bout you Nsaa?"

Nsaa: "Sounds like you and I had a similar experience, colleagues had done it and I was questioning myself, 'oh gosh university, oh gosh, can I do this? Then I said, I'm gonna do it, of course I can. Yes, I can! I sound like a member of Barack Obama's 2008 campaign team, don't I?"

Some chuckle. The women welcome the distraction and chatter about President and First Lady Obama. They chatter for a few minutes.

Sankofa: (Rises to her feet) "Sorry to have to break this up ladies. God knows we needed the light conversation, but can we keep going? Nsaa!"

Nsaa: "Well I had almost finished really, like Akoma, "my manager was supportive too… she said: 'go for it…I think you should do your nursing, but this is a first stage… go for it.'"

Aya: (Shuffles uncomfortably in her seat) I think I need to go next, as my experience mirrors that. "My manager encouraged me to do nursing but the time wasn't right; neither could I afford to. She raised it again and again over the years then she said: 'okay, I'm going to register you on the Band 4 course…you go Aya and I will help you…I will be your mentor.''

Dame-Dame: (Trying to avoid spilling her drink, looks up awkwardly) "How I got on was quite straightforward really, my colleagues, seniors and patients would ask…why don't you do your nurse training? So, when I saw the fd advertised and I heard it could lead to nursing, I applied."

GyeNyame: (Rising to her feet and looking over at Mama B) "Last but by no means least eh…if Nsaa is a member of the President Obama crew, then I'm with Dr Martin Luther King…I had a dream…"

SunSum: (Trying hard to stifle her laughter) "Preach it sister."

Bese Saka: (Laughing hard) "Amen and praise the Lord."

The laughter is contagious, the rest of the women are no longer trying to gain composure, they are laughing uncontrollably.

Sankofa: (Stands. But she is laughing hard too. She tries to compose herself, but each time she looks at one of the women, laughter is triggered, she's gone…she flops into her seat!)

Mama B: (Stands and without uttering a single word, within a few moments, order is seemingly resumed.)

GyeNyame: "Well brethren, like the wise man said…I have a dream (laughter tears rolling down her cheeks; trying to avoid eye contact with Mama B. She closes her eyes to compose herself and continues…her tone changes, her voice, broken and serious.) "Throughout my childhood, my ambition was always to be a nurse. I always tell myself that my education was poor so I won't be able to do it! I always wanted to go to university, but that was a dream, (a smirk etched on her face), that was just wishful thinking.

Sankofa: "Thank you. So, grateful. Re-telling our accounts ain't easy, but as someone said earlier, it's necessary. Shall we have a break and then we'll hear from Mama B. Quarter of an hour enough?"

Lazily, bodies emerge with the noise of chairs screeching along the tiled floors. The room buzzes with chatter and laughter and there's much ribbing in store for Nsaa and GyeNyame who linked themselves to influential Black leaders and orators. Instead of punch, tea, coffee and herbal tea is poured, complimented by moist Jamaican ginger cake served on napkins.

Akoben walks over to the iPad, turns the speakers on…Labi Siffre is belting out:

"The higher you build your barriers, the taller I become, the farther you take my rights away, the faster I will run. You can deny me, you can decide to turn your face away, no matter cause there's something inside so strong. I know that I can make it. And though you're doing me wrong, so wrong, thought that my pride was gone. Oh no, something inside so strong ooh ho, something inside so strong."

At the end of the song, Akoben presses replay, this time she mouths the words as she walks away.

The group re-converge. Sankofa introduces Mama B.

Mama B: "Well Sankofa, thanks for the invitation. I'm already enjoying the space…though I feel the need to lay foundation as I may not meet the expectations you all have of me on this journey. Unless we lay a sturdy foundation, what we build will be vulnerable to loss like so many efforts of the past. So, do I have your permission to go a little deep in this space? We cannot really make sense without reading. Reading is a discipline and much reading is required to help us make sense. I know that for many of us, our exposure to academic reading has not been inspirational but for us to move forward we must close that chapter and be open to read and reread and then make links from what we have read to our lived experiences.

It is also useful to share reading and ideas. So much learning is achieved through sharing. So, this won't be a space where you are taught, this should be a space where we are simultaneously teachers and students."

GyeNyame: "Well, let me speak for myself, I need to have a positive academic experience. I'm hoping this is going to be the place for that. I have daughters who aspire to go to university. I probably could have done things differently in my time at uni but I was building on nothing. I really want to learn how we could do it differently, I'm only 45 so I don't rule out going to university again."

(Looks around the room with all eyes on her, her nervousness is evident in her voice.)

GyeNyame: "Ladies are we ready?" Are we ready to read, to get disciplined? To…what do they often say? To engage in this process and to invest time?"

(The women's smiles and nods is all the permission Mama B needs to proceed.)

Mama B: (Looking directly at GyeNyame winks then clears her throat) "To quote Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807 - 1882) "The heights that great men reached and kept, were not attained by sudden flight. But they, whilst their companions slept, were upward toiling through the night." Now I make no apologies for being direct here. During the break, I overheard a lot, but there are two questions that I wish to address. The first has multiple parts: Why is Mama B. here? Isn't she a Professor? How can she understand our journey? The second: Do you really think we can make a difference? Well, the second question is a weighty one and the first important to clarify if we are going to build trust and move forward.

So here I am. Am I a professor? Yes. I am a proud, Black, female professor from the island of Jamaica. Will I understand your journey? You bet I will! Sankofa said something earlier and I liked the way she phrased it, she said, Mama B, will be using the concepts of some who have gone before us, whether in life, academically, spiritually or emancipatory; those who are further down the lane of liberation than we are at present. I am one of those who is further on, on the journey' and ladies, that's all I am! Yes, I have a title. Yes, I've earned degrees and yes, yes, yes, I too have had and am still having my struggles with hegemony and institutional structures."

GyeNyame: "Now Mama B, you haffi mine yo language…hege…wha?"

Mama B.   (Chuckles) "Yes, GyeNyame…point well-made…hegemony, meaning those in the majority or those in power, in our world, white folk…I started where most of you are, that's my reality and as we journey together you will gain insights into my own as well as other Black academics lived experiences too. However, commiseration is not necessary. We need to enlighten ourselves, then strategise to at least try to redress the power imbalances. I want to draw your attention to a thought from Professor and Philosopher Cornel West (1982) he said: "Human beings possess the capacity to change their conditions and themselves, but not to perfect either their conditions or themselves" (p. 17). Change commences with one small step, such as the one we are taking today. When I say, 'our reality' I mean it's the reality of Black women, wherever we live as a minority.

We will describe our undertakings through this series of meetings as: intentional 'Black feminist epistemology.' Simply put, it means we are serious about exploring, making sense of, then sharing knowledge from our cultural experiences. A transformative educator, Paulo Freire, would say, today we are embarking on 'an epistemological relationship to reality'. By that we are accepting that we have spent time 'immersed uncritically' but now, we are striving for 'critical engagement' of our own lived experiences. We are working from an ontological position which is not generally found in Higher Education Institutions. Ontology basically means, who we are, what makes us up. So in layman's terms, we will be reliving, examining and critically reflecting on our Higher Educational experiences, taking into consideration our ethnicity, our gender and our culture. We will ask some hard questions of ourselves. So Akoben, when you said, you were not nice to your manager because you were denied access to the course. I want to lovingly speak into that…we know how easily we are stereotyped, so we need to ensure that we challenge others who are not like us, we use approaches that will minimise them focusing on our conduct rather than the important issue we are seeking them to address. Our aim is that we will become more self-aware and strategic so that those we work amongst will better understand us, our experiences and the provisions that will enable us to work to our potential in both education and employment settings."

GyeNyame: "So let me see if I get this… WE are researching OURSELVES and telling others how and what WE want them to consider us…well about flaming time!"

Mama B: (Chuckles) "Amen to that sis! Now we are all going to get a little philosophical. West (1982) suggests that:

> "The community understands inquiry as a set of social practices geared towards achieving and warranting knowledge, a perennial process of dialogue which can question any claim but never once and for all…the social or communal is the central philosophical category of this pragmatist conception of knowledge (p. 21)".

West argues that in knowledge seeking the crucial component is not intuition but social practice and communal norm. So, our reflection will equip us with questions for our institutions but as importantly for ourselves. Empowering ourselves is a radical step we have avoided for too long, it's time ladies! We will proactively share in the hope that the dissemination of our stories will contribute to improving our situations, the transforming of our realities and our mindsets.

However, ladies, listen and listen to me good…decolonising our minds and coming to a better understanding of ourselves will not come without struggle. I like the idea of us doing this for our children but the children will have their struggles; just as our parents had theirs and we are living ours. Hegemony can disprove our history. They can, as Labi Siffre just sang, deny us, and decide to turn their faces away. When we speak from our lived experiences in the present…the denial gets harder, not impossible, just harder! We can use the experience of Yancey (1998) to help us as we anticipate their probable responses. Yancey suggests that the hegemonic response could include the following denials: "1. our suggestion of oppression is inaccurate or inappropriate 2. our oppressors are not the cause 3. our oppressors will select a method of correction which will fall short of correcting the structural oppressions" (p.10). Let's bear these in mind as probable critiques for destabilising the oppressors. This work will centralise us. We will be honest about what we need to do, as well as send out challenges to the institutions. Nothing about gaining equality is easy. Let's also remember that!" Yancey (1998) also reminds us that "the institutions do not see oppressions in their structures because they are not looking at it from the angle of analysis that would reveal such things as oppression" (p.10).

Nsaa: (Raises her hand and waits for acknowledgement)

Mama B: "Nsaa, please share what's on your mind."

Nsaa: "Based on what you've just said, I wonder if our generation are experiencing denial 3. Studies show that for decades in this country Black children have been denied educational experiences equitable to their white counterparts. We also know that professions such as nursing have been unjust in the way they placed Black and Irish women on subordinate programmes. We know that previously universities were inaccessible to people like us. But then some political party thought up widening participation. This was meant to address, or as you said in your quote, correct the structural oppression. In many cases WP failed, I'm guessing that institutions undertaking research will be saying, they provided us with opportunities, because that's what policies do right? But what institutional research will show is we've failed, not that the structures in place failed us!"

Mama B: (Smiles) "I like the connection you made there sis. I encourage you to take your thoughts another step and ask, who should provide the counter argument?"

Akoma: "Well, if you ask me, that's an easy one to answer. It should be people like you Mama B. Black professors and you academics. Shouldn't it? You know the language of the institutions. In fact, you are part of the institution."

Mama B: "Well, here are some of my realities that may surprise you sisters. Though I'm in the academy and I hold the titles recognised by the academy, I am not perceived to be equal to my peers in the academy. The same structures that oppress you and I as students are very much the same structures that oppress me now as a Black academic. There are an awful lot of Black and white academics who advocate for 'true equality' who just get silenced. If you want to know about professional isolation, come talk with me later. In my experience, the ways my peers try to subjugate and ostracise me generally follow this sequence: implication, accusation, subordination then distanciation.

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In fact, I'm currently in a season where colleagues imply my diary is not a true reflection of my commitments: their accusations spiraled within our team and I was then called by my manager who told me that the team had complained that I am not a team player, neither was I pulling my weight. The team did everything they could to exclude me from 'team knowledge'.

The final nail in my coffin was when cost improvement and service redesign proposals were put in place. The team had to come up with a plan, I was not invited to the meetings as they were scheduled at times I was lecturing. I heard of the final planning meeting and though I wasn't invited, I attended. My colleagues were shocked when I entered the room. I announced that I was unable to stay the duration but I would forward my suggestions to the lead person. I then looked at the team's revised organisational chart. My position alone was relegated with the recommendation that my salary be protected for two years. Subsequently, I had to spend time evidencing what I do, which was useful as it transpired I was doing more and higher quality work than my peers. To conclude, I kept my job, but who the hell can I now trust in that team? How do we move forward? Cause, I tell you what, when the process was over, it was back to normal FOR THEM! No one acknowledged what they had done to me. No one talked about it. It was as though nothing had happened. BUT NOT FOR ME!"

Akoben: "Hang on a minute! Are you for real? Are you expecting us to believe that at your level you have to put up with the same shit, beg yo' pardon, as us? So why the hell do you bother getting all them degrees and titles then? I thought 'you lot' up there in the ivory towers with 'them' would be exempt from all that crap!"

Mama B: (Laughs, then grunts) "West (1998) argues that institutional oppression is covert and often denied by those within the upper echelons of the institution. I found out recently there are only 18 minority female professors in the UK. Trust is a huge issue for them working alongside colleagues within structures. I use distanciation to protect myself. What I mean is, I go to work, to work. I refuse to socialise with colleagues. Piper (1998), an African-American female Academic and Philosopher described what I do as an, 'instinctual removal of…self from the toxic contexts'. I am generally an easy target because I refuse to keep my mouth shut on issues of ethics, transparency and equality. I talk to other Black men and women in the academy both here in the UK and abroad and most of them are living through some seriously weighty injustices too.

That's simply our reality! We are not, as you say, in ivory towers. Would you believe that currently, in the academy, work on the issue of race inequalities is still not seen as 'real research' (Alexander 2016).

But if we are to truly engage, ladies we first and foremost engage with self, how did West (1998) put it? He said:

> "There is a certain kind of openness about one's own self such that people can see that you're being self-critical and they can see how you are complicitous with some of the very things you talk about. In other words, it's not simply pointing fingers or calling names, but really showing that you are in the very mess that you are trying to grasp" (p. 37).

End of quote. So, ladies, it is our hope that "If we're willing to take a risk here and become vulnerable, then those in the institutions will open up, take a risk and become vulnerable with regard to listening to what we are saying." (West 1998:37) But if the truth be known, the struggle certainly doesn't get easier because one has greater academic credentials or exposure.

I like to use quotes to start stories so I'll share with you a quote from Yancy (1998) who uses the words of Robert Birt, an African American philosopher. Birt wrote:

> "Philosophy is often regarded as amongst the highest of human intellectual activities and manifestations of human intellectual excellence, a superior endeavour suited for 'superior' (ie 'white') minds - hardly an endeavour for which Blacks are deemed capable or which would fit them for their 'natural' function as useful labourers. To this day, a Black philosopher is commonly regarded as a contradiction in terms, an anomaly or an undesired intruder into a realm that does not concern him or her" (p. 5).

My question is: when will Birt's 'to this day' fail to be true for us Black academics or Blacks in general?"

Sankofa: (Coughs, smiles and nods)

Mama B: (A little embarrassed looks over at Sankofa) "I'm sorry ladies, I'm now doing the very thing that Sankofa and I said we were not going to do. That's…talk too much! That cough was my cue to wrap this up and get you talking. So, in closing, we will strive to develop and share our own epistemologies. We accept we have biases and we enter this space acknowledging that our biases are based on our multiple experiences in the differing contexts.

We tend to have "a deep suspicion of 'university philosophy' or 'academic philosophy' that tends to be concerned with abstract concepts and forms of universalising and always in track of necessity as opposed to the concrete, the particular, the existential, the suffering beings we are and can be" (West, 1998:33).

We acknowledge right from the start that our major intention here is to have our stories told, whilst also having the courage to be our self, the courage to wrestle with the truths about ourselves the truth about the NHS and the University and the courage to commence a differing kind of dialogue in our fight for justice. We know that the foundation degree programme was rolled out to: males, Asians, Whites and other mixed and or minority groups. We also know that in those groups there were 'failures' too. However, here in this space, we are only interested in the journeys of Black British and Black Caribbean women.

Yancy (1998) terms what we will be engaged in here as, 'dialectical conversations'. He suggests such conversations are, "complex sociolinguistic interactions that function as a site of fecundity, richness, opens, tension and contestation" (p. 7). In other words, we can produce rich, new insights through our sharing together. We are engaging in 'dialectical conversations' because as a group we are connected and can share our realities. Our purpose here is not to merely talk, but to make sense. To 'revalidate and reconstruct our norms in light of our lived experiences and perspectives as Black women. We will strive to accomplish this without 'universally demonising whiteness.' As we dialogue we will strive to carve out some sense of intent for approaching our futures. Freire, (1987) believed that education should transform lives, he suggests that 'dialogue is itself creative and re-creative' so what we are doing here amounts to a form of recreating ourselves through dialogue.

So, let us recap some of the points and questions that arose from your responses to the first question in this series. Getting on to the course seemed to result from a combination of self and managers' referrals. Some of you are aspiring nurses. A couple of you fought to get on the course. What I didn't hear was: 1. How many of you researched the course yourselves prior to accepting a place? And 2. Did any of you choose your place of study? How about we look at those two questions for starters?"

The two questions Mama B. posed fell straight to the tiled floor and so did the eyes of most of the women. The silence was palpable, but Mama B was not perturbed, she waited for what seemed liked minutes then she spoke again.

Mama B: "Okay then, why did you not research the course for yourselves ladies?"

Nsaa: "Well Mama B. I'll start. Where I work, it's the managers who seek out our development, we have never been encouraged to do it ourselves, and to be fair, she does a good job at it, so we leave her to get on with it. If I'm honest though, I was so chuffed at the idea of going to university, I'm not sure I would have cared where I went. It was only after my daughter started researching her university place that I came to understand that universities also had league tables. Mama B, without making excuses, 'cause that was a hard-hitting question, we are the first generation to inhabit the university space, right? We are also what the institutions label 'non-traditional' so who do we learn the rules of engagement from? We had no role models!"

Mama B.   "Now hear me sisters, my intention was not to criticise but to encourage us to think critically. You've raised good points there Nsaa. It seems, your daughter has already had a more informed approach to selecting her place of study. So that's progress! So, we reflect, ask the critical questions to move forward, right? I mean…"

Akoben: "Mama B, can I interrupt here? "All I can say is, when you've been working at a place for over 20 years with very little training and you get offered the chance to go to university, you take it. I wouldn't have dreamt of interrogating it. I just took it. But I learnt the hard way about choices, didn't I? Bloody hell ladies, we were brought up on the saying that, nobaddy no gi yo' nuttun fi free. You know, I for one really had no excuse not to 'check out' the course. I remember Sankofa got us discussing the Tuskegee experiment in one of our Literacy classes, way back when. That was my first ever classroom lesson on thinking critically. They injected the people they had made illiterate through denying them education with a virus then fed them sweets and watched them die like a lab experiment. Nothing is free…and certainly not for oppressed people..."

Mate Masie: "Hang on there Akoben, let me say something, I remember that Tuskegee session as well, but Many of us want to be nurses and we saw this as our foot in the door. But now you've asked the question, I wonder if we were just told what we wanted to hear, because our history shows we would not explore education provision for ourselves. SunSum told me that her manager thought the NHS was bringing back the enrolled nurse position. For many qualified nurses the Band 4 role was a threat, but for us, we heard: university, Band 4 and our own caseloads and that equaled professional respect, and one step closer to being a nurse. Who wouldn't jump at that opportunity? But, apart from getting into university everything else was an empty promise. My father used to tell us: 'an empty promise is a comfort to a fool'. That's about right, I do think the institutions see us as fools."

Mama B: "We must know our history, this must be amongst our principal pursuits. Black women and nursing pedagogy have historically been problematic, so the omission of knowledge of our history as well as a lack of exploration of 'so called' opportunities has proven to be physically, psychologically, professionally and emotionally costly. I have sourced some reading for us to explore as part of our reflection on our journeys. History hasn't done too well at teaching us about the Jamaican nurses who were pioneers of seeking an equitable nursing education during colonial times.

Ladies, ladies, knowledge not only informs, it places us in positions to liberate ourselves. So please, please read! What we are striving to do is take our experiences from the peripheries of the academic and workplace contexts and make them the centerpiece of the discussion. Sankofa, why don't you distribute the readings for the next session and explain how it will work. We are never going to have time to address everything in full, but please bring your reflections to the next session. Thank you, I enjoyed being with you today."

Sankofa: "So ladies, in session 2, we are going to explore institutional structures and power. Some of the language in the papers I'm handing out here may be a little highbrow but, we've chosen philosophers and papers which are: not too dense, which speak about struggle and many of the philosophers are Black too. So please, let's stick with it. We will be co-facilitators of the sessions and Mama B will be here to support us. Has everyone got the next date in your diaries?"

The women stand dispersing to different parts of the room. Some gathering utensils from the kitchen, others packing up chairs, whilst GyeNyame disseminates the papers.

Scene 4   Session 2. Moving On

It's a wintery February evening in 2013. The women meet in a local church hall in Hockley, Birmingham. For sustenance, it is 'bring and share'. Akoben's responsible for the hot meats and she continues to showcase her momma's recipes. Some brought hard dough bread, whilst others brought paper plates, cups and drinks. No one dared to bring alcoholic drinks into the 'house of God'. Mate Masie unveiled her Jamaican fruit cake, preserved since Christmas. As she opens the box those nearby are hit with the aromas of rum and Red Label wine.

GyeNyame: "Wow Mate girl, I guess your message is, you don't need alcohol in a bottle to enjoy it. Is how much alcohol yo' put in dat?"

Mate Masie: (Walks away making a cross as though in confession) "Not a lot, an' I wouldn't lie to you, 'cause I in the house of the Lord."

GyeNyame: (Giving Mate Masie, that 'pull the other one look') "Well you know what they say, the proof of the pudding is in the eating, so if it tastes as good as it smells, save one big slice for me."

The women serve themselves food and take their seats with food on laps and drinks at their feet as was their custom.

Pre-session chatter:

Sankofa: "Mama B. I have been living with a quote from Angela Davis (1998), she said: "I never saw philosophy as separate from a social critique or from Social activism" (p. 21). I have been deliberating on that quote since we last met. Davis' quote helps me in affirming my approach to this study. For me, part of my social activism is to ensure that I write up our accounts in a way that it is accessible to Black women. Our challenge however, is to keep the unity…Davis' account also gave a warning not to think we are unified based just on coalition, she suggests that would be naïve, rather, we need, "a unity produced politically, around issues and political projects" (pp. 24-25).

SunSum has been contemplating too, I think she's been reading Janice Collins' (2015) work on Active Centralised Empowerment (ACE). For today's session, she's suggested that we speak from the centre. She explained her idea to the group and the others liked it. We will keep the large circle layout but place a couple of chairs in the middle of the circle, then, whoever is going to voice her thoughts sits in the middle. I asked her why more than one chair, she said that sometimes they may wish to share in isolation whilst at other times with another who was equally central."

Mama B: (Reflectively) "Coalition is a good place to start Sankofa, then grow from there…Regarding the ACE approach, love it! Let's do it! We do have a responsibility Sankofa to remind ourselves that centralising requires intentional preparation and an openness to be constructively challenged. Those interventions may be painful but questioning could also lead to decolonising the mind. We must be aware that deconstruction is often uncomfortable, and sharing our thoughts can be costly."

Sankofa: "I hear you ma'am!"

Mama B stands and claps her hands to gain the attention of the women. The chatter eventually ceases and plates are stored underneath chairs.

Mama B: "Welcome to session 2 ladies. I'm pleased we all made it through the icy temperatures to be here. Thanks for the delicious soul food and positive energies you've already started to generate. You women are amazing! I'm learning so much…I'm loving what Freire calls 'reciprocal' learning'. On the board, she writes the following quote:

'So, long as the determination of a person's income is not only beyond democratic control and public knowledge, but is a matter of autocratic power and secret manipulation, just so long the application of logic and ethics to wealth, industry and income is going to be a difficult if not insoluble problem' (W.E.B. DuBois, 1973:101)

Mama B: "Now there is a tough quote, in pairs dissect for a few minutes read it, re-read it then as you do your talks if any part of this quote resonates with you, make the link as you share. I'll give you five minutes then we'll start!"

GyeNyame: "I would like to talk about how the two institutions (the university and the NHS Trust) we work and study in has power to influence and secretly manipulate rendering us as 'failures'. They offer us 'opportunities' though from time and memorial, as my grandma would say, their autocratic power over us was to control us by determining our fixed status and income. No Band 4 for you…we have satisfied the funders, placed you on the course and will use your skills if you quality but…man, this is tough! Anyway… I read a couple of the articles you gave us. I'm not saying that I fully understand, it was like being back at uni again." (She giggles somewhat awkwardly) But I think I understand or should I say, I'm accepting that this journey is going to be painful. How can confronting deception and exploitation be anything but…both at work and at uni as a Black woman, I feel completely powerless! I'm not sure if this is what you wanted when you talked about us making a link Ma B…" (looking directly at her for a response)

Mama B: "Well, power is a topic of breadth and depth so you just make a link to any aspect of the quote when you feel it resonates. Just whilst you've stopped for the moment GyeNyame, I think SunSum has shared the idea of centralising the speaker, so are you ready to take the centre seat as you carry on sharing?"

GyeNyame: "No, not really, will someone join me please? Akoben?"

Akoben: "I really don't trust myself when thinking about power dynamics, much more talking about it, but this should be a safe space, so I'll join you."

GyeNyame: "Thanks sis. I must say Mama B's questions at the end of the last session hit me hard. Real hard. I couldn't help feeling that I had allowed myself to be 'used' for someone else's gain or agenda. The more I thought about it and shared it with my husband, the sicker I felt. Now, I'm not about to heap guilt on myself, for me, this is more about learning and I have learnt that a lack of exploration contributed to my exploitation. I spoke to my daughters about their university application processes and it was then that I fully understood the magnitude of the question. To be honest, I was not involved in my daughters' university application processes. The sixth form tutor did it all. Another lesson there for me!

So, here are a couple of things that haunted me since the first session: 1) we had no choice about where or what we studied. 2) I hadn't really researched the course. We went to a university chosen by our workplace and though some of us knew others who had finished the course before we started, we didn't check whether on completion they had been appointed to the new roles they were promised. As I reflected I thought, lack of research exposed us to some inequitable and poor practices and ultimately to exploitation and disappointment. To try and emphasise this, let me throw out a question. How was your induction? I'm hoping that we can attempt to…make a link to power here Mama B."

Mama B: "Okay, go for it."

Nsoromma: "Well, that's easy for me. Three little words…didn't have one!"

Bese Saka: "Seriously Nsoromma? We had two, the induction at work was fun actually. I did a presentation, I was a bit nervous but it was alright. Uni induction was a bit chaotic. You know, you had to get your ID, you know, the big panic and you felt a bit…out of it really."

Mate Masie: "I don't know if what I had was an induction. I'll tell you this. I remember this woman coming to talk to us, she made it (the course) sound very interesting, after her talk I felt good, couldn't wait to go…(laughing) you know, I felt good, I just felt excited…"

Nsaa: "I felt really good about going to uni on day one. I was looking forward to being with others of like mind and gaining knowledge of the campus and services. Instead…I walked into the room, a large lecture theatre, looked around the room and thought… where's the Black people? (laughing) I did. But for me, it was that feeling that I'm here in university and I feel good. I felt important and thought…I'm here, but where are the others like me? Didn't have a proper induction though."

