

EDUCATIONAL SCHOLARS

Jaziea Farag is an award-winning Children's author, an Education Advisor for Wales for a Fostering Agency and Speech and Language Specialist Teacher. She is an Early Years and Racial Trauma Consultant and currently completing her PhD. Her research interests include creating feelings of belonging for families in Early Years settings as well as educational and vocational aspirations of Black and Minority Ethnic learners and the links with Racial Trauma.

She has been teaching for over a decade in Wales and formerly taught during the Educational Reform in Abu Dhabi and as a part of the Emotional Health and Wellbeing Team for a Local Education Authority. She is an active champion of Anti racist practice in education and works closely with DARPL to facilitate training for Governors, Practitioners and Senior Leaders to nurture their journey to anti-racism. A highlight of her career so far was being asked to set up the first Teacher Network for BERA.

During my years of teaching and now as a consultant my thoughts on the fundamentals of how children learn have stayed predominantly the same. I have always considered that children learn best when they feel safe and valued. I strongly believe that it is meaningless planning for learning unless you first plan how you are going to meet these basic needs for all children in your setting. To do that, I feel that practitioners need to focus not just on the resources, environment and learning experiences but the values, wellbeing and self-awareness of all the adults who are interacting with the little people in your care. I think we sometimes underestimate and undervalue the power of a positive role model and the impact of the connections they build with young people. I therefore always try to reflect on how I am feeling and my responses when I enter a classroom or setting as I truly believe that an enthusiastic adult that shows interest can really spark engagement and therefore learning. Another area of education that I always try to incorporate into my practice no matter where I am working is the involvement of the wider community around a child and ensuring that I am not working in isolation, this should include families and members of the community.

My first memories of school are great ones. Laughter, friendships and lots of outdoor play. I attended a Primary School with a high level of culture and diversity in terms of its pupils until I was 7, and then we moved out of the area, so I attended a very different school from Year 2 onwards. Moving to this school was the first time I became aware of my race and have vivid memories of the first day and several events that followed where I felt othered, alone or very 'on display.' Through the entirety of my education, I was never taught by anyone that looked like me and it is only looking back and reflecting, that I realise the impact that had on me personally and the influence it had on my teaching philosophy. It led me to really spend time when I was in the classroom planning for a diverse and inclusive education, but it wasn't always easy to find the information or resources particularly in Wales. This is when my interest in the family as a source of support and learning began and the quest to ensure that all children get to see themselves reflected in their education. A lot of my professional choices have stemmed from those values and this project looking at Educational Scholars has just filled me with joy and 'a-ha' moments as well as more questions. We need to give learners a fuller education so that they can make their own informed decisions.

Jaziea Farag



BELL HOOKS



BACKGROUND INFORMATION

bell hooks (1952 - 2021) was an American scholar, author, educator and activist. Her work mostly focused on race, class and feminism.

She grew up in the South of the United States, one of five children in a close-knit Black community.

hooks' early education took place in segregated schools, later moving in to schools where the majority of students and teachers were white.

Later on in her life she gained a masters degree in Literature, and became an author and lecturer in a number of universities including Yale and Stanford.

hooks chose for her name to be written in lowercase with the aim of drawing attention to her work rather than her name.

BELL HOOKS' WORK

bell hooks' work on education focused on the relationships, the connections and the environments we create as educators for children.

She believes that all children have the right to receive an equitable education.

"The classroom remains the most radical space of possibility."

(b. hooks)

hooks explored the links between gender, race and class and how these intersections can contribute to, and uphold oppression. She noticed that the education she received in segregated schools was deeply influenced by anti-racism. Hooks observed that her Black teachers taught with an emphasis on freedom, connection and transformation. When hooks started attending integrated school she noticed a shift in the education she received - it became more about learning and retaining information and understanding and following the social "norms" and rules.

From these educational experiences, hooks began to develop her pedagogy around education. She believed that the purpose of education is for critical thinking, reform and questioning.

She understood how important it is for adults to build meaningful and genuine connections with children. Discussing how contempt and shaming from adults can greatly impact how children learn and develop:

...sometimes shaming kids is like pressing a pause button, they never go beyond that moment in grade school when someone told them how dumb they were.

(b. hooks)

bell hooks' work encourages us to reflect on our curriculum, to use education as a space to make change and to not only support children to feel they are cared for but also to feel that they can create a world they can live in fully.

REFLECTIONS ON BELL HOOKS' WORK

What do you think the purpose of education is?



How does the curriculum you work with support children to be critical thinkers, to ask questions, to be curious and explore? Are there ways you can do more of this with them?



How do you build connections with the children you educate and care for? What impact do you think this has on them?



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