



Beyond Labels: Embracing Neurodiversity Through a Cultural and Inclusive Lens

By Shanine Fasasi

Introduction



Shanine Fasasi is the founder and CEO of Diversify Education and Communities CIC, a Nottingham-based organisation dedicated to promoting cultural diversity and inclusion within education and the community.





Established in 2017, Diversify Education and Communities CIC was born from Shanine's personal experience as a Black teacher trainee facing discrimination and misconceptions about her cultural identity. Determined to create a platform where cultural identity is accepted and celebrated, she transformed her university dissertation project into a thriving community interest company. Diversify runs impactful projects like Dads & Lads and Faith Housing Services, bringing people together at their home, the Beechdale Community Centre.



Kwame's Story

- Bright, creative boy
- Labelled “difficult” & “disruptive”
- Mother faced stigma from her Caribbean community
- Represents many African & Caribbean families



Why Are We Here?

- To explore neurodiversity through a cultural lens
- To embrace whole identity: neurotype + culture + lived experience
- To challenge exclusion and stigma



What is Neurodiversity?

Cultural Challenges:

- Natural variation of the human brain (autism, ADHD, dyslexia)
- Stigma & misunderstanding
- Spiritual interpretations
- Fear of diagnosis and labels

Schools & Services – The “One-Size-Fits-All” Problem

African & Caribbean children often:

- Over diagnosed with behavioural disorders
- Under-supported educationally
- Prone to exclusion
- Question: Who are these systems designed for?

What True Inclusion Looks Like

- Safe, stigma-free spaces for families
- Culturally responsive practices (storytelling, music, food, spirituality)
- Training professionals on cultural nuances in neurodivergence
- Respect and Celebration of Diversity
- Representation and Voice
- Safe Spaces to Express Identity



Our Work at Diversify Education & Communities CLC

- Community gardens reconnecting to heritage
- Parent support groups: honest, no-judgment spaces
- Creative sessions: drumming, dance, food for expression
- Culturally Inclusive Projects
- Community Engagement and Empowerment
- Collaborative Partnership
- Mental Health and Wellbeing Initiatives

Interactive Activity – “Label or Lens?”

- Phrases to consider:
- “She’s always in her own world”
- “He can’t sit still”
- “They’re too emotional”
- Question: Label or different perspective?
- Language shapes understanding



Closing & Call to Action

- Move beyond labels
- Uplift neurodivergent voices in communities
- Embrace culture as a bridge to inclusion
- How can you create space to celebrate difference?

Thank You

- **Questions?**

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