Dame-Dame: "Like Bese Saka, my work-based first meeting was made fun. You got to meet one or two of the tutors from the university. They came to the workplace to talk to us with one of the former students. The student gave us an insight on what to expect." But as we went through the course ourselves, we realised that what the student gave us was the sanitised marketing version. I didn't have a university induction."

SunSum: "Induction, naah, it was so quick. Erm, it was on the Trust site. They told us the modules, what we would be doing, but it was all…it just went pass me really. I didn't really understand the depth of it. We didn't have a uni one either, the tutors came into the workplace and that was where we had our 'so-called induction'."

Akoma: "You know something, my induction was quite strange actually. They did icebreakers and stuff, but err, really, erm, I don't think they can quite prepare you really for what happens throughout your stay."

Akoben: "So we're the centralised ones. Now let me get this right SunSum. Those on the outside of the circle represent women in society in general. Those of us in the middle are symbolic of bringing the issues of Black women from the outside, where we live it, but never talk openly about it. Taking this position means we have something to say and our voices won't remain hidden or silenced. We need to speak out to academics, our colleagues, our workplaces and maybe even our societies. But am I right in thinking that we are also talking to ourselves? Yeah!   Well, I'm going to be blunt. From the start, I felt…uni…you know what…it's just a big wide world and nobody gives a shit about ya! I tell you the…that's how I felt when I started…I tell you the truth…when I started uni…everybody else seemed to know what they were doing…I didn't. They were getting it…I was like…shit…so what am I supposed to do? What am I supposed to be doing?" In my case, there wasn't much guidance at first you know. This reliving thing brings back the confusion and hurts man…teck over GyeNyame please…I need to gather my thoughts."

GyeNyame: "Everyone is looking at me. You see, I've already learned a lesson just listening to you all. What if we had talked to each other? We would have known that most of us felt like fishes out of water. But we never shared that, did we? Because we never shared, we all ended up finding our way to Despondency Street in isolation. If only we had shared… "Well…my induction, to be honest it was quite scary. I was scared because we didn't know what to expect. It was our first day and I remember when they (the lecturers) talked, everything they tell us, they teck up a book. (laughing quite loudly) I never figet this one woman it's like…she was talking about academic writing and plagiarism - she teck up a book. Stella Coxwell, was a name of one of the authors. I remember the tutor used Coxwell's name for almost everything.

But no joke, everything they said they mentioned a book. I think, I left with the names of between ten to twelve books. I say, I left with the names, but I didn't. The lecturers talked so fast Coxwell was the only one I got down. I went to my induction in the dark and I left in the dark. What more can I say?" Does anyone want to add anything?"

(The room is silent, so she continues)

GyeNyame: "The NHS and Universities are well established institutions with clear standard operating policies. What does our induction experiences tell us about power? Ball (2008) suggests that, "the concept of knowledge economy was introduced by Drucker in 1966, where he made clear distinctions between the manual worker and the so-called knowledge worker" (p. 19). That word economy kept cropping up in the papers I read. Ball (2008) goes on to say that:

"within policy, education is regarded primarily from an economic point of view. The social and economic purposes of education have collapsed into a single, overriding emphasis of policymaking for economic competitiveness and an increasing neglect or sidelining of the social purposes of education" (pp. 11-12).

End of quote. I was invited onto the Band 4 programme and I'll be honest, the promised wage rise was as important to me as the anticipated university experience. I now understand that the introduction of the opportunity to attend university was an economic endeavour. The institutions got me, they lured me into their web where they could exploit my skills, as they had done with my parents' generation. And what was their bait? Economic uplift!... Shit…I guess they always knew the uplift was never going to happen. I laughed when my husband pointed out that the government got done too, as our courses were government funded. But as a tax payer, I guess it means it wasn't the government, it was all of us working people. As we strive to make sense of the links between us being offered the foundation degree and the state of our economy, let's hear the words of Tony Blair, our former Prime Minister. Akoben, have you got that section with the quote?"

Akoben: "Yes, I think this is the bit you want me to read. Blair (2005) states that:

"The purpose of the reforms is to create a modern education system and a modern NHS where at last the levels of investment are coming up to the average of our competitors, real power is put in the hands of those who use the service, the patient and the parent where the changes are becoming self-sustaining, the system open, diverse, flexible able to adjust and adapt to the changing world" (p. 15). Is that where you wanted me to stop?"

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GyeNyame: "Thanks Akoben, ladies, did we get that? We were to be given real power! How in the world were we given any power at all much less real power, when right at the entry point, they 'failed' us? How important should a comprehensive induction have been to first generation, mature, day release, employed students? I mean…"

Akoben: "GyeNyame, I see the link you're making, but I wonder if it would help if we defined induction. What is an induction? I looked it up. The Oxford dictionary states that an induction is: 'the action or process of introducing someone to an organisation or establishing them in a position.' Sorry, but I feel the need to repeat that - for emphasis. An induction is: 'the action or process of introducing someone to an organisation or establishing them in a position.' So, we were placed in a higher education institution without been given the knowledge of how to be established in it. Set up to fail, right from the start! GyeNyame's right! Now I've started, I just want to get a few things off my chest. I read Freire (1987), he said, and I quote:

> "if we are able to make readers uneasy, fill them with some uncertainty, then what we do will be important, if we achieve that, our work will be rigorous" (p. 4).

I'm no academic but I want us to attempt to show rigour in our work so we are not dismissed as a group of storytellers. When our readers engage, our accounts should create responses on many levels. I know we are only a small group of women in non-powerful roles, but we can work to high standards, can't we…?"

Mama B: "You're right Akoben, but I think it was the same Freire (1987) who said that: "what is rigorous today, may not be tomorrow as rigour is not universal" (p. 4). Freire thought differently about pedagogy, another word for teaching, so he's really giving us license, if ever we needed it, to go ahead with thinking differently and…"

Sankofa: "Yes, and from my experience, doing things differently can be slow, filled with anxiety, doubt and be messy too, because there's no one correct script to follow. But, it's liberating and offers so much learning…hey, let's do it...let's journey on a road less travelled…what do you say?"

GyeNyame: (Voice breaks with emotion) "What do you mean messy? Is there a non-messy option for people like us? Mess is what we are expected to wade through every time, it's our reality! And we are not victims, we become more resolute, knowledgeable, resilient and determined because of our wading.

Earlier, didn't you refer to a philosopher West… hang on… I wrote it down… "we are in the very mess we are trying to grasp."

(Silence overtakes the surroundings; the noiselessness is awkward. Sankofa waits to see if Mama B will interject something motivational. She doesn't…she's busily thumbing through a book…it seems like minutes pass…then Nsaa speaks.)

Nsaa: "Akoben, may I take the centre for a moment please? My reading was Freire and Pedagogy and there are a couple of links that I can try to make with power also. I would like to further explore power and the lack of proper induction. I want to use a few quotes here… Freire (1987) states, it's a long quote but please bear with me.

> "…Education does not shape society… it is society which shapes education according to the interests of those who have power. If this is true, we cannot expect education to be the lever for the transformation of those who have power and are in power. It would be tremendously naive to ask the ruling class in power to put into practice a kind of education which can work against it. If education was left alone to develop without political supervision, it would create no end of problems for those in power" (p. 36). End of quote.

He went on to say that 'transformation' can only be accomplished by those who 'dream' about the reinvention of society. Hey, there's something to be said for us dreamers. In this space, we are dreaming that we can probably shine light into how institutions, as GyeNyame said, accepts us in darkness and uses power dynamics that ensure we exit in darkness or remain in professional obscurity in our workplaces. Universities are large complex sites, so for part-time students not to have an induction is a travesty of equality…The AP role was new, all our colleagues on our wards should have been inducted into how to integrate this new role too… I'll swap places again Akoben."

Akoben: "Wow…well said Nsaa…those in power would not really want us to be given the knowledge to be established in the institution as, I don't know, it may 'threaten' their power? Several qualified nurses thought that the Band 4 role would be a threat! If we have no power, we are no threat, are we? Anyway, are we done for now GyeNyame?"

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GyeNyame: "Yeah, let's give others a chance. Being central is okay actually ladies, come on have a go."

Akoben: "Mama B, Sankofa, I think we're done for now."

(GyeNyame and Akoben return to their seats on the peripheries.)

Mama B: (Rises and takes the centre seat) "Thanks all. There's so much there in what you've said that linked to Dubois' opening quote, you have started to think about power and structural manipulation, maybe these are themes that we will return to in future sessions. For now, however, I'd like to pick up on a couple of points. Nsaa walked into university and asked herself, 'where are the Black people?' That's an important question, because for most of us, our social worlds have a very strong Black presence. Supplementary school teachers, colleagues, some of us even attend predominantly Black places of worship so it can be perplexing to find ourselves in a context where we are the only Black person. I do wonder how often whites and particularly bourgeoisie, I mean, middle class whites, have such an experience. It may be worth saying here that David, et al. (2010) undertook studies on Widening Participation in Higher Education and found Nsaa's experience represented amongst other BME students. They found that some BME students chose universities because they had a representation of BME students. You however had no choice about where you studied. The lack of choice was also an issue, you were denied the social mobility that higher education offers so many of its students. Hold that thought!

Then again, the pain was palpable as we talked about the messiness of life's struggles and sense making. Let's consistently recall the message from West (1998) that I quoted earlier and that GyeNyame also referenced. We should expect our journeying to be somewhat messy, and messiness is okay. So, ladies as we become vulnerable in this space, sometimes 'starting with the woman in the mirror, asking her to consider and maybe change her ways' then others are inspired or challenged to make themselves vulnerable. Those 'othered' folk who have a similar mindset may also be challenged to give us an audience and create spaces for us to co create dialogue. But, we must accept that within the Black communities there are power and gender struggles that must also be navigated and it could be argued, our internal power struggles contribute to experiential mess.

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Thank you, ladies, I'm sure that we will return to power as we journey in our meetings, it's amazing how time flies, we have not even scratched the surface!

Remember the next meet up will be our visit to the NHS England's conference where Sankofa will be in dialogue with a member of the National commissioning team. The dialogue is one session of their conference on Widening Participation. I wonder if we could meet say, 12:30 for a huddle. We will discuss the dialogue in session 3. God bless and safe journeys home."

Scene 5   NHS England's Conference - July 27, 2013
                       The Drum Birmingham

(12:45 The women meet Sankofa for a quick huddle)

Sankofa: "Thanks for coming ladies, I really do appreciate you all. Mmara has been quite prescriptive about what I can and can't ask, but I've got your points for exploration and I'll try to get in as many as I'm able to, more importantly, I will try to get information that can assist us in making sense. Wish me luck!"

(Women voicing encouragement and affirmation)

GyeNyame: "Quickly everyone, I would like to suggest that at the next session we look at our experiences of 'getting through'. We agreed that we would go ahead though only half the group will be present. I would also like to suggest that the next session is held in a home…what do you think? If you are willing, I could open my home for it. Is that okay?"

Bese Saka: "I won't be there, but I'll send my thoughts."

Nsoromma: "Me too."

Sankofa: "Sounds like a good idea GyeNyame but I think you should run it by the others and see how they feel too. I know you don't do emails much but it may be a quick way to get the views of everyone."

(The women disperse to find seats.)

1:10 The interview commences - Sankofa is interviewing Mmara-Krado from NHS England's commissioning team.

Sankofa: "Thanks for having me, I'm looking forward to today's dialogue. I would also like to welcome my colleagues who have an interest in this section of your conference. Mmara, could you commence by telling us how the role of the Assistant Practitioner came about?"

Mmara:	"Welcome…okay, well APs emerged within the last three or four years, and it is a methodology to bridge healthcare and the workforce shortfall. We know from national intelligence that we have an ageing NHS workforce population. Within the next five years we are going to see many people leaving the health service, those who are nursing which is the biggest cohort of healthcare professionals in the NHS… the ones who are in their early 50s because you have the right to retire at 55 and now with how the government is playing with pensions, a lot of people are going to take the opportunity to get out just in case anything changes. So, the national workforce intelligence is telling us that there are many nurses coming up to age 55, the nursing retirement age and that there is a possibility that many of these people will take early retirement because of the economic changes. And so that will put a gap in the nursing supply."
Sankofa:	"And yet, my observations are that many of the staff that have gone on to the fd programme have been mid to late 30s and older." Though they won't be able to afford to retire at age 55 based on their salaries, will they? So that's how they benefit the NHS."
Mmara:	"Erm yes, that's true and I suppose, there's a couple of other reasons for the fd selections at that age…one, the AP role is an opportunity for those who are silent…the 'I've always wanted to be a nurse and do more kinds' and this is an opportunity for them to do it. If you recall, we used to have the SEN role. There are similarities between the AP and the SEN. The SEN was a 2-year training programme. The AP is a 2-year training programme. The key difference is that, as an SEN you went on to NMC registration whereas an AP now can't and the other difference is about the issuing of medication."
Sankofa:	"If I was to give an observation here, it would be that the project 2000's aim was to get rid of the tiers of nursing."
Mmara:	"Yes, that's how come they stopped the enrolled nurse training."
Sankofa:	"Hmm, so has it just been brought about in another guise?"

Mmara: "Well going back to the starting of our conversation, it has been driven by the assumptions that have been made that a lot of people are going to retire and there is going to be a gap and we are not going to feed that food chain as quickly as we need to. And not only that, but I'm sure that through your economic analysis, you'll know that we are going through a very unprecedented change in this country regarding the NHS where money is very, very short.

So not only have we got a picture of mass exodus of people coming up for retirement in nursing, we can't afford the workforce we need. We need a lot more people in the healthcare service than we did twenty years ago because people are living longer. So, healthcare services are under considerable demands. So, if the demand goes up, we must meet that demand with supply. And how we give those supply is through workforce, so it's those scales that we must balance. So, we have mass exodus, demands going up and all the shortfalls in funding.

So, this role has been born out of that. The aspirations are that we would be bridging the gap. But it's hoped that this role, whilst it's not an enrolled nurse, will give some capacity to qualified practitioners with.... There is some national intelligence that suggests that there was a lot of qualified practitioners doing clinical functions or activities that could be assigned to a lower band so when you are looking at CARIS because you have a registered practitioner doing it, it makes that product more expensive. If you used an AP, even if you saved 10/20/30% of what that registered nurse would be, it makes that product cheaper. It gives more capacity to the registered nurse to take up some of the higher-level demands and brings down the whole workforce demand for that practitioner, so it's a conundrum really, but they do feature APs in the conundrum in getting everything balanced for the future.

From a strategic planning point of view, in theory it's good. In theory, it balances the books, it brings you the head count, it makes nursing affordable, it attempts to ensure that our service users get the right treatment with the right people looking after them in the right place at the right time and all that rhetoric.

There are a lot of hurdles to jump. As you know the NHS is quite steeped in culture, it is quite hierarchical.

I don't know whether I should say organisation... but function and there is some resistance in people / clinicians working with APs. I mean, if I focus on nursing, nursing is very…it's my patient and to say you are going to hand over some of your activities to somebody else for your patients makes nurses a bit nervous. 1. from the accountability point. 2. it's my patient and 3. actually having the easier tasks within your day of work, gives you that little bit of respite as well, so I think it's...and I know through planning as well that it's going to come up to some buffers, there will be challenges."

Sankofa: "Are you anticipating tensions within the profession?"

Mmara: "There will be tensions, there will be... I don't know whether you have looked at this bit, like how skills are worked out on a ward. What I mean by that is how many Band 7s, Band 6s, Band 5s, 4s, 3s, 2s and 1s. Well the quotas are predominantly driven by professional judgement so it will be senior nurses and interested team members that will take responsibility...a matron could have two senior nurses and one will be flying the flag for APs and the other not and it's purely based on professional judgement."

Sankofa: "So you're saying that the guidance isn't mandatory, I don't understand that."

Mmara: "Okay and whilst a Matron or manager will use everything, evidence wise to try and influence the culture, the thinking…at the end of the day you can't overrule that professional lead for that particular area. So, whatever the personal view of the managing nurse is, that's what governs whether APs will be employed or not. You mentioned tensions, remember that some nurses wanted the SEN role abolished, so if the AP is perceived to be a back-door re-entry. The role will not be welcomed or supported."

Sankofa: "Oh yeah, that's quite interesting because, at the outset of the conversation you said it was driven by economics…."

Mmara: "But nurses don't do economics…"

Sankofa: "But shouldn't they?"

Mmara:	"They don't…they don't…they're not…they're not…they want to look after their patients, they don't care what it's costing, they just want to look after their patients. Their thoughts are you at the top sort it out! And if they're gonna look after their patients, they want good staff on the shop floor. So initially they'll think, I don't want 'no watered-down Band 5.' I want a Band 5 and that's what the advocates of the AP role will be up against."

Sankofa:	"Right, from what I've read, the fd is a national programme and some NHS hospitals have really gone for it. Manchester seems to be one area where the Band 4 role has really taken off, in fact I know someone personally from the Trust that I work who has relocated to Manchester after completing the programme with us and not being able to secure a Band 4 role. So nationally... I don't know is it …."

Mmara:	"I'm quite surprised you said that because nationally there are discussions on safer staffing models, looking at the skills mix for new hospitals and what type of workers we will need. I know your Trust has trained APs but hasn't placed most of the people that you trained in AP roles. And there was…you see, what you need to know is, were the APs counted in the qualified numbers?"

Sankofa:	"Right, well I don't know that!"

Mmara:	"Okay, now whilst you refer to Manchester, it will be interesting to know how they are using APs. If they are using them to improve competence availability within the environment as opposed to using them in the trained staff numbers, then that makes sense. They're very fortunate. Okay, I bet they haven't reduced their Band 5 numbers or their Band 6 numbers. It will be interesting to see their Christmas tree, their profile from before they used the AP to now when they are using the APs. Now, sure, if you said to clinical leaders, we are going to give you Band 4s instead of Band 2s, they would say, give them to me please! We are going to include Band 4s as part of your 1-5s in your establishment but it's not going to impact on your 5, 6, and 7s very much, they'll say, give them to me. If you start saying we are going to skills mix your Band 5s across the Band 4s, taking out some Band 5 and replacing them with 4s, you've got a different argument. So, you need to understand how they are using them.

Okay, I mean certain areas like... you need to understand how and where they are using them, so there is like, outpatients, no problems, there are certain areas where you must think value for money like, ICU, HDU, CCU, Neo Nate, because of the mandatory trained staff to patient requirement, so you can't, flex that model. You're not going to get very much. So, it would be interesting to see how Manchester has done it."

Sankofa: "Okay, I didn't know of all the complexity of that, so I haven't explored that, but..."

Mmara: "Yeah, but you have to understand that! And regarding the role of APs nationally, a lot of nurse leaders are saying no, we're not using Band 4s because what's the point? Because at the end of the day as you know the care set up, Band 4s will be replacing Band 5s. I think, I don't know…a Band 4, when they get to…I don't know…maybe 3rd from the top on the pay scale, they'll be earning the same as a newly qualified Band 5. Then it's the same as a 2nd year Band 5, then a 3rd year Band 5 because they've moved up the pay scale. So, the manager's argument is fair enough, why would you take an AP who can't do drugs… when they might as well take a newly qualified Band 5 who, after 6 months you know, they can be doing their own drugs? You will never be able to give a Band 4 a patient without supervision. These are some of the issues and challenges here, but what we have to define is, what we want from the AP role and how far do we want them to go?"

Sankofa: "My question would be, was this knowledge known prior to the introduction of the Band 4 role, or is this something that's just been found out?"

Mmara: "The way the NHS is now, the shortfalls, the concerns, the demands. Everyone should be saving money. People do knee jerk and don't always think things through, and I know, training has been done locally. I know that there are a number who have either left or have backed out of the course, working as they were before. Going back to your question before that, you've noticed that there are a lot of 40 plus people going into the programme, erm, yeah. I don't know if it's a good or a bad thing. It's good that people get the opportunity to realise their dreams, because you will have, maybe a significant number of Black people who have sat in HCA posts as a Band 2 and now here is an opportunity to, you know, fly. Whilst there's been a lot of older adult students, erm, the attrition rates are a bit worrying.

Because people are jumping to this dream but things have changed so much academically that they had to get through those academic hoops as well, it may prove different to what they think it was going to be. Okay, and we must be careful that we don't do an injustice to those aspirant HCAs. When we are gonna start looking at trends and say, well a lot of Black people have gone on this, and they are not getting through there needs to be critical research which informs us."

Sankofa: "Yeah. Well this study will be part of the critical research you refer to. And from what I'm gauging I understand what has been said but personally, I'm quite sad that more research wasn't done up front. Because what you identified as the women falling by the way, erm, I wonder if part of them 'falling by the way' was because the systems weren't rigorously researched and implemented especially around the areas of need and support."

Mmara: "You mean the attrition rates?"

Sankofa: "Well, yes, if the nursing leads were resolute they were not going to use APs, then why would they invest the skills of their Band 5s and others to train and mentor the APs and why give aspiring HCAs this false hope?"

Mmara: "If you think about what we've seen here so far, it was always gonna be difficult, for a particular group, it was going to be difficult anyway. But it was going to be more difficult for groups, if you think about erm, ok, let's think about the fact that I said culturally, nursing doesn't particularly want APs, and what you don't want, you don't support very well. A student nurse is a traditional role, nurses understand student nurse status, they know what the product is. They will be quick to impart learning and share learning because they want that product at the end of the day. So that's number one okay. Number two, I mean, I don't know what the demographics of your APs that have gone off, if it's been 20% Asian, 10% Caribbean, and 50% Caucasian, I don't know but if there is a number from a BME group, then they will struggle again, because you are not going to find that mentorship."

Sankofa: "Okay, why is that absent?"

Mmara: "You will find mentorship, ok and supervision but it takes more than the given mentorship and the given supervision. You need somebody out there that will go the extra mile with you. Black women generally find it difficult to get a supervisor. A supervisor, someone they can sit with and trust. Because that's what it's about trust, some one that you can trust. I can't do this assignment here so can you give me some guidance? You must give something of yourself to build trust, friendship… As there are so few Black managers around, for those that come from the BME communities, they are not going to find that supervision. I'm not saying that is totally the fault of it, but it... That is going to be a difficulty, so needs thinking about."

Sankofa: "One of the issues I guess is that the Windrush generation of nurses didn't do the academic route into nursing and so the perception is, they are fantastic nurses, but academically, they may not be best equipped to support APs…I don't know…"

Mmara: "Nursing now in the computer age is totally different, it's totally different…it's very different. If you do have clinicians out there on the wards that don't understand how to access intelligence that can help them with their practice; that's concerning because we must move with the times. You do, so that's another subject right. But yeah, I can understand that. So, one of the areas it may be useful for your group to discuss later is: are AP students just going to Black clinicians as mentors and if so, why?"

Sankofa: "I do question WP, the whole concept of it, if you are going to take someone in who hasn't had the luxury of going through formal education in the same way that a traditional student would have done. Then surely, that should have been part of the preparation to think, well these are non-traditional learners so we are going to have to put pastoral care in…"

Mmara: "And use a non-traditional approach to pedagogy...let's be frank here, WP is a good idea, in one breath, but I don't know if it is in another. And I say that because I recall just after the Conservatives had got in and they cut down on commissions as a result we didn't have enough nurses so we did overseas recruitment and…what they did they call it? Widening the edge gate into nursing.

Now what you have are programmes which were driven by the government with a cash incentive and bums on seats for HE institutions to get their income…so, if you were to say things like, there are practitioners out there that can't or won't support the APs, that wouldn't surprise me… Things have changed you know, since Mid Staffs. So, if APs are saying they are not developing clinical skills and been professionally developed then the Trusts have failed… they've failed…this started with the Trusts. The SHA whips all the trusts around to get APs, whether they like it or not, get them on a course and this is what happened. And so, when people are forced or made to champion something that they may or may not believe in, which may or may not have been thought out thoroughly this is the consequence."

Sankofa: "I look forward to the evaluation of the AP project, though we know, people can make evaluations say what they want them to say. I doubt, however, that anyone will want to say we have just thrown multiple thousands at this with very little to show for it, especially as we are supposed to be cost saving. Thanks, Mmara. That was really insightful."

Scene 6   Session 3. Getting Through

(The doorbell rings at GyeNyame's home, she opens.)

GyeNyame: "Hi, welcome to my humble abode. I see you've all arrived together."

Nsaa: "Yeah, it was Akoben's idea for us to travel together and I'm glad we did…. I'm not sure I would have found it by public transport."

Akoben: "Have you been baking GyeNyame? The aroma in here reminds me of bygone lazy days with the grandkids."

GyeNyame: "I'll take your coats, go on through to the living room and help yourselves to snacks and drinks…don't be shy and let me know if you need anything else. I'll join you in a minute."

Mama B: (grabs Sankofa's arm) "Let's have a quick word. Sankofa, as we are in a home this evening we need to negotiate time as it can be so easy to get carried away because we are comfortable. Having said that, shall we ask the women how they want to work with the timing?"

Sankofa: "That's True…okay, I'll mention it."

Sankofa: "Welcome everyone, to use the time well, shall we start, I'm sure we'll be okay to enjoy the cuisine as we share…is that okay GyeNyame?"

GyeNyame: "Oh please, feel at home."

Sankofa: "Well we knew that numbers-wise we were going to be a bit thin on the ground. Since the conference, I have had a couple of long telephone conversations where our sisters wanted to share their reflections following what they found out at the conference. Some felt so strongly that they took to writing and have sent me some of their experiences of 'getting through'. Let's remember them as we journey tonight. Bese Saka and Nsoromma were particularly affected."

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GyeNyame: "As you all know I am a Christian, so I hope you won't mind if I open with prayer and I will also say a word for our sisters who are struggling. Some go for counselling, others to drinks and drugs… I go for prayer."

(She intones a prayer and at the end, everyone quietly says, Amen.)

Sankofa: "What do you think, shall we start with the accounts the ladies sent of their experiences of 'getting through' the course? Mama B. could you please read Bese Saka's? Oh, before we do, I think we need to agree how we will manage the time tonight."

GyeNyame: "I suggest we leave it fluid…there's been a lot of feeling from the conference and we need time to work through it, we've discussed it and everyone agrees."

Sankofa: "Okay then. So, Mama B. could you please read Bese Saka's?"

