



**2023 BLACK**

**LEADERS**

**IN**

**SCHOOL**

**PSYCHOLOGY**



# **CHARLES BARRETT**

## **PhD, NCSP**



**Dr. Charles Barrett went to St. John's University (Jamaica, New York) as a speech and English major.**

**Being a child who received speech therapy for a significant stutter from 1st through 6th grades, he wanted to help children like by becoming a speech pathologist. Alternatively, he would become a high school English teacher. He changed his major to psychology (no longer speech) and worked with Dr.**

**Raymond DiGiuseppe. Near the end of his undergraduate career, he was torn between continuing my education to become a teacher or to pursue clinical child psychology. Based on his interests (e.g., working with children in schools), Dr. DiGiuseppe told him about school psychology. He often say's that Dr. DiGiuseppe changed his life.**

### **Words of Encouragement For Future Black School Psychologists**

**His advice for future black school psychologist is to always remember why you entered the field.**

# Candice Aston PhD



**Dr. Candice Aston was exposed to the field of psychology as a first year graduate student pursuing a degree in counseling psychology. As part of her studies, she was required to take a course on psychological testing that was taught by a Black male school psychologist. He introduced her to the opportunities within the school psychology field and encouraged her to switch her concentration to school psychology. With nearly weeks before the application closed for program admissions, Dr. Aston quickly gathered her materials and was ultimately accepted into Duquesne University's school psychology program. She believes that representation in the field was so crucial to her entry in the field and hopes to continue to work on diversifying the profession.**

## **Words of Encouragement For Future Black School Psychologists**

**Dr. Aston advises future Black school psychologists to keep at the forefront of your mind the important role you will serve in positively impacting the lives of Black children and families. Don't underestimate your influence or the intellectual gifts you bring to your graduate training program as well as the districts or universities you serve.**

**Learn more about Dr. Aston at <https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=m17T5woAAAAJ&hl=en>**

# **CHARITY BROWN GRIFFIN PhD**



**Dr. Charity Brown Griffin was introduced to school psychology by her undergraduate research mentor. She had a passion for psychology, loved working with children, and came from a family of educators. Dr. Griffin's research mentor told her to consider school psychology as a career choice and from that moment she began researching graduate programs in the field. She has her undergraduate research mentor to thank for belonging to this amazing profession.**

## **Words of Encouragement For Future Black School Psychologists**

**Her advice for future Black school psychologists is School psychology, like the broader field of psychology, has historically, fallen short by engaging in professional practices rooted in racism. As such, you must be intentional on being your authentic self and do your best work to advocate for kids using a justice lens.**

# **NIKOLE HOLLINS-SIMS**

## **EdD**



**As Dr. Hollins-Sims neared the completion of her undergraduate psychology degree from Millersville University, she was uncertain of my next step. Her advisor, at the time, encouraged me to consider applying for graduate school in school psychology. She knew that she came from a family of educators and during class she often spoke about how education and psychology seemed to connect. Dr. Hollins-Sims never knew school psychology existed. She heard of school counselors, but never knew of a school psychologist. The process of applying and interviewing for graduate school slowly started to open her eyes to the potential of this career choice. It wasn't until she took her first introduction to school psychology course that she realized that this was the best choice for her.**

### **Words of Encouragement For Future Future Black School Psychologists**

**Dr. Hollins-Sims advice to the next generation of Black scholars and practitioners of school psychology, would be to never accept limits on your potential to heavily influence and impact the field.**

**Learn more about Dr. Hollins-Sims at [www.hollinssimsconsult.com](http://www.hollinssimsconsult.com)**

# **TAI COLLINS**

## **PhD, BCBA-D**



**Dr. Collins was originally a biology pre-med major at Loyola University New Orleans. After Hurricane Katrina, he started a mentoring program in local schools. He quickly became interested in the relationships between Black students and their teachers, who often did not look like them. Some teachers had great relationships with their students while others suspended their Black students often. Dr. Collins decided he wanted to help schools become a safer and more productive space for Black students, which led him to the field of school psychology!**

