

STARLIGHT

Starlight Black Child
Mixed Heritage Group

June 2009

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

Editorial

Welcome to the June issue of our newsletter. The debate concerning solutions to the underachievement of young people of African Caribbean heritage continues in this issue. We would love to hear what our readers think the solution is. We have included an article outlining Lee Jasper's proposal for an African Academy which should provoke some interesting debate.

Also in this issue is information about a conference on the experiences of service users from black and minority ethnic groups who access the mental health services. Frank Bruno will be interviewed by Hári Sewell concerning the notion of being 'Big, Black and Dangerous?: the Man, the Mind and the Media'. It should be an interesting day.

The 1958 race riots are remembered in this issue. There is a year long programme to remember these riots and a plaque was unveiled in memory of a victim of that era, Kelso Cochrane on May 17 this year. The riots are a significant part of British history. They demonstrate

the struggle that is endured in trying to achieve a society free from ignorance and racist attitudes. Nubian Jak Community Trust Plaque Scheme is the only national BME plaque scheme in the UK.

On a lighter note, we are planning our annual event at Aston Rowant Nature Reserve in July - it should be bigger and better than last year and we are looking forward to seeing everyone. What better way to enjoy a picnic on a summer's day! Entertainment will be provided by various artists and musicians with plenty for everyone to do. Details below.

We have also included a joint statement prepared by People in Harmony in January 2009 that seeks to advance the social well being of people, couples and families of mixed race.

We hope you enjoy this issue and, as always, do get in touch if you would like to contribute an article or share any news with us.

A TV film was made in 1991 about this woman's life but do you know who she is?



Diana Ross was going to play the part but actress, Lynn Whitfield got the part instead. Any ideas?

Turn to page 4 to find out more about her.

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'Sounds like Summer' picnic 25 July 2009

In partnership with Natural England, the Environment Centre on Holywell Mead, the Wildlife Trusts, Forestry Commission, A Rocha, The Chiltern Society, Walking the Way to Health, Oxfordshire Outside, we are organising our second trip to Aston Rowant National Nature Reserve for the 'Sounds like Summer' picnic.



Picture from last year's event - a good time was had by all and this year's aims to be even bigger & better!

this year. There is a nominal fee of £1 per adult with free coaches leaving from Oxford City.

There will be a range of performers including: Pete Fryer Acoustic -- Rock & blues covers by 'The Legend'; Scott Gordon Band - Strumbletastic Acoustical-ness!; Indian dancing; Messy Jam dance group; DJ Ja' Blinks; African drumming and dance; Freizinger - Dream sounds of a magic fluteand many many more!

There is plenty to do for all the family, such as: Green Man musical stroll; Drumming and African Instrument workshop; Make your own musical instrument; Storytelling; Nature's concert walks; Walk your way to health; Wood carving workshops; Wildflowers walks; Wildlife craft activities.

Bring a picnic or enjoy the wide variety of food stalls including:

Caribbean food, Indian food, Deli stall with salads and sandwiches, Ice Cream, Local BBQ. If you wish to consume alcohol please bring it with you.

Location - J6 M40, signposted from A40 nr Stokenchurch, south side of the reserve, opposite Cowleaze Wood car park.

For more information or to perform on the day contact Jenny on 01844 351833 or Cathy on 01844 355506.

Coach places are limited - book now by calling Sue or Glen on 01865 776691

Special points of interest:

- The proposal to set up the UK's first self funded African Academy
- Important conference addressing the needs of BME clients accessing Mental Health services
- Remembering the 1958 Race Riots
- Aston Rowant Trip
- PIH and the coalition of mixed race organisations
- **FREE SUBSCRIPTION**

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Please ensure any contributions/adverts arrive by 31 August 2009

Next issue: September 2009

It is a fun day out for all! We had a brilliant day last year and we hope to make it even bigger and better

The call for an 'African Academy' to end the continual underachievement of black students

Lee Jasper is passionately arguing for the establishment of an African Academy 'as a beacon of academic excellence' designed to end the continual underachievement of black students currently attending mainstream state schools. He believes it is time to take responsibility to create conditions in which positive role models will emerge. He refers to the current recession and how this is likely to impact particularly in the black community. He argues that the most precious resource is black young people but many lack hope and become ensnared by the criminal justice system, mental health institutions and violence. Too many young people have tragically died or, as Jasper says, been left 'permanently disfigured (emotionally and physically) by their own society'. He argues that we have observed a continual decline in educational standards among black young people and the high unemployment levels that accompany it. He cannot bear to watch another generation of the 'black, poor and young, slide into a pattern of recurring failure'.

