

“Every conversation starts with the child”

Black History Month – October 2020



Guest blog written by Rachel Lovelady

In Siobhan Maclean's 'Practice Curriculum' she features an exercise called **“Standing on the Shoulders of Giants”**.

In the exercise, Practice Educators ask their students to name a famous social worker. Take a minute while you're reading this, can you name a famous social worker? How do you know about them? What are they famous for?

She then suggests you consider how many famous nurses you can name? How many famous doctors?



When I googled “famous nurses”... These are the kinds of results which appear.

When I googled “famous social workers”, the fifth search item was a website where you could “*name and shame your social worker*”. The items above it were American actors and

presenters who also had a social work degree.



Florence Nightingale, Marie Curie... Nurses certainly need praise. They were heroes before the pandemic, they are even more so now! I did notice, however, that the nurses that appeared on the Google search were mainly white...

And I am also not suggesting that we, any of us, came in to our roles in Social Care looking for praise or fame!

But Siobhan's exercise is a thought-provoking one and certainly makes me wonder about how often we feel able to celebrate the achievement of social workers... It also lead me to question... have the experiences and achievements of Black professionals not been amplified or celebrated in our culture, in favour of a focus on white people?

To mark [Black History Month \(October 2020\)](#) I would like to use this blog to raise awareness of some inspirational black social workers. Hopefully it will mean you know their names and their achievements at the very least. For some of you, I hope it encourages you to think some more about our profession and the inspiring voices within it. I have included some further reading and recommendations if you'd like to research more...



Do you recognise this social worker?

Leymah Gbowee won a Nobel Peace Prize in 2011. She is a Liberian peace activist, social worker and women's rights advocate. She is Founder and President of the Gbowee Peace Foundation Africa, based in Monrovia.

Leymah was seventeen years old in 2003 when the Liberian Civil War started. She said it turned her "from a child into an adult in a matter of hours".

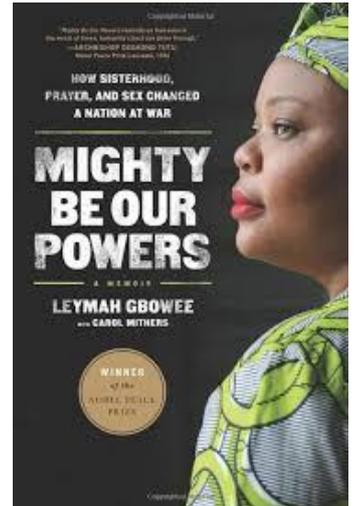
While the conflict happened, she became a young mother, trained as a social worker and as a trauma counsellor. Leymah is best known for leading a nonviolent movement that brought together Christian and Muslim women to play a pivotal role in ending Liberia's devastating, fourteen-year civil war in 2003. This historic achievement paved the way for the election of Africa's first female head of state, Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf.



You can read more about her here:

<https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/peace/2011/gbowee/biographical/>

There is a documentary film about her, *Pray the Devil Back to Hell*, and her memoir; *Might be Our Powers* was released in 2013.



Dr Prospera Tedam

Dr Prospera Tedam was the lead for Social Work Practice Quality at Anglia Ruskin University where she worked from 2016 – 2020. She is now Associate Professor of Social Work at the United Arab Emirates University.

Her research interests include human rights with a particular focus on children, cultural competency and legal frameworks.

She is the Chair of the voluntary organisation *Afruca* (Africans Unite Against Child Abuse, <https://afruca.org/>)

Dr Tedman is also a member of the Independent Families Returns Panel for the UK Border Agency.

In response to research which, Dr Tedman and others, had conducted in relation to black students' experiences of social work placements, Dr Tedman created the Mandela Model and associated cards, which are available at;

<https://siobhanmaclean.co.uk/publications/the-mandela-model-practice-cards>

This model focuses on how to open up and engage with discussions about diversity in practice education (to me, these questions are useful for working with everyone, not just student social workers). Here's an overview of the model;

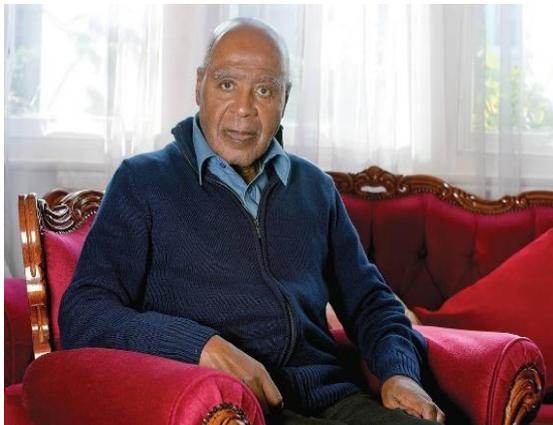
- Make time (How much time do you have? How much time does your student need? Pace, timing, how long is the placement, etc)
- Acknowledge Needs (Personal, team, organisational, learning)

- Differences (Gender, disability, social class, sexuality, faith, religion, power etc). By acknowledging differences, similarities will/should emerge.
- Educational Experiences (previous, type, size, goals, aspirations, value of education)
- Life Experiences (ill health, wealth, poverty, bereavement, war, relocation)
- Age (Direct or indirect questioning, does age matter, what are the implications?)



Siobhan Maclean's webinar on the topic of "Anti-Racist Social Work" featured a spotlight on Dr Tedman and is worth a watch.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tkgHLHxP-HY>



Paul Stephenson

You might have heard of the third and final social worker quite recently... When a statue of Colston – a slave trader – was pulled down in Bristol by protesters, many suggested it should be replaced by a statue of Paul Stephenson.

<https://www.bristolpost.co.uk/news/bristol-news/petition-calls-statue-bristol-civil-4202437>

Paul Stephenson won a Pride of Britain award and also has an OBE due to his civil rights activism. As a young social worker working in Bristol in the 1960s, he became aware that a Bristol based bus firm would not employ black or Asian bus drivers. Paul staged a 60-day boycott of the company. His campaign directly resulted in the company revoking their 'colour bar'. The day the campaign ended was 28 August 1963. That's the exact same day that Martin Luther King delivered his famous 'I Have a Dream' speech in Washington.



Paul then went on to achieve nationwide fame for refusing to leave a public house until he was served - in the face of their 'no blacks' policy. His resulting arrest and trial paved the way for the first Race Relations Act in 1965.

Paul is quoted as saying;

“Every generation has a duty to fight against racism, otherwise it will find its way into our country and into our homes. Addressing this challenge is our duty if we wish to seek a happy and prosperous existence”.

<https://www.prideofbritain.com/component/k2/dr-paul-stephenson-obe>

Please remember we have a Practice Forum on Diversity prompted by the Black Lives Matters Movement. If you would like to attend, please email me for an invite.

We also have a resource list saved in the Diversity folder within All Staff S Drive. Please do add to the list with any resources which you know of!

Please consider using your reading and reflection on this blog as evidence for SWE – don't forget to re-register if you haven't already. Let me know your thoughts on this and other blogs, using the PSW email address.

Principal Social Worker principalsocialworker@york.gov.uk

What is going well	What is not going well	What would you like to change
Comments		

Dallas

Rachel Lovelady, Advanced Practitioner
Dallas Frank, head of QA/safeguarding and PSW.