### **Words of Encouragement For Future Black School Psychologists**

**For future Black school psychologists he would share a few notes: (1) walk with authority and authenticity; (2) do not let impostor syndrome stop you from achieving your goals; (3) seek community and find your people; (4) practice strong self care while also being excellent; and (5) understand the rich identity that you should bring to your work.**

**Learn more about Dr. Collins at**

**<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/2372966X.2021.2021783>**

# **JANISE PARKER**

**PhD, LSP, LP, NCSP**



**Dr. Parker found out about school psychology in a happenstance way. However, when she learned about the field's commitment to supporting school-age students' academic, behavioral, social, and emotional development, she was convinced that this was the field for me! Once she observed all that school psychology could be through my field-based training and through the lens of my cultural identity and background, she saw a world of possibilities regarding the mark she wanted to make in this field.**

## **Words of Encouragement For Future Black School Psychologists**

**Dr Parkers advice to future Black school psychologists is that authenticity is key! When entering this field, it can be tempting to conform to the status quo as means of survival and perhaps to feel a sense of belongingness. However, she has experienced joy and a beautiful sense of fulfillment in this field by remaining true to herself. Pursue your interests! Trust your purpose! And be unapologetically YOU! When in doubt, find a mentor or community that will support you and cultivate your capacity to becoming your best professional self**

**Learn more about Dr. Parker here:**

**<https://education.wm.edu/ourfacultystaff/faculty/parker-j.php>**

# **SHERRIE PROCTOR**

## **PhD**



**Dr. Proctor first found out about school psychology from a flyer for the University of South Florida's School Psychology Program on a bulletin board at her alma mater, Spelman College.**

### **Words of Encouragement For Future Black School Psychologists**

**Her advice for future Black school psychologists is to Bring your authentic self into your work. There is a need for diversity of experience, thought, and backgrounds in our field. You are needed so do not shrink yourself.**

**Learn more about Dr. Procter at  
<http://justschoolpsychologists.weebly.com/>**



# **KEESHAWNA BROOKS**

## **PhD, NCSP, LP**



**Dr. Brooks was first exposed to school psychology through her mother, a special education teacher for over 20 years. She frequently visited her elementary school and enjoyed learning the flow of the academic year. she was also fortunate to meet her students during school events and get a sense of the inner workings of a school community. Her mother also introduced her to the school psychologist, who later became her mentors. He and other mentors helped Dr. Brooks connect shared experiences to what she may encounter in my training. Her mentor helped her understand what a day-in-the-life of a school psychologist was like. This made her feel better prepared to handle the start of her studies.**

### **Words of Encouragement For Future Black School Psychologists**

**Dr Brooks advises future Black school psychologists to find your voice and show up. As a Black woman, it is important for her to show up for other Black scholars and Black scholars-in-training. Whether it be attending conferences, participating in school psychology recruitment activities, or chatting with graduate students in the hallway, she aims to connect directly. To do this, she had to quickly become comfortable with meeting people where they are and be present with an actively listening ear. She urges Black emerging scholars and practitioners to find this comfort level and invite others to the proverbial table.**

**Learn more about Dr. Brooks at [https://www.thechicagoschool.edu/faculty-finder/byname/keeshawna\\_brooks/](https://www.thechicagoschool.edu/faculty-finder/byname/keeshawna_brooks/)**

# **KIZZY ALBRITTON**

## **PhD**



**Dr. Albritton's initial exposure to school psychology was during her work as a special education teacher serving middle school and elementary students. As a special education teacher, she had the opportunity to engage with the school psychologist frequently and the problem-solving aspect of the work really intrigued her. Dr. Albritton can recall having a conversation with my school psychologist at that time (Eliana Lesser) who was extremely supportive and strongly encouraged her to apply to the doctoral program, so she did. After entering the doctoral program, she had the opportunity to meet fellow Georgia State alum, Dr. Sherie Proctor. The mentoring that she received from Sherrie (and continue to receive) strongly influenced her decision to specifically pursue a career in academia.**