Mama B: (Walks to the centre and sits on the floor) "Sure. So, this is Bese Saka's piece everyone."

               "Hello comrades, I can't tell you how deeply the interview with Mmara affected me. It was heartrending to find out that we, and I mean all those who did the fd (whatever colour or gender) were just objects in the hands of strategists and policy makers. And to be honest, I use the labels 'strategists' and 'policy makers' loosely because you would think that competent 'policy makers' and 'strategists' would know what they were doing.

               Though I was hurt and just wanted to 'shut down' - I didn't. For me, it now makes sense why the clinical Band 4 role evaded us. The knowledge from the conference has made me more determined to let others know what I endured on a promise that was never properly thought through and as a result, was never to be. I tell you this, ladies, the knowledge from the conference has also made me want to really invest in this project. So, listen up, Bese Saka has been reading and will be philosophising. Go on laugh, I'm not there to hear ya, but I'm serious.

Freire (1987) said:

> "the more you understand the mechanisms of economic oppression and exploitation, the more you understand what working for wages really is, the more you illuminate, the more you put light on some obscurity necessary for domination" (p. 4).

We thought at the time that our Trust and our clinical leaders were 'supporting' us, some of us may even have thought that they saw our worth and were willing to create opportunities for us to professionally develop. After all, many of them had encouraged us into nursing, but financially that option was ruled out. If we had been cynics, we would have been perceived to be ungrateful. In the current climate and with our histories in the Trust, was it wrong that we didn't even consider whether the widening participation offer was a credible one? Ladies, I laughed out loud when I read this quote from Freire (1987):

> "getting a job (a promised promotion in some of our cases) was a concrete and realistic expectation of HE" (p. 68).

Now I'm glad I'm writing this and not speaking it, because some of these names are, as one would say rather challenging to pronounce. I can hear you all laughing, please pay attention, this is serious! Bourdieu, I think he's white and French talked about 'conversion strategy.' I talked this through with Sankofa, and ladies it made sense. As healthcare assistants on pay band 2 of the NHS' hierarchical banding structure we have limited and often insufficient economic resources. Because of our economic positioning, it was impossible for us to give up our jobs and go off to university to train as nurses. We all know, because we live it, there are not enough members of clinical teams that respect the role of the HCA so we have no symbolic capital at all. Not professional anyhow. They will often enjoy our cultural capital in the sense of our dress, food, music and social life. So, we do have this strange, complex, work, social life relationship. Stay with me ladies, I'm at the main point now, philosophising is not easy… we hoped that the sacrifice of engaging in HE/NHS fields, where the results generally result in social capital meaning a respected professional status would materialise for us. It was our expectation that our new professional status would lead to economic capital, the Band 4 position.

Okay, in lay man's terms, we hoped that our education would be converted into a more fulfilling role with better pay… got it! Instead, we've come to understand that because the 'strategy' was a 'knee jerk reaction' that we, an already subordinated group were only to reap exploitation, professional relegation and vitiated educational experience for our sacrifice. Now here are some of my recollections of 'getting through' the educational experiences.

"Couple of times I felt…why am I doing this? Shall I give up? But to be honest, my family kept me going. It wasn't the uni part that was most challenging, though some of it was. It was work. Sometimes, I would go and offload at home and my family were like: you can't give up now, you have come so far, you have struggled, you fought to be on this course. There's a reason you were meant to be doing this you know. My eldest son was like, mum, don't give up. I took courage from the family and in those tough times I said, you know what, 'the system' is not going to beat me… I decided that I'm not giving 'them' the satisfaction of seeing me giving up because they would love that. That's what drove me. I wanted to show them. I'm talking about the people at work…for me, passing this course means I could be a Band 4 and they didn't want to see me in that position.

When I passed the course, I made a big thing of it…you should have seen the shock on their faces. Yeah, they were all shocked, because like SunSum said in an earlier session, they think we're dumb. My manager blatantly asked me, how did you pass, when … (a Caucasian colleague) is struggling?" The very elements of my culture, which are perceived to be 'weak' (our family structures) was what got me through. My cultural habitus provided me with all I needed to survive in the fields of higher education and the NHS Trust and to come out with my diploma. I'm looking forward to seeing you all when we will be talking about workplace mentoring and university support. I hope we've got a whole day for that one. Shalom ladies. Writing has helped to calm me down. I hope it all made sense."

Mama B: (Places the papers on the floor and runs her eyes around the group)
"That's the end of Bese Saka's piece. Well, she really used her readings well. I'm pleased with her time investment, because frustration at injustice led to her being proactive.

Jamaican born Philosopher Gordon (1998) described himself as a 'praxis intellectual' because his life is 'submerged in community organisations and the struggles of those who access them'. There is a quote our parents handed down which said, 'feels it, knows it' and I guess we could add, 'and they should share it'. To quote an African American philosopher Harris (1998) our "philosophy is born of struggle: struggle to overcome, overcoming adversity, overcoming exclusion, overcoming a lack of 'authentic opportunity' and overcoming exploitation" (p. 219). I guess those of us in this room can say amen to that…over to you Sankofa."

Sankofa: (Rises to read) "Whilst the room is quiet, I had a thought that I just want to throw out there. Can you see the impact we can have even in our absence? Bese Saka isn't here, yet…"

GyeNyame   (interjects) "Her words have impacted us powerfully."

Sankofa: "Exactly! I'll now read what Nsoromma wants to share."
                  "Hi sisters, we were duped, weren't we? We were offered a 'widening participation opportunity' when the very profession that we thought would 'widen' was closing ranks, how were Band 4s referred to in the interview? 'Watered down Band 5s.' When I left the conference, I went for a long walk to try to make sense of it all. I've got to tell you all, I cried. I didn't want to, but as I walked through the park in the rain, hot tears mingled with the chilly drops of rain on my cheeks. Politics, economy and power. We are not engaged in politics so we are consistent footballs in the games of economy and power. I read some of Apple's (2013) work and I liked him, he was easy to read and said a lot of things that I could relate to. Though I'm not sure how some of his arguments sit with me, I count him credible because though he's a white professor, he's lived the struggle as a parent of a Black adopted son. Maybe it would be more accurate to say that he has insights into the struggle. There's no denying that he is white, privileged, male and a professor, therefore powerful right!

Through the work of Apple (2013) I came across the idea of 'affective equality'. Check this out:

> "Affective equality is totally devoted to the affective system and to a thoughtful interrogation of the socio-political, ideological and personal relationships that do (or do not) provide and sustain, 'love and solidarity… Affective equality, portrays and analyses the voices, the joy, the pain and dense realities of women and men engaged in activities associated with their labour of love, care and solidarity in richly detailed and insightful ways" (p. 16).

I, for one was hoping I would have experienced some 'affective equality' at university and from work-based learning in a health context. Now I'm wondering if widening participation provisions fail to reorganise itself around the norms of 'affective equality, how dare it assert that it is 'widening PARTICIPATION'. My experience of this space has made me view education differently. I know it could be argued that I should have considered education before. But at this point, my dad's voice echoes in my head, he would say, Nsoromma, nothing is done before the time!

I want to include two more quotes before I share my lived experience. Apple (2013) again:

> "Education is not a neutral activity. It is ultimately connected to multiple relations of exploitation, domination and subordination and very importantly to struggles to deconstruct and reconstruct those relations" (p. 23).

For me, it is only now that we are deconstructing our educational experience that I'm even thinking like this. Apple also says, "negative educational experiences have a damaging effect on both the sense of self and the understanding of what one can truly become" (p. 21). Well, after I read that quote, I dropped the book and couldn't pick it up again for a couple of days. In those days however, I thought a lot about my schooling and recalled the times teachers would tell me that I could never be the nurse I wanted to be. My dad encouraged education at home, but at school I was usually bored. Teachers never listened when I said the work was too easy for me…I better leave those thoughts there! Though I acknowledge I'll need to revisit them as I journey towards self-liberation. Anyway, regarding getting through, I'm no longer sure, I want to say I got through…got through what?

Any road here it goes: For the first couple of months just getting used to it (HE), you know it was exciting because I thought to myself it's a new thing. I'll get a bigger qualification out of this, meet new people and then it was just like the work load hit. It's so much assignments, everything was getting done but I thought it was just like one assignment after another and that and just before the end of the year…the first year, it was like I had problems with a parent being ill and I couldn't concentrate. It was like uni's focus gone out the window 'cause I needed to concentrate on my parent but I still got the work in. It's just that I think what knocked me was exams. I'm not good at exams but I tried. Because I think they gave me three goes and to me I thought I had completed two goes and I had another go. However, I think with having all this pressure with my parent, I lost track… they told me that I had 'failed' three attempts and I couldn't carry on with the course. I did explain to them the situation of my parent being ill and passing away and blah, blah but to me it was like…'oh well you 'failed' the course now, bye - see you later'. I didn't feel I was getting any support or anything.

When I 'failed' the first time, I don't think I really got much support. Just more like 'oh you've 'failed 'the first exam, just more studying so…well I had a few of my friends on the course so we tried to get in little groups and help each other out and stuff which sometimes worked. But I think with me and exams, if it was done…like it was done in two parts for the whole day...so, I had one in the morning and one in the afternoon and it was the afternoon bit, it's like the written one. Practical ones I'm fine but its written exams. I just like…the anatomy. It covers everything down to what …. I thought why are we having this exam? Am I going to use this in an actual work place? When we were at work and we had students that come to the placement, they even said 'why is your course so hard, we've never had anything like this? Their booklets were easier than ours and I thought, my gosh! So…that kind of put me off a bit but I carried on, it's just that I felt like I did not get no support.

I think when it got to the case of 'oh well you've 'failed' the course' and then I'm asking well how can I appeal and stuff? 'Well you've got to fill out this form and that form.' I thought I've never done this before, this is a new thing to me. They don't guide you…to me, and I'm not being funny, but to me it felt like looking at my colour and saying 'naah sod ya' because I am not the first person. There's a few…there's a couple of Afro-Caribbean girls that have been to the course before or on my course that have really felt like that too.

If dad was here now, I imagine he would be listening to my retelling with that quizzical look on his face and ask, Nsoromma, think…who failed here? He would probe me about how I came to accept and repeat the institution's label of myself as a 'failure'. It was Dubois (1973) who said,

> "educational establishments too often take on as teachers those of books and brains with no contact or firsthand knowledge of real everyday life and ordinary human beings…those types of teachers generally fail" (p.109).

In the crease of the page, I responded with a question, fail who though sir? Do they fail themselves, their students or both and how comes I've never heard in my lived experience of a lecturer / teacher failing their students? Anyway…when I spoke to Sankofa, she challenged me to read up on the education of our generation, so I guess I'll find some examples.

I was told I'd been withdrawn and stuff like that. I appealed, it's just like a waiting game and then they reject you. They said I lost the appeal, so I thought fine, I've lost the appeal, get my head together. I did my assignments, yes, but that's what's really frustrating as well… I passed the assignments but when it got to the exam, because I 'failed' the exam they did not want to carry me on. But I thought you could have at least said 'oh well, carry on the next year and we'll do the exam at the end or something or one part of the exam now and another part at the end' but no". I'm not convinced my personal experience was taken into consideration, the process seemed to be nothing more than a formality. I exited university wondering why I wasn't exposed to the educational experience that DuBois (1973) had envisioned when he wrote:

> "…an educator should be far more than a master of a branch of human knowledge. They have got to be able to impart their knowledge to human beings whose place in the world is today precarious and critical; and possibilities and advancement of that human being in the world where he is to live and earn a living is of just as much importance in the teaching process as the content of the knowledge taught" (p. 105).

How could either the university or NHS Trust argue that what I was exposed to was even an 'opportunity'? It could be argued that they considered what should be taught, but failed to consider the whom and the how. Sorry guys, I can feel myself getting annoyed again so I'm going to sign off here. In conclusion, 'my partner and kids were great, they understood that I had this 'opportunity' and the work had to be done. They were really supportive.' Ladies, looking forward to next time."

Sankofa: (Reflective - walks back to her chair and sits.

GyeNyame: "Time for a comfort break and a brew? Don't know about anyone else, but I'm…I don't know what I am…how could something appearing to be right, you know the offer of a free foundation degree, go so wrong? Universities need more of their staff to engage in critical pedagogies. Anyway…time for some music I think. SunSum can you be the selector?"

(SunSum walks over to the iPad and picks Jimmy Cliff's many rivers to cross…the lyrics commence: Many rivers to cross, but I can't seem to find my way over, wondering I am lost, as I travel along…)

The women sit and chatter as GyeNyame and Nsaa serve hot milky drinks and nibbles. The atmosphere is energised with outbursts of laughter.

Mama B: (Shouts above the chatter) "Just giving you a heads-up lady, we will start again in five
                 minutes."

SunSum: (Swaying to the music, rises, reaches over to the iPad and switches off the music.)
Mama B: "Okay ladies, we've heard the voices of two of our absent friends and we can see that
                 their reading is contributing to sense making. How shall we proceed?"

(Nsaa jumps to her feet, with book and notepad in hand.)

Nsaa: "My experience was somewhat positive so maybe I should go next and offer another
                 perspective. Well, let me start by saying, I consider what we are doing here to be
                 REAL education. I'm really enjoying our engaging with concepts and ideas, loving it! I
                 get the feeling that we are all enjoying Freire, so I'll start with one of his quotes:

                     "an education that was not connected to the struggles for emancipation and against
                     exploitation was not worthy of the label education" (Freire 1987: p. 24).

                 I think our absent friends have demonstrated the absence of 'affective equality' in their
                 accounts. In addition, I question whether what our sisters experienced was education
                 at all. I think they made some powerful points exposing the deficits in universities and
                 the NHS, structures. These institutions often boldly declare the rhetoric of equality,
                 inclusion and social justice but the reality is rarely experienced by the minority groups
                 they claim they want to reach.

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The question is…will they ever get there? Sankofa encourages us to go back, learn from the past, then move on. Here's my tentative attempt! "Many years ago, I went and done a course which really inspired me...it was sort of, the first time I think I identified myself as a Black woman. I think, what it was, the people that were there were sharing the same kind of stories. And it was targeted at Black women, some of dual heritage as well but all identifying as Black women. The course was taught by Black women, but with one white tutor. But, erm, but she was aware or understanding, I don't know if it was aware or understanding or a bit of both. I don't know if they discussed this but certain things she just wouldn't come in to. Yeah, certain discussions she just wouldn't come in to. That's because she knew that her presence would restrict us expressing ourselves, so that was good.

It was a Black project and that actual building was erm, Marcus Garvey. So, we observed certain things that Marcus Garvey stood for and everything, they would keep that tradition so...there was no meat in there and...so, I worked…Yeah, erm, so I was there for a while and again it was a very Black environment and that place was set up to get young women, Black women back into employment and education. The organiser was a very militant, red skin woman, you will still see her around now, if you go to any kind of cultural venues or cultural events. She will be there pumping the Black power, and then there was J... she was Black orientated as well, Black woman again…" Now that education was about collectively and individually drawing out our strengths, I'm telling you, as bell hooks (1984) advocates 'both the teachers and us students recognised that we were all responsible for creating the learning environment together.' As a result, our sessions were incredibly powerful and useful. Through bell hooks' work I can now describe what I experienced there as 'engaged pedagogy'. bell hooks' (1984) suggests that engaged pedagogy occurs when:

> "there is a mutual relationship between teacher and students that nurtures the growth of both parties, creating an atmosphere of trust and commitment…she asserts that engaged pedagogy makes better learners because it asks us to embrace and explore the practice of knowing together, to see intelligence as a resource that can strengthen common good" (p. 22).

So, I feel well and truly blessed to be experiencing 'engaged pedagogy' again here too.

So, ladies… what got me through the fd…was me…my determination…I had a positive academic Black woman in my department who was willing to guide me. I hadn't been in education for years…and you know, you tend to gravitate don't you… to your own?

But I walked into the room at university, had a quick scan around the room and I thought…where's the black people? I did…so anyway…there were several things I didn't realise when we first started…I just use to go to the sessions and I was waiting to be directed…cause that's what I was used to… being directed. I thought I've made my first step now… I'm at university… anyway, I'm going through and after about a month or so…the other students were asking…oh have you started your workbooks? I thought… workbooks…which workbooks? So, I said to my colleague have you started your workbooks? … She said no… so obviously…that's when I learned it was self-directed…you must direct yourself! I've got to say, I had to shift gears quickly. I went out, got diaries and highlighters and planned and planned. I also realised that I had to get the family on board very early on. We had to get better at communicating and planning. Keeping it real, my children helped me a lot through university."

Akoben: "Hang on a minute Nsaa, so what effect did the self-directed learning have on you getting to grips with uni and how did you manage the self-directed aspect?"

Nsaa: "As I've said I'd been exposed to some teachers whose approach to teaching had been quite radical and transformative. I think that is probably why the idea of going to uni didn't faze me really". But I must say, widening participation offered me the hope of something new, something ideal for the mature, working student. I think it was Giroux (1987) who said that even those with ideological conventions ignore the complexity and foundational relation between student culture and learning. He went on to say that, "some teachers' best intentions are subverted by employing a pedagogy that is part of the very dominant logic they seek to dismantle" (p. 19). So, to answer your question Akoben, "I was floored by the whole idea of self-directed learning at first. I was a non-participant because I didn't understand the concept and I felt totally disempowered and marginalised because it seemed that I was the only one who didn't get it. I must quickly add that I wasn't and after getting over the shock that I was behind some of my peers, I soon educated myself and caught up.

My support, guidance and inspiration was me wanting to complete and my kids…I think my biggest inspiration after getting in and seeing what it required of me was to self-motivate to complete. I talked to myself, Nsaa… if you just push yourself a little bit more…you could get top marks in everything…because I wasn't pushing myself ladies…I'll be honest. My self-determination got me through ladies…more than anything. I've got this book…Waris Dirie (Desert Flower) …and I bought it to show you today…I think before I started that course or roundabout…I was reading this book and it was probably one of the first books I completed cover to cover. She inspired me, 'cause she went through so much and still achieved. I thought…I'm just gonna go for it…but as I said ladies…once I get onto something…I ain't gonna stop it…and I know even if I am under immense pressure…I will still carry on…

Having listened to my sisters I am now asking myself if my previous 'custom made' education had enabled me to 'survive' the structures we work and access for vocational education. If I return to Freire (1978) he wrote about educators using descriptions of 'traditional' and 'liberating' and he said that neither had 'the right to deny the students' goals for technical training or job credentials' (p. 68). What I'm learning here is that the traditionalist is concerned with preserving the 'establishment' and their approach means that the dominant group is always in power. I think it was also Giroux's (1987) idea that, "to be educated is not to be free, it is to be present and active in the struggle for reclaiming one's voice, history and future" (p. 11). Listening to Nsoromma's piece, I was reminded that liberating approaches to education, 'avoids blaming the students.' She was taught using conventional styles, she didn't grasp the subject well enough to get the grades to pass, then she had no support, yet she's the one who 'failed!' Enough said!"

(She collects her notes which are scattered on the floor and returns to her chair.)

Sankofa: "Thanks Nsaa, I'm heartened by some of the points coming out of these conversations. I'm encouraged that you have really engaged with the wide range of authors. Now, Mama B and I had a conversation at the start of our meeting.

The thing about being in the comfort of a home means we can lose all sense of time…"

GyeNyame: (interrupts, stands to her feet and declares) "I hope you are not going to suggest that we close here Sankofa. We were also talking over coffee, and we can't believe how cathartic this is (thanks for the word Nsaa) so if you and Mama B are okay for time we need to have a form of semi-closure on this tonight. I mean we would like to at least air the thoughts we've had pent up since the conference interview with Mmara-Krado."

Sankofa: "Does GyeNyame speak for everyone?"

Akoben: "Yes she does, and I would like to suggest that we put some low music on in the background this will help to lift us a little, we want to continue but sometimes it's a little heavy."

Mama B.   "I'll be honest ladies, though I'm enjoying what is happening here. I need to go… When a home was suggested, I thought uh oh, the setting tends to impact discipline. I've had a long day and would really appreciate it if you could call me a cab please GyeNyame. It is nine thirty. It's a shame because I know I'm going to miss out…good night ladies."

(The room is quiet. No one responds. Mama B rises and walks to the door. She locates her coat and starts to put it on.)

(GyeNyame rises and follows behind Mama B. GyeNyame is visibly disappointed by Mama B's desire to leave.)

GyeNyame: (Whispers) "It's okay Mama B, we wondered whether you would be in this for the long haul like us. Sometimes things don't go to plan but we must keep going… that's our lived experience. We are silenced in uni, silenced at work, we rarely come together to share. In fact, I must admit even we are surprised at our commitment to this, especially with all the reading we have had to be doing….I guess not all of us need to fully commit though eh?"

(Sankofa walks into the hallway and interrupts GyeNyame who is in full flow)

Sankofa: "Is everything ok?"

GyeNyame: (Ignoring Sankofa's question, continues speaking to Mama B) "You said we were in this together, then on the first occasion that we are off script…you're off. Are we not making quick enough progress for you? Are we not getting to grips with the academic stuff at a level that stimulates you? I'm sorry, but I jolly well dared to believe that we could see this thing through together. It would be a first on so many levels. But hey, I'll get your cab. We always say that those who have arrived…generally don't have patience with those on the journey. We kind of hoped you and Sankofa were different."

Mama B: (Addresses Sankofa) "Yes, everything's fine. My sister here is questioning my commitment. She's having her say…"

Mama B: (Addresses GyeNyame) "I know how my leaving may look to you GyeNyame. But I need to let you know that your accusations are quite unfair. Our commitment to do something different in this space, to address a seat of injustice is just one of the many 'battles' I am COMMITTED TO. I'm fully aware of what our people say about people who they perceive have 'arrived'. I want to remind you that from the start of the journey, I made it clear that I was in the struggle. I haven't arrived anywhere and I am disappointed and somewhat annoyed by your tone. However, I'm glad you had the courage to voice how you perceive things as this enables dialogue which hopefully leads to a better understanding. It was Lorde (2007) who said, "what is most important to me must be spoken, made verbal and shared, even at the risk of having it bruised or misunderstood" (p. 40). I guess that's where WE are! So, forget the cab GyeNyame, yo' made yo' point, I don't agree with a lot of what you said, but our tensions, suspicions, and past assumptions will all need to be part of navigating this space. I'll make a call home and I'll return to the group."

(GyeNyame visibly shaken returns to the room Darius Rucker's song 'This' (2011) oozes softly from the iPad.)

"For every stoplight, I didn't make
Every chance I did or I didn't take
All the doors that I had to close

All the things I knew but I didn't know

Thank God for all I missed

Cause it led me here to

This…"

(The aroma of Jamaican Blue Mountain coffee permeates the air. The women are deep in hushed conversations, then suddenly, the door opens. The talking stops and all eyes shoot towards the door. With beaming smiles, they welcome Mama B back into the room.)

Mama B: (Jovially) "An' you lot can shut down those Cheshire cat grins…now if I'm staying I need to have a go at giving you an insight into my world."

(There's cheering, clapping and a light laughter that's contagious. Try as she might not to laugh, Mama B is also infected and she finds herself laughing alongside the others)

(GyeNyame pours Mama B a mug of coffee, winks and mouths, 'thank you'.)

(Mama B: Stands behind her seat, clears her throat and recites a prose.)

Mama B: "When you see me, you think, you see arrived and free, but I know different, I've lived this whole trajectory

You see me all dolled up and looking good, but,

you have not seen the multiple, oppressive wounds I've withstood,

you hear of the triumphs, but I've lived through each scar,

you think that I've accomplished, but I know, I've only come so far,

I can't carry the world, though so often I feel I do.

The problem with carrying the world is, who the hell then carries you?

I feel the weights of race and gender sitting heavily on my shoulders,

I despair because there's so few of us that navigate the institutional boulders.

Sometimes I just want to have space to be me and grow,

But I know I must be here for others, who have no one else but us few, to turn to, or to go!" Thank you!

Nsaa: "Wow… Off the cuff? Love it! I think that deserves a round of applause ladies."

(The women rise to their feet and applaud.)

GyeNyame: "You're spot on Mama B."

Mama B.   (looks directly at GyeNyame and winks) "A few minutes ago, GyeNyame, when she
                 was sharing her mind, mentioned being silenced. I heard her voice break as she
                 choked back the pain. I want to speak into that pain for a few moments. When Black
                 feminist activist Audre Lorde reflected on her life following a cancer diagnosis she
                 wrote that amongst the things she most regretted was her silence. Now, I wouldn't say
                 she was silent at all, she had a lot to say and indeed she said a lot of profound things
                 leaving a legacy of 'knowing' for generations to come. However, she knew the fear
                 associated with speaking out. In her reflection of engaging in civil rights Lorde (2007)
                 identified herself 'not only as a casualty' but also as a 'warrior'. She said that, 'learning
                 to put fear into perspective gave her great strength'. Lorde was a believer that her
                 silences hadn't protected her and neither would ours. Lorde, told a story about a
                 conversation she had with her daughter on the topic of silence and her daughter's
                 response is a great image for me personally. Listen to what her daughter said: "…
                 there's a little piece of you that wants to be spoken out, and if you keep ignoring it, it
                 gets madder and madder and hotter and hotter and if you don't speak it out, one day it
                 will just up and punch you in the mouth from the inside" (Lorde 2007:42).

(There's an eruption of laughter, slapping of thighs, heads nodding and on each face, there's that look of
knowing.)

Mama B: (continues) "Finally, Lorde said: "For we have been socialised to respect fear more
                 than our needs for language and definition, and while we wait in silence for that final
                 luxury of fearlessness, the weight of silence will choke us" (Lorde 2007:44). So
                 GyeNyame, maybe our little tay ta tay in the hallway was your part of your initial steps
                 to using your voice…to breaking silence. I'm sure this is a subject we will come back
                 to. Because of time I'll park that thought. Akoma, are you ready?"

Akoma: "Wow Mama B. How in the world do I follow that? So, glad you decided to stay. I would
                 have hated to have lost out on that poem and thought. We got that powerful
                 contribution, all because, GyeNyame spoke out."

GyeNyame: (Reflective) "All because the words punched me in the mouth from the inside."

As the words leave GyeNyame's mouth the room is once again lightened by laughter.

