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**“Outsiders Within” Our Paradigms:  
Black Women Headteachers of the  
Windrush Generation**

# Black Women Leaders of the Windrush Generation

- The first Black head teachers in their local authority who came of age as school leaders in the 1960s and 1970s.
- Windrush Generation--African Caribbean immigrants who arrived in Britain before 1971



# Black British Feminism

(Mirza, 2009; Ali, Mirza, Phoenix, & Ringrose, 2010)

- Oppositional critical social theory for political empowerment and social justice.
- In the 1990s incorporated the shared colonial histories of African, Caribbean, and South Asian women in Britain who have come to be figured as “black” through political coalitions.

# Black Feminist Thought (Collins, 2000)

- Challenges the treatment of black women as objects of knowledge by valorizing them as agents of their own self defined knowledge.
- Collins argues that for Black women to become “insiders” in the system they are often forced to assimilate a standpoint quite different than their own.

# Methodology: Life Histories in Context

- **Archival research** on UK schools in the late 1960s and 1970s and race equality efforts through local history archives and mainstream and community newspapers
- **Interviews** with head teachers or family members/associates that focus on critical life events and their path to school leadership
- **Lives in context** which situate the narrative within the historical and geographic context

# Yvonne Conolly, Headteacher, Ring Cross Infant School, London, 1968



# Find a job, Gaining Promotion

- I lived in Swiss Cottage, Finchley, and they (ILEA) put me in South London. And these were all trials of how to cope with winter. How to get the right bus. How to get the connections....I would go down to South London to the office and then they would say "Well, we don't need a supply teacher (today)." (Yvonne Conolly)

# Yvonne Conolly, Ring Cross Infant School, London, 1969



# High Aspirations for Students

- It's giving the opportunity, real opportunity, to children, as I used to say, to *hit the ceiling*. I also want to hope that those children will use the learning well, particularly in equal opportunities terms. That they will actually be able to accept and respect people's cultures and religion... And regardless of what they go on to do, that will be central to them. (Yvonne Conolly)

# Betty Campbell

## Mount Stuart Primary, Cardiff, 1973



# Betty and Her Parents



# Butetown Students - 1975



# Promoted Black History and a Multicultural Curriculum

- There's a curriculum one has to follow but you can broaden it. It's entirely how you look (at it). They want the children to read, obviously, lots of books, so I said, "What's wrong with reading about somebody Black in history? What's wrong in reading an African fairy story? Or folk tale? You know?" It was an ordinary curriculum but as far as I was concerned I adjusted it to suit myself. (Betty Campbell)

# Gertrude Paul, Leeds, 1976

Gertrude Maretta  
Paul



A Woman of Many Firsts

Unveiling of the Civic Trust Plaque Honouring  
Mrs Gertrude Maretta Paul  
October 21st 2011  
Bracken Edge Primary School

# In the classroom at Elmhurst



# Gertrude Paul at the UCA (United Caribbean Association) Saturday School



# Findings

- Black women headteachers made creative use of their marginality or “outsider status” and viewed education as a transformative project
- Engaged in “micro resistances” (Aladejebi, 2015)
- Appointment as headteacher may signal interest convergence (Bell, 1980)