Background to Breaking the Silence Surrounding the Black British Life Experience

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The papers included under this subject heading – Breaking the Silence Surrounding the Black British Life Experience – offer insights into the research journey I embarked on in exploring the black British Caribbean life experience with a view to transformational change. In my MBA research (Bravette 1993) I surfaced silence and culture as central to understanding the black British Caribbean life experience. These two themes were carried into my doctoral studies at the Centre for Action Research in Professional Practice (CARPP) at the University of Bath. My commitment was to penetrating the silence surrounding race and the black identity through research while simultaneously developing conscious bicultural competence. I was awarded my PhD – entitled: Towards Bicultural Competence: Researching for Personal and Professional Transformations – in July of 1997 (Bravette, 1997).

My research began informally in 1959 when I first entered Britain (from Jamaica) as a child to find myself being identified and treated as a black member of the society. At the tender age of 5 my most significant first lesson was learning that it was not a good thing to be black in Britain. Struggling to identify the means by which I could avoid black treatment I chose to keep only white friends as a means of maintaining the patronage of white teachers. I arrived at the apex of this informal learning journey about race in 1982 when I returned to higher education focussed on reorienting my career away from mainstream organisational life and so racism and discrimination. I was, however, to find myself confronted by what I theorised as the social phenomenon of forceful black socialisation (FBS) in the HE context. FBS enabled me to make a distinction between the normalised black socialisation (NBS) occurring in the black social category and the forceful black socialisation (FBS) which is institutionally administered. The experience of FBS thrust me into an existential crisis of meaning the confusion and chaos of which triggered and underpinned the research journey which was to ensue.

The formal action research/inquiry journey of exploring the black British Caribbean experience began in the early 1990s with my MBA research. In these selected papers I share this journey through a series of conference papers delivered, as central to my research strategy of breaking the silence which surrounds the black British Caribbean life experience. Simultaneous to this was developing my own conscious bicultural competence as a generative legacy for future generations of descendants of enslaved Africans (DoEAs). The papers depict the journey of consciousness as shifts in my levels of awareness become evident as my understanding of the issues advance. Selected papers are shared up to 2007 when I perceive that conference papers have served their purpose and that it was now time for me to revise my research strategy.

References