Akoma: "It was interesting listening to Nsoromma's account, 'cause we were told we had four attempts at the exam, so the message on exams was not consistent. I failed twice. I went and spoke to the tutor and asked her what areas I should revise, she was little help as she just told me to revise everything we covered. And again, why do they make the language so highbrow anyway? I got through because one of my colleagues on the course said, "ok Akoma, I'll meet up with you and we'll cover such and such a' area". So, she met with me twice. I got the diagrams, I was struggling with an' then stuck them on the wall, so that as soon as I came in, I saw it and made the link, oh yes, that's what that means. I began to tape myself and I had the tapes so that I could listen to them as I went along…

I'm telling you, everyone on the course had sleepless nights because we didn't know what hit us! You know, because with everything we were just thrown in at the deep end. We were told, 'oh, it's a foundation degree' and that's it. We never really got the support. I mean, at the hospital we had little crash course errm…but you know, we needed a better level of support than we had. We all were amateurs, we'd never been to university before so we never understood the university language or culture. So, we could have done with more of a…what did Nsoramma call it…affective equality from those at the university. Whereas you know, we were never really given that. You know, we didn't get as much help as we should at work either. It's like you're off the ward a little time and the nursing team expect you to know everything. They are wanting to delegate asking 'Oh can you do this?' When I said, I can't, they'll, then say, 'Oh you've been to the course, what have you been doing?' I readily reminded them that within nursing you cannot go and complete a procedure that you haven't been trained to do. They didn't make the link that if they didn't train me, I can't do the task.

Well it would have been nice if I had completed the course. But errm, you know, with the support…I didn't have that. Because even if you're doing something and you're stuck on it. You don't always get the help either to complete it. I've always asked, because as I say, you can ask, the worse one can say is no. So, it's not like I didn't ask but when you work on a busy ward and nurses are busy it's very, very hard to get the practical training. I was constantly reminded that I was not an equal to student nurses, you know, you must be hanging around and you don't get the help.

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I…to be honest, I don't think I've failed. If I had gone into the second year and hadn't passed anything at all then I would have considered that a failure. Whereas as I say, it was because of circumstances why I didn't end up completing it. But I wouldn't really class it as a failure, would be lovely to say that I received the degree but it's just one of those things. So, I'll try to tell you how my reading links into my experience. I had a book by Dewey, I enjoyed it so much. I tell you ladies, I marked up that book, at times it felt like fire in my hands. There were times when he wrote of my experience so clearly, I literally just froze. I'm being serious. This kind of reading and engaging with text is new to me and so empowering. Yes Nsaa, it's transformative! Okay, I never confidently got to grips with referencing in my year at university, but I'm going to try not to plagiarise here…oooh, check me out! Dewey, (1997) like Freire (1987) spoke of transformative education. Dewey suggests that:

> "the subject matter of education consists of bodies of information and of skills that have been worked out…therefore the chief business of educators is to transmit it" (p. 18).

The university, knew we were not what they refer to as 'traditional' students. We had come the vocational route, yet they never varied their assessments for our programme of study. They 'transmitted', but we couldn't work out the body of information. We needed support in further developing our skills to confidently work at the HE level. The uni and work maintained what Dewey described as the 'pattern of organisation', in other words, the way they use lecture theatres, classrooms, time schedules, schemes of examinations and promotion of rules, like if you 'fail' your exam so many times you're off the course and so on. But 'pattern of organisation' disadvantages and silences 'non-traditional' students. We don't know, because we were not taught the rules. Yet for those who make and are gatekeepers of the rules it's business as usual. It sometimes felt like the university's structures were saying. We took you in, didn't we? What more do you want? You're here now… fit in with our way or take the highway. We've done our bit. Many us just couldn't fit into a way that was never originated with us in mind and refused to adapt to accommodate us!

I mean Nsoromma's experience was 'pattern of organisation' those inflexible patterns led to her being ejected from the course! Dewey (1997), in his criticism of 'traditional education' states: "The traditional scheme is, in essence, one of imposition from above and from outside" (p. 18). So, although they labelled us 'non-traditional' students, we were treated no differently to the so called, 'traditional students'.

Now, if the truth be known, there is a gulf between the academic experience and abilities of 'traditional' and 'nontraditional' mature students and the university and NHS Trust knew that. Why were we governed by the same standards? I have said that I don't think I failed and that's because I think that both institutions prohibited my active participation because of their business as usual approach to providing me with a so-called opportunity. I'm not stupid and I'm disciplined so I could have completed if the institutions had enabled me to. Prior to entry they offered me support, which didn't manifest.

In conclusion, if we are to believe what Mmara said in her interview, neither the university or the workplace had a 'well thought-out philosophy of social factors that operate in the constitution of individual experience'. (Dewey, 1997: 20) If I speak for the absent sisters as well as myself, we didn't engage in a transformed education that was designed to meet our needs. We were violated by historical systems and structures which wanted us to fit our size seven abilities, knowledge and exposure into their size three institutional provisions. It couldn't work for many of us and we should not have had to live it, to prove it. The university is filled with academics who allegedly know about how education works. But do they know? Do they care? I've so much more I could say. I'll be re-reading Dewey and maybe returning to his works in future meetings. Sorry, but this level of reflection is very new to me though it's tough to look injustice in the face and name it, I'm moving from the stage of merely being peed off by it, I'm building the resilience to question it in a different way. Guys, I really do love this space! Wanna take over SunSum?"

SunSum: "Would you all mind if I just put a song on? This is for you, all of us in this room and all the mature students that will come behind us, whatever their colour or background can we just let it play out …"

(She walks around the plates on the floor to the sideboard and selects the Hollies song, he ain't heavy, he's my brother.)

"The road is long
With many a winding turn
That leads us to who knows where
Who knows where
But I'm strong

Strong enough to carry him
He ain't heavy, he's my brother
So, on we go
His welfare is of my concern
No burden is he to bear
We'll get there
For I know
He would not encumber me
He ain't heavy, he's my brother…"

(After a complete round, only the odd sniffle intermittently interrupts the silence.)

(GyeNyame hands around the box of tissues and tears are slowly wiped away. Everything seems to be happening in slow motion.)

(Tears and tensions are released as the words of the song wash over those in the room like a balm.)

"If I'm laden, at all
I'm laden, with sadness
That everyone's heart
Isn't filled with the gladness
Of love for one another …"

(SunSum walks over and stops the song in mid flow…the room is silent again.)

GyeNyame: (Breaking the silence) "Ladies, would you mind if I prayed? I'm going to read a variation of a short prayer by Nordette N. Adams (2013). Heavenly father, 'open our hearts to accept the one called "other" who seems so unlike those we prefer to call sister or brother. Open our eyes to see the illusions of social hierarchy. Help us overcome the smaller mind that divides and conquers humankind. Amen.'

Thank you, ladies, prayer is one of my tried and tested de-stressors when I feel weighty. Though that was a little heavy, it was good, I feel like we're getting somewhere. What do I mean? Well Akoma is right, the university and the NHS Trust should have known that this seemingly un-thought through provision would provide a bitter sweet experience. But I know from all my conversations with Sankofa that we need to take some responsibility. Now don't get me wrong this is not about blame. This is about us, educating ourselves on our histories that though the institutions suffer from amnesia, we really can't afford to!

If we had done our research, had knowledge of our parents' histories, then I wonder how different our experience would have been. Wouldn't it have been something if collectively, armed with the insights we have now, we had gone to the institutions with questions about how they were going to ensure we had a positive educational experience? If we had asked our employers to enter into a contract with us to pay us for the skills we were developing, to provide us with assurance that we would be treated as students. In this space, we are arming ourselves for the next, so called, new initiative and hopefully we will be ready to be less 'grateful recipients' and more 'critical negotiators'. SunSum it's over to you."

SunSum: (Turning to face Sankofa) "I hope I'm not out of line here, but Sankofa, we haven't heard much from you. I'm prepared to go next, but I wondered if you could share some of what's on your mind. You were either part of our preparation for the fd or our support whilst we were on the fd. I don't know if you know this but women of all backgrounds talk about you a lot in our snatched moments in clinical settings. People you teach, enjoyed learning with you and we wondered if our experiences and outcomes would have been different if the lecturers were more like you in style. I, for one, remember that it was in your classes that I and others like me first read Black authors in an educational setting. I never even read the works of Black people at school. Can you remember how emotional I got when you first introduced us to Mary Seacole in Literacy Level 2. I'm not   ashamed to say this, though maybe I should be, I cried in the class and I asked Sankofa why had I never heard of this woman and I even did an access to nursing course? Those sessions produced lively discussions. It was fab. I also learned that important lesson on the difference between criticising and critical analysis. See if you agree with me ladies, as Black kids, to criticise was forbidden, our parents would give us a good telling off for criticising. True?"

(The women respond agreeing with SunSum)

SunSum: "That critical analysing malarkey, took some getting my head round. You got us telling our stories and you shared them in journals and stuff like that. I know you have spoken to each one of us on the journey, but this space was your idea. How are you feeling now and could you share some of your thoughts with us?"

Sankofa: "If the truth be known SunSum, I'm tired and as emotional as everyone else right now. Or perhaps, even more so. Firstly, you are not out of line, okay! As the prayer GyeNyame read stated, any perceived hierarchy here is merely an illusion. I'm in this, not as a lead but as one on her own journey. I've been busy trying to capture all the prodigious stuff that's being unveiled in these spaces. Well… where do I start? I think I want to have a go at speaking into some of the things that have come out so far. As I'm not prepared it may be disjointed, but I'll try to link as much as I can.

First, let me just 'out' a thought and leave it in the air. We say our parents told us not to criticise. I wonder where our parents, who were brought up under a colonial system, learnt not to criticise? Was there a colonised hierarchy of power attached to their understanding of criticism, and is that what resulted in the forbiddance? Now we don't have time to go there right now…but it is a question worth considering. Now let me return to the space. We have started explorations into: breaking silence, being informed and using our knowledge to critically engage. We are also exploring a range of intentionally inclusive approaches to pedagogy.

The words transform and transformation have been recurrent in our space, so I'll pick up on that theme first…bell hooks (1981) advocates that, 'when she learns about her students, she knows how better to serve them in the role of an educator'. That's my belief too. I assure you that me introducing Black authors into work-based literacy did not go unnoticed by my Caucasian colleagues. I got my share of criticism, but to be honest, I didn't have to argue hard to silence the critics. I merely exposed the fact that I was addressing the lack of diversity in our resources. I hope that through your encounter with me as an educator you observed me proactively dismantling the hierarchical structure. I acknowledge that I may have had some 'power' as the tutor in the classroom but in my eyes, we are all on a similar journey towards social justice through a critiquing of the dominant culture. But let me not hide my own shortcomings. The very concept that precipitated this journey we are on was my concept of 'failure'. I started this study because…some of you were 'failures' and I was questioning whether I had, in part, contributed to that 'failure'…I know, can you believe I thought like that? …How naive!

I had subconsciously accepted the institutions' labelling of some of you as failures. I too, was a victim of 'colonised thinking'. Woodson (1933) contends that 'only by careful study of the 'negro' himself and the life which he is forced to lead can we arrive at the proper procedure of education' (p. xiv). He further argues that 'the mere imparting of knowledge is not education.' I think Akoma pointed that out when she referred to Dewey's work too. Woodson was radical in his approach to education and through his work and the work of many others, I was supported in my long-winded journey to a different epistemology. The last song we played resonated with me on so many levels."

(She writes on the whiteboard on her lap then holds it up so others can read the words.) The road is long with many a winding turn, that leads us to who knows where, who knows where.

Sankofa: (Continues) "My programme of study is a six-year programme if you're lucky. I'm just over half way in and yes, the road has been winding. Most of the time, I ask myself…what possessed you to take this on? You see, I am the first of my siblings to go to university too. I'm driven by three things predominantly: passion, purpose and principle. Once I got on the course and realised that not completing was not an option for me. I then had the challenge of trying to find out how to engage on this academic course in a manner that wasn't going to leave me feeling like I had used you to get to an academic height and leave you in your uncontested places. So, this is a risk…I have lost count of the number of people who have advised me against taking a non-traditional approach. But I spoke to my supervisors as well as my very wise father. He reminded me that every choice or decision ever worth taking is a risk and social justice issues are certainly risks worth taking."

(She writes on the whiteboard on her lap again then holds it up so others can read the words.) But I'm strong, strong enough to carry ~~him~~, her. She ain't heavy, she's my ~~brother~~ sister. So, on we go…

Sankofa: (Continues) "For the record, I don't feel strong, well not often enough. I feel like a fraud, but I've spoken to students from all backgrounds and walks of life, even those who may be labelled 'traditional' who say they feel the same. For the past three years, I have lived between laughter and breakthrough and tears and despondency. I cry because I don't feel strong enough to carry this mantle of doing things differently. Who the hell am I?

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I don't want the responsibility of your voices. I don't want to carry the weight of race and gender everywhere I go. I cry often because I don't know enough, of the how to…I cry because nothing ever seems constant…I think I get a handle on 'it', then I lose 'it'. I feel confident one minute and scared stiff the next. I feel somewhat bipolar. I laugh because I understand my privilege. I think, God, you're having a laugh to have placed me here for such a time as this. Reluctantly, I accept that I have been exposed to too much, so as Lorde said, I "cannot sit in my safe corner as a mute bottle" (p. 42). I must face my fears. It's my purpose and passion that fuels me to try and keep trying. I laugh when I leave a supervision and my supervisors can see the points I'm trying to make, even if my attempt is somewhat clumsy at the first, second and third drafts. I laugh because on very few odd days… I do feel strength rising and I seek out sources to keep it topped up."

(She writes on the whiteboard on her lap again then holds it up so others can read the words.) ~~His~~ Her welfare is my concern, no burden is she to bear, we'll get there, for I know, she would not encumber me, she ain't heavy, she's my ~~brother~~ sister.

Sankofa: (Continues) "I want to do this for us, so it will take approximately six or so years of my life. It will cost me thousands of pounds. But what choices do I have? I could have closed my eyes and thanked God that I don't live with the day-to-day disparagements that you have inflicted on you. I could have aligned myself with the institutions and become 'colour blind'. I could have carried on blaming you for failing. But way too many have done that! I didn't want to be part of that school. So, our welfare, and the educational welfare of generations to come is my concern. You know something, I don't go to classes and stuff now, I work a lot in isolation so it's tough and the dreams in my head are just dreams. Or so I thought…What we are doing now, is living my dream. It is my hope and dream that what results from our space will influence, inspire and impact people of all backgrounds, but I want this work to be accessible to Black people. When I shared with my father what I wanted to do and how scared I was because I was swimming against the tide, he reminded me of these lines.

    'Your playing small does not serve the world.
    There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you.

We are all meant to shine, as children do.
We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us.
It's not just in some of us; it's in everyone.
And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same.
As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.'
Marianne Williamson (1992)

You may also recall that the late great Nelson Mandela also used this quote because of its potency. As I've listened to the recollections and reflections, so much of what you have experienced has been written about in a study I recently read by Miriam David. I heard Nsaa assert, we had no higher education role models. Hockings, Cooke and Bowl (2010) found that students who were first in their families to attend universities heavily relied on tutors or managers to guide them on the 'right' path. So, you had no expectation that others in your situation didn't have. You expected those leading to have your best interests at heart. I also heard Akoma agonising over the fact that though you were 'non-traditional' students yet the only form of pedagogy you were exposed to were the traditional styles. Well, Hockings et al (2010), found that to be true in a study they undertook. They stated:

"Research on the impact of widening participation found little evidence that teaching methods had been adapted to meet the changes in the composition of the student population" (p. 95).

End of quote. So, you see, it's not appropriate or fair to use the word 'failure' to describe students until we start exploring what happens in the institutions.

In the study I just mentioned, they also explored how teachers academically engaged all students within a culturally, socially and educationally diverse classroom. Following their exploration, they found that "over three quarters of the teachers they studied admitted they knew very little about the lives, backgrounds and interests of their students": Yet they all distanced themselves from the deficit view of 'non-traditional student' (p. 101). How could I continue to uncritically label you as 'failures' when you inform me that teachers seemed unwilling to rephrase the points they were trying to get across and would rather repeat even though you stated you did not understand the first time? David (2010) in her study of widening participation students found that: 'they found it hard to stay engaged during lectures. They wanted analogies, stories and illustrations' (p. 105).

Now it would be too easy to simply blame the teachers, we have come further than that, haven't we? We understand that 'institutional policies, targets and inspections are probably contributors to making 'transformative approaches' to learning too risky for teachers. Akoma, I loved the way you picked up Nsoromma's phrasing of her experience after she failed her exams. You both used the words 'ejected'. Vignoles and Powdtharee (2010) in their exploration of institutional policies used the term 'forced withdrawal' to describe the process for those who had to leave a course following an exam failure. I don't want to pre-empt what others may be saying after me yet, I recall some of you telling me, much to my frustration at the time, that lecturers had informed you that you could exit the course at year one as you would still get the cap and gown. I recall arguing with you saying, quite assertively, that you could get the cap and gown and a full qualification at the end of the second year too. In my quiet moments, I have wondered if lecturers were encouraging you to 'voluntarily withdraw' because it was their perception that you were incapable of completing year two. Finally, I am encouraged by your resilience. David et al. (2010) argues that, "disadvantaged students demonstrated greater resilience and commitment to their studies, often in the face of adverse structural discrimination and oppression" (p. 153). In this space, you are sharing your strategies for survival... it's insightful and I'm sure the half has not been told. In closing, Woodson (1933) suggests that 'real education means to inspire people to live more abundantly, to learn to begin with life as they find it and make it better" (p. 29). Well I don't know about you but I get new hope bubbling up in me after each of these sessions as I think that is exactly what we are striving to do. To paraphrase Woodson, philosophers have long conceded that every wo/man has two educations, that which is given to him/her and the other that he/she gives her/himself. In this space, we are educating our self and from what I can see, we're doing a good job and as importantly, we're loving it! How's that SunSum, can I stop there for now?"

SunSum: "I'm glad I called on you now, you would have gone home with that…now I want to read Woodson. Thanks. Another quick comfort break before…"

(Mid-sentence, the women head towards the door and head in differing directions. Some to the kitchen, others to the upstairs and downstairs loos.)

GyeNyame: (Heads back to the living room, tray in hand.) "Tea's up…"

(The women make their way back to the living room and take their seats.)

SunSum: (Sits uprightly then commences.) "I'll tell you the truth, I'm beginning to wonder, what I got myself into here? I thought what we call 'the space' was just going to be conversations. Philosophising is psychological stuff and it's heavy. I can tell you this, I've learnt more in these sessions relevant to my life than I did in two years at university. I wish I could explain how I feel…Yes Sankofa, I'm lovin' it! I share what we discuss here with my brother and he adds another perspective. He often reminds me that adult education should be enjoyed and should transform lives! My brother is quite political though; I don't often think of Black women as political, yet I wonder if what we are doing here is politics. I mean, even GyeNyame's, prayer was kinda political…anyway…my first year at university was hell. Erm, you were just thrown into things… not what I expected, erm...I go to the library and try to absorb everything and I'd leave giddy. I just couldn't absorb what they wanted or...did I even know what they wanted? It was really, really, tough. Felt like giving up loads of times...yeah, stopped an' cried and cried and cried...my husband…he'd say to me, yo' can do it. Yo' 'now, yo' clever…you can do it...

The compu...then because I wasn't good with the computer. I think that was my biggest problem. Yeah, we even had to use the computers to do forums...I could do 'erm…'cause I knew what I wanted to say...but it was the IT bit. I'd never gone around a computer before doing that course, so everything was alien to me about computers and…the kids were brilliant… bared with me and showed me... My husband was brilliant, he would say, don't give up. Erm, it was a lot…it was a lot to take in with the assignments an' the workbooks, google. It was a lot an'…if they had said, write a 3,000-word essay, I could do it with pen and paper no problem. Ah, research...researching things, evidence-based, research, all that. It was just alien, it was just... I was just thinking they should have introduced us to things a bit better, like, give us a month or two on how to be a mature, first time, HE student, because it was alien to me...referencing, that was it, referencing and IT they were big issues for me.

One of the important lessons here for me, is to look at what is happening beyond us. I must say, I like Sankofa's honesty, but what stands out from what you said beyond your honesty Sankofa was that you were willing to delve further. If we are to break the cycle of thinking that 'it's us', that it's solely our fault, it's Black people and we can't get on in HE.

During the last break, Sankofa showed me two lines from the book she was quoting from and I thought. Oh, my word, so it wasn't us. Most of us were saying that student nurses were commenting that our course seemed intense with a lot more workbooks than even second year nurse students. Well please listen to this, Bathmaker (2010) found that fd programmes were not run any differently from Bachelor degree programmes. How can that be? It's shocking! I'm sure that there is more than one way of interpreting that sentence. But we have offered our perspective as well as some of our lived experiences…then the institutions have the audacity to label us failures! Bathmaker (2010) also found that, 'some universities ran bridging programmes during the summer before the start of fd programmes. Those bridging programmes covered areas such as research skills, time management, taking notes, referencing and preparing presentations. So, what can we say, did the universities which failed to offer such support to their non-traditional students 'fail' them? 'Course they did, at least they did in my humble opinion!

I got through because I met up with colleagues like Akoma and what she didn't know, I sort of helped her and she is good with the computer, so she helped me. It was just me and Akoma really…you know, we helped each other. We got on the phone, we spoke an'...yeah, yeah…if we didn't, we'd go potty. Yeah, you know what made you sort of down-hearted as well, the approach and attitude of the lecturers. One of the girls told me that she arrived early at the lecturer's office at Uni and heard the lecturer reading someone's work to another lecturer an' the two of them were laughing. Fancy lecturers jeering an' mecking fun of someone's efforts. Goes back to what Sankofa said, they didn't know us, our journey, neither did they seem interested in us. As students, we talk amongst ourselves an' everyone had the same sorta feelings. Err, what helped me through it as well, err, I've done physiology before so my way a coping wid dat, 'cause' we had exams to teck.

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I'd write stuff, stick it around on the walls… get my brother to do big pictures, diagrams of the nervous system an' study it that way, an' I passed first time, an' I could not believe it. So, as you can see, my journey on the fd was a family affair and it is through the contributions and support of the family that I got through. That's all I wanted to add really."

Akoben: "Well, it's over to me, we've been going a while, so I'm gonna just say it as I saw it … uni…work-based learning, you know what… it's just a big wide world and nobody gives a shit about ya. That's how I felt when I started… I tell you the truth…when I started uni…everybody else seemed to know what they were doing. They were getting on with it… I was like…shit, so, what am Silverman (2011) I suppose' to do? You know…all the talking… I felt like it was doing this

(with agitated facial expressions and one arm waving above her head.)

I remember talking to one of the tutors and she goes… 'Yea… you're just feeling a bit bewildered…. it's new to you… but it will come to you in time' … which it did…eventually, you know. This tutor goes…there's a learning skills centre…right…there's people that would help you…they won't write your assignment…but they will help you with your assignment…de referencing…Lawd a gash…Oh people, I'm telling ya…the first year I found hard… I had been so many years out of the education system…having other commitments in life…you know, my kids and what have you…you know…work as well and then taking this on…it was really hard…Determination got me through…I knew I was gonna do it…an' I heard my mum in my head…yo' love start tings and no' finish dem…I was finishing this…I'm finishing this…I'm finishing this…

(pauses to compose herself… then recommences.)

When mi graduate an' when mi hab mi hat an' mi gown on…you gonna see me crying…you know…cause I'm not doing it… Yes…I'm doing it for myself…

(loses her trail of thought, recomposes, then continues through her tears.)

I just wished she lived long enough to see me through and say Akoben… An' yo' know what? I know my mum was proud of me…I know she loves me…but for this one time…I could say, 'see mum…I started it…and I finished it…' You know what I mean…so it doesn't matter how many hurdles…how many times I've got to jump…I'm finishing this…So if it takes me more than the two years…then so be it…I can still achieve and finish…me a finish…mi 'no' care.

You know… I remember, I saw my manager in the corridor…'cause she left us now…she says… "Oh Akoben, how's the course going?" an' I said…it's going very well thank you…she says… "Oh…so what about everybody else?" I said…oh, they all dropped out…I'm the only one that's finishing…an' mi smile and carried on walking…and I thought…yeah…because you put everybody else ahead of me…an' you know…that's like another way…of saying…you weren't good enough…to me…I felt that…you know what I mean…I'm gonna put these people through…because I think they are better than you…Well they weren't…'cause you know what…dem nebba finish…dem nebba finish…

Going through the 2nd year…the workload was more….the criteria to me was more stringent…you know, it was like…because when we first started for the first year…the mistakes that you probably made…they would overlook it…and your referencing…they didn't include it…you had to do it…but you weren't marked against it…with the second year now…everything was included…so you had to do the referencing properly. Everything had to be right…to get through the second year…I mean the course itself was fine… but like…we were meant to start the May… Clear inna July… we still no start the course…because the tutor was off sick…So I'm saying to the course director…so what…only one tutor you have?

And then…by the time…they found somebody that could do that module…they had left it so long…our assignment hand in dates coincided… So…then you were trying to juggle everything… I remember saying to the course director… This is too much…This is too much because…you know…you're supposed to have time to just focus on one thing…Yes… you know…you might end up juggling something at the end… but three things…she goes…" well, you know Akoben. I said, no well, you know Akoben nuttun… I says… this is because the start date on this module was so late…You know… you have a deadline for your assignment…right…you hand it in…then they give you a deadline to say…well, you should get back your work at this time…then they email you to say, Oh, I wasn't able to look at your work, but you'll get it for this date. I remember the one module…they delayed it and delayed it and by the time some of us got our assignment back…the deadline for the resubmission was the following week…assignments wha' yo' haffi write… me sey… lawd have mercy…that was my challenge.

I remember asking before I started the course…are there any exams? The response was NO…I tell you…if they had said to me...you're gonna have to do an exam…I would say…I don't want to do it…I feel, for me…I'm more of a hands-on person…the pressure of revising and remembering…doesn't work for me…You know…we're all different… and no matter how… I could read for the whole year…you se' once mi si dun and de paapa look pon me…blank…I doan se' a ting….I had to go an' see Sully and let him give me some extra tuition for the exam because I just couldn't get my head around and the way they word it you know…You have to know what they're talking about to give the right answer…well…thank God…I pass' the practical…that was no problem…but the written one…I had to do it again…But I pass' the next time… my study partner was struggling and I just tell her…me one naah go upon that stage…me naah leave you…you going up there with me…I said, me and you have been here from start…and we have…My study partner and I met at work, in the library at the hospital…in the library at the university…she come a mi house…mi go a fi har… we've worked together…

Disciplining myself was my biggest challenge…Not even…I had a few run-ins with the course director and other tutors… but that wasn't…because you know what…at the end of the day…you don't have to like me…you just need to teach me what I need to know…but it was disciplining myself…you know…going to work…coming home… I'm tired…all I want to do is go to my bed…do you know how many all-nighters I've put on these works? I have had to structure myself. I'm gonna be so honest with you…life had to go on and work wasn't supportive either, I had to plead, don't put my nights so near to my uni days…because if I have an assignment to do…you know…I've been up from day…go right through to the night…go right through to de next morning…and just manage to hand in the assignment before 3pm…

I went to, what do they call it? PD something…and there is a guy there and you would book in with him and he would…I'm sure I saw it here somewhere (rummages around her reams of paper) because this critical analysing thing…he was ever so good…see it here…this is all the writing…he wrote down…and I held onto that…you know…you think to yourself… because it's all new to you… everything just sounds difficult….

