



# STARLIGHT

Starlight Black Child  
Mixed Heritage Group

March 2006

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

## Welcome to our Spring issue!

Welcome to our Spring issue! We continue to progress, albeit sometimes a bit slower than we would like, mainly because of problems we have encountered with our new pc which we hope have now been completely resolved, fingers crossed.

We now have a website - [www.starlightenterprise.co.uk](http://www.starlightenterprise.co.uk) and we would be pleased to hear what people think of it. A special thanks to Cheryl from Studio 45 for all her support in helping us to get the website up and running and helping us to manage the site.

We are also promoting a couple of courses here in Oxford and we have some dates for our 'Does Colour Matter?' roadshow conference. Details of these events are provided in this newsletter.

We have finally found a suitable meeting place for the group and regular meetings will commence from Thursday, 20 April. This should help us to increase membership, fundraise and organise family events in time for the summer holidays.

We will be going to WOMAD in Reading again this year, for another extravaganza of music, arts and dance from around the world. There will be over seventy artists and groups from more than thirty countries appearing on seven stages; there will also be a full programme of interactive workshops for adults and children plus a Global Village of over 250 international food and merchandise stalls. Tickets went on sale in mid-March so it is recommended that anyone wanting to join us should get their tickets early to avoid disappointment.

Other points of interest in this newsletter is a review of Professor Chirs Gaine's book *We're All White, Thanks* plus Sue's personal story about being a white mum with a black child of mixed heritage.

As always, contributions from readers are welcome and we look forward to hearing from you.



### Who Am I?

I was Britain's first black mayor. I was born in Liverpool and lived in Battersea. I had an award winning photographic studio. I came into prominence as a public speaker after supporting John Burns in the General Election. A year later I won the local election and became Britain's first British born black councillor.

Do you know my name? Turn to page four to find out.

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### Review of Professor Chris Gaine's book:

#### *We're All White, Thanks - the persisting myth about 'white' schools*

This is the third book in a series. *No Problem Here* was published in 1987, *Still No Problem Here* was published in 1995 and this current title was published in 2005. Each book addresses why racism does not appear to have any relevance in white areas because it is fundamentally seen as located where there are 'other races' living. The dominant perception being that 'other races' cause racism by their presence in relation to conflict over employment, housing and culture.

*'By this logic there was inevitably more racism when there were more of 'them', so no-one was looking for the disease when the causes of the contagion were at a safe distance. There may be unpalatable things said, but really there was 'no problem.'* (Gaine, 2005:1)

This third book, *We're All White, thanks*, includes a discussion about the changes in approaches to tackling racism over the years, reflect-

ing on some past policy history, but the overall stance of the book is to argue that no strategy has successfully challenged prevailing images, stories, stereotypes, expectations and anxieties that exist in predominantly white areas. For example, shifting the curriculum towards information about other cultures will not address the most intractable part of the problem - the perpetuation of prejudice and racism. Although it may be useful to have assemblies about Diwali or other cultures, these strategies are insufficient on their own. If these activities are done in isolation the message may simply confirm stereotypical views.

One of the key difficulties facing mainly white schools, Gaine argues, is the lack of familiarity with dealing with race and ethnic diversity, whether in terms of being comfortable with appropriate language, discussing difference with parents or pupils, or dealing with overt racism. He points out

the tendency to want to de-contextualise them, when dealing with conflicts between pupils, to treat incidents as if 'no one comes to them carrying any baggage'. (Gaine, 2005:101) However, he goes on to argue that whilst this wish to 'de-racialise' such events may be 'done in hope', or born out of anxiety, this is a mistaken strategy - this is one occasion where 'race' must be noticed.

Gaine concludes that all young people must be equipped with an appropriate education, to free them from the shackles of uncritical acceptance of racist myths and enable them to relate to people and groups positively and not fearfully or resentfully. Minority pupils must also be provided with a safe and affirming educational experience. If these two moral and educational motives are achieved then they will have a profound long-term positive consequence for British society.

