

BEYOND CAPTURE:

A CULTURAL HUMILITY APPROACH TO THE VOICE OF THE CHILD

PRESENTATION BY: JOEL DUNN

REACHING HIGHER – VOICE OF THE CHILD CONFERENCE 2026





SO WHAT IS YOUTH VOICE?

- RIGHTS
- PARTICIPATION
- PROTECTION
- EDUCATION AND YOUTH WORK
- THE LANGUAGE WE USE NOW

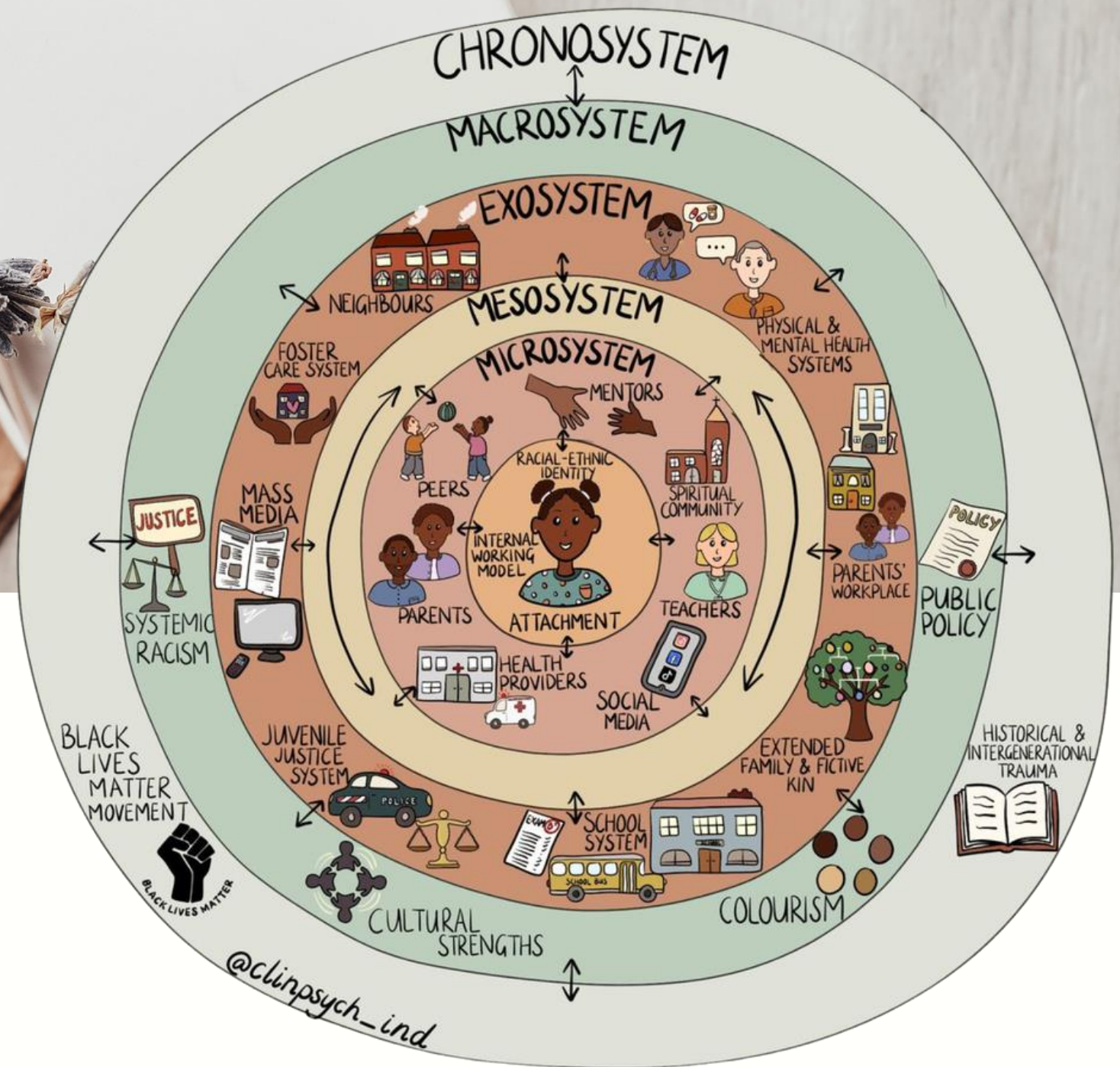
**YOUTH VOICE WAS NEVER ABOUT
EXPRESSION. IT WAS ALWAYS ABOUT POWER.**

BEYOND CAPTURE, CULTURAL HUMILITY

- 1. LIFELONG CRITICAL SELF-REFLECTION
- 1. RECOGNISING AND CHALLENGING
POWER IMBALANCES
- 1. INSTITUTIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY AND
ADVOCACY