But he just made it so clear…I always hold on to this…he did this over a year ago for me….and I always hold on to it…I just could not get it…. What do you mean? Critically analyse what? And what are you talking about? But Ethan…he was magic man…I rate him…I would go to him…make an appointment…and he would say…back again? …and I would say…yeah back again… Yeah, he is good…It's not been easy… no, it's not been easy…as mummy sey…if yo' waan gud…yo' nose haffi run…there is good and bad in going to uni…It is not just all bad… I would not say it was all bad….it is an uphill struggle…I do not think that going to uni will ever be easy for anybody like us…if it was easy, we would all do it. You know what I mean…if it was easy…everyone would do it…and everyone would have their degree…still no have no Band 4 job…but you know…that's my reflection. And yes, Mama B, I am going to get a coach so I avoid slipping into stereotypical behaviours…I think that I need to work on this going forward."

Mama B: "Thank you Akoben. It would be great to pick up on some of these points. Akoben had a few things in common with other accounts, if I were to quickly summarise, disciplining herself was a challenge. Using her voice, she mentioned having run-ins with lecturers but importantly wanting to re-think how those run-ins happen. Finding it challenging to grasp what was taught, but then using support to gain enlightenment. There was a lot of good stuff there for exploration. Ladies, feel free to explore any one of those themes and share whether by email or telephone as you have been doing before or during our next session. Speaking of next session. Have we all got the next date in the diary? I will be hosting it at the university and I think you have requested that I invite a speaker. More information will follow. As usual, speak to Sankofa if you have any further points to raise or discuss. Now can we go home please? Mi tyard."

(This time, there's no objection to closing the session. The women quickly assign themselves roles to wash up, fluff up cushions and tidy up the space they have just inhabited. Sankofa checks that the women have reading material before everyone heads out the doors.)

Scene 7   Session 4. This is how it was for me…Messages

Final Meet up in the Frantz Fanon Lecture Theatre, 2nd floor in the University of Westmoreland.

The first arrivals wait for the others in the staff car park where Mama B reserved parking spaces. For many, this campus setting makes them uncomfortable. As the group walk up the corridor they discuss some of the emotions racing around their minds and bodies: doubt, anxiety and fear. These emotions were both uninvited and unexpected so they choose instead to focus on aspects of resilience building, camaraderie and the fact that they now possess some insider knowledge.

They arrive at the lecture theatre which is spacious with large windows. Some head to the windows through which they see a range of sculptures, probably erected by students past and present. Akoben announces that the circle discussion was off the cards today as the room was not suitable for the approach they had come to love. On a large table at the front of the theatre was a finger buffet with an assortment of sandwiches, veg sticks, hot and cold drinks and fruit. The women looked at the display, totally unimpressed. They speak, but only hushed, undecipherable mutters can be heard. Sankofa appears distracted and disconnected from the group. She walks over to a large portrait of Franz Fanon hanging from the wall at the rear of the theatre beneath the portrait is the following quote:

> "The imaginary life cannot be isolated from real life, the concrete and the objective world constantly feed, permit, legitimate and found the imaginary. The imaginary consciousness is obviously unreal, but it feeds on the concrete world. The imaginary is possible only to the extent that the real world belongs to us." (Frantz Fanon, 1956 in Wildeman 2008: p1.)

She reads the inscription to herself, then re-reads it aloud. Following the second reading, she searches for her iPad, capturing the inscription in a photograph and mumbles to herself how incredible it is to find words spoken six decades ago which conceptualises her approach to academic writing in her time.

It is not long before chatter and laughter fills the room. This group of women have grown together, they weave in and out of each other's conversations. They are on epistemological and ontological journeys, they share their pride in what they are doing with heightened confidence that has grown out of their engagement. The initial emotions they experienced at entering the building seem to have abated.

Mama B appears, she looks flustered. She glances across at the food and mutters something about the absence of hot food. For a few minutes, she seems in a world of her own, that is until Nsaa runs over to her and embraces her.

That embrace seems to free her from her deep thoughts and she emerges consciously into the space. She acknowledges the women, greeting each one by name with prolonged embraces.

Sankofa: (interjects) "Ladies, the session will commence in fifteen minutes."

Some of the women head off in small groups to find the toilets, whilst others scrutinise the buffet removing the cling film. When the women return from the ladies, the whole group gathers unenthusiastically around the food, picking and complaining. After all, it is not what they are accustomed to.

Akoben: "Uno boycott de chicken, they still have the feathers on. Lawd, a bet dem no wash, nor season dem neither. Lawd, mi a go stick to de fruit an' de crisps."

GyeNyame: "But a wha' Mama B do ya so. She 'no shudda know we betta dan dis? Bwoy Mama B, you let we dung. An mi 'ungry yo' know. Wha' safe ya? The veg sticks and the crisps, maybe a couple a de sandwich."

Mate Masie: "Uno bad sah…bless an' eat, a so mi madda woulda sey."

(The women pick around the food disdainfully, moving on to their seats with meagre helpings on plates.)

Mama B informs Sankofa that the speaker has not yet arrived.

Sankofa: (Frustrated by late starts, selects the instrumental version of redemption songs by Bob Marley on the iPad, checks the speakers work, then joins the women.)

Mama B: (Stands at the podium. The hubbub ceases.) "Ladies, today we will commence with a song, please reach under your seats for the words. Whether you sing like angels or with no tone at all, it would be great if you would sing like no one was listening. Is that ok?"

The women down plates and search for the papers. At first glance, some immediately discard the paper as this is a song some know well.

Sankofa walks over to the iPad and turns it on. After the first few bars, the women start singing, and they sing with gusto from their bellies.

"Old pirates, yes, they rob I,
Sold I to the merchant ships
Minutes after they took I
From the bottomless pit
But my 'and was made strong
By the 'and of the Almighty
We forward in this generation
Triumphantly
Won't you help to sing
These songs of freedom?
'Cause all I ever have
Redemption songs
Redemption songs

Emancipate yourself from mental slavery
None but our self can free our minds
Have no fear for atomic energy
'Cause none of them can stop the time
How long shall dey kill our prophets
While we stand aside and look?
Some say it's just a part of it
We've got to fulfil de book
Won't you help to sing
These songs of freedom?
'Cause all I ever have
Redemption songs
Redemption songs
Redemption songs" (Repeat)

Bob Marley - Redemption Songs (1980)

(Each woman sings as though the words were keys to releasing an angst they carry deep within. As they get to the second verse, release is evident. The voices are strong and harmonised. Some faces are contorted, others with widened smiles. There is no evidence of self-consciousness, those crying, make no attempt to conceal the tears. At the end of the music, a couple of the women ring out the chorus a-cappella style:

"Emancipate yourself from mental slavery
None, but our self can free our minds
Have no fear for atomic energy
'Cause none of them can stop the time
How long shall dey kill our prophets
While we stand aside and look?
Some say it's just a part of it
We've got to fulfil de book

Won't you help to sing
These songs of freedom?
'Cause all I ever had
Redemption songs
All I ever had
Redemption songs
These songs of freedom
Songs of freedom"

At the end of the rendition there is a silence which is high jacked by the sounds of deep breathing and a few laboured sighs. Almost in reverence, each woman closes her eyes.

Mama B walks forward and grasps the hand of Sankofa, Sankofa takes hold of GyeNyame's hand and within seconds all the hands in the room are linked. Then, Aya, one of the quieter members of the group begins to chant the line…

Aya: "emancipate yourself from mental slavery, none but ourselves can free our minds
                 emancipate yourself from mental slavery, none but ourselves can free our minds."

Her words echo through the large room. Then each woman in unison repeats the line. Before long there is an explosion of disjointed voices chanting,

               "None but ourselves can free our minds."

Some of the women walk to the peripheries of the room. Most seeking personal space within 'the space', when they find their space, they stand, in silence. In time, each woman returns to her seat, there is no embarrassment, no awkwardness, just an unspoken knowing.

Mama B: (Stepping forward) "Well ladies, ethics would say, that right now I should consider your
                 support needs, I mean that was (The capital letters that follow indicate a raised voice)
                 POWER-FUL…SO MUCH EMOTION…I would be admonished to signpost you to
                 counselling or something. So, to keep in line with ethical considerations…come and
                 talk to me afterwards, if you need to speak about what just happened okay."

There was an outburst of laughter. Emerging from amidst the laughter is GyeNyame's voice:

GyeNyame: "Mama B, tell the ethics people that they are often part of our problem, what we just
                 experienced in this space is the kind of 'support therapy' we need.

All we need is space to explore our way…using the insights of those who understood us and our struggle, like prophet and philosopher Robert Nesta Marley. Right here, just now as well as other times on this journey, 'we have just been'. We, without having to analyse or vocalise, understood the tears and the silence. We have an empathetic association with both as well as with each other as sojourners."

Mama B: (Smiling) "Okay GyeNyame, we hear you! In academic terms, we just positioned ourselves between ontology and epistemology. Simply because we are free to be! We have had the time and space to reflect as well as the group association. These are the elements that create the right environment for us to grow and develop. It was Lorde (2007) who said, "The white fathers told us: I think, therefore I am. The Black mother within each of us…whispers in our dreams: I feel; therefore, I can be free" (p. 38). I think that's what you're saying GyeNyame. We felt what the late, great, Bob Marley spoke to us through his lyrics. When we sing, emancipate yourself from mental slavery, in this context, it means the same as the academics would say, decolonising the mind. We relate to the 'mental slavery,' don't we? The words hit our understanding. Our parents would say, 'feels it, knows it'…We share an history of mental enslavement, because of the partial education meted out to us to ensure we consistently occupy subordinate spaces. But we are accepting that it no longer should be dominantly so, as we can create spaces such as this one to liberate and educate ourselves."

Sankofa: (Interrupts) "Yeah, let's put some flesh on theory, for me theory has very little to teach me until I add human experience to it. In my experience, too many of our mature Black nurses describe themselves as 'good bedside nurses'. I have no doubt that they are, but what this journey has forced me to look at is the root of the description or the 'label'. When the 'label' good bedside side nurse was first introduced it was an implication by the Colonial British nurses that the Black nurses' knowledge would only ever be 'practical', never 'intellectual'. Therefore, Black nurses would never be able to be managers or leaders. Now, whenever a Black nurse uses the 'good bedside nurse' label I often feel that they are resigning themselves to the subordinated position they have been apportioned.

In a few cases, I've said to Black nurses, go read up around the history of nursing and then you may want to further develop that label, for example, I'm not only a good bedside nurse but I also possess the skills, knowledge and aspiration to… inviting them to finish the sentence based on the conversation we were having, for example, be an excellent manager or an outstanding matron."

Mama B: "Sankofa, living up to her name which means go back into the past to learn from it so you can inform the future. Thanks for putting the flesh on theory. Okay, ladies, some of you have emailed Sankofa and me to share your frustrations with what you describe as a lack of closure in our 'spaces' sometimes. You have shared your views that the sessions are not long enough and that we need to make them longer. Well, though we have responded to your emails, Sankofa and I felt your concerns need to be addressed here too.

Firstly, we agree that there hasn't been a structured approach to wrapping up the sessions and we will try to address that today. We do think however, that part of the problem is that the sessions have been a lot longer than we had planned and that has often been driven by our desires to share more. We've done this in agreement with you, but it's important that we remind ourselves of a few things. We will never have complete answers to any of the issues we are exploring in these spaces. Remember the messiness discussion we had in our earlier sessions? There's no sat nav, no A-Z, no bible. We are doing something that may have been done by others with similar aims… but never by us.

Secondly, there will never be sufficient time. Sankofa and I have tried to put a skeleton themed programme together and it was our hope that in discussion and with agreement, we would flesh it out with you and my word has that been done…but in fleshing out…and going with a revised, agreed plan, we have sometimes lost our focus on managing time. I must say however, there is no denying that much learning has happened in the space. But our learning has been experimental. A pilot if you please! It is inevitable that it feels unpolished and unfinished and we will never have enough time to get everything in. What we are trying to expose in a couple of sessions would take researchers in the academy years, this should be a longitudinal study, sorry…a study done over several years.

So, co-seekers, what excites us is the fact that we have been ignited, we are engaging with text and authors and YOU are contributing to the process of making sense of OUR educational journeys of this time. So, can we throw out a challenge? Can we accept the messiness as an important part of the journey? Can we live with the lack of closure sometimes? The incompleteness? And our biggest challenge…can we continue this work in lots of other spaces when this group ceases to be; sharing the lessons we have learned from it? Can we? Ladies, can you? One of the things we've loved about your emails was that you were not merely complaining but you were coming up with suggestions for solutions… Now I'll hand over to Sankofa. Oops, before I hand over, any questions?"

(There was no verbal response, just shaking of heads and smiles.)

Sankofa: "Thanks Mama B, and thanks ladies. I incubated the idea of 'the space' in isolation. I didn't have the faith to think that we could really make it happen. I dreamt it… I desired it and longed for it…but I must confess that I doubted whether busy women, who had been stung by education would want to fully engage. But you have, and your insights and contributions have been a real boost to my resolution. That said, when I received Bese Saka's email suggesting that to save time you were going to create posters outlining the summaries of your pitfalls and roadblocks. I danced and danced with joy! Picture me doing an African jig around my living room screeching...we've got a vision and it's alive…it's alive…"

GyeNyame: (With a wry smile - interrupts) "Our imagination isn't that great Sankofa, can we have a visual demonstration please?"

(The women laugh, Sankofa leaves space for the laughter, then continues.)

Sankofa: "I'll save it for another time GyeNyame, the routine needs perfecting…and I need a dancing partner so when we're done today, I'll get you to help me perfect my moves and we'll perform together for the others… Anyway, you trouble maker…let's move on. I know that you have brought along your posters. Would you put them on the walls so we can all have a look and remind ourselves of the themes? I've got blutac here for you."

GyeNyame: (Voice broken) "Can I just add something Sankofa please?"

Sankofa: "Yeah, go ahead GyeNyame."

GyeNyame: "I thought about whether I was going to talk about this…as you can probably tell from the tremor in my voice, this still hurts really badly…I didn't put it on the poster, now I wish I had. One of the most deepening wounds from the breakdown in communication between the university and workplace for me was…getting letters from bailiffs to my home…

(she breaks downs and sobs, Akoben goes to stand with her.)

I need to say this...excuse me…(she uses breathing techniques to compose herself). My otherwise extremely supportive husband was so mad when on more than one occasion we got letters from bailiffs for the non-payment of the university fees. I lost count of the number of calls I made to the Trust's learning and development department but for two years the issue was unresolved… I passed all my assignments, I paid a tutor to help me to prepare for the anatomy and physiology exam as I am a dyslexic learner and had failed the first two attempts because I ran out of time. I passed the third only because I paid for extra tuition. I turned up to deliver my final presentation and I was stopped. I was turned away, despite my pleading and my tears, I was sent home… I was not allowed to present though I was fully prepared because the university said my fees were not paid by the Trust. That was it, this wasn't the first time… I gave up because I had tried everything I knew and…" (tears streaming down her face…GyeNyame gets up and leaves the room. Sankofa signals the women to continue whilst she goes after GyeNyame.)

(The women put up their posters, then everyone moves around the room reading each other's contributions.)

Nsoromma - Pits / Shits and Survivor

Lecturers: a couple of lecturers were alright, but others just did not want to know. The lectures were okay. But assignments and booklets, it's the wording in there I had difficulty and got frustrated with! I'd tell the lecturers that I didn't understand and they'd repeat themselves. I wanted to say, I'm not hard of hearing, I heard you, but I don't get it!

I OFTEN wondered, why can't they find DIFFERENT WAY to explain it to me?

I had a mentor and an assessor on the ward but my mentor went on maternity leave so I was getting shipped around to different mentors. Because they said it was a work based course, I expected to have more responsibility at work, but there was no structure. I took on a few extra tasks like bloods and cannulations. All other tasks I was doing before I started the course.

Exams are not my thing… this was a work-based course, yet it was the exam that ended it for me. When will universities learn that exams aren't for everyone?

NO ONE considered ME or was willing to HEAR ME. I'm not being funny, but to me it felt like looking at my colour and my background and saying in my words… 'nah sod ya'! No one gave a shit about you!

But then there's another thing they tell all us if you apply for the foundation degree 'oh yes you can get a job out of it'. I've got somebody on my ward who has been finished for years and she's t still waiting to get a job.

I'm hopeful, I survived, I'm okay in myself. I just feel so tired and drained, I don't think I've got anywhere, but something new will come to me. I just need to find a new path.

NSAA - SELF SUSTAINED

Mentor: I used my mentor to sign off my course books. I found my own support system. I pulled on another Black woman (an independent friend) for peer support. We had a great friendship, we could chat loads about different things in life and everything… but even with her I found that she hadn't really got the enthusiasm… the drive wasn't there… so though we would meet up to work, we lacked discipline and identified it.**I took on the job to keep us focussed.**

We were told that on completion of the fd, we would only have to do 18 months of nursing. That turned out to be untrue! In reality, those who wanted to go on to do nursing, found that the fd did not exempt you from any part of the nursing course.

Lectures were okay, nothing special! If I didn't get something, I spoke to my peer or my daughter.

From the beginning of the second year, I was just wanting to just finish the course… **it just took my life away**. I had this beautiful home and I weren't enjoying it… my kids… I needed to be with my kids more and not in libraries or on campus.

Personally, **completing the course has been an achievement!** I've got my picture up with my gown on. It is a great personal achievement. I know my dad was very proud when I gave him my photo. My mum said… well done girl and you know… I feel good… my kids feel good…that I've done it…

There has been no economic advantage. I can honestly say getting a fd has not really impacted my work much either.
Though I'm proud to have finished, I don't judge those who count the cost of going to university and wonder if it's worth it!

SUM
SUM

OVERCOMING
&
ME

The new uniform and badge gave a
bounce to our step.
My university mentor was brilliant.
In that, my mature learning needs
were catered for.
Such a shame that individual couldn't
be cloned.

It's an achievement. I've got a
certificate. it was a long journey,
it was hard, it wasn't easy. But, I
did it with the help of others. I
did it, I did it, yeah, I did it.
It's helped me to understand
understand what's going on with
my patients. And terminology as
well as what's happening inside. I
mean before, before I done the
course, I did things because the
nurses told me to. I didn't really
know why I was doing it. Now I do
and it makes a different.

The language used in lectures was totally
different
to every day language.
The pace of the assignments were not well
thought through
The uni and the NHS Trust didn't seem to
work together and
we sometimes felt like the pig in the middle of
muddy confusion.
They made a promise of a professional uplift
which didn't materialise.
After I passed, they relegated both the badge
and the uniform but not the responsibilities.
We were never treated as students as we were
operating in both roles at the same time and
the HCA role was always dominant.

We heard of lecturers discussing
our work and laughing.
It was hard to trust them from then

Work mentors never had time to teach me.
They often criticised more than supported.
They told me that they felt the introduction
of the AP role was wrong and that I was
going
to be cheap labour.

GYE-NYAME - IT HURTS LIKE HELL, NEEDS MORE THAN WORDS TO TELL!

This is how I'll summarise the whole hurdles issues from my point of view. I was given this 'amazing' opportunity to go on holiday (university) I wasn't able to choose which one, I had to go where I was told. I was 'given' the package (promise of upskill and upgrade) I didn't know the what was in it. I had never travelled before so I often felt I was in dark places. When I got to my destination I found that I hadn't anticipated many of the hurdles.

I tried, believe me, I tried! I overcame my learning difficulties and the untold heartaches of constantly being misunderstood. With all my trying, I landed in a pit. I couldn't get out… you see the university and the Trust couldn't get my fee system sorted. THREE TIMES I WAS DENIED ACCESS TO THE UNIVERSITY BECAUSE MY FEES WERE NOT PAID.

The third time was the day I turned up to do my final presentation. I was STOPPED and told as my fees were outstanding I could not present. That was the final straw… I CRIED…I PLEADED…I EXPLAINED…I LOST HOPE… I GAVE UP TRYING.

So now, I've regressed, MY MIND HAS REVERTED TO THE 'CHAINED STATE' it had been in for years because it wasn't being used. This whole experience has left me feeling like a person who had a paid holiday but was given contraband to carry, got caught, pleaded their innocence, but is now in prison for something they had not done!

I was accused of cheating and this is an insight of how it was left: My tutor, after grilling me about the content of my assignment and I was able to explain and correctly answer all her questions concluded, "well the content is yours, but the structure is not yours."

I expected university would be challenging, I knew it would be hard. For me, though the assignments and exams were challenging. The overwhelming barrier was that I felt I was a midget caught between two giant structures that just weren't talking to each other.

LECTURES

Apart from one lecturer, I often went in the classroom in the dark and exited in the dark, isolated and despondent!

MENTORS

Most of the time my mentor was too busy to teach me anything, even to sign off my books, we had to meet up in our own time. I cried to my manager who was very supportive about the lack of opportunity to develop my clinical skills she said:

"Gye Nyame, when you're here you're counted in the numbers." So I had to fulfil the role of a HCA whilst being a trainee assistant practitioner. I I was trying to function in both, but there's no room to function in a trainee role once you go on duty, as the HCA role is often understaffed.

I've learned a lot and being a mature student pushed me to read and do stuff but we were NOT students we didn't get student opportunities

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Akoma

Lectures and Essays :
Too long - not well paced with too many handouts and too much reliance on powerpoint

Essays and Assignments - Too wordy using unnecessarily complex language

ME:
To be honest, I don't think I've failed, I say, it was because of circumstances why I didn't end up completing it. But I wouldn't really class it as a failure,

ME:
To be honest, I don't think I've failed, I say, it was because of circumstances why I didn't end up completing it. But I wouldn't really class it as a failure,

Programme:
Not enough joined up thinking, too heavy on theory too little practical
University and Workplace were totally separate entities.
Exam was too heavily weighted

Bese Saka
Barriers, Pitfalls and Personal lessons

Biggest challenge was trying to get support. Seriously, it was trying to get support and battling on through more or less on my own. Getting through it with lack of support .

Study time, you wasn't getting it. My mentor, always too busy.. I'm like, you are supposed to be my mentor, where's the encouragement? So at Uni, told the personal tutor and stuff.

The university offered my placement mentor a mentoring course. Yeah, cause I told them, she doesn't know what she's doing.

Mentor, I didn't even see my one. The second year, I never worked with her once. Well, I worked with her on the same shift, but we never did anything together.

I said to my manager, I said, I'm going to need time to study because the mornings,used to be quiet then, she said that Wednesday would be a good day but, then she put me on clinic when all the other staff were chatting, sitting around doing cleaning.

When I was doing the course it was like, oh yea, there'll be a job because we haven't got any APs here and it would be good for the department .And then it's the second year and like you're asking in your PDRs what's happening am I gonna get it? And it's like, oh I don't know financial situation

Reverting to a band 2 uniform after 2 years working as a band 4 in training.

I feel bleep, bleep, bleep. I don't cuss so I say bleep, bleep, bleep. Two years of struggle, hard work, built up my skills… what really got me angry is when the manager turned round and said: " but if you don't get your band 4 and you go back to a band 2, will you still do the clinics that need the AP skills?" 'cause you'll have to keep your skills current!

It's made me stronger and I... I ask questions more. You know like before, now I don't mind asking oh what's that, or do you mind if I come in and watch ? I'm more like wanna see more and you know it's built up my... confidence to ask more. Made me tougher.

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Aya - I Know myself and how I got here!

YEAH!!! I'm happy now… I'm more motivated now, before I had this course I had no status. I'm just in the hospital serving tea…every time, I'm just serving foodI often thought, I'm a HCA why can't they give me something else to do?

Since I been to university… I'm able to look at a patient and tell them his saturation…I can able to look at a patient an tell them his respiratory rate… I can able to look at a patient and do the blood pressure, the blood sugar, ECG, bloods… I can admit a patient. So I'm more motivated and I've been enhanced with more skills. So university was good… though at first I never used most of the procedure I learned in training. It's been 6 years and I still haven't given me the post or the banding I was promised. But no one can take my piece of paper away from me. I feel that… I am a brilliant girl now…

I overcame the hurdles of an unstructured course, with boring lectures and tutors who didn't seem to expect much from me by teaming up with a mature, Black student nurse. She was bright, ambitious and even when she was fed up with me, I just kept going to work alongside her. She was brilliant, my private mentor.

I was promised the band 4 position, it's been SIX years and I still haven't had it. I am constantly asked to use the skills I gained. I really work doing the role of a band 4 yet for three years I remained on a band 2 salary. I have since applied for a band 3 post and got it.
My manager insulted me the first time I asked about the upgrade in position, when I asked the third time…She accused me of harassing her.
BUT STILL, I RISE EACH SHIFT TO SERVE MY PATIENTS.

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MATIE MASIE - POTHOLES, HURDLES & ME.

Mentor at work… I didn't have one, I was doing everything myself really. I was appointed one, but she had her own issues and we never got together to put in a plan.

When I moved wards, I was given, R and I don't think she was that interested in being my mentor… I felt it was because I wasn't a student nurse, they paid more interest in the student nurses.

Lectures: sometimes when you can't understand something and when you ask the questions it's as if tutors are too busy to answer, or help you… the funny thing about it is sometimes they'd say, if you need any help you must come to us. But when you do go to them everyone is always too busy.

I tried at first but after that I didn't bother because I'm thinking you know what, why bother, because no one is gonna bother with me anyway.

The Library, I hadn't been in education for ages. I didn't have a library induction. I just followed the other girls. Then I had a library fine because I forgot to bring books back…my fine was about three hours pay. I stopped going to the library because I couldn't afford to keep paying… And then you couldn't afford to keep buying the books either.