### Special points of interest:

- Regular meetings for the group
- 'Does Colour Matter?' conferences in Brighton & Bristol
- Workshops
- Learning about racism

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Please ensure any contributions/adverts arrive by 31 May 2006

Next issue: June 2006

## Learning about racism - The personal journey of a white mum with a black child of mixed heritage by Sue Funge

Having grown up with the influence of the hippy movement - promoting love and peace, and a message that we are all equal, men and women, black and white - I guess I wasn't aware of the devastating impact racism can have.

At 18 I met my future husband and I imagined a rosy future, having fun for a few years and then settling into the role of wife and mother. Sadly things didn't go as planned, getting pregnant became more and more of an issue as I feared the worst and thought I would never be a mum. We were so young and naive and no one talked openly about such things in the 70s so the inevitable happened, our marriage broke down and I was alone, aged 26, not really knowing what my purpose in life was.

I moved to London and became a part of the latest music scene. It was fun on the one hand but if I'm honest it was also a lonely time. I was thrilled therefore when a good looking, young black man started to pay me attention. I entered into a new phase of crazy experiences. Without going into too much detail, we married after returning from our trek across Europe and stay in Morocco.

Back in England, life was so chaotic and distracting I couldn't believe it when it was confirmed I was pregnant at last. My husband wasn't so thrilled however and I ended up homeless and five months pregnant. Nevertheless the birth of my son was the most significant, wonderful, fulfilling experience of my life. I couldn't believe we had managed to produce such a perfect little human being, I was filled with such awe and admiration as I looked down at this little baby boy. When I left hospital you can imagine how I felt therefore when I encountered my first negative response from an old white man who was clearly disgusted that I should have borne such a child! One or two more encounters in the very early weeks of my son Rory's birth made me think again about what racism is and how was I going to best ensure my son didn't absorb all this negativity.

I began to notice the bias on the television with either a complete absence of any black presenters, actors or comedy programmes or a portrayal of them as muggers, drug addicts, musicians or sports people. Adverts for hair products continually pointed to straight, shiny hair as being 'healthy' and the absence of any black models suggested indirectly that they had 'unhealthy' hair! Other things began to bug me. When we went to the library, where

were the books showing black children in the key role and not just a token picture of a light skinned child somewhere in the background? (Fortunately I saw an early advert for Letterbox Library, publicising their anti-sexist, anti-racist children's book club and I joined immediately - they became a lifeline.)

Over the next few years my little boy was growing big and strong and was a happy, contented child who was a total pleasure to be with (he was and is the most rewarding part of my whole life). We lived in a relative cocoon in our two bedroomed house in Haslemere, Surrey, with plenty of toys and books in our home that clearly promoted a celebration of black children, people and their heritage. We shared a number of books, mainly thanks to Letterbox Library, that helped us both to learn of the great contributions black people have made over the years.

When Rory was four years old we left Haslemere and moved to Oxford. I had met a single dad with two young boys, aged six and four, and we intended to begin a new life in Oxford as a 'reconstituted family'. My partner, was white but we had discussed prejudice and as he was Jewish I felt he would be able to empathise with Rory when he encountered prejudice. Again this was another big learning curve for me as I realised that just because someone may have experienced some form of prejudice it doesn't automatically mean they have examined their own feelings about racism and are not racist themselves!

The beginning of the end of this relationship

***I hope we can help to make sure that all our children can grow up with such a strong sense of themselves - then we may finally break down these barriers created by racism and discrimination.***

occurred when I commenced setting up the Black Child Mixed Parentage Group in Oxford when Rory was eight. I had been studying for my degree in Education and Sociology during this period and I had used this time to further my own understanding of how racism is perpetuated from one generation to the next and how we might be able to break this cycle.