### **Words of Encouragement For Future Black School Psychologists**

**Dr. Albritton's best advice for future Black school psychologists would be to embrace the idea or thought of blazing your own trail. Moving the field forward will require Black scholars and practitioners who can delicately balance the exploration of new ideas while also acknowledging the efforts and hard work of the Black scholars and practitioners who have worked tirelessly to pave the way. When thoughts of doubt or fear begin to creep in (because unfortunately they will), just remember "If not you, then who?"**

# **SYCARAH FISHER**

## **PhD**



**Dr. Fisher had initial exposure to school psychology through a psychological testing class at her alma mater Hampton University. She was a psychology education major and felt that it was the perfect fit for her future goals. After graduating with her PhD in school psychology, she practiced in the schools for a few years prior to joining academia.**

### **Words of Encouragement For Future Black School Psychologists**

**The advice Dr. Fisher would give the next generation of Black scholars in academia is to remember that YOU belong and YOUR ideas matter. Remember to lift as you climb and give other Black scholars an opportunity to shine and grow. Know that even though you are in academia, you can make a difference in kids' lives through the community-based research you do and partnering/collaborating with local school districts. For Black practitioners, she would say be brave! Don't let the politics of the adults in the school shrink your advocacy for the youth who need it most.**

# **TAMIKA LA SALLE-FINLEY**

## **PhD**



**Dr Finley was exposed to school psychology when she taught special education and worked with the school psychologist.**

### **Words of Encouragement For Future Black School Psychologists**

**Dr. Finley advises future Black school psychologists to constantly remind yourself of your original purpose for getting into the field- and, to surround yourself with individuals who will help you cultivate that vision. The work is hard, the days are long but the impact you, as a minority practitioner or scholar is immeasurable. Also, and perhaps most importantly, protect your peace at all costs.**

**Learn more about Dr. Finley at [www.tlasalle.com](http://www.tlasalle.com)**

# **STACY-ANN JANUARY**

## **PhD**



**Dr. January initial exposure to school psychology was when she was an elementary school teacher in a school within an impoverished community in which nearly all students who attended were Black. One day she sought support with promoting the social, emotional, and behavioral success of a student in my classroom. The school psychologist assigned to our school met with her, conducted an observation, and shared some strategies with her that she could use in my classroom. It was during her three years teaching that she learned more about the inequities in access, opportunities, and outcomes for Black students and the systems that perpetuate those inequities. She loved students and teaching but wanted to learn more about how she could improve educational outcomes for Black students. That led her to pursue a PhD in school psychology.**

### **Words of Encouragement For Future Black School Psychologists**

**Her advice to the next generation of Black scholars and practitioners is to pursue your passions, prioritize being in inclusive and affirming environments in which you can thrive, build a supportive network of mentors and colleagues, and make time to engage in the things that bring you joy.**

# **OLIVER EDWARDS**

## **PhD**



**Dr. Edwards entrance into school psychology, some 35 years ago, emerged partly because of a mentor relationship developed with an older friend at his church. It was Dr. Bailey who shared with him the opportunities in school psychology. She was an outstanding mentor who recognized his abilities and inspired him to stretch beyond my self-perceived capacity to seek, not only success, but significance. Mentoring makes a difference!**

### **Words of Encouragement For Future Black School Psychologists**

**His advice to emerging scholars and practitioners is to engage in work that is meaningful. That is, unless the work is important, the return on investment in time and effort will result in inconsequential outcomes. All too often, emerging professionals underestimate their capacity and potential to positively impact society. We can reach beyond our perceived limitations when we are unafraid to risk the initial failure. The micro-failures (small setbacks) that result in learning can lead to macro-achievements (great successes). Meaningful work makes lives better.**

**Learn more about my scholarship here: <https://www.ucf.edu/news/new-1-25-million-ucf-project-addresses-states-critical-shortage-of-special-education-teachers-school-psychologists/>**