I'm not that good on the computer… so I didn't really like the computer, but I did want to have better skills. I'm just…a one finger typist and you didn't just have to do your class work, you had to use moodle…

Staff were confused asking, what is the fd? And then they would say things like, oh it's just like the SENs that they use to have years ago… things like that…And it's like some people were probably threatened as well, so that's why they didn't wanna help me…

I just tried to do my own thing… but it didn't help, because with a course like that you need somebody behind you to motivate and help you.
The qualified did not help me.
But when they wanted help, they'd say, " Matie you should be able to do the bloods now" You've been on that course haven't you? The way I saw it they wanted somebody to be cheap labour… that's the way I saw it… it's still happening now…

For me, I honestly feel I've wasted time. I'm disappointed,

You know I just wanted to… I just wanted to do achieve as a black person…
You know because here, they always say that… you know… that we can't… we're always treated different to everybody else…
We're always treated as though we are a lower class… I've overheard people say it…so maybe I'm a little bitter.

Dame Dame - Hurdles present to be jumped over!

MENTOR:

The mentors are willing to teach the student nurses they didn't seem to see us as students. They didn't really value or recognise our trainee role in the team us as part of the team. Student nurses got more attention, on a number of occasions, I had to remind my mentor that I'm your student as well.

It really took a long time and a lot of complaining to finally get some shifts where my mentor and I could actually work together. We were rarely on the same shift. In fact, I sometimes had to come into work on my off duty so I could develop the clinical skills and complete my workbooks.

PROGRAMME:

Not many of the modules on the programme were linked to the workplace / clinical skills

As an assistant practitioner I am expected to like have my own patients delegated by the nurse and working under her supervision to meet their care needs, with the exception of medication. That is NOT happening.

I've lost TRUST in the organisation!

When I was doing the course I had a badge which said, 'Trainee Assistant Practitioner'.
Now I've qualified as an Assistant Practitioner, the nurses use me in the role because I ask to do things. I don't want to lose my skills.
YET I NOW WEAR A BADGE THAT SAYS Healthcare Assistant

I was promised a band 4 position on completion, since completing I've been to the matron and who says there is no funding. I asked whether funding could be sought to up upgrade me to a band three, she said NO!

THE ONLY CONVERSATION I HAVE HAD WITH THE ORGANISATION WAS TO BE TOLD BY MY MANAGER, YOU NEED TO STOP WEARING THE TRAINEE UNIFORM BECAUSE YOU ARE A BAND TWO.

Completing the course has changed how I work as nurses now see me as being more competent to do other clinical. Things that they would be doing themselves, I am now allocated to do.

AKOBEN - HOW I WADED THROUGH CRAP BUT CAME UP SMELLING OF ROSES

The lectures: We ALL complained about teaching skills, in too many instances they were non existent we had presentations just read to us. I don't know why they badda right, 'cause we can read for weself…

I found it quite insulting… I remember saying to one lecturer… I'm not being rude but you're just reading what's on the presentation… you're not telling me nothing. I said I can look at the powerpoint at home. I said you need to explain to me, because you're giving me this assignment and I can't get my head around it. When people would ask her something, she goes. "Well, I don't know the medical jargon". I would say, I'm not asking you for the medical jargon… just tell me how dis fi flow through dat…and open up… you know… **I need the nitty-gritty… and you know… it was just like she couldn't comprehend what we were on about…and her teaching… <u>her style was just so crap.</u>**

It wasn't all bad though, **THERE WAS ONE EXCEPTION**

He'd say something like say… you had a bowl… you had a piece of cloth…and you put water in it… and you put this powder in it…and it filters through… **He'd just simplify things so that <u>you could actually see it in your head…</u> whereas if you said to others can you explain that another way because I don't understand… they couldn't find another example to give you… so you were still left stupid. I remember the good one was was explaining to us…and half of us didn't understand what the hell the tutor talking about…and they simplified it to the point of talking about traffic lights and there was….OH…. from most of us in the room, cause we all got it then!** Most lecturers would stand up in front of the class… presentation…der…der… der…der…der..der… ok, and if you have any problems you can email me…**<u>I don't wanna email ya… I wanna talk to ya…</u>**

I think we were meant to start in May…**<u>Clear inna July… we still no start de course…'cause the tutor was off sick…</u>**

<u>My manager appointed me a work place mentor,</u> now I would not mind that she gave me X… if me and X talked… but we don't even flipping talk. The woman was so lazy she was one of those trained nurses who did not want students. She didn't want to have any body under her wings to train and show the ropes….I remember… this mentor was leaving. I went to the new manager… I said, how is this going to work for me… X is going and I need a new mentor. I had a new manager by then, the new manager goes how did you get X as your mentor? I said… your predecessor gave her to me. She asked, what did you do to upset my predecessor? I CHOSE MY NEW MENTOR AND OUR RELATIONSHIP IS FANTASTIC - My choice is a BRILLIANT TRAINER.

Going to university was an up hill struggle… I do not think that going to uni will ever be easy for anybody… if it was easy… we would all do it…

Nurses were very negative in their comments and approach to me when I started this course…very negative…

I never left the HCA role, I was a HCA/TAP

I know that I am not going to get that light blue uniform that the APs have now… cause they can't give me job… that's fine…as long as they don't hold me back… <u>it's kinda bitter / sweet because I don't want them to stop me using the skills I've learned, but I also know I won't get paid for those skills.</u>

(Following the readings, the women naturally gravitate to those accounts they resonate with most and start resharing. There is much chatter and filling in of gaps as they retell. The conversations are choreographed with a range of gesticulations.)

(After approximately fifteen minutes Akoben stops the group and suggests that the point they have just been discussing privately is worth sharing publicly.)

Akoben:	"Can I add something we just spoke about but we didn't include on our posters, I think it is important. The whole uniform and name badge occurrences really confused our patients. Those of us who undertake AP roles in our HCA uniforms are often looked on suspiciously by patients and their relatives. We find ourselves having to justify and explain that we are qualified to undertake clinical duties delegated to us."

Mama B:	"That addition is very important Akoben, I hope those incidents were communicated to matrons, as patients need to trust that staff are competent and a quick way of doing so is by taking notice of uniforms and name badges. Ladies can we finish off our conversations and come back together please? I suggest we have a comfort break of fifteen minutes, then I will introduce our speaker. Fifteen minutes then ladies."

(The women disperse in a range of directions, seeking out loos as well as snack machines. They quickly return to their seats expectantly.)

Mama B:	"Well, thank you for coming back early. It is my pleasure to welcome Dr. Owo Adobe. Dr. Adobe has been a life-long friend of mine and she has asked me not to do the formal academic introduction. In fact, in our discussion about her joining us today, she asked if the format could be more conversational rather than a lecture. I took the liberty of saying that would be okay, but you said you would prefer a formal talk so ladies. I now present to you Dr. Owo Adobe."

Dr. Owo Adobe:	"Well, good evening sisters. I can't tell you how pleased I am to be here. When Mama B told me about your gathering, I felt a spiritual connection with what you were doing. Each time we spoke I enquired of you and was heartened when I heard that you were still going. From small acorns, mighty oaks grow. Do not underestimate what you are doing here because of the size of the group or your perceived lack of experience. I wish to affirm you.

From your posters, it is evident that in-spite of poor mentoring, you endured. In-spite of lectures that neither ignited, enlightened or transformed you, you endured. Whether you wore a TAP uniform or were professionally relegated to your previously held HCA uniform and position, you endured. Even when the university and workplace systems worked to disable and disempower you, you endured. Be assured of this fact, whoever we are, to succeed, we must endure.

I just want to say, Mama B, was showing me professional respect when she used my title. But I am Owo. No need for titles here! I can honestly say that when I heard about some of the conversations you have been having, I was really looking forward to joining you. When the invitation came, I was looking forward to the dialogue. So, needless to say, I am a little disappointed that my brief is to do a formal talk. Nevertheless, I will try my best to sow some seedlings in the epistemological soil you have been tilling and hopefully, even in my absence through your nurturing they will develop and grow. To begin, I'll acknowledge one of the pioneers of post-colonial thinking, the one whose name this theatre bears, philosopher and psychologist, Frantz Fanon. Of education under colonialism Fanon (1967) said:

> "Intellectual alienation is a creation of middle-class society. What I call middle-class society is any society that becomes rigidified in predetermined forms, forbidding all evolution, all gains, all progress, all discovery. I call middle-class a closed society in which…ideas and men are corrupt" (p. 224).

Fanon's view was one that was supported by revolutionary educationalists, Freire. Apple (2013) articulates Freire's views stating:

> "The dominant class, deaf to the need for a critical reading of the world, insists on the purely technical training of the working class, training with which that class should reproduce itself as such. Progressive ideology, however, cannot separate technical training from political preparation, just as it cannot separate the practise of reading the word from reading discourse" (p. 28).

Now I understand that in your context, class is not considered to be amongst the dominant considerations for you. However, not now, but maybe in phase two of your journeys you may consider how the hegemonic community view class and control. I fully understand that this is an epistemological trajectory, this is about you. However, in any battle, knowing your opponent's views, strategies and plans results in you being a stronger opponent yourself.

What I surmise from your recordings, as well as the accounts of several adult mature first generation university students, is that you were not exposed to an education which challenged or stimulated you to think critically or otherwise. Educators then need to revisit the question: What is the purpose of education? Are universities and workplaces working towards ensuring that the educational experience is not only a positive but a productive one for all students? Unfortunately, your experiences suggest that HE is an unnecessarily treacherous place to navigate. Apple (2013) argues the following of education in general, but I think this argument is also very true for work-based education. "Education is seen as, simply factories producing test scores and docile workers" (p. 4). He further asserts that our education systems generally focus on 'production and consumption' and what is often missing is a consideration of those hurt by this approach. GyeNyame's poster jumped out at me, she is one who has been hurt by the 'systems' she tried to navigate in pursuit of personal and professional development. I felt your distress, you articulated yourself well in that poster. It is incredibly frustrating when processes that should be established and routine consistently fail. Such an ignominy! But I encourage you my sister, my friend, do no stop dreaming! Like Maya Angelou's poem suggests, find your own way to 'still rise'. You may have been denied a positive educational experience, pay increase, promotion, but you do not have to accept the imposition of failure. Your identity is not fixed it is fluid, therefore, for this season you may be down but keep engaging in spaces such as this one because your voice has very much been a dominant one. Keep rising! Don't rule out returning to university either.

When we sang Redemption Song, at the point of repetition I was reminding myself that I needed to constantly work against the concept that because of my race and gender I had to restrict myself to peripheral spaces. I wonder what would happen if we were all involved in a process of consistently emancipating ourselves from the enslaved thoughts of being 'frauds' in spaces because we are obviously a minority. We so often believe that 'failure' makes us 'failures' instead of acknowledging that oftentimes the disappointments and heartaches create and provide opportunities for us to learn, to think differently, to be creative and potentially to find our own, culturally appropriate solutions. George Sefa Dei (2010) reminds us that Fanon was:

> "instrumental in shaping and refining the thought that colonisation is equally about a study of subjectivity and power relations. Colonialism and colonisation had significant effects on the psyche of the colonised" (p. 11).

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I recall earlier on in my career addressing issues around the internalisation of a limited view of my skills and abilities. You have been able to explore how a colonial approach to nursing education resulted in the partial skilling of Caribbean nurses. Hewitt, et al. informs us that the scientific aspects of nursing was not part of the syllabus for Black nurses in the Caribbean until they took responsibility for designing and delivering the nursing syllabus which would enlighten and propel them into the professional spaces they wished to inhabit!

In this space, you are committed to what Fanon (1967) described as the 'two-sided-ness' approach to the theorising of colonisation. Dubios (1974), Howard (2004), Sefa Dei, (2010) and others argue that to critically engage with issues of domination and oppression, with a view to 'dismantling' the practices of oppression, both the oppressors and the oppressed need to be studied. In both groups, the strategies of resistance need to be considered. In this space, you are making your attempt and I applaud you. As I reflect on your posters, the words of West (1998) came back to me, he claims:

> "The Black experience offers philosophy a profound sense of the tragic and the comic rooted in heroic efforts to preserve human dignity…in short, a deep blues' sensibility that highlights concrete existence, history, struggle, lived experiences and joy" (p. 39).

Your posters included all that West alluded to, aligning West's quote to what's happening in this space excites me. I can't tell you how much. You see, here, you are pursing your own philosophy, you are engaging with and thrashing ideas that will enable you and others to better comprehend the education you experienced as you all move forward. For so long, we, as Yancy (1998) suggests, "have allowed the white philosopher to be the sole definer of our reality" (p. 9). Therein lay a great deal of our problems. I wonder if there have been studies that have explored how many 'researched groups' access the research findings their lived experiences informed? Freire, (in Apple, 2013) asserts, "we must develop and present our counter hegemonic perspectives as a way of interrupting colonial dominance in education and in cultural studies in general" (p. 35). That's what's happening in this space.

What is also imperative as we interrupt the hegemonic approaches is that we are explicit about our bias. As we share our stories, we declare, we do not wish to be objective.

It was Fanon who argued that it would be both 'impossible and dishonest' for us to claim objectivity. As 'self' researchers, culture is an important consideration of our viewing of the world. However, in most cases, culture from a place of 'knowing' is not fully explored, especially when 'we are researched' by those who have historically and currently position us as 'other' in education and employment. Often what Caucasian researchers fail to fully understand is…actually, I will use the words of Fanon (1967) who articulates this thought much better than I could. Fanon asserts that during colonisation, "The inferior complex was 'created by the death and burial of local cultures' (p. 18). He further argues, and we all know this through our lived experiences, that Blacks have dual dimensions. We are very much aware that in so many aspects of our lives we behave differently amongst Caucasians than we do amongst our fellow Blacks. I can also tell you from my lived experience that Caucasians who are advocates of equality, social justice and 'engaged' pedagogy are generally as enslaved by the HE and work-based institutions as we are. I'll borrow West's (1982) assertion here, "This philosophical journey is mediated by value laden interpretations of the *Black woman's* struggle for *equality and* freedom; the major bias of this inquiry is the desire for freedom *and equality*" (p. 23). We are making our bias explicit, that's what this approach requires of us.

I'll draw on the psychological expertise of Fanon who stated, "The 'negro' is enslaved by his inferiority, the white man enslaved by his superiority alike behave in accordance with a neurotic orientation" (p. 60). He follows on to say, "negroes' inferiority complex is particularly intensified among the most educated". I would add here, amongst those 'we assume are educated'. Think about your working context where you are placed in bands for your pay. I assume that as you predominantly reside and are kept in residence in the lower tiers of the banding structure you must invest in self-awareness and self-esteem to co-inhabit the working space as people worthy of respect.

I generally find myself more often than I would like, in professional spaces where I am the only minority. However, I am learning that I am responsible for my projection in those spaces. After all, it was Fanon (1967) again who said that, "A white man in a colony has never felt inferior in any respect… the colonial, even though he is 'in the minority' does not feel that this makes him inferior" (p. 92).

So, let's ask ourselves the question, who the hell has the right to keep us inferior and what the hell do WE need to do to correct the maligned position? I will close this section with a final thought on breaking the colonial mindset from Lorde, (2007) who asserted:

> "Those of us who are poor, who are lesbians, who are blacks, who are older - know that survival is not an academic skill. It is learning how to stand alone, unpopular and sometimes reviled, and how to make common cause with those others identified as outside the structures in order to define and seek a world in which we can flourish. It is learning how to take our differences and make them strengths. For the masters' tools will never dismantle the masters' house" (p. 112).

There is a quote conceived out of experiential pain, if ever we've heard one! In moving on I must say I am perturbed by the way the institution uses their power to control your professional identities. Your recall provided me with insights that made me question the psychological impact your journey must have had on you. I understand that professionally, you were uplifted, through mediums that both colleagues and service users understood. You were provided with new uniforms and name badges. Some of you shared the professional pride the epaulets provided whilst accepting that they also created some angst within teams, as seniors didn't always understand what your uniform represented. What I consider to be an ethical violation was the fact that for some of you, even after successfully completing the programme of study, were told to stop wearing the uniform and the name badge, but still asked to perform tasks linked to the newly qualified role. How unjust! How could an institution that 'claims to care and provide care' with a strapline, 'where everyone matters', do that to their staff and colleagues? Who sanctions such actions? I thought the health sector were advocates of non-maleficence. It's an interesting observation that when abuses, such as Stafford hospital, are publicised, politicians, the public and decent human beings demand investigations, accountability and change. I accept that lives were lost at Stafford, so it's right that investigations should be undertaken and reports and recommendations made.

However, we underestimate the fact that we annihilate people professionally and psychologically and no one seems to give a damn.

I don't suppose I will ever be able to approach a hospital again without asking, where does the balance lie in this institution between the number of people they make well and the numbers they make sick through their practices and surreptitious conducts? I will also be wondering how many professional terminations it undertakes as it strives to keep its 'peaks snowy'. I understand that cost efficiencies have resulted in 'down banding' in some areas of the health service. However, it is an absurd concept that you can gain a qualification then have your uniform and name badge 'relegated' but required to take on additional tasks in line with the qualification. Watson (1992) argues that:

> "power is generally explained through issues of dominance and manipulation or coercion. When others use their control to disadvantage others" (p. 392).

I'm sorry ladies, but at this point, my blood boils…widening participation may have appeared to partially open doors, but what seems invisible to too many on the inside is the barbed wired fences of injustice that must be navigated to stay in and move through. I mean, I respect your resilience. Your aspiration to become 'recognised professionals' has left you fatigued, exposed, vulnerable and symbolically you have had your professional accomplishments stripped off, by the so-called powers that be. Without sounding defeatist, I wonder how it will be possible to address structural injustices when as Bradley (1992) argues, "colonialism brought in to being and integrated work economy, in which the core western society exploited the resources of the 'so called, third world' (p. 42). I'm not sure why I read that in the past tense, but anyway! By no means am I saying that you should view yourselves solely as victims. I wish to echo the view of Baldwin (1985) here. He asserts:

> "I refuse absolutely to speak from the point of view of the victim. The victim can have no point of view for precisely so long as he thinks of himself as a victim. The testimony of the victim corroborates, simply the reality of the chains that binds him, confirms, and as it were, consoles the jailer" (p. 78).

Our message is, hey, we see what you've done…we understand it, we're broken but not dead. Disappointed? Yes! Bloody angry and annoyed? Yes, both with you and ourselves. Had we known our history, you would not have duped us, using the same strategies you used to dupe our parents. So, we are as mad with ourselves as we are with you. That's why this space and this approach is necessary. We need to get the word out! We must get the word out!

I'll end this section by paraphrasing a thought of Freire (2004) widening participation has placed a 'dark cloud' over us because it 'reduced education to mere training' and annihilated our dreams. But whilst there is life, there is hope…still we rise, tentatively, but we rise. The lovely thing about the audience here is that I can ignore the stuffy formalities. I'll stop there and suggest we have a comfort break?"

(The women disperse. Owo consults with Mama B about the pitch and whether she should continue. Mama B suggests she goes ahead with the practical activity they previously discussed. The women return.)

Mama B: "Okay ladies, thanks for returning on time. Owo is asking your permission to change the format to a discussion. Would that be okay?"

Akoben: "Yeah, see, here is a lecturer who knows that she needs to break things up and get us involved. Another reason I love this space!"

Owo: "Ladies, I would like to encourage you to break into three groups and we'll have twenty minutes to discuss the following.

(She turns the flip-chart around revealing the task.)
                Following your fd experience, you are asked to convey messages or ask questions to the following:

                The university
                The funders of your course
                The workplace

                I will give you flipchart paper and pens and you can be as creative as you like in your expressions. At the end of the twenty minutes, your groups will merge and you will be given a further ten minutes to consolidate your messages. Finally, you will be asked to add a message to a mature Black woman who is considering taking up a work-based secondment opportunity. At the end, you will agree and decide how to share just the key messages. Any questions?"

(The women disperse without acknowledging Owo's question.

The time elapses and the group nominates Akoben to feedback.

Akoben: "First, I've got to say that the groups shared how difficult this was. It was harder than we had anticipated. We added a section we called messages to self and here we use quotes that we have had read, recorded and memorised as part of this journey, quotes that remind us to stay united:

Messages to ourselves:
One finger cannot pick up something from the ground
One hand cannot by itself lift a load off the head
One leg cannot run
One head cannot form a committee

To become a force to be reckoned with, we must abandon mistrust amongst ourselves and unite. I'll shout this message to our sisters. Black women we want to gather with intentional solidarity so we can articulate our frustrations with inequalities and through our interconnectedness journey to our self-defined, political, professional and personal identities.

Finally, and this is one worth remembering: Drum roll please…
"You never
                hit
                    a
                        person
                            over
                                the
                                    head
                                        when
                                            you
                                                have
                                                    your
                                                        finger
                                                            in
                                                                their mouth."

The room erupts with laughter.

Gye-Nyame: "Yeah, love it. Let's stop expecting those who malign and oppress us to find solutions for us. We need to be instigators of our own liberations. Now, Mama B, Sankofa and Owo we would like to convey our messages using an adaptation of the traditional African call and response."

Owo: "L-o-v-i-n-g i-t! So, your first message is to the Funders…let's have it!"

GyeNyame: "We wanted WP equality not the poisoned chalice of opportunity!"

Akoben: "How did you hold the NHS Trust and HEI accountable for the funds invested? Did you request formative and summative evaluations of the programmes and how were these used?"

GyeNyame: "We wanted WP equality not the poisoned chalice of opportunity!"

Akoben: "How were we to inform you that our 'opportunities' resulted in:
                A poor educational experience?
                An unfulfilled promise of salary uplift?
                An unfulfilled promise to patients that the NHS would be better staffed?"

GyeNyame: "We wanted WP equality not the poisoned chalice of opportunity!"

Akoben: "Why weren't our experiences and expectations part of your evaluation? What responsibility will you take for the fd 'travesty'?"

GyeNyame: "Now Dame-Dame and SunSum it's over to you with messages for the university."

Dame-Dame: "We longed for transformative pedagogy, not a colonised approach to study!"

SunSum: "Why do you limit your teaching methods to talks and power-points? Why did you resist us when we asked that you link theory to practice?"

Dame-Dame: "We longed for transformative pedagogy, not a colonised approach to study!"

SunSum: "What stopped you trying to get to know us? Let's talk about why your learning environments were not conducive to our learning? What else could we have done to convince you that we longed for you to demonstrate that you believed in us?"

Dame-Dame: "We longed for transformative pedagogy, not a colonised approach to study!"

SunSum: "Why did you allow the issue of funding to impede our educational experience though you partnered with our workplace?
Talk to us about how important full inductions are to mature students' survival in a HEI?
Why does your HEI have so few tutors that we felt we could relate to?"

The caller and responder for the messages to the workplace will be, Nsoramma and Nsaa.

Nsoramma: "Don't malign us through affirmative action, have the courage to challenge institutional discrimination!"

Nsaa: "Can we discuss how not giving us student status, sent a message to colleagues at work that they could vituperate us?"
"Can we explore the fact that because we had no professional identity, our educational experience lacked quality?"

Nsoramma: "Don't malign us through affirmative action, have the courage to challenge institutional discrimination!"

Nsaa: "Can we be enlightened on why you considered it acceptable to promise salary upgrade but fail to honour your promise?
What should be your responsibility for the fact that some of us were ejected from our course because you failed to pay our fees on time?"

Nsoramma: "Don't malign us through affirmative action, have the courage to challenge institutional discrimination!"

Nsaa: "Mentors didn't engage but why should they when there was no consequence for not engaging? Why did you not take an interest in our experience? In the beginning, you shovelled the 'support' rhetoric down our throats? But our reality was sink or swim…
How about we meet and tell you more of our lived experiences?
Why didn't the Chief Nurse then, or the subsequent Chief Nurse care about us and our development?
Why were none of us included in the Band 4 assessor roles that were created. Look at your provision and notice our exclusion then, let's talk…frankly and honestly."

Nsoramma: "Don't malign us through affirmative action, have the courage to challenge institutional discrimination!"

Nsaa: "Our final question and message is, do you care that you have lost our trust, and would you agree that when trust is eroded it must be re-earned? We're open to talk, if you're open to LISTEN and HAVE THE COURAGE TO OVERSEE CHANGE!"

Finally, this is what we would like to say to mature Black sisters … Aya and Akoma.

Akoma: "Sorry, can I interject something here? This cultural approach is inspiring, Maya

Angelou asserts:

'We may encounter many defeats, but we must not be defeated. It may be necessary to encounter defeats so we know who the hell we are, what we can overcome. What makes us stumble and fail and somehow miraculously rise and go on' (The late show face to face 2006).

I needed to add that we are more than victims, we are moving on despite it all…ok go on Aya."

Aya: "Be informed, so you can rise!"

Akoma: "Research the courses you are offered and explore the promises prior to accepting your place.
Insist on getting ALL promises or assurances in writing
Invest time in researching the history of your people in the context you will be working and studying."

Aya: "Be informed, so you can rise!"

Akoma: "Be more than grateful, be in the know
Be in the know about how you like to learn and ask for your preferred learning styles
Be in the know about the relationships you want with mentors and coaches and hold each accountable to it."

Aya: "Be informed, so you can rise!"

Akoma: "Be one who questions
Be one who seeks out support
Be one who uses her voice
Be one who reads, widely, reading empowers and motivates. Reading may not come naturally either, reading will require discipline, read and reread until you understand then share."

Aya: "Be informed, so you can rise!"

Akoma: "Be one who counts the cost before she starts, consider how you will build resilience as disappointments / setbacks will inevitably be part of your journey.
Be one who intentionally rises and goes on, in spite of the setbacks…to your own development and to helping others on their way too."

Owo: "I love the cultural manifestation. My word…bear with me whilst I appreciate the

moment…there is something to be said about 'not naming but interrogating and

inviting dialogue. I loved the way you asked questions of the institutions rather than

prescribe to them (Dillard 2014).

Mama B, we need to have a conversation about that approach…I, I really liked it…sorry, I really feel this. I, I just love this reciprocal learning space yet, I think this is a great place to end. I hope you all agree. Thanks for letting me in, cherished it… I hope to join you again, but just as a sojourner."

Sankofa: "Ladies, I'm sure you would like to join me appreciating Owo for a stimulating and thought provoking session. Also, please give yourselves an applaud for pulling that presentation out of the bag with so little preparation time. Wow…well done! Now remember our agreement, the final session will be held without me or Mama B and following that meeting, GyeNyame, your nominated spokesperson will let us know whether you wish to, and if you do, how you will proceed. In the meantime, I have the task of writing up our time in this space. Thank you and I look forward to hearing from you soon."

The women hastily gather their belongings and make their way towards the exits.

