

STARLIGHT

Starlight Black Child Mixed Heritage Group

December 2006

A newsletter for families, friends and professionals with a keen interest in issues related to black young people of mixed heritage.

Season's greetings

Welcome to the December edition of the Starlight newsletter. We hope all our readers will enjoy a peaceful and happy time during this festive season.

The second *Personally Speaking* article is included in this issue and we really hope this can remain a feature of each issue of our newsletter. The aim of this article is to provide a voice for people of mixed heritage to discuss how they have developed their personal racial identity and how they chose to identify their racial origins.

For this issue a twenty-two year old woman of mixed parentage has shared her experiences growing up in Oxford. We look forward to hearing from other people who would be willing to contribute their personal perceptions. Confidentiality is respected and there is no need to include your name, just your age and gender is relevant for this feature.

With reference to the project

mentioned in the last issue which focuses on raising the life chances of Dual and Multiple Heritage Children and Young People, Bradley Lincoln, the project coordinator, used the '5 C's of Awareness' concept in discussions with the young people. He felt it proved to be extremely useful in discussing issues of identity and belonging with the young people. This concept is included in this issue and it would be interesting to hear from our readers whether they find this a useful tool with reference to these discussions.

As 2007 marks the 200th anniversary of the abolition of slavery, we would be interested to hear from our readers how they think this anniversary should be marked. We have included an article concerning the abolition and some information on two key figures who contributed to the abolition.

As always, contributions from

readers are welcome and we look forward to hearing from you and, as stated earlier, we are particularly interested in hearing from people of mixed heritage and how they choose to describe their racial identity.



Do you know who this man is?

He was a leading figure in the Chartist movement, the first mass popular political movement in Britain, but who was he? Any ideas? Turn to page four to find out.

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200th Anniversary of the Abolition of the Slave Trade

March 25 marks the date legislation was passed that led to the slave trade's abolition. Tony Blair feels that the bicentenary offers a chance for Britain to say how 'profoundly shameful the slave trade was' and adds it also represents an opportunity to 'express our deep sorrow that it ever happened'. According to The Observer, (26 November 2006), he plans to go further than any previous leader in seeking to distance himself from the actions of the British Empire, nearly 200 years after the 1807 legislation. However, he will not be making an explicit apology despite years of pressure from some black campaigners and community leaders.

Blair acknowledges the grievance and resentment still felt by many towards the empire's exploitation of Africans. According to The Observer, notes seen in the possession of Baroness Amos, the Lead of the House of Lords, he wants to make a bold gesture that will be 'internationally recognised'. He will back a United Nations resolution by Caribbean countries to honour those who died at the hands of international slave traders.

The slave trade began in 1517, when a Spanish nobleman was licensed to import African slaves to the settlements. By 1754 there were 263,000 slaves in the New World and 15 million were transported

in total, according to The Observer. Conditions aboard slave ships were horrendous. Hundreds of slaves packed in, often chained lying down for the duration of the trip. A fifth died from disease or starvation on the journey.

There are plans to mark the 200th anniversary of the abolition with an official remembrance day. However, according to The Voice (December 11-17 2006), there are three factions demanding different commemorations to mark this anniversary: 'black supporters calling for a greater prominence of black abolitionists, whites who want William Wilberforce to be the prominent figure and politicians anxious not to upset middle England voters.'

A brief outline of a black abolitionist, Olaudah Equiano and William Wilberforce, a white abolitionist, are provided on page three. Let us know what you think. Do you think William Wilberforce should be the focus of a permanent memorial or is it time to acknowledge the significant contribution black abolitionists made. Most of us will have heard of William Wilberforce but perhaps it is time to put a black abolitionists such as Olaudah Equiano in the limelight because without his and other black abolitionists' contribution the voice of slaves may never have been heard. What do you think?

Special points of interest:

- Personally Speaking ..
- The "5 C's" of Awareness
- Anniversary of the Abolition of Slavery 200 years ago
- Training the Trainer

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Next issue: March 2007

The '5 C's' of Awareness - article written by Sue Funge

A concept developed by Ulric Johnson & Patti DeRosa

As stated in the editorial, Bradley Lincoln has found this concept useful when discussing issues of identity and belonging with young people of dual and multiple heritage. It helps to highlight the complexities of identity that we all face and can help young people to reflect on what influences have impacted on their sense of identity. Given that young people of mixed heritage can have experience of being rejected by some black and white people, this concept may help them to make sense of their experience.