# **JANINE JONES**

## **PhD, NCSP, LP, HSPP**



**Dr. Jones was a first-generation prospective doctoral student, so she did not have any mentoring or guidance on determining the best fit for my career goals. She knew since 9th grade that she wanted to be a psychologist. She did not really know the difference between Counseling, Clinical, and School Psychology. She came across school psychology because of a brief mentoring moment with a scholar in counseling psychology. She was interviewing with a faculty in a counseling psychology program because She thought that it would be the correct aspect of psychology for her to provide mental health services to youth in schools and clinics. This person was incredibly gracious when he recognized that her goals were not compatible with counseling psychology. He said to her, “hey, let’s walk down the hall. I have someone I want you to meet.” He took her down the hall at the University of Texas at Austin and introduced her to the school psychology faculty who happened to be in the suite. They introduced her to the field of school psychology, offered her an interview on the spot, and soon thereafter she received an offer of admission. School Psychology was the right fit for her goals.**

### **Words of Encouragement For Future Black School Psychologists**

**Her advice to the next generation of Black scholars and practitioners is to constantly critique the status quo. As you learn the traditional practices in the field, interrogate why psychologists do things that way and whether such practices are likely to appropriately serve Black and Brown youth. Be unapologetic as you challenge the norm.**

**Learn more about Dr. Jones at [www.drjaninejones.com](http://www.drjaninejones.com) or (UW profile:) <https://education.uw.edu/people/faculty/jjones2>**

# Stacy Williams PhD.



**Dr. Williams stumbled into the field of school psychology. In college, she wanted to combine her love for education and psychology and explored both educational and school psychology. School psychology adopted her, in that she got accepted into her school psychology programs and got rejected by the educational programs she applied to. She stayed in school psychology because she was intrigued by the possibility of designing and implementing interventions in order to reduce referrals to special education. She also stayed because she enjoyed the field of consultation and the possibility of doing systems consultation.**

## **Words of Encouragement For Future Black School Psychologists**

**Dr Williams advice to future Black school psychologists to be their authentic self in the spaces they occupy. Authenticity should inform your teaching, research, service and practice. If you are authentic, it will never feel like work. You will enjoy what you do and in many ways it will be restorative. To be restorative is to give back to self and community. In the journey towards authenticity, surround yourself with a tribe that celebrates your accomplishments, challenges you to be better, and builds you up when you stumble.**



# Erika Wood

## PsyD



**Dr. Woods initial exposure to school psychology was as an undergraduate at Howard University. Her major advisor convinced her to change her minor from Spanish to Education. Her first class in the college of education was taught by a school psychologist. At the time she was looking at clinical psychology but knew she had a great affinity towards children. Her education professor opened up a whole new world for her and she will be forever grateful to professor and advisor!**

### **Words of Encouragement For Future Black School Psychologists**

**The advice Dr. Wood would give to the next generation of Black scholars is to focus on a strengths base perspective when working with children of color. So much of what we do appears to be based on a deficit model. While you do have to have a balance in describing a student's strengths and weaknesses, children and adolescents with disabilities have a great deal of strengths. Also, know that representation and relationships truly matter and the field of school psychology needs you!**

**You can learn more about Dr. Erika Wood at [mspaonline.org](http://mspaonline.org)**

# Anna C. J. Long

Ph.D.



**Dr. Long was drawn to school psychology because of the opportunities to make a broad social impact. She loves how the field enables us to reach and serve ALL, as well as engage in work that promotes and protects the educational, social, emotional, and behavioral health of students where they live, learn, and play.**

## **Words of Encouragement For Future Black School Psychologists**

**Dr. Long would advise future Black school psychologists is that early on, try to find a trusted support system of senior and peer colleagues who share your values, can provide critical advice and guidance, and the support you need to keep going when it gets tough. Also, don't compare yourself to others in academia as best as you can. Success in academia should be defined by you and your career goals, not by others or what is traditionally recognized and considered to be a success. Everyone must chart their own path.**

Learn more about Dr. Anna Long here:

<https://www.lsu.edu/hss/psychology/faculty/school/long.php>