He refers to the long history of academic reports that have attempted to address the problems black children face in schools but he feels the crisis is so great within the black community now that he has been persuaded of the need for a school that meet the needs of young black people. He no longer sees the point in engaging in these long, 'turtuous' explanations about the reasons why black children and in particular, black boys, are failing in school. He is tired of the endless and unresolved debates that are usually prompted by the publication of yet more research. Particularly, as he argues, the acceptance of institutional racism is routinely denied. Meanwhile, significant groups of young people are being failed by the British public sector education system. He acknowledges and ap-

plauds those that do succeed despite all the odds but he is not intending to set up a school for this group; it is intended for the 'underprivileged, disenfranchised, and excluded'. He wants the proposed academy to focus on providing education to black young people in Pupil Referral Units, Youth Offending Institutions, on probation or who, in some other way, have dropped out of the education system.

Jasper refers to Bernard Coard's publication in 1971 '*How the West Indian Child is made educationally subnormal in the British School System*' and wonders what has changed? Coard identified a number of issues black students faced

in the British education system arguing they contributed to their academic failure. For example, low expectations in a white-controlled system of education; a sense that the cards were stacked against them and low teacher expectations that led to a lack of self confidence in their ability. Thirty-eight years later and these explanations seem as relevant today! Jasper therefore argues that we 'simply cannot afford the luxury of (these ongoing) debates if they continue to result in maintaining the status quo.'

Jasper believes the time for action is now. He refers to the successes in America, listing a number of celebrities who support, or have benefited from attending historically black colleges. He feels it is time to initiate similar progressive processes in the UK as a matter of



Lee Jasper

urgency. He is seeking to establish the UK's first self funded African Academy. He says he would continue to campaign for the reform of the public education system to achieve the goal of good quality, inclusive education that operates on the basis of merit. However, he feels that it will not be solved by short-term project funding initiatives. He believes it requires 'an institutional vision that is both sustainable, self funded and within our own control'. The idea is to develop a school that is based on 'creatively' using the National Curriculum to 'promote positive self-awareness and a sense of cultural and historical pride in young people'. He argues that we should stop sacrificing thousands more black children to the education system that claims to be inclusive but in reality 'excludes diversity and fails to educate'. Legislation allows for the setting up of independent and faith based schools that meet their specific and diverse needs. Jasper therefore believes it is time for black community leaders, business pioneers, celebrities, parents and young people to come together to work towards the establishment of black schools in a similar vein.

He says the first steps are well under way with the African Academy Steering Group established. They already have over 500 members and the momentum behind this project increases everyday. They are currently taking steps to formulate an African Academy Leadership summer school, host a founding conference and establish a web site as an educational resource. The project is open to anyone who shares this vision and has the skills to help. He is inviting people with 'staying power and commitment' to get involved and help deliver this initiative.

(Article extracted & adapted from <http://www.blackpresence.co.uk/tag/lee-jasper/> on 29 May 2009)

PIH & the coalition of mixed race* organisations

In January 2009 People in Harmony prepared the following statement in consultation with other organisations, including ourselves.

'As a coalition of mixed race* organisations we seek to advance the social well being of people, couples and families of mixed race. One of our main objectives is to influence and improve ways in which public services such as education, health and social care, and criminal justice are delivered to the mixed race population through discussion and debate, research, campaigns, and the arts.