COMMUNITY VOICE



Dr. Jessie Stern's adaptation of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, illustrating how macrosystem influences such as national economic policies, institutional practices, and systemic racism combine to restrict access to quality education and essential support networks for Black youth. (Stern, Barbarin & Cassidy 2021)



GOING UPSTREAM

**"THERE COMES A POINT WHERE WE
NEED TO STOP JUST PULLING PEOPLE
OUT OF THE RIVER. WE NEED TO GO
UPSTREAM AND FIND OUT WHY THEY'RE
FALLING IN."**

(A public health parable, 1970s.)

HOW WE LISTENED

1. WHO IS IN THE ROOM IS THE METHOD
2. NAME PEOPLE WHO WANT TO BE NAMED
3. CHILDREN IN THEIR OWN SPACE, IN THEIR OWN LANGUAGE
4. LISTEN TO PARENTS AND CHILDREN SEPARATELY, THEN TOGETHER



**"I WAS TOLD MY CHILD
WAS READY FOR
SCHOOL. HE WASN'T. I
KNEW THAT. BUT WHO
WAS GOING TO LISTEN
TO ME?"**

Parent, Year 6 focus group



**SHIFTING
POWER,
CHANGING
COURSE**

FROM VOICE TO TOOLS

**"YOU NEED
SOMEONE WHO
KNOWS YOU. NOT
SOMEONE WHO
KNOWS YOUR
FILE."**

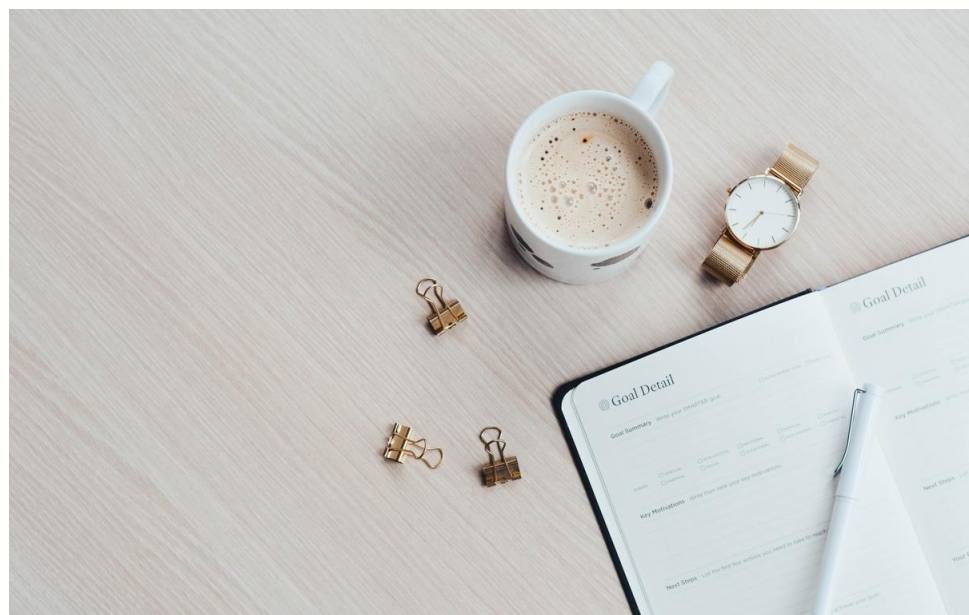
(YEAR 7 STUDENT)

**READING CHECK • READINESS CHECK • TRANSITION
PASSPORT.**



SQUARE PEGS, ROUND HOLES

Numbers tell you where. Voices tell you why.



THE COST OF INACTION



HE IS NOT THE PROBLEM

By a Mum who needed to be heard



CONNECT WITH ME ON LINKEDIN

THANK YOU FOR LISTENING