Scene 8. Sankofa Reflects

Sankofa arrives home exhausted but equally exhilarated, she puts away the bags and books. She changes into her yard clothes, sets up the coffee machine and heads off to the patio. She plans an all-nighter as she wants to capture as much of the session's reflections as she can whilst it is still fresh. She decides to take a short break first, so she lowers herself into the rocking chair. The garden is tranquil, the moon is full. Staring at the stars she slowly drifts into a state of semi-consciousness. As she drifts she dreams…

A tiny, dark skinned, white haired, character appears, she is pencil thin with big eyes and lovely white teeth. She is draped in crisp Kente cloths and speaks with a quiet voice. She introduces herself as Akoko Nan. She explains that she is an ancestral parent and, in fact, that is exactly what her name means. She informs Sankofa that she has come to help her with her reflections on this leg of her journey.

Sankofa: (Contemplatively) "What has it all been about?"

Akoko Nan: "What my child?"

Sankofa: "This whole journey, you know my last decade. Life, power, exploitation, superiority, education, failure, inferiority, injustice, fear, silencing, subordination, life… what is it all about?"

Akoko Nan: "Tell me, my child, what have you found?"

Sankofa: "Where do I start? How do I share it? What I have found is huge, not all new in the larger scheme of things, but new to me. Your question is too big for me. What have I found? Well, I have revisited communication and strove to reclaim our oral history whilst acknowledging that, because of navigating two cultures, that was not without challenge! I have written using an approach called autoethnography, and as Herrmann (2014) asserts, "autoethnographies bridge the gap between the remembered past, the fleeting now, and the ephemeral here after" (p. 337). I have relived the past, reviewed the present and I am leaving an account of our lived experiences for the future.

Our ancestors…it's strange saying that now I am talking to you…anyway…you left us with positive examples of unified approaches to: community-empowerment, community education and self-definition.

Even under colonialism Black nurses were self-motivated, strategic and impressively effective in gaining equal professional status to whites and rising to the higher echelons of nursing in the Caribbean. Many of you ancestors were politically astute, you utilised constitutional change to work to your benefit. Many of you did not rely on white advocates.

I re-lived the challenges of the impact of British education on Black Caribbean immigrants and their children. I learnt a great deal about how two generations, our parents and our own, simultaneously struggled towards self-identity in Britain during the 1980s. To our credit, many of my generation can navigate the British and Jamaican cultures seamlessly. Having said that, Black stereotypes are still used to keep us mute and in subordinated places in the workplace and the wider society.

The educational history of my generation in the UK has been tainted, but the inequitable educational experiences rallied us to educational proactivity, where we became co-educators of our own children through supplementary, self-funded politically active Saturday schools. But we haven't sustained our influence, historically, and to this day, nursing education has been problematic for way too many Black women, in that, it has been an inequitable provision.

Nursing reforms need more thorough consultation and intentional efforts to avoid knee jerk reactions which are strategically flawed, thus contributing to poor educational experiences and manpower waste. (The Assistant Practitioner's role being an example of an under-utilised provision.) Widening participation was a good concept in principle but not more than mere rhetoric in practice for some. Widening happened, but not much else changed…Akoko Nan…are you listening to me?"

Akoko Nan: "I'm listening child…continue…"

Sankofa: "Widening participation was problematic because the educational opportunity it offered was not transformative, yes, there were a few examples of good practice, but sadly way too few! The university followed the 'pattern of organisation', their approaches were inflexible and inequitable.

In both the university and the workplace, structures and behavioral patterns reinforced a closed society of production and consumption. Unfortunately, the educational experiences of mature Black women presently are not significantly different from the education our parents experienced during colonialisation.

I have learnt that the institutional structures are reliant on us being un-informed. If we remain ignorant we will always be conduits of exploitation. We need to break and keep on breaking our colonial mindsets. We must advocate and make critical thinking our normative approach. We must interrogate more and trust less. We must call to remembrance that the NHS, that called our parents because it was understaffed since 1948, still suffers the stigma and reality of not being able to retain nurses in our present time. We must engage with our history, be informed. We must also become informers and reminders.

We need to cast off the labels and challenge the stereotypes imposed on us. We need to educate the nursing profession that they are not doing us a favour. They need us, and to retain us, they need to respect us. We need to throw off our fear of mobilisation. For goodness sake, our parents travelled from the Caribbean. Sometimes we struggle to think about travelling within the Midlands for work. Gosh, we need to wake up! …Akoko Nan…What are you doing? Why are you silent? What is this about?"

Akoko Nan: "You are summarising what you have learnt my child…do not get frustrated by my silence…go on…"

Sankofa: "Nice link, it was frustration and a refusal to remain silent that initially fueled me to embark on this five-year journey. Purpose and passion sustained me. This journey has been a labour of love, I have enjoyed going back, learning from the past, I am filled with excitement and anticipation about how this work will inform, inspire and educate future generations.

So, have I achieved a fair bit of what I set out to do? I set myself gigantic challenges; this work needed to:

-        Be accessible to the research community and their wider communities.

- Contribute to social activism.
- Make explicit the experiences of a group of Black women within the NHS.

How did I do?

- Okay, well I've learned that we can do things differently. It probably takes longer and is messy, but it's equally illuminating and right.
- This journey has brought new knowledge; Black British and Black Caribbean women have retold their own accounts of Higher Education and Work-based learning. Their voices are not generally heard in educational research.
- I have merged my methodology and the mode of writing, creating a performance autoethnographic drama to showcase our experiences. Thinking about merging Black Feminist Methodological Stance and performance autoethnography, I came across this quote by Alexander (2008)

> "Performance ethnography becomes a form of standpoint epistemology, a situated moment of knowing that positions performers and audiences in the interstices of knowing themselves through and as the other…a standpoint from which to view culture" (p.83).

I was heartened by that, an affirmation of the approaches I had utilised.

- The performance autoethnography sets this work up as a social action piece which can be performed in a range of contexts. A serious yet educationally engaging approach. I'm pleased and grateful to have had the privilege of the journey. Akoko Nan, anything to add?"

Akoko Nan: "For the record my child…I'm very proud of you. Don't ever underestimate the force that drives you. Go on…"

Sankofa: "Are you? … thanks, that means the world to me! Now, I must firmly state here, some of these experiences and outcomes were not exclusive to Black British and Black Caribbean women. However, it was only the accounts of the Black women that were of interest to me, simply because in the context of the NHS we are generally written about, we don't write about ourselves. In one of our sessions we joked about dreamers and dreaming, but for me this dream was no joke, I felt compelled to see this through.

Abdulai 1995 asserts:

> 'Perseverance molds dreams into reality - above all, it is the only divide that separates the dream from the dreamer, and on which all ideas are molded into matter. Thus, not to persevere is to throw in the towel' (p. 64).

Akoko Nan, do you have any messages for us?"

Akoko Nan: "Tradition would say, you should produce a list of recommendations, however, your work is not a traditional piece. Your work asks the readers, especially those in HEI, NHS and primarily Black women, to discuss and put in place processes to ensure that this generation is the last to be educationally SUBJUGATED and professionally EXPLOITED by the NHS, AT LEAST IN YOUR TRUST. The women who completed the first year and exited have a partial qualification which can be completed at some time in the future.

The ancestors would have desired that all women complete the course, most education is good and transferable, but we understand, in our discussions we've accepted that what the women who stepped off the course in year one achieved was 'Exploitation Escapism'. Their plight was temporary, whilst they have life and there is hope that they can complete at some point in the future and rise professionally. However, my child, they need to invest in self-belief and self-empowerment, they need to learn to push past their minor insignificant differences and UNITE. Our children often rely on others to advocate for them because they think they are weak. Their weakness is in their separateness, united, and I do not just mean in numbers, but in spirit, in purpose and in the cause that is greater than each individually, they would be an influential force to be reckoned with.

The lack of historical knowledge is a deficit they can no longer entertain. They must engage. Knowledge empowers. I tell you this my child, 'not to know is bad, not to wish to know is worse'. If only they could see, their ancestors were strong together, listen to them, go and learn from history, increase your awareness and listen to your intuition. My child, my own ancestors used to remind me, 'if we stand tall, it is because we stand on the shoulders of many ancestors.' My dear, I see you are tired, but I have an admonition for you, use this prose as you engage with our communities. You are primed for activism!

"How can we know we don't know, if what we don't know, we ought to know and what we now know is 'his-story'? But what we should know is 'our-story'. How can we tell 'the-story' of 'our-story' when 'his-story' is now 'our-story'? How can we even begin to tell 'our-story'?

Do we then accept 'his-story' as 'our-story'? No, we cannot and should not, and ought not accept 'his-story' as 'our-story'. Then to revisit our past we must. Then to revisit our past we must.
To reclaim 'our-story' we are challenged.
To rewrite 'our-story' for posterity is our task.
So abibiman Sankofa.
Se wo yirefi na se wo Sankofa, yen kyi.*
It's not a shame to revisit the past when you have forgotten.
Neither is it forbidden to learn from the past.
It's not a crime to borrow from the past.
Neither is it taboo to emulate aspects of the past.
So "abibiman Sankofa".
Se wo yirefi na se wo Sankofa, yen kyi."
Perhaps then, by consulting the past, we can create the future."
(Abdulai 1995:49)

* (Akan meaning: it is not a taboo when you forget aspects of your culture to revisit the past and fetch that aspect of who you are.)

Sankofa: "I've enjoyed and dare I say, I'm proud of this project. It gives us a voice. Though Gandin (2006) would argue: "it is not that the subalterns are not speaking; voices are being raised, but mainstream discourses have constantly overpowered them" (p. 217). This work encourages others to dialogue and hopefully respectfully listen. Workplaces and HE are fully aware, as Gandin (2006) again argues:

"there are other ways to organise education and it is far from impossible to implement them" (p. 217). Education providers must choose to move away from the 'one size fits all' approach to education and this discursive work is one of the 'weapons' for deconstructing traditional approaches experienced by many minority groups.

It is important that we provide this counter argument to education providers as, in the words of Gandin (2006):

"the rhetoric of neoliberalism insists on the importance of education to solve the problems of capitalism…yet education has failed to efficiently provide workers with the appropriate skills" (p. 219).

The findings of work have proven that assertion to be true. That's another reason this work is so important. As I come to the closing of this reflection, I recall reading a piece from Carter-Black (2008) she painted such a visualisation for me as she discussed her PhD journey, she said:

"I was immediately immersed in a group of women with whom I would share a range of events and all the various and commensurate emotions. There was laughter, camaraderie and tears of joy. We shared almost unparalleled levels of anxiety, weariness, exhaustion and sheer unmitigated terror. At times, it seemed that we redefined the term *stressed out.* Huddled together, connected at the hip, we clawed our way through a process experienced by a very small percentage of the world's population – even smaller if you are a Black woman" (p. 118).

"I longed for the opportunity of those shared experiences but I had to settle for the dream and the hope that not long from now, Carter-Black's lived experience will be many Black women's educational realities here in the UK. Transformative education should never be easy and for that very reason it should never be experienced in isolation. For me, it's been a very lonely journey… I'm so tired, Akoko Nan, would you mind if I just stay here and sleep a while on your shoulders…Black women's activism is… the snooze is over.

Sankofa awakes.

Postscript

This study with 'our' narratives and stories has been set in what is classified as the post-colonial, post-modernist paradigm. I remind myself of the single word that has fuelled and sustained me throughout the years of this project. The word Sankofa. Sankofa from the Akan tribe in Ghana, means: 'go back, learn from the past, then move forward.' Autoethnography, as an approach for writing up this study supported my aim to engage with the past. Bochner (2014) posits:

> "You can't bear the thought of losing the past or making it disappear as it did for your parents. The mission of all story tellers is to keep history alive but it's not your own it's the calling of all storytellers to go back and reclaim the past, pay attention this time, figure out what you can do with your stories, keep memory alive; make it meaningful. There is no reason to relive the past unless it can help you to anticipate the future. We seek a more just world in which to live" (p. 2).

The past has produced much learning about the lived experiences of Black women's experiences in the nursing profession within Britian's NHS. One of the most important lessons from the past has been the example of what Black women facing social, professional and structural injustices can accomplish when they become co-constructors of their liberation. Education with interconnectedness must be our ticket out of some of our personal, mental and institutional incarcerations. Black feminist stance offered me the opportunity to do something not generally done in nursing in the UK. To make the voices of Black women the dominant voices, to unmute them, to centralise them, to listen to them and make sense with them.

The Assistant Practitioner's role has already been superceded by the Associate Nurse's role. What this means for the current APs who are still seeking their band 4 position is not known. This study has explored the lived experiences of a small cohort of Black British and Black Caribbean HCAs who had undertaken the 2-year part-time fd programme in a Midlands University whilst working in an NHS Trust in the West Midlands. In my role as researcher, I accept that this study has its limitations as the generation after me will have additional histories to unearth and revisit. For example, I have used Black Feminist Stance but the Womanist movement is starting to question why my and previous generations have failed to include some of the other intersects of oppression such as sexuality. This work is unfinished, I understand that the thesis must end, however, my commitment to social action means that this is merely the end of this thesis.

For now, I have fulfilled the aims of this study (see pages 12-13) which were to: Return to past literature to explore Black women's experience of nurse training and professions in the NHS.

To give voice to Black women who are working in low-skilled, low paid roles whose voices are absent from the dominant discourses in nursing education in the UK. I have engaged with Black British and Black Caribbean women's experiences of engaging in the Foundation Degree course through work-place learning. I have used Black Feminist Stance with open interviews as a transformative approach to centralising the voices of Black women. Penulitmately, this studies theorectical framework is autoethnography showcasing the stories of the women in a drama which positions them in fictional settings coalescing their lone voices providing a vison of what could be. The ethnodrama utilises the embedded and embodied stories and makes public, accounts that have been submerged. Finally, rather than labelling the NHS's structures as racist, this project has chosen to question rather than name in our efforts to make sense of the Black women's experienes. It asks questions of Black women, the NHS, the HEI and the funders of work-place learning. The above has been the contribution of this thesis

However, the work continues. I am committed to speak to the NHS Trust, the university and the funders of the fd opportunity with a view to ascertaining how the learning from this study can inform and influence the new Associate Nursing programme. I will endevour to support Black Nurses to explore ways they can become interconnected thus influencing their own professional liberation. One of the approaches that should be considered is the role and responsibilities of educators to ensure that the delivery of education contributes to life transformations. That educators strive to make education not only accessible, but relevant, ensuring that all groups who access HE can relate and feel included. Considerations need to include representation, as well as differentiated learning styles and approaches. This thesis presented as an ethnodrama I hope will live on through dramatisation in a range of settings and for radio. The methodological approach most certainly renders this work more accessible that a traditional or conventional thesis. It is my hope as researcher that my niece who is currently undertaking her nurse training will one day revist this 'past' work to inform how she and those of her generation build and continue to professionally advance in the NHS of the future. Koro-Ljungberg (2016) helps me to articulate my justification for not susbscripting to a conventional ending, she asserts:

> "Conclusions and endings are likely to imply the final word, complete stops and loss of beginnings. Rather than writing about concluding thoughts, I want to direct readers' attention to productive 'failures' of unfinished research, since without a conclusion I am failing to conclude my text, my thoughts. I also fail to provide you my readers a way out, a reason to stop reading, interacting and thinking…Productive failure has to do with partiality and absence. Something about the research and researchers' / participants' interactions is still to come and to be continued and extended" (p. 101).

"Koro-Ljungberg's quote encapsulates my final deviation from thesis writing tradition so accurately… this junction in the thesis simply determines the end for now".

A

P

P

E

D

I

C

E

S

Glossary

ACE	Active Centralised Empowerment
AP	Assistant Practitioner
BB	Black British
BBC	British Broadcasting Association
BC	Black Caribbean
BFMS	Black Feminist Methodological Stance
BME	Black Minority Ethnic
CCU	Coronary Care Unit
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
DVD	Digital Video Disk
ESN	Educationally Sub Normal
FD	Foundation Degree
GNC	General Nursing Council
HCA	Health Care Assistant
HDU	High Dependency Unit
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institution
ICT	Information Computer Technology
ICU	Intensive Care Unit
JGTNA	Jamaica General Trained Nurses Association
MA	Masters of Arts
NHS	National Health Service
NMC	Nursing and Midwifery Council
OBE	Order of the British Empire
RCN	Royal College of Nursing
SEN	State Enrolled Nurse
SRN	State Registered Nurse
TAP	Trainee Assistant Practitioner
UK	Unitied Kingdom
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisations
USA	United States of America
WP	Widening Participation
WPL	Work Place Learning

PAGE EIGHT   THE DAILY GLEANER, SATURDAY, JUNE 26, 1948

Today's Thought:

UK Hears 2,000 West Indians About To Sail

Assurance Asked

BITU Demands May Lead To Showdown

The Daily Gleaner

KINGSTON, JAMAICA

SATURDAY, JUNE 26, 1948.

DO IT NOW!

An Example

Jamaican Governor?

Poss Cadet Test

Gov't. Again Defeated By Lords On Nationality Bill

LONDON, June 25—(Reuter)—The mainly Conservative House of Lords defeated the Government on two further Opposition amendments to the Britain's Nationality Bill last night, one the vote of 60 to 20, the other, on its relation to Eire.

'Making Havoc'

Amendment Moved

Additions Made To Statutes Of The Order Of The British Empire

FROM PAGE ONE
British Call Out Troops In Berlin

FROM PAGE ONE
May Pen Citizens' Move To Test Bridge

FROM PAGE ONE
Dewey Seen Next President Of U.S.A.

Saviets Urge

Not Liked

Educational Muddle

By T. E. Hughes

4 Days A Week

FROM PAGE ONE
Bevin Plunged Deep

CURRENT ITEMS

FROM PAGE ONE
Seabrook Farms Want No More Workers

Famine Menace

FROM PAGE ONE
Worker Drowns In Water Supply Basin

'NO SERVICE WITHOUT STANDARDS' GRADUATE NURSES TOLD

Library to be removed

Teachers course successful

Ward Sisters' course

REX MORGAN, M.D. —

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS

To Sell

Motor Vehicles

NOTICE

NOTICE

ASTHMA MUCUS
LOOSENED FIRST DAY

Famous marble for export again

for extra satisfaction

REACH FOR...

Captain Morgan rum

SUNDAY CROSSWORD PUZZLE
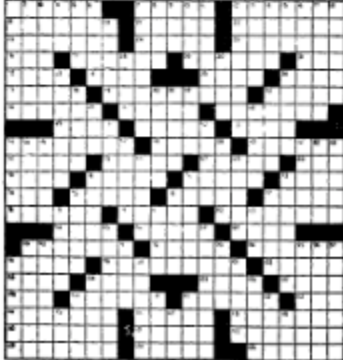
ANSWER TO THIS PUZZLE WILL APPEAR NEXT SUNDAY.

COLONIAL STUDENT NURSES IN TRAINING

by a Special Correspondent
of the "Times British Colonial Review"

Systems stopped

Government policy

Territories benefit

Purposes

Unsuitable

Problem of Standards

IT'S O.K.

IT'S Kelly's CARBONATED BEVERAGES

USED CAR BUYS

1956 HILLMAN MINX
1955 AUSTIN A50
1955 PREFECT
1955 HILLMAN CALIFORNIAN
1955 HUMBER HAWK

E. M. MARTIN (SUCCS.) LTD.

Japanese factory for Mexico

Well, what d'you know . . .

Nursing Education in the UK

2017 The Associate Nurse qualification was introduced

2013 Nursing became a full graduate profession

2009 The Assistant Practitoner's role was introduced for those working in 'assistant' roles. This was gained through the completion of a 2 year undergraduate programme. A foundation degree in Health and Social Care

1989 saw the commencement of **'Project 2000'** which included: the **abolition** of the **SEN role** therefore **SENs undertook conversion courses to register**. The **nursing diploma was introduced at level 5. The nursing degree was introduced at level 6.** Both were 3 year programmes with 50% work placement and 50% at university. **Diploma and Degree nurses were students who had to be supernumeray to the shift.**

With the abolition of the SEN and Auxiliary roles the **Healthcare Assistant role was introduced initially requiring no qualifications , therefore no registration.**

1919 saw the passing of the Nurses' Registration Act. Nursing registration was set up in **1921.**

State Registered Nurses undertook a **3 year** course to gain registration. **State Enrolled Nurses** undertook a **2 year** course and were placed on a roll.

Interview Transcript – with Pseudonyms

Sankofa: I'm going to ask you just to sort of set the pace really and to set the base of our discussion, can you tell me about where your parents are born? Give me a bit of information about your parents.

Nsoromma: My mom's from …. and my dad's from … in Jamaica but he has like passed away now.

Sankofa: ah.

Nsoromma: I don't know too much about them but I know that my dad was a …, and that he did talk a little a bit about his background and stuff but not too much I think, I don't know…

Sankofa: ok

Nsoromma: Errm... we did try and discuss it a lot but, I think, I don't know what happened in my dad's passed and stuff like that but its just that he did not really talk much and stuff.

Sankofa: And what did your mum do?

Nsoromma: She when to school with nuns

Sankofa: Oh!

Nsoromma: Yes! Not a good experience but yes, all girls' school with nuns.

Sankofa: Okay and then when she left school what did she do?

Nsoromma: And when she left school she was in a lot of children's homes and that. She had little bits of problems and stuff like that, but then she's like worked in …, she's worked in a nursing home, errm… she's done a lot of things as my mum and my dad worked like fixing train tracks and stuff like that

Sankofa: Oh, okay

Nsoromma: …. see that's not too bad …, been alright.

Sankofa: Huh huh - okay. Tell me about your ethnic background, how would you describe your ethnicity?

Nsoromma: Ooh...errm...that's a tough one. To me I'm mixed in other words, I've got a bit of me mum and a bit of me dad (she laughs), so in other words take me as you find me. If you don't want to talk to me, don't talk to me. If you don't want to mix with me, don't mix with me, I'm one of a kind. I'm alright with some people and some people just don't want to know. I think it's like you say with colour and stuff so…

Sankofa: Do you find that?

Nsoromma: Sometimes yes.

Sankofa: Even at work?

Nsoromma: Not too bad at work but you can get the odd errm..what's the word, the odd jibes said behind your back and stuff like that, but it don't bother me anymore you get to used to it.

Sankofa: Tell me how old you were when you started your foundation degree:

Nsoromma: About 38.

Sankofa: Okay, right and do you know how the course was funded?

Nsoromma: Errm all I knew about it is that we get like different emails on the intranet and one of my Ward Sisters must have found it and just more or less asked us would anybody like to apply and stuff like that. So I applied anyway, they kind of pushed me because I was like more confident in doing things, so I thought I'll have a go at this and errm it was just that I applied and I then did not think I would get anything back and then I got a letter back saying just to come for an interview for a chat with coffee and stuff, so I thought well, take it, lets go and have a chat (she laughs).

Sankofa: Tell me about the interview

Nsoromma: I had one interview with two of the girls from the Learning and Development. We just had a chat and they just more or less asked me why would I want to do the foundation degree and what job I was in and stuff like that and I have ever done like a degree or any kind of that or have I been to uni before, which I thought was scary at first. Induction, well, that's easy for me. Three little words…didn't have one!"

Sankofa: What was scary?

Nsoromma: I don't know. It's just that I've been out, went to school did what I had to do, went to college for a bit and then it was just the thought of the erm… studying again I think. I'm good at studying but anything to do with reading and it kind of goes in my brain for so long and then that's it, I have to put it down because I can't concentrate no more. It was a challenge so I don't know.

Sankofa: What's your job role at the minute?

Nsoromma: Erm… Healthcare Assistant.

Sankofa: How long have you done that?

Nsoromma: 10 years - my longest 10 years ever

Sankofa: Laughs

Sankofa: Was that on the same ward that you are on now?

Nsoromma: Errm no. I was at … until last August and then we moved over to … with the configuration so its two wards from …, two wards from here and we just more or less merged together and one's the trauma and one's electives.

Sankofa: Are you settled?

Nsoromma: (Sigh) I was but it's much harder over here. It's just like there seems to be no team work or anything and it's just because we don't wear a blue uniform, it feels like we don't get noticed anymore.

Sankofa: You don't get noticed?

Nsoromma: Yes. It just seems like we're the dogsbody and we got to do everything and stuff like that. To me I feel like because I'm not a nurse, I've got to do all the donkey work in other words and I really don't think it's really good.

Sankofa: Do you think that the patient's feel like that too?

Nsoromma: The patients have noticed a lot from now to when we was at …. It's like while they're waiting for operations they sit and they watch and they listen to everything, because they can say to us sometimes 'oh you're always on your feet all the time, don't you ever get break, don't you need the Staff Nurses helping you' and I thinking, at first I did not really recognise and the I thought nah the're are just sitting there and watching.

Sankofa: Have you ever addressed with any of the...

Nsoromma: Every time we have a meeting we have PDRs with team leaders I've brought it up. I think all of the Health Care Assistants on my unit have brought it up, so I think after the PDRs something gets done sort of maybe now, but we have all addressed it.

Sankofa: What do you mean when you say something gets done?

Nsoromma: Errm it's just, I don't know, it's just (she goes quiet), we just like we are let down, we just don't feel like we work in a team anymore. It's frustrating.

Sankofa: What would you like to change though?

Nsoromma: (sighs) Erm... if it was me, say if I was a Staff Nurse, I wouldn't treat my Health Care Assistants the way some of the Staff Nurses treat them.

Sankofa: Give me an example

Nsoromma: Well its like, with us it's like, yes, the Staff Nurses are well we've got this to do and we've got nursing things to do, but I'm thinking but it doesn't matter everything is a nursing thing, right down to the basics. It's so frustrating when you are with patient and you've got about 2 or 3 buzzers going. It's like they are just sitting there watching them. We have watched, a couple of us last week stood at the top of ward and actually watched them sat there not answering the buzzer. It was so frustrating (Evande groans), we're just trying to sort it all out now. I think the Matron's going get in p….

Sankofa: Are you hopeful?

Nsoromma: We'll see what happens.

Sankofa: Are you hopeful?

