

OPERATION BLACK VOTE THE HOME OF BLACK POLITICS



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OBV NEWS

ISSUE 1 SPRING 2007

identity

*the campaign to
keep 'black' Black*

**a decade
of ACTION**

OBV's story

equality

*200 years of
political activism*

**connecting
communities**

TAKE A LEADERSHIP ROLE



WHO RUNS London



Operation Black Vote



WHO RUNS My City maps out key decision making institutions

WHO RUNS My City is a website, a booklet and a fold out poster that comprehensively lists all institutions in a city

The WHO RUNS website is a dynamic and ever evolving source of information, detailing the nuts and bolts that make a city function

WHO RUNS LONDON? LAUNCH - 25 APRIL 2007

Further information contact OBV on 020 8983 5471
Email Leon Green: leon@obv.org.uk

Visit the WHO RUNS Birmingham? Website @ www.obv.org.uk

Editor's Note

Welcome to the very first edition of OBV News. We are a campaign with big ideas, and essential to our work are the hundreds who take part in our schemes and thousands who attend our events and sign up to our database.

Increasing numbers of people have, through our schemes, found a place of influence within our institutions.

We applaud those who step up to the challenge of leadership and recognise others within government and the wider society who are committed to seeing our country afford everyone, regardless of race or creed, equality of opportunity.

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'our future is in our hands'

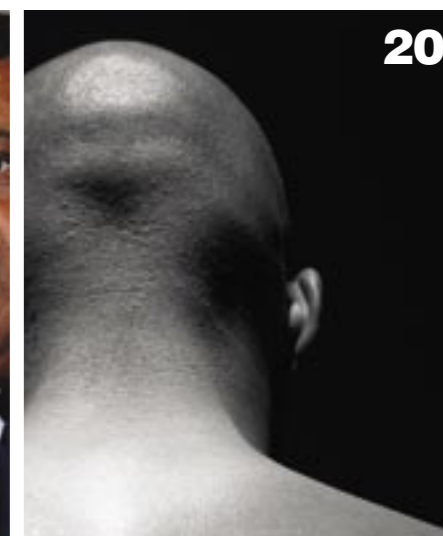
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Director's Note



Sometimes you feel that you're making great progress in tackling race inequality. That the big private institutions are no longer seeing diversity as some kind of charity act for BME communities, but rather as an essential element for a progressive company to succeed.

For a while it seemed that all mainstream political parties would be motivated by political expedience rather than political correctness to ensure they were both more inclusive and more representative. But woe betide if you let your guard down for less than a second, everything that has been gained can be rolled back with interest.

“Together we make a difference”

Trevor Phillips' debate about multiculturalism is doing just that. I believe that 99.9% of the population prior to Phillips' comments would have concluded that 'multiculturalism' is a good thing and makes the UK special. Post Phillips that figure, although still the majority has fallen to 67% in a recent poll. Worse still, important figures in the Government including the leader of the Conservative Party, have bought into this cul-de-sac debate blaming multiculturalism for the radicalisation of some Muslims, and other social ills.

The Tory leader in a recent speech stated: 'Multiculturalism sounds like a good thing: people of different cultures living together. But it has been manipulated to favour a divisive idea - the right to difference.'

If we cannot be different then what, forced assimilation? No public funding for cultural festivals that highlight difference? What about funding for organizations such as OBV that focus on BME communities? Where this will end no one knows, but we ignore this debate at our peril.

In a year when we celebrate the achievements of African slaves, former slaves in the Caribbean, the Americas and the UK, along with their white colleagues, we learn that the legacy of 200 years of slavery, 200 years of colonialism and fifty years of extreme racism, cannot be turned back in thirty or forty years.

The struggle continues, more subtle now, but still holding the progress of Black nations and BME communities down.

The answer is to be aware, find relevant information and organise politically, financially and spiritually.

At the back of this newsletter you can sign up to support OBV. I hope you will and