I had listened to debates about the inadequacies of white parents/carers and how I had been irresponsible having my son whilst the struggle continued to achieve equality for black people. I was also warned that my son was likely to reject me in his teens because I represented white European supremacy and racism. I was told this was inevitable as he struggled to find a comfortable identity and the most I could do was understand his need

to go through this stage.

However, I began to consider more carefully the messages I was being given. I had not been welcomed by any local black community groups, I was not accepted by white neighbours whilst I continued to discuss or mention racism. I could have been accepted by the local



Sue's son Rory

white community if I had gone along with their view that Rory could 'blend in' and that no mention would be made of the delicate issue of his skin colour! It was as if the colour of Rory's skin was a kind of deformity that no one would be unkind enough to mention. How different from the message I

wanted to give Rory - my perfect little human being!

So, I realised the real world was much crueller than the one I had hoped to grow up in - the hippy message was a beautiful dream not matched by reality. I had to be willing to face up to the realities of life including the possible rejection from both black and white people, and continue to nurture a positive self identity for my son.

I have gone through periods of time when I have looked to the black community for support and got none. I have been made to feel that I am making a fuss about nothing by my white neighbours, their friends and white professionals and have had no support from here either. I have also hated myself as a white person whilst adoring all black people unquestionably - if they weren't very nice to me I deserved it, I was white, and anyway how on earth does anyone stay 'nice' when they live in such a racist society!

My son is meant to be. Other human beings have no right to judge how 'black he is' or describe him using derogatory terms. He is a whole person and I am proud of who he is. He is proud of his black and white heritage. Rory has continually had my love and support and an unconditional celebration of who he is. He did not reject me in his teens and as he has got older we have talked about some of these comments others have made over the years and he thinks it's all crazy. He says he feels I have helped him to feel good about himself, he doesn't worry about rejection from either white or black people because if they think like that he doesn't particularly want to know them anyway.

I hope we can help to make sure that all our children can grow up with such a strong sense of themselves - then we may finally break down these barriers created by racism and discrimination.

## Starlight Black Child Mixed Heritage Group Weekly Meetings during school term time

We are pleased to announce that we will be holding regular meetings every **Thursday afternoon** during term time between **5pm and 6.30pm** at Blackbird Leys Adventure Playground, Blackbird leys, OXFORD commencing **Thursday, 20 April 2006**.

Staff will be on hand to supervise activities with your children. Refreshments will be available.

Anyone who supports the aim of the group is welcome to come along.

The group provides a forum for adults, parents, carers and black children and young people of mixed heritage. It offers the opportunity to gain support, information and advice and participate in outings and

events. Providing a voice for black young people of mixed heritage, their families and friends. The group can also help to raise awareness of the significant contribution black people have made to British society, both in history and in contemporary Britain.

A possible format for each week's meeting is as follows:

Week One - Children's book display

Week Two - Debate - the issues raised in the Jeremy Kyle show

Week Three - Relax and enjoy a cuppa with other members of the group

Week Four - Identity development and our children

Week Five - Relax and enjoy a cuppa with other members of

the group

Week Six - The impact racism can have on our children

Week Seven - Relax and enjoy a cuppa with other members of the group

Week Eight - Visiting speaker

Week Nine - Relax and enjoy a cuppa with other members of the group

Week Ten - Visiting speaker

Week Eleven - Relax and enjoy a cuppa with other members of the group

Week Twelve - Evaluation and ideas for next term

Week Thirteen - Last session before the summer break.

**Other ideas and suggestions welcome. We hope you will come & join us & find out what the group may be able to offer.**



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

### Starlight Black Child Mixed Heritage Group's FAMILY PARTY

**Saturday, 8 April 2006 4pm onwards**

**Caribbean Cuisine**

**Music**

**Blackbird Leys Adventure Playground, Blackbird leys, OXFORD**

**We hope you will come and join us and find out what the group may be able to offer.**

**For more information contact: Oxford 776691**

**E-mail: [StarlightEnt7788@aol.com](mailto:StarlightEnt7788@aol.com) [www.starlightenterprise.co.uk](http://www.starlightenterprise.co.uk)**

### Supporting Dual Heritage Children & Young People Workshop on Thursday, 11 May 2006 9.45am - 3.30pm



We are pleased to invite you to attend our workshop **Supporting Dual Heritage Children and Young People** due to be held at The Oxford Centre, 333 Banbury Road, Oxford on **Thursday, 11 May 2006 9.45am - 3.30pm**.