In the past mixed race people, couples and families have frequently been portrayed as occupying a problematic position in our social fabric and life. They have been described as marginal, isolated, and confused, burdened with identity problems, and disadvantaged in their life chances. In the last decade or so much fresh thinking has shifted the ground from that of problematising our various communities to

celebrating their diversity. New cultures of human rights, equality and diversity, and the positive duties expected of our public bodies have created an environment in which our coalition is seeking positive engagement with the various sectors in society, including government, voluntary bodies and NGOs, and the private sector: we are uniquely placed to share our knowledge and experience and to represent the interests of this community. We are aware, too, that disadvantage and discrimination persist, some of which is mediated by differences in socio-economic position across our different communities, and we seek positive change to ameliorate these drawbacks.

People in Harmony (PIH) was established in 1972 as a support group for families at a time when the disadvantages of racial mixing were emphasised in the wider society. Over the years, PIH has challenged these assumptions and evolved to meet the needs of our members and of the mixed race community throughout Britain

through support, representation, awareness campaigns, research, and dialogue with the public services. Their work has involved engagement with schools, local authority social services, official bodies such as the Office for National Statistics, and government departments such as Communities and Local Government.

Over the last few years other mixed race organisations have become established in different areas of Britain, some to meet specific issues such as lack of family support, others to cater for the emergence of new kinds of mixed race communities as the ethnic/cultural mix of our population has become increasingly diversified. In 2008 PIH decided to develop their objectives through sharing their skills and experiences with other mixed race groups, thereby providing a stronger and more representative voice for these various communities.

Continued on page four

Working with Ethnicity Race and Culture in Mental Health

We are pleased to promote this conference and its full day's programme addressing the issues in Mental Health when working with Minority Ethnic groups and their cultural differences. The day aims to demonstrate the role that practitioners can play in improving experiences and outcomes for services users from black and minority ethnic backgrounds. It provides a voice to service users' and their accounts of recovery whilst providing tools for front line managers and organisational leaders to make affordable gains that are measurable. It aims to place the work of local organisations within a national context and test the ability of mental health services to deliver related targets.

The target audience is front line staff working in mental health trusts and local authorities; front line staff working in the independent sector; users of mental health services and carers; managers with responsibility for delivering fair mental health services; organisational leads on equality, diversity and human rights; people in the criminal justice system and ambulance service who work with mental health; psychotherapists; senior managers responsible for achieving improved outcomes for people from black and minority ethnic groups.

The proposed programme includes a welcome and introduction from the day's chair Errol Francis: Senior Associate Coordinator, Race for Health. This will be followed by a keynote address by Melba Wilson: OBE National DRE and Equalities, National Mental Health Development Unit 'Squaring up to the task: Delivering Race Equality in the Long Term' followed by a question and answer session. Hári Sewell will go on to present 'Frontline practitioners can buck the trends!: Evidence that demands action'. After a short break Paul Grey: Service User Consultant with Grey Services / Pastor will present 'No 'write-offs' please: The responsibility to be hopeful' with a facilitated discussion with Paul focusing on 'Finding Solutions'. After lunch Dr Mayuri Senapati, Post Mod-



Conferences

www.harisewell.com

Solutions Within Reach

Special guest Frank Bruno, Former
WBC Heavyweight Champion

Date: Monday 22nd June 2009

**Venue: Friends House 173 Euston Road
London NW1 2BJ**

All fee paying delegates will receive a free copy of Hári Sewell's book 'Working with Ethnicity Race and Culture in Mental Health: A Handbook for Practitioners'

ernly Inclined Consultant Clinical Psychologist, East London NHS Foundation Trust will provide a presentation on 'Women from Black and Minority Backgrounds Controlling their lives' followed by the Chair of the Hearing Voices Network (England), Jacqui Dillon's presentation 'Touching on Taboos: The Hearing Voices approach'. There will be a further break before Hári Sewell presents 'Assuring improvement: The Locked Hexagon Model (six interdependent aspects of performance improvement)'. He will then discuss with Frank Bruno the notion of being 'Big, Black and Dangerous?: the Man, the Mind and the Media', including delegates' responses. The day will close with a summary by Errol Francis 'Complex responses to

complex issues'. At the end of the conference at 4.30pm there will be the opportunity to be photographed with Frank Bruno.

