

STARLIGHT

Starlight Black Child
Mixed Heritage Group

September 2005

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

Editorial

October marks the start of Black History month and we are celebrating with our own children's fancy dress competition and family party due to be held on the 22 October see details below.

We have been extremely busy during the last few months and are currently applying for charity status for the group. This should help us to secure funding to provide more services for the group and help us to promote it nationally, making links with other groups across the country.

We held our second 'Does Colour Matter?' conference in London earlier this month and are now involved in planning the next one due to be held in Liverpool on 15 December. An overview of one of Professor Gus John's papers, which is included in our conference pack, can be found in this newsletter as it highlights a number of key issues relevant to the debate.

Also in this issue is an article by

Rory Campbell, Sue's son. He has put forward his perspective as a black young man of mixed heritage. He has also designed a short questionnaire and if anyone would like to contribute to this ongoing debate and research we would be pleased to hear from you. Rory has also reviewed a disturbing film concerning the rise in gun crime in Britain.

We are keen to receive contributions from others as we would like this newsletter to be a forum for promoting positive relations and encouraging an open debate. It is also possible to advertise in the newsletter and our rates are included on the back page.

Finally, now that we have a Management Committee and public liability insurance we intend to find a suitable venue to hold regular meetings. Anyone interested in attending is welcome to come along. Please contact us and we will let you know when and where they will be held.



Do you know who this is?

Have a guess, the answer is printed on the back page.

There are a lot of black people who have been significant in British history that we should all know about. We will provide details of websites and sources to help you and your child(ren) decide who they would like to be in the fancy dress competition when you request an entry form.

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Special points of interest:

- Black History Family Fancy Dress Party
- 'Does Colour Matter?' conference in Liverpool
- Mixed Race Britain
- Professor Gus John

BLACK HISTORY FAMILY PARTY

On Saturday, 22nd October we are hosting a competition for children to dress up as a famous black person either from history or today. Who will your child become? Mary Seacole - 50 cent - Martin Luther King - or ??? Age categories: 4-8; 9-13; 13+. Competition Entry Fee £1 per child. Tickets to party £6 per family. Music provided by Studio 45's Ja'Blinks. Prizes. Caribbean Food. Bar. 4pm til late at the Regal Community Centre, Cowley, Oxford.

For an Entry Form and Tickets please contact Starlight Black Child Mixed Heritage Group. Telephone 01865 776691 or E-mail: StarlightEnt7788@aol.com.

'Does Colour Matter?' Conference in Liverpool

The third in this series of conferences is due to be held in Liverpool on the 15 December at the Kuumba Imani Millenium Centre.

As stated in our first newsletter the purpose of this 'roadshow' of conferences is to debate how white and black professionals can move on in terms of their perceptions of racism and begin to contribute to the development of an

inclusive set of services that values the skills and talents of a diverse range of people.

It is clear that despite all of the legislation and equal opportunity policies, we have yet to create a genuinely culturally diverse, open and equal environment. We believe that by hosting this debate independent of any organisation,

local authority or other institution, we are most likely to provide an opportunity to explore these issues in an honest, open environment, free of any pressures, real or imaginary, that may limit contributions to this debate if linked more directly with participant's work environment.

Please contact Starlight for more information.

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Please ensure any contributions/adverts arrive by 30 Nov 2005

Next issue: December 2005

Mixed Race Britain - Through My Eyes By Rory Campbell



Rory Campbell

“Soon we will not be discussing the differences between the ‘races’ but the similarities that we share and realise that when it comes down to it we are all human, just different shades.”

I am Rory Campbell. My mother is white and my father is black. I don't remember ever meeting my father and have been raised by my mother my whole life. I don't feel I have ever had a positive black role model but my mum always tried to make me aware of my black history and I feel that this helped me to form the belief that all people are equal and anyone who thinks otherwise is just wrong.

A lot of my friends are also mixed race and I wonder how they see themselves as regard to their racial identity. Do they see themselves as members of both black and white communities or do they feel part of one more than the other?

As a twenty-one year old living in Oxford I have a wide range of cultures in my peer group and I notice that, once out of school, friendship groups seem to mirror the ethnic groups of their members, for example, African Caribbean boys will tend to associate with each other. However, I have noticed an exception to this rule with mixed race young people. It is not unusual to see a single mixed race girl with a group of white girls or a mixed race boy with a group of Asian lads. Why is this? And does it mean that mixed

race people don't feel that they are part of any racial group?