As developed by Ulric Johnson & Patti DeRosa the '5 C's' of Awareness refers to:

Colour - In a literal sense, colour refers to individual/group identity based on race and/or the colour of one's skin, that is either self determined or defined by those in power. However, we use this 'C' symbolically to also mean aspects of the self/group that are part of one's essence. Attributes that are not changeable, such as colour, sex and sexual orientation. For example, colour "just is!", but it is Culture and Context that defines colour as 'Race' and gives it either positive or negative value.

Culture - The values, beliefs, symbols, behaviours, ways of living and shared history of a group of people (that may or may not belong to the same ethnic, racial or gender group) that are continually changing and are passed on from one generation to the next. Culture interprets the meaning of Colour, Class, Character and Context.

Class - Refers to power relations and examine individual/group identity relative to power, authority, hierarchy, status and the degree of access to control over, or ownership or resources, including wealth, education, employment, housing etc.

Character - The unique aspects of each individual person, including personal preference, idiosyncrasies and personality traits. People who share similar Colour, Culture, Class and Context, still possess aspects of the self that are unique to the individual.

Context - The reality in which individuals/groups currently exist based on time, location, environment and the socio-political, economic and historical conditions, which influence individual and group experience. Colour, Culture, Class and Character cannot be seen in isolation from Context and cannot be fully understood when removed from the Context that shapes their meaning.

I think this is a valuable contribution to the debate and reflects how complex and multi-dimensional the issue is.

Alongside this helpful contribution I also believe we need to continue to challenge racism and prejudice so that being of dual or multiple heritages would be no more significant for black young people of dual heritage than it is for white young people of dual heritage. I don't believe it causes anyone concern if a white young person has white parents from very different cultural backgrounds because there is nothing to identify them as being a minority ethnic group visually, in other words

they are white so they are not seen as any threat. They are free to be proud of their heritage and comfortable with their identity, without necessarily being stereotyped or discriminated against.

Our young people of black dual or multiple heritage are clearly going to experience prejudice and this is why I have always felt it was important to work with white parents to help them to see the importance of our children being proud of their black heritage. In my opinion, this is the most likely way that they will be able to put prejudice, whether it is from the black or white community into context, because they have sufficient information about their heritage to know that they do not have to prove how 'black or white' they are. Whatever they then go on to choose to identify themselves as personally is being done from a position of strength, not defence, and they are likely to have a strong sense of their own self worth and pride in who they are.

Focusing on being proud of being of dual or multiple heritage should not be seen negatively in my opinion. Uniting under the common experience of racism is also necessary if we are to succeed in our fight against racism. As Beverley Prevatt Goldstein said at an EYTARN conference in 1995 "Black children with a white parent are already likely to experience racism ... (They) need to feel not only comfortable with a black identity but able to include it in their particular experience.... Black is not a colour - it is a statement of a shared past, a present reality and a future intent."

Personally Speaking ...

The experience of a young woman of mixed parentage aged 22, growing up in Oxford

Growing up as a child of mixed heritage, I have never truly understood my place in society. I know that neither side will ever completely accept me as I have quite fair skin. However, I have always encountered less obvious racism from the white community. One of my earliest negative memories is of being at a party as a young girl of about 9 years old and having a red, gold and green necklace ripped from my neck by a black girl who told me that I was not "black enough to wear that".

Even now, as an adult, I suffer more prejudice at the hands of black people than any other race, women in particular. I have been told that my make-up tones only work because of my "yellow skin- a real black person couldn't get away with those colours" Some people may have taken that as a compliment but I took it to mean that I was not a "real" black person. A white friend also once referred to me as "not really black" though so I have taken a long hard look at my racial identity.

I was the only mixed race girl in the whole of my year at school so I am sure that it is a positive thing for those children of mixed race going through school now to be part of a larger group. They will never feel alone racially as I did but I fear that the school system is still prejudiced. As a girl, I believe I experienced far less racism than my brothers did, as it seems that society has a far greater fear of black men than of

black women.

Now, as a parent myself, I know that it is essential for me to have a strong and positive racial identity in order for my son to develop his own. I am now just proud to say that I am of "mixed parentage" and if society has no box for me I will make my own!