Fees: Statutory and private sector - £295 per place. Non-statutory sector - £225. Please call to find out if there are any discounted places left for service users. Also, if you book a place via the Black Mental Health UK website the fee is £180, but it is important to put the following reference on the form BMHUK01. Otherwise, to book a place please call 07549 170308 / 07737 281123 / 07951 635033 or email conferences@harisewell.com Confirmation of a place will be made upon receipt of payment. Cancellations before 5th June 2009 will incur a charge of £50. Unfortunately they are unable to accept cancellations after 5th June 2009 though they will accept an alternative delegate. Conference fees are inclusive of refreshments. Maps will be sent with confirmation.

1958-59 Remembered Steering Group

On the 17 May 2009 at 3pm a commemorative plaque was unveiled at the Grove Inn Restaurant and Bar on the corner of Golbourne Road and Southam Street, North Kensington. Fifty years earlier to the day, Kelso Cochrane, a man from Antigua who settled in London in 1954, was walking home when he was set upon by a group of white racists. One of the men stabbed Kelso in the heart and he died later that night in hospital. No one was ever convicted of his murder but it did contribute to the first investigation in race relations in Britain. The unveiling of this commemorative plaque represents part of a year long programme to remember the 1958 riots by the 1958-9 Remembered Steering Group and to celebrate the community achievements since.

The Notting Hill race riots were a series of racially motivated riots that took place over several nights in late August and early September 1958. Fifty years ago Notting Hill was a working class area in West London and was little more than a slum. People moving here from the Caribbean settled in the Colville area alongside the white working class but it was a tense co-existence. 'Colour bars' saw black people turned away from pubs. Signs were placed in windows stating 'No blacks, no Irish, no dogs, no children'. Landlords either refused to rent rooms to black families or crammed lots of people into one room and charged them way over the odds.

The riot is thought to have started on Saturday 30 August when a gang of white youths attacked a white Swedish woman, Majbritt Morrison. The youths had seen her the previous night arguing with her Jamaican husband Raymond at Latimer Road tube station and they had shouted racist insults at him. She retaliated and when they saw her the next night they pelted her with bottles, stones and wood and struck her in the back with an iron

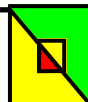
bar, until the police intervened and she was escorted home. Morrison later wrote an autobiographical book, *Jungle West 11*, which included details of her ordeal. Later that night a mob of 300 to 400 white people, mostly 'Teddy Boys', were seen on Bramley Road attacking the houses of West Indian residents. It was the catalyst for widespread attacks on black homes by white mobs, wielding sticks, bottles and iron bars. These disturbances, rioting and attacks continued every night until they petered out at the beginning of September.



The violence erupted in west London after riots in Nottingham

The Notting Hill Carnival was started by Claudia Jones in January 1959 as a response to the riots and the state of race relations in Britain at the time. The fighting in 1958 also paved the way for the first Race Relations Act of 1965 which outlawed racial discrimination. The riots had caused tension between the Metropolitan Police and the British African Caribbean community, which claimed that the police had not taken their reports of racial attacks seriously. In 2002, files were released that revealed that senior police officers at the time had assured the Home Secretary, Rab Butler, that there was little or no racial motivation behind the disturbance, despite testimony from individual police officers to the contrary.

The Nubian Jak Community Trust Plaque Scheme is the only national BME plaque scheme in the UK. For more information contact: 0800 093 0400 or email info@nubianjak.com



PIH & the coalition of mixed race organisations

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PIH ask you to support them in pursuing these objectives to achieve a fairer and more equitable society for the mixed race community for whom the coalition caters; these objectives have been set in the broader context of the endeavours of all communities to achieve a fairer and more just society for the diverse population of this country.

The coalition would specifically like to see:

- Mixed race experiences and identities reflected throughout the school curriculum
- Health and social care practitioners learn more about how mixed race families, their children, and young people see themselves
- The language of public policy acknowledge and recognise mixed race identity
- The provision of training & awareness raising on mixed race issues in the criminal justice system
- A more robust challenging of attitudes that are hostile to mixed relationships in the wider society and in some ethnic com-

munities in particular

- A proper representation of the mixed race community in our public life and on our public bodies
- Consultation on public policy issues with the grass roots organisations representing mixed race people, couples and families.