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Nsoromma:	(blows) I'm hoping, but it's that frustrating sometimes I don't even want to come to work anymore.
Sankofa:	Really?
Nsoromma:	Yes. So now its just that get up, go to work, do what I've got do and go home. That's how I feel.
Sankofa:	You don't enjoy your job now?
Nsoromma:	I do and I don't. I do because of my patients but staff wise no. I would just rather go in, make sure my patients go through surgery, do their recovery, go home and I go. That's how I feel now.
Sankofa:	I'm going to shift you from work for a little bit and take you back to secondary school education.
Sankofa:	Tell me a little bit about secondary education.
Nsoromma:	Errm…All my schooling was in … Errm my secondary school weren't too bad actually. To me now I feel confident in doing things and approaching people and saying what I've got to say. When I was a school I didn't I kind of closed everything in and did not want to say nothing, just let it all go above my head and stuff like that, but then again, since my dad's passed away, I think my voice has just come out now.
Sankofa:	What happened?
Nsoromma:	I don't know it just.. I went through a really bad patch. When my dad passed away it was like I closed in, I didn't want to talk to nobody and then one day I went to work and actually broke down in front of everybody, then I went to counselling and I then I thought, nah, this isn't happening and its just like he was there saying well don't bottle it all up just let it all out and I've just gone crazy now. It's like I'm not standing for nothing and if you don't like me don't talk to me, but I'm going to have my say.
Sankofa:	And has it got you in to any trouble?
Nsoromma:	Not at the minutes
	Both laugh
Sankofa:	Oh, that's good to know. Did you get any qualifications at school?
Nsoromma:	Ohhh... I did but I they weren't very high qualifications. My science weren't too good but I did not like science any way. I think I got Cs and Bs I think on my Maths and my English and I did, errm... what else did I do? I did like Health and Social Care, but at school they called it community care, but you have your passes, distinctions and merits and stuff like that, but I got a top mark in that because I think with that, caring was what I wanted to do.
Sankofa:	And you knew that from school?
Nsoromma:	Yes

Sankofa:	Right - what exactly did you want to do though as caring is quite wide?
Nsoromma:	Work in an hospital (laughs)
Sankofa:	Really?
Nsoromma:	God help me yes (laughs), but I wanted to work on the baby unit.
Sankofa:	What role did you see yourself playing?
Nsoromma:	Errm... I don't know, I just had this thing I've just wanted to work on a baby unit looking after all of the little babies.
Sankofa:	Mmm - did you ever try that? Did you ever pursue…
Nsoromma:	Well, I think what it was, with that I think when we visit the hospital. Where my mum lives the hospital's not that far from hers so we could go up to the hospital to visit family and that but you had to pass like a neonatal unit, so I'm like excited to have a look. And it's like this one time there was a little baby that passed away and the I thought, nah, can't do it no more and after that I did not want to know. I even to college to do a bit more of the course after the college, but no did not want to do it no more. It just really oh! can't have little babies die on me, no, and then after that I didn't. I thought no I've got to change my prospective to something else.
Sankofa:	And did you?
Nsoromma:	Errm… not really no. I had my daughter and my son and then I thought nah I've got to do something with my life.
Sankofa:	You mentioned college, tell me about college?
Nsoromma:	Errm... college weren't too bad actually but there you go studying again. I think once I got out of school I did not want to do no more. I thought my studying days were over.
Sankofa:	What did you do at college?
Nsoromma:	It was like a health and social care to get more merits and stuff like that, but I don't know, I think its either I couldn't concentrate or with the experience of what I wanted to do and how this little baby died, I just thought nah, I've got to do something different.
Sankofa:	So, did the baby die whilst you were on the course?
Nsoromma:	Not really, I think what it was, we went to visit families but because neonatal unit's where you can pass and I think there was a family there, but I were kind of young then, so you see a family and bereavements and stuff… and you. I think the bereavement bit; I didn't think I could cope with having to tell a family that their baby or something and I thought nah I can't do this.
Sankofa:	So did you finish your course a college?
Nsoromma:	No. After I while I sit back and think about it and sometimes I think I should have done this, I should have finished it off but I just didn't.

Sankofa: Hmm okay and did you then go on to do any studying in a work place or?

Nsoromma: No did not do anymore studying and that errm but when I moved to Birmingham I worked in a nursing home for I think it was about 3 or 4 years but then I needed a change of scenery, because it was like to me I was seeing the same people every single day I need something different and then I applied at City and then I got a job there. I'm just crazy me! (both laugh)

Sankofa: But you knew what you wanted didn't you? Okay. So, you told me that you saw the advert for the foundation degree and your...?

Nsoromma: My Ward Sister but she's not with us now but when we were at …, she more or less said that there's this application come up do you want to apply? So, we kind of looked at it and I thought, actually it took me about two days before I decided to do it, I thought shall I or shan't I? Because I thought to myself it's more studying and I haven't studied for so long and would I want to do this. Then after a while I just thought, no, my kids are older now, so I thought I need something so it was a challenge.

Sankofa: But you thought you would for the challenge? (Nsoromma: yes) okay.

Nsoromma: It was a challenge but not a very good challenge.

Sankofa: Tell me about it.

Nsoromma: For the first couple of months just getting used to it (HE), you know it was exciting because I thought to myself it's a new thing. I'll get a bigger qualification out of this, meet new people and then it was just like the work load hit. It's so much assignments, everything was getting done but I thought it was just like one assignment after another and that and just before the end of the year…the first year, it was like I had problems with a parent being ill and I couldn't concentrate. It was like uni's focus gone out the window 'cause I needed to concentrate on my parent but I still got the work in. It's just that I think what knocked me was exams. I'm not good at exams but I tried. Because I think they gave me three goes and to me I thought I had completed two goes and I had another go. However, I think with having all this pressure with my parent, I lost track… they told me that I had 'failed' three attempts and I couldn't carry on with the course. I did explain to them the situation of my parent being ill and passing away and blah, blah but to me it was like…'oh well you 'failed' the course now, bye - see you later'. I didn't feel I was getting any support or anything

Sankofa: But what about when you failed the first-time what support did you get then?

Nsoromma: Errm... I don't think I really got much support, just more like 'oh you've failed the course, just more studying and do this, do that and the other' so...

Sankofa: Did you know where to go, what to do?

Nsoromma: Well I had a few my friends on the course so we tried to get in little groups and help each other out and stuff, which sometimes worked, but I think with me and exams, if it was done, like it was done in two parts for the whole day, so I had one in the morning and one in the afternoon and it was the afternoon bit, it's like the written one. Practical ones I'm fine but its written exams I just like.

Sankofa: What is it about them?

Nsoromma: The anatomy (both laugh). It covers everything down to what …. you live or like your intestines and bits of your insides of your stomach, the bones in your legs and the skull and feet. At first I thought yes, you've got to this exam. When I did it a second time I thought why are we having this exam? Am I actually going to use this in an actual work place? Because when we was at work and we had students that come to the placement, they even said 'why is your course so hard, we've never had anything like this. Their booklets were easier then ours and I thought my gosh! So… that kind of put me off a bit but I carried on, it's just that I felt like I did not get no support.

When I 'failed' the first time, I don't think I really got much support. Just more like 'oh you've 'failed 'the first exam, just more studying so…well I had a few of my friends on the course so we tried to get in little groups and help each other out and stuff which sometimes worked. But I think with me and exams, if it was done…like it was done in two parts for the whole day...so, I had one in the morning and one in the afternoon and it was the afternoon bit, it's like the written one. Practical ones I'm fine but its written exams. I just like…the anatomy. It covers everything down to what …. I thought why are we having this exam? Am I going to use this in an actual work place? When we were at work and we had students that come to the placement, they even said 'why is your course so hard, we've never had anything like this? Their booklets were easier than ours and I thought, my gosh! So…that kind of put me off a bit but I carried on, it's just that I felt like I did not get no support.

I think when it got to the case of 'oh well you've 'failed' the course' and then I'm asking well how can I appeal and stuff? 'Well you've got to fill out this form and that form.' I thought I've never done this before, this is a new thing to me. They don't guide you…to me, and I'm not being funny, but to me it felt like looking at my colour and saying 'naah sod ya' because I am not the first person. There's a few…there's a couple of Afro-Caribbean girls that have been to the course before or on my course that have really felt like that too.

Sankofa: So after the first year did you go into the second year at all?

Nsoromma: I was told I'd been withdrawn and stuff like that. I appealed, it's just like a waiting game and then they reject you. They said I lost the appeal, so I thought fine, I've lost the appeal, get my head together. I did my assignments, yes, but that's what's really frustrating as well… I passed the assignments but when it got to the exam, because I 'failed' the exam they did not want to carry me on. But I thought you could have at least said 'oh well, carry on the next year and we'll do the exam at the end or something or one part of the exam now and another part at the end' but no".

Sankofa: Who supported you with your appeal?

Nsoromma: Errm my tutor helped me fill out one of the forms that you have to appeal with and send them. It's just like a waiting game and then them to like reject you. So, after I while I just, I don't know, I just felt like there was nothing there, it's like once you fail the course or something you just get pushed aside. It's like the girls that was on the course that I was one and the one after, its like they had trouble and stuff like that. They wasn't being recognised and then, I don't know, I said its either us or the unit.

Sankofa: What do you mean by us?

Nsoromma: I just thought it is us that we are not doing something right or they just don't want to teach us or anything like that.

Sankofa: Did you ever sense that whilst you were on the course?

Nsoromma: I think with certain lecturers I did after a while because its not like the same thing came up, it was like you would have a couple of lecturers which were alright and one that just did not want to know. It was like I think I'll fail her today or I might pass this person today, but I don't know, it's just studying and stuff like that now, I just think to myself why do I bother? Shall I carry on or try and do something different and I think well why? because of my bad experience that I had before.

Sankofa: But you passed all your assignments?

Nsoromma: I did my assignments yes but that's what's really frustrating as well, is that I passed the assignment but when it got to the exam, because I failed the exam they did not want to carry you on. But I thought you could have at least said 'oh well, carry on the next year and we'll do the exam at the end or something or one part of the exam now and another part at the end' but no. They've even got a leaflet in our Staff Room now asking if anybody else wants to further their career, so I thought well I'll just email tutor because he's running it, just to see if I could carry on where I left off or start a fresh and he says because I've withdrawn or failed I can't do it but he's give me some other degree or something to do, so I will have to look in to that and see what it is.

Sankofa: Did you get credits from university?

Nsoromma: Erm... I did but because of the exam there weren't enough credits to pass that whole year, which I think to myself I've done all this work and it's like not being recognised but I thought I'll keep the work because it will come in handy one time.

Sankofa: Tell me about the lectures you attended.

Nsoromma: The lectures weren't too bad. It was an experience (Evande laughs). Nah the lectures were okay but I think with me, when you give you like your assignment booklets and stuff I think it's the wording in there I get difficulty and frustrated with. So, its like they'll tell me and it goes in one ear and out the other and then they I'll have to meet with my tutor and make him explain it to me in different way, then I know what its all about because otherwise I just think 'Oh my god - what have I let myself in for'.

Sankofa: You said you met with other people from the Trust (Nsoromma: mmm), did you like form a support network?

Nsoromma: There was a few of us that did, I think it's not so much the errm... because we had a group that did it the very first time and then I think there was another two groups, there was another group and my group and then there was the groups after that found it difficult and it was like they was asking other people in the groups before how did they find it and what did you do and stuff like that, but we did try and give each other some support, like, say if I passed an assignment I would say well I don't know if the assignments going to be the same but here's my work if you want it, just have a look and just take bits out of it and stuff like that and we kind of got on okay. I can still keep in touch with most of them anyway, so it's not too bad. Most of them are at City some of us are over here.

Sankofa: And did they finish? The ones you were…

Nsoromma: Erm ...a couple of them didn't, they failed. Erm... (Sankofa: failed what?) I haven't actually spoke to them like … and a couple of them are still doing the course. I think it's next year or this year October or something that they finish.

Sankofa: So, when would you have finished?

Nsoromma: I would have finished October last year.

Sankofa: Okay, right

Nsoromma: So... but then there's another thing they tell all yeh if you apply for the foundation degree 'oh yes you can get a job out of it'. I've got somebody on my ward that still waiting to get a job.

Sankofa: So, she's completed the…

Nsoromma: Yes, she's completed the course but she's got to wait for a job. She's been told that when they put the advertisement she's got to apply for it, but she's frustrated as well, but I did say to her I said 'look at this way, it's a good thing not a negative thing. You may not have got a job here but the good thing is if you want to go somewhere you've got that to take with you.

Sankofa: So, what is she frustrated about?

Nsoromma: I think it's just that she's done all the work and been told there's a job and there isn't, but like I said to her I said 'don't worry about it, your time will come.

Sankofa: (laughs) - you're quite philosophical

Nsoromma: (laughs) Huhhuh - 'somebody will want you.

Sankofa: (laughs) so you got through the first year with the exception of the exam, what was it that drove you because you were saying that college didn't work for you?

Nsoromma: Do you know what? I don't even know. I just thought, I think because I know my kids have grown up I thought well let me just try something new and see if it will work for me. I don't even know what drove me to it. As if, for me, if I had thought because of the studying, I would have thought no forget it, I don't want to do it, but I thought nah. I think at first I thought yes, a degree, me the only person going to university, yeah... could be a good one!

Sankofa: (huh huh) the first only person in your family?

Nsoromma: Yes.

Sankofa: So, you would have been the first?

Nsoromma: Yes, I would have been the first one.

Sankofa: Right, okay

Nsoromma: So... but never say never.

Sankofa: No and it doesn't sound like you've finished.

Nsoromma: With me now I think I just biding my time (Sankofa: right). I think there is something out there for me just to clutch at and go and get it and I know I'll to do it, but it will come to me soon.

Sankofa: Let's say, apart from the exam, what was the biggest challenge you faced being at uni?

Nsoromma: Errm…I don't really know. Errm…I think my biggest challenge would have been doing the studying I think. If I could an easier way to get in there, pass and get my degree and gone, I would have done it (both laugh), but it was like the study, I think the studying because I actually thought at one time there's got to be an easier way than this.

Sankofa: Who were your supporters?

Nsoromma: I did have a mentor and an assessor on the ward but I think with my mentor, she was like on maternity leave so it was like I was getting shipped around to different mentors, but then my assessor, she just more or less helped me (Sankofahuh huh) and signed off my work and went through things with me and that.

Sankofa: So, was that a positive…?

Nsoromma: Yes

Sankofa: Did the university ever come in and work with your mentor or assessor?

Nsoromma: Errm... not really. They came in to have like their visits that they do have and see how I'm getting on and stuff like that, but it weren't on a regular, like a regular thing to talk to my mentor or assessor about.

Sankofa: What about the practical side?

Nsoromma: Because they say it weren't a work based course, you do most of the stuff in your row, but I took on extras like you have to bloods and cannulations and stuff. All other stuff I was doing before I started the course. (Sankofa: right). So, to me it was like we were doing this anyway but this has got to be with the course it can get signed off (Sankofa: yes), so to do like cannulations and bloods and stuff that was a challenge, I'm thinking 'god how am I going to this?'. That was a good experience because it was something new, but half the other stuff I was doing then and half the stuff that have been doing before I'm still doing now. (Sankofa: right). It's like they always look on me to help my colleagues and stuff like that - 'oh if you get stuck go and ask Evande she will help you'.

Sankofa: (Huh huh). And what support did you get from the Trust when the university decided to withdraw?

Nsoromma: Errm... I don't know. I don't think really got much support form the Trust.

Sankofa: What about the manager who recommended you?

Nsoromma: She was a little bit upset because I didn't finish but she understood the situation, but she was off with ill health anyway, so it was just like the Trust itself, it's just, they tell you to go on these courses and they'll help you and stuff but they don't. I've seen a different light to the Trust lately and that is when you finished the course you're meant to give them so much of your time but I'm thinking you don't help so why should we give you our time? (Sankofa: mmm) That is why lately I'm coming to work thinking forget, I'm coming to work and go home, I'm not going to give you nothing because you don't give me nothing back (Sankofa: mmm) so...

Sankofa: Do you think the Trust or the university could have done anything more to support you?

Nsoromma: I think to myself, if I was to advise somebody else about this course, I would tell them to look really, really deeply in to it and see if you are going to get the support you are going to get, because its like 'yeh the Trust has got this new thing going on with the help of the uni', but it's just like, the Trust is one thing, the university's another. It's like it just don't all come together and say well if you're having trouble here and your trouble there, its either you having trouble and get with it, I don't know. There's some of the courses I think the Trust need to really, really look into properly because it's just not, well from my point of view I thought I felt like I did not get no support.

Sankofa: And during the time, because you've mentioned your dad, are you okay to talk about it?

Nsoromma: Mmm (yes)

Sankofa: During the time when your dad was ill, did you inform the university?

Nsoromma: Yes, I did tell them because if anything was to happen I have to leave Birmingham and travel to … (Sankofa: right), which work was good with because they said to me 'anything happens just go, we sort you shifts just go if you need to go. But it was just like I think having my dad on my mind all the time and trying to concentrate with uni work, it just got a bit too much (Sankofa: right) so... I don't know. I mean I started snapping at family and stuff. It was either just leave me alone and let me do what I've got to do.

Sankofa: But what about uni? How did you inform them, what was put in place for you?

Nsoromma: Errm… I think with uni because I was only there one day a week anyway and it was only like on the actual days we have to go in and get work and do like our essays because otherwise we would have self directory days and days off. So, I weren't too bad in that way but I think it was just the studying, concentrating and worrying about my dad and then at that time I just usually keep things to myself and just do what I've got to do. If you're not listening to me I'm going to just bottle myself up but now I have to tell you.

Sankofa: Did you feel the uni wasn't listening to you?

Nsoromma: At first yes (Sankofa: right). Not when my dad was so much ill I think it was after. I think when it got to the case of 'oh well you've failed the course' and then I'm asking well how can I appeal and stuff? Well you've got to fill out this form and that form. I thought I've never done this before, this is a new thing to me because it seems like they show you around and stuff and tell you where to go, but they don't, to me, they don't show you the paperwork and stuff or tell you the people to go to appeal for anything and it's like if you appeal, you think 'oh well. To me, and I'm not being funny, but to me it felt like looking at my colour 'nah sod ya' because I am not for the first person. There's a few or there's actually a couple of Afro-Caribbean girls that have been to the course before or on my course that have really felt like that.

Sankofa: And did you meet and talk about it?

Nsoromma: Yes, because there's actually a girl that actually told me to get in touch with you - yes.

(Sankofa and student laugh)

Nsoromma: She was asking me for ages. She always asks me how do I get on and I asked her how do you feel and she said I just feel so tired and drained. That's all we ever did is just felt tired, drained and like we wasn't getting anywhere, so I don't know, but something will come new to me.

Sankofa: What message would you like to send to the people who funded this course because they paid for a year to fund it, what message would you send to them now?

Nsoromma: I think just don't bring a course in and say yes, we are going to take this course from some uni or from wherever else or whatever. They need to get together like we have normal study days. I think somebody from the Trust and the uni and anybody that wants to bring it, look into it more and have more opportunities for everybody because they say they are there for everybody but to me I felt like they wasn't.

Sankofa: Okay. What message would you send to the uni? What could they have done differently for you?

Nsoromma: Listen more I think and understand the different needs. Yes, I know they have to go by policies and university stuff and that, but you got to bend the rules one way or another or just give a little but I have learnt by my mistakes and won't be doing that again.

Sankofa: What mistakes do you think you made?

Nsoromma: I don't know. I just feel, I feel let down (Sankofa: huh huh). I feel like, well, if you can do it for a white person you can do it for us (Sankofa: hmmm). That's how I feel at work as well, I'm thinking I don't care what colour you are or what grade you are and everything, you need to treat people the same because I find it disrespectful.

Sankofa: What do you think they did for a white person that they did not do for you?

Nsoromma: To me, I think they get more support, more one on one in other words, and more say like explanations and stuff. I know not all of us are all brilliant, there's people that's got like dyslexia and stuff like that but like the wording in your booklets and stuff. Do it in plain English because these big words I do not understand. It used to take me about half an hour to find out what a big word was before I understood the question and I thought nah, just put it in plain English and with something that we all know, because half of us have not studied since we have been at school, because our course right now, compared to an actual nursing course, and I know what these students are going through with their nursing, is ridiculous. We used to always say that it was so much work that they have give us to do. Even they did not have that amount to do but then they still got to know the parts of the body and stuff, so I'm thinking well why is our course is so hard just to get a band 4 and a nurse's course is easier to get the band 5? (Sankofa: Mmm) So think like that and they need to really look into things more I think.

Sankofa: And what about work? What would you say to work? What could work do differently or do they need to do anything differently?

Nsoromma: Actually, my ward and the team I was with they've been alright with me, they have understood what I have had to get through. They have even said to me 'do you want some time out and do you want to refresh your brain and go back again or do you want to learn something different? It's like now, when they put this up again there was the support there, 'well if they are not going to let you go, try the course that they are giving you or do you want me to look for something else for you? I said 'I'll let you know on that one.

Sankofa: It seems like they believe in you.

Nsoromma: Mmm. It's like when we have PDRs and we have one on one's before I came over and my Ward Manager has always said 'why don't you be a nurse? I'm saying 'no'. She asked, 'well give me a reason?'. I said, 'because I know what all you nurses are like'. I said, 'don't be offended but half of them are lazy, don't want to do nothing and expect us HCAs to do everything', so she said 'ok, but next time you do your PDR will you think about it and would I think about it'.

Sankofa: But would you be the same nurse as them though?

Nsoromma: To me I don't think I could because it's like to me, how I've done it, I'm an outsider looking in, so I know exactly how they treat the rest of their staff and that is one thing I couldn't do.

Sankofa: So, would you not consider being nurse just so you could make change?

Nsoromma: But would that change ever happen? That is why I'm really thinking, it just like say if we have ward meetings and its seems to be same thing that comes up every ward meeting. We had one yesterday and I just sat there and I listened because I was not going to say nothing to see if anything changed and nothings changed, so there we go. There is still time (she laughs) I might change it.

Sankofa: You earlier said you would tell anybody thinking of going to do this course to look in to it

Nsoromma: To really, really think about what they want to do (Sankofa: what?) because it does exactly change your prospective in life and change you whole life inside and out and including your family. Luckily, I have had good family support and that because 'my partner and kids were great, they understood that I had this 'opportunity' and the work had to be done. They were really supportive. There's people that's been on the course that's had divorces and had to move out their house and I'm thinking in a way I'm so glad that never happened to me.

Sankofa: Mmm

Nsoromma: Because it is a hell of a lot of hard work. I've cried so much doing this course its been unbelievable. But I really would tell them to really, really think about it, just don't jump in to something just because of a degree or a higher band, because at the end of the day you may not get it. Or you could do something easier maybe lower band and you might get it, but hey girl its life.

Sankofa: Is there a symbol, an artefact or anything that links in your head to the journey that you have been on for the year?

Nsoromma: Hmmm. I don't know, not off my head. That's hard one that is! (Sankofaand Evande laugh)

Sankofa: Okay

Nsoromma: That's a really hard one!

Sankofa: And is there anything else at all that you would like to tell me about your year in a university doing a foundation degree?

Nsoromma: How much it's been a long, long journey.

Sankofa: Mmm

Nsoromma: And a long hard journey as well

Sankofa: Any positives?

Nsoromma: Positives for me; I'm glad I did it even though I did not get the outcome that I wanted but in a way, I am glad I did it, because its give me a chance to, say like if I didn't do it and I did come to a course that's going, I'm saying would I want to do that course? Now I've done it I think well yes, I didn't pass with what I have got to do but here's another chance of doing of it (Sankofahuh huh) and at least I know I what I'm putting my foot in to (Sankofa: yes). Because uni and the big wide world, its not like school where you can hide behind everybody, no, so I'm kind of, if I could do another course that involves uni again at least I know what I'm stepping in to (Sankofa: Mmm) and this time I will have my eyes wide open.

Sankofa: What would you do differently?

Nsoromma: (big sigh) Maybe do a little more research on the actual thing I want to do and where the support is if anything goes belly up.

Sankofa: That's been really insightful. Thank you.

Nsoromma: That's okay - you can come again!

(Both laugh)

Nsoromma: I've worked with different races. I have also been to college with different races, grown up with different races and went to uni and I think uni is the one where you know its just one person and another person and to me its every Afro-Carribbean person that I've known on that course has come to me and said that I haven't passed, they feel like their not getting the support and they don't know whether to carry on.

Sankofa: Do you know non-Afro-Carribbean people have done it?

Nsoromma: Yes. I've got one who's just finished now. I think the only she said was that she felt like one of the lecturers did not want to pass her, that was it (Sankofa: right) and that lecturer was a white lecturer (Sankofa:right). I have asked her how she had been on the course and she says the course has been fine, but they often say they have always felt like they have had no support or anything. And I thought do you know what? That's how I felt but I felt ten times worse because my dad passed away.

Sankofa: And did you ever think as a group you were going to go to them and talk to them?

Nsoromma: No really.

Sankofa: Why not?

Nsoromma: I think with me it was working different, I have to tell you am telling you. With uni I thought well are they actually going to listen? They are not going to see us after 2 years so are they really going to listen? That's how I felt, so I thought deal with it in my own way.

Sankofa: And do you think you own way was strong enough?

Nsoromma: No. I think if I'd had done this course right now I would most probably be in a different fix. I either passed it or thrown out for my mouth (Evande laughs), just stating the fact that I need support more (Sankofa: yes), so I don't know.

Sankofa: So, your dad's passing has given you courage and with that courage you would have dealt with things differently?

Nsoromma: Yes. I think if it was a bit further on and I would have done the course like now, then I would have had more strength more or less to say what I have to say

Sankofa: Mmm

Nsoromma: Oh well just look in to some new courses.

Sankofa: Yes and hopefully you'll go on and do really, really well.

Ethics Approval from Workplace

04 May 2013

Dear Ms Warren

 R&D Ref: ████████

I am pleased to inform you that ████████████████████████ NHS Trust have now issued NHS Permission (R&D Approval) for the above study. Please find attached the study approval letter, the hard copy is in the post to you for your records.

Should you require any further information please get in touch.

From: ██
Sent: ████████████████████████████
To: Warren Peggy ████████████████████████████████

Subject: ████████████████████ The impact on Widening Participation (WP) policies

Dear Peggy

Re: R&D ████████████ **- The impact on Widening Participation (WP) policies: an ethnographic case study of mature black British and black Caribbean women's perception and experience of foundation degree programmes and of Higher Education.**

The R&D Department here at ██████ has recently implemented ████ as our new database for recording of the Trusts research activity.   The information that we used to hold on our ReDa system has been migrated over to the █████ system and we are now in the process of data cleansing.

I am contacting you in the hope that you can provide an update on the progress of the above mentioned study for which you are identified as the PI in our records. In particular please could you confirm whether recruitment into the study was completed prior to the 1st April 2016. If any recruitment has taken place since 1st April 2016 then I will be coming back for more information.

If there are any problems or queries please do not hesitate to come back to me.

Many thanks

██████

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