I for one see myself as a black man and I think that the majority of my mixed race friends share this belief but it is not true. I am a mixed race man, I am not just black any more than I am just white, so why this denial of my white heritage? Many mixed race kids born in Britain claim the country of their black parent's origin. In this denial of Britishness they also effectively deny their white heritage. I think this is because mixed race people are easily perceived as being black by others based only on appearance. In the past there has been tension between black people and British nationalists such as the National Front, BNP etc and I believe this is why some black people will try and distance themselves from white people. This behaviour is echoed by other ethnic groups, most notably some Asian families keep traditions from their homeland and in a way refuse that they are even in Britain. So is it true of mixed race people? Does disowning their British heritage mean that they embrace their black culture and history?

The fact is, black history is not taught in most schools (I remember learning more about Ameri-

can history than my own black ancestors). Therefore, HipHop and R&B are the closest the majority of young people get to black culture. Even this has only really become acceptable as HipHop culture has been absorbed into white culture. I don't believe that this is truly black culture with so many white kids emulating what they see on MTV and the like. But it is also not white culture as the main icons of this culture are largely black. So is this a new mixed race culture?

All ethnic groups have started to merge their cultures on this small island. Admittedly some more than others, and the number of mixed race children born in the UK proves this point as the number has been steadily increasing over the years. Inevitably the influence of mixed race members of society will also grow. This can surely only be a good thing as mixed race people (whatever the mix) are more likely to see the perspective of both their ethnicities. I believe that if this trend continues Britain will become a more diverse and equal society which has got to be good. Soon we will not be discussing the differences between the 'races' but the similarities that we share and realise that when it comes down to it we are all human, just different shades.

The Questionnaire

Rory has designed this short questionnaire and we invite readers to answer the questions and send them to us so that we can report back in the next newsletter.

Please take a moment to complete this short questionnaire aimed at finding more about you and people like you.

1. How old are you?
2. Do you have any hobbies? If so what are they?
3. What is your occupation?
4. Do you have any mixed race colleagues? If so how many?
5. Were you born in Britain?
6. Where are your mother and father from?
7. Do you feel British?
8. What term do you prefer to use for your ethnic origin?
9. What is in your opinion the most offensive term?
10. Do you feel people in general react differently towards you because of your race? If so could you give an example?
11. What ethnic group are the majority of your friends part of?
12. What do you feel is the most prejudice ethnic group in general? Why?
13. Have you ever been arrested?
14. Have you ever felt that the police treated you differently because of your race? If so please give an example?

Thank-you for your time.

BANG! BANG! In Da Manor

Film review by Rory Campbell

Bang! Bang! In Da Manor is a hard hitting documentary by riceNpeas films. It is about the growing gun culture in modern Britain focusing on London. The documentary opens with an interview with Sabina Gbesemete, mother of Selorm Gbesemete, a 21 year old man shot in front of several of his friends. His killer is still at large.

This theme continues throughout the documentary interviewing young people both in and outside of the gun culture. It includes interviews with arms dealers, people on the receiving end of the bullets, their parents and social workers working with these people with the goal

of finding out what causes this disturbing new trend.

The documentary includes footage of the funeral of Toni-Ann Byfield, a 7 year old girl killed in her father's drug related murder. It also includes interviews with an L.A. gang mediator involved in the first cease-fire between the notorious blood and crip gangs in L.A., focusing on how the American gang culture is filtering through to our youth in Britain.

The highlight of the film is the interview with Dr Lez Henry, a sociologist at Goldsmiths University of London. He ex-

presses some very well thought out and poignant views backed up with his work with 14-19 year olds.

In short this is a very informative and thought provoking documentary that I believe should be shown in every school in the country and defiantly viewed by anyone working with young people affected by this senseless violence.

Five stars. *****



BANG! BANG! In da Manor
By riceNpeas films
www.riceNpeas.com

Professor Gus John

'Identity, Culture and Pedagogy - Black and Minority Ethnic Leaders for the 21st Century'

Following the struggles for equal rights in the 60s, 70s and 80s, Professor Gus John argues that this has yet to lead to equal rights to employment opportunities with selection processes that are not arbitrarily biased and weighted against black people. He feels that the call for more black people to be represented in the workforce and in senior management positions, has become a racialised process.

He feels that the root of the problem is the manner in which structural, cultural, institutional and personal manifestations of racism and discrimination are ignored. If there is a drive to recruit more black profession-

als in this climate, Professor Gus John believes that no 'self-respecting black person... (should) allow themselves to be placed in any situation where they could be looked upon as gaining their position by grace and favour rather than merit'.

He goes on to say that so long as we live with racism in this society, so long as black people's existence, in all walks of life, is mediated through the dynamic of 'race', so long as the schooling system continues to be anything but inclusive of black people 'in all our complexity and all our richness, we do not have the luxury of being professionals **who simply happen to be black. There**

is nothing 'simple' about being black in British society'.