People in Harmony in consultation with:

Multiple Heritage Project; MixTogether; Sputnik; Inheritance Project; Planet Rainbow Project; MOSAIC Black and Mixed Parentage Family Group; Intermix; Starlight Black Child Mixed Heritage Group

* **Mixed race is the term preferred by the greater number of mixed race people, as shown in a recent survey (Aspinall et al 2006) set up to advise the ONS on 'mixed' categories for the upcoming 2011 Census. See: http://www.pih.org.uk/features/mixedracein_britain_report2.pdf**

Brief update from Starlight

We have been accepted as a Community Interest Company by Companies House so we hope this will lead to us attracting funding that will allow us to expand our work as well as offer all our accredited courses free at the point of delivery in our local community.

We are still working with partners on the conference 'Tackling under achievement in Oxfordshire Schools' but anticipate this will now be held in September, rather than July as hoped. The Oxford Academy have asked us to do the Going for Gold course and the parent engagement course which is great news!

We are returning to Bristol for the second 'Going for Gold Showcase Evening'. They have been tracking students who completed the course last year and they are doing well. We really hope that this will lead to more schools piloting the course. We believe our course provides a valuable contribution towards ending the continuing underachievement of young people of African Caribbean heritage attending schools across the UK.

We are also holding a fundraising event for Young Carers at the beginning of the school holiday, supporting local young people who requested this opportunity.

Who was she?

Her name is Josephine Baker. She was born into acute poverty in St Louis, USA on the 3rd June 1906. She dropped out of school at the age of 12 and lived as a street child in the black slums of St Louis, sleeping in cardboard shelters. Her street-corner dancing attracted attention and she was recruited for the St Louis Chorus vaudeville show at the age of fifteen.

She travelled to New York in the early 1920s and performed at the Plantation Club and Broadway. She moved to Paris in 1925 and became an instant success when she performed at the Theatre des Champs-Elysees. She was renowned for her erotic dancing and performed the *Danse sauvage* wearing a costume consisting of a skirt made of a string of artificial bananas. She represented one aspect of the 'Art Deco' movement and was very creative. She was painted by Picasso and by 1927 she was the highest earning woman entertainer in Europe. She appeared in several films, studied ballet with Balanchin and danced in the Ziegfeld Follies. During the Second World War she became part of the French resistance and was the first American-born woman to receive the French military honour, the Croix de Guerre.

In the 50s and 60s she championed the black civil rights movement in the USA. She also protested in her own way against racism adopting twelve children from different corners of the world, calling them her 'Rainbow Tribe'. She refused to perform for segregated audiences and her insistence on mixed audiences helped to integrate shows in Las Vegas, Nevada. In 1951, she made charges of racism against Sherman Billingsley's Stork Club in New York where she had been refused service. Grace Kelly was at the club at the time and she rushed over to Baker, took her by the arm and stormed out with her entire party, vowing she would never return

and she never did. The two women became close friends and later, when Baker was near bankruptcy Kelly offered her a villa and financial assistance. In 1963 she spoke at the March on Washington at the side of Martin Luther King Jr. She was the only woman to speak at the rally.



Baker costumed for the Danse banane from the Folies Bergère production Un Vent de Folie in Paris in 1927, her most famous banana costume.

On the 8th April, 1975, she starred in a retrospective revue at the Bobino in Paris celebrating her fifty years in show business. It was financed by Prince Rainier, Princess Grace and Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis and received rave reviews. The opening night audience included Sophia Loren, Mick Jagger, Shirley Bassey, Diana Ross and Liza Minnelli. Four days later, Baker was found lying peacefully in her bed surrounded by newspapers with glowing reviews of her performance. She had suffered a cerebral haemorrhage and went into a coma. She was taken to hospital but died on the 12 April, 1975 aged 68.

FREE SUBSCRIPTION

Please forward this issue to anyone you feel may like to join our list of subscribers. The newsletter is produced quarterly in December, March, June and September. It is distributed via e-mail to save on printing and postage costs and help the environment too.

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 31 August 2009.

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 September newsletter is 31 August 2009.