- ◆ This workshop will explore the issues that may face dual heritage children and young people.
- ◆ Delegates will have the opportunity to consider how they can meet the needs of dual heritage children and young people.
- ◆ Practical activities and ideas will be discussed with the delegates.

**To book a place please contact us for a booking form**

£125 inclusive of VAT

Refreshments and Lunch is included

## TACKLING RACISM IN PREDOMINANTLY WHITE AREAS

### Workshop on Friday, 12 May 2006 9.45am - 3.30pm



We are pleased to invite you to attend our workshop **Tackling Racism in Predominately White Areas** due to be held at The Oxford Centre, 333 Banbury Road, Oxford on **Friday, 12 May 2006 9.45am - 3.30pm**.

- ◆ This workshop will explore how to tackle racism in predominantly white areas..
- ◆ Delegates will have the opportunity to consider strategies that can help them successfully challenge racism.
- ◆ Practical tips and ideas will be discussed with the delegates.

**To book a place please contact us for a booking form**

£125 inclusive of VAT

Refreshments and Lunch is included

## Summer Breeze

### BOAT TRIP & PARTY

STUDIO 45'S JA'BLINKS AT THE HELM

With guest appearance **JADA Pearl**

Saturday, 27 May 2006 6pm from Folley Bridge

Partying at The Isis Tavern 9pm til late

Caribbean Cuisine

Tickets in advance £25

Please contact us for a booking form

### Who Am I?

**John Richard Archer** was born in Liverpool in 1836 to a Barbadian father and an Irish mother. He settled in Battersea in London around 1890 with his black Canadian wife, where they opened an award winning photographic studio. In 1906 he won the local election and became Britain's first British born black Councillor. Until he was nominated there was no mention by the opposition parties of his colour. Later they used his race to supposedly highlight the radical policies of Battersea's working class tradition.

In 1913 he was elected the tenth Mayor of Battersea. the night of his election he declared "You have made history tonight.. Battersea has done many things in its past, but the greatest thing that it has done is show that it has no colour prejudice, and that it recognizes a man for the work he has done."

### Subscribe to this newsletter

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 BCMHG*. 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 31 May 2005.

### 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 June newsletter is 31 May 2005.

## 'Does Colour Matter?' Roadshow Conference in Brighton and Bristol

We are pleased to announce that we have two dates confirmed regarding our roadshow conference **'Does Colour Matter?'**:

**Monday, 22 May 2006**

**9.45am - 4.00pm**

**Community Base, 113 Queens Road,  
Brighton**

and

**Thursday, 8 June 2006**

**9.45am - 4.00pm**

**The CEED (Charity) Ltd**

**Ujima House, 97-107 Wider Street, St  
Paul's, Bristol**

genuinely culturally diverse, open and equal environment. By hosting this debate independent of any organisation, local authority or other institution, we feel we are most likely to give participants an opportunity to explore these issues in an honest, open environment, free of any pressures, real or imaginary, that may limit contributions if linked more directly to their work environment.

Our aim is to write a report that outlines the issues raised and will include recommendations for a positive way forward once we have completed this series of one day conferences.

The report will be forwarded to all those who participated in the conference and can be used as a template to take forward this work in their specific location.

**If you would like to participate in this date please contact us for a booking form. The cost of attending this conference is £125 inclusive of VAT and includes a Caribbean lunch and refreshments.**

As stated before, we feel that this debate is crucial to the development of an inclusive set of services that values the skills and talents of a diverse range of people. We feel this is most likely to help create opportunities for all children irregardless of their cultural heritage.