We would really like to make this a regular feature and look forward to hearing from other people who would be willing to contribute their personal perceptions. Confidentiality is respected and there is no need to include your name, just your age and gender is relevant for this feature.



Starlight Black Child Mixed Heritage Group - update from the Editor

I am currently a full-time student at Ruskin College, studying for a Youth and Community degree. As a student, my work placement as Development Worker for the group is going to prove invaluable. As a parent of four children of mixed race, I found the group an extremely positive experience when I joined many years ago.



Christine Chambers

I feel parents of mixed parentage

children are exclusively equipped to empathise with one another. There is a safety in numbers - we can challenge things as a group which, as individuals, we can only tolerate. Issues arise all the time which you might not have expected - in education, out of school activities and even on our own doorsteps. There are various pathways which we, as parents, can explore. I chose to follow that of accepting and celebrating my children as black young people and am so glad I had the opportunity of being involved in the group and that I can now build on this experience to promote the group locally.

The Starlight Black Child Mixed Heritage Group continues to meet every Wednesday (term time only) at Blackbird Leys Adventure Playground 5-6.30 so come along and join us. BLAP offers a fantastic

outdoor space for the children to play as well as a comfortable indoor area for us to hold meetings.

After the Christmas and New Year break we will be putting together a programme of activities for the next term and I will endeavour to publicise this as widely as possible. My children have gained a lot from the group and the trips and events we have organised and I am looking forward to seeing new families gaining the same positive experience as mine have.

We are also still hoping to set up a multicultural toy and book library, the grant application is out there and we are waiting to hear if we are successful. If successful, we intend to offer this service to everyone in the local community. Helping to build a positive attitude towards cultural diversity and a celebration of all of our children as unique and special.



Providing a forum for families and friends with black children of mixed heritage.

Olaudah Equiano v. William Wilberforce ?

Olaudah Equiano (c. 1745 - c. 1797)



c.1789: Olaudah Equiano

Equiano was an African-born writer whose experiences as a slave prompted him to become involved in the British abolitionist movement.

Olaudah Equiano was born in west Africa, probably Nigeria, and was the son of a chief. At around the age of eleven, he was kidnapped with his sister, and they soon became separated. Equiano was shipped across the Atlantic or 'Middle Passage' to Barbados as a slave.

He was then taken on to Virginia and bought by a British naval officer, Henry Pascal who renamed him 'Gustavus Vassa' after the 16th-century Swedish king.

Later he was sold to Robert King, a Quaker merchant in Philadelphia. He learnt to read and write and was taught about Christianity. Equiano saved carefully and in 1766 was able to buy his freedom. He then became a sailor, travelling all over the world. In 1773, he took part in an expedition to try to discover the Northwest Passage.

In London, he became involved in the movement to abolish slavery which led to the publication in 1789 of his book, 'The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa, the African'. He then travelled throughout England promoting the book, which told of his childhood and experiences as a slave. It became immensely popular, helping the abolitionist cause and made Equiano wealthy. It is one of the earliest books published by a black African writer.

In 1792 Equiano married an Englishwoman, Susanna Cullen and they had two daughters. Equiano died on 31 March 1797.

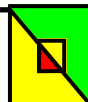
William Wilberforce (1759 - 1791)

William Wilberforce was born in Hull in 1759. At seventeen, Wilberforce went to St. John's College, Cambridge. One of Wilberforce's friends at university was William Pitt, who was later to become Britain's youngest Prime Minister. William Wilberforce decided on a career in politics and soon after leaving university at the age of twenty, he decided to become a candidate in the forthcoming parliamentary election in Hull. Wilberforce supported the Tory government led by William Pitt.



In 1784, Wilberforce became converted to Evangelical Christianity.. He joined the Clapham Set, a group of evangelical members of the Anglican Church, Wilberforce became interested in social reform and Lady Middleton approached him, to use his power as an MP to end the slave trade. The Society of Friends in Britain had been campaigning against the slave trade for many years. They had presented a petition to Parliament in 1783 and in 1787 had helped form the Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade. Of the twelve members on the committee, nine were Quakers. As a member of the evangelical movement, Wilberforce was sympathetic to Mrs. Middleton's request and on 12th May 1789, he made his first speech against the slave trade.