He concludes that it is necessary to work together to challenge systems that continue to provide cover for the racists and bullies and to form alliances with progressive white colleagues who refuse to validate this system.

New ways of working with black staff and black communities has got to be found rather than black managers helping to make racism look respectable by accommodating it in its institutional forms, thereby identifying themselves as part of the problem.



"We do not have the luxury of being professionals who simply happen to be black. There is nothing 'simple' about being black in British society."

Life Olympics Course

The aim of the Life Olympic course is to raise the aspirations of young people who have failed to achieve their potential in mainstream school.

By providing an opportunity for young people to participate in this personal and social development course they will gain essential skills that can contribute significantly to their potential to succeed.

The course is varied and tailored to meet the specific needs of the young person. It includes activities that help to promote a positive self identity and self esteem and encourages young people to achieve their full potential. They can gain the basic skills that can help them return to learning or gain employment.

The benefit of providing an

opportunity for young people to gain confidence and basic skills in an alternative setting can be as follows:

- They may have found succeeding in a formal education setting difficult.
- They will have the opportunity to succeed at the pace and level that supports their individual needs and ability.

'I recently completed the course and feel I have a better idea of my self worth and the worth of others. It helped me to understand why I might react in adverse ways in certain situations and helped me to think about better ways to react in those situations.'

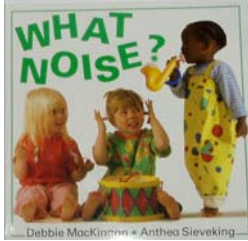
(21 year old participant)

For further information contact Starlight Enterprise



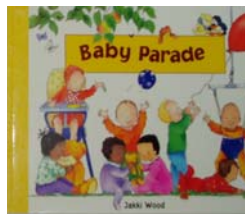
Just to remind readers that we hold a stock of children's books for sale which have been provided by the book club Letterbox Library.

We have included a review of three of the books for pre-school children.

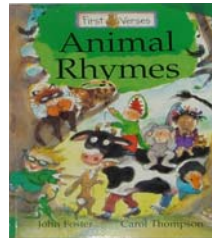


What Noise? is aimed at nursery level children and features photographs of toddlers from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. The toddlers are making noises and there are

written explanations of the sounds. This book



Baby Parade is a fun book that any young child would enjoy with amusing rhymes and bright illustrations of all the activities a baby enjoys in his/her day, from playing in the sand pit to bath time. The last two pages of the book are reserved to give the names of every baby featured in the book next to a small picture.



Part of the First Verses series, *Animal Rhymes* contains lively bright images to grab a child's attention. This is an excellent book of new and old children's poetry about animals. Long and short, funny and scary. This book

has it all to get older pre-schoolers thinking about verse and rhyme.

If you would like details of other titles we would be pleased to send you the full list of books available. They include books for older children and resources for parents and teachers on a variety of topics that reflect Letterbox's commitment to equality and diversity.

A two day course exploring the needs of looked after black children

Starlight Enterprise Limited are pleased to offer a two day course for foster carers, social workers and other interested parties regarding the needs of black children of dual heritage.

This two day course offers an opportunity to look at the im-

portance of nurturing a positive racial identity and self concept. It includes valuable personal insights as well as practical tools and ideas that can help empower foster carers and workers to nurture a positive self identity in the children in their

care. There is also an opportunity to reflect on an individual's values and beliefs and their understanding of racism and discrimination.

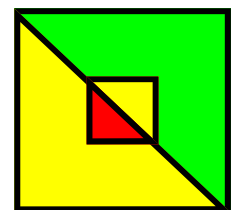
For further details please contact Starlight. (details below)

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 and encouraging an open debate with the aim of improving race relations in Britain today. The deadline for the next issue is 30 November 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 December newsletter is 30 November 2005.

Christmas Party

Friday, 23 December 2005 8pm til late

Dance - Jazz - R&B - Reggae - Soul - Funk

and much much more

Tickets £6

For further details please contact us (details below).

Did you guess?

The picture is of Queen Charlotte Sophia who was King George III's wife (1738-1820). She is Queen Victoria's grandmother and was directly descended from Margarita de Castro y Sousa, a black branch of the Portuguese Royal House.

Her Negroid characteristics were expected to be played

down, softened or even obliterated by the artists of the time. Sir Allan Ramsay was the artist who was responsible for the majority of the paintings of the Queen which did not 'soften' her African features.

He was an anti-slavery intellectual and was also married to the niece of Lord Mansfield, the

English judge whose 1772 decision was the first in a series of rulings that finally ended slavery in the British Empire.

There are many more facts to be discovered about Britain's black history.

This information was extracted from the website: www.100greatblackbritons.com.