Wilberforce, was seen as one of the leaders of the anti-slave trade movement. When he presented his first bill to abolish the slave trade in 1791, it was easily defeated by 163 votes to 88. Wilberforce refused to be beaten and in 1805, the House of Commons passed a bill that made it unlawful for any British subject to transport slaves, but the House of Lords blocked the measure. In February 1806, Lord Grenville and his Foreign Secretary, Charles Fox, along with Wilberforce, led a campaign in the House of Commons and House of Lords and when the vote was taken the Abolition of the Slave Trade bill was passed and it became law on 25th March 1807.



Who was he?

William Cuffay (1788 - 1870)

William Cuffay was born on a merchant ship in the West Indies in 1788, the son of a naval cook and former slave from St Kitts. His family later settled in Chatham, Kent. Cuffay became a journeyman tailor but lost his job when the new tailors' union went on strike in 1834.

Furious at the way he had been treated and convinced that workers needed to be represented in parliament, he became involved in the struggle for universal suffrage. In 1839 he helped to form the Metropolitan Tailors' Charter Association and soon became an important figure in the Chartist movement in London. He was elected to the national executive of the National Charter Association in 1842 and later that year voted president of the London Chartists. Cuffay's significance is illustrated by a

contemporary report in The Times which referred to "the black man and his party".

During 1848 Cuffay was one of three London delegates at the National Chartists Convention and was considered one of its most militant leaders. The main task of the convention was to organise a march to London to present a chartists' petition to the House of Commons. Cuffay was disgusted when the march was called off at the last minute.

In the summer of 1848 Cuffay became involved in a conspiracy to lead an armed uprising against the government. Based on the evidence of a government spy, Cuffay was arrested and convicted for preparing to set fire to certain buildings as a signal for an uprising. He was sentenced to be transported to Tasmania for 21 years.

Training the Trainer Courses

The following courses offer an opportunity to gain the skills to run an OCN Level One course in your own setting. **All courses include lunch, refreshments and a copy of the course manual.**

(1) RAISING THE ASPIRATIONS OF YOUNG PEOPLE OF AFRICAN CARIBBEAN HERITAGE (with Black History Resource) This course offers young people of African Caribbean heritage the opportunity to become more self-aware with a positive racial identity; to gain some knowledge of black British history; develop effective communication skills; manage their emotions and improve their skills for learning.

Friday, 26 January 2007 9.45am - 3.30pm Fee: £225

(2) 'GO FOR IT!' A Self Development Course for young people This course offers young people the opportunity to develop self-confidence and self-esteem; build effective communication skills; manage their emotions; practise writing a CV, completing an application form and developing their presentation and interview skills.

Friday, 2 February 2007 9.45am - 3.30pm Fee: £175

(3) ENTERPRISING WOMEN This course offers women the opportunity to gain confidence and develop their self-esteem; become empowered; recognising and appreciating the skills & talents they possess; improving their presentation skills and being who they want to be.

Friday, 9 February 2007 9.45am - 3.30pm Fee: £175

(4) RAISING THE ASPIRATIONS OF YOUNG MEN & FATHERS This course offers young men & fathers the opportunity to gain confidence; understand the possible consequences of substance and alcohol abuse; become more self-aware and manage their emotions effectively; consider the role of a man & father in today's society; practise writing their CV, completing application forms and improving their presentation and interview skills.

Friday, 16 February 2007 9.45am - 3.30pm Fee: £175

Contact Starlight Enterprise Limited for more information or to book a place. 1 Mole Place, OXFORD OX4 7SD Tel. 01865 776691 E-mail: StarlightEnt7788@aol.com



Some photos of our Community Chest Panel hard at work ...



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The cost of subscribing to this newsletter is £20 for four issues. They will be produced in December, March, June and September. Please send us a cheque, made payable to *Starlight Enterprise Limited*. If you need to be invoiced please let us know and we will arrange to send it to you.

Send us your views or articles

We welcome contributions from our readers and look forward to receiving your contribution. We hope that this newsletter will provide a forum for promoting positive relations, encouraging an open debate and aiming to improve race relations in Britain today. The deadline for the next issue is February 2007.

Advertise in this Newsletter

Let us know about your events, services and situations vacant. Our rates are very reasonable.

Full page: £150
1/2 page: £85
1/4 page: £45
1/8 page: £25

Please contact us with details. The deadline for the March newsletter is 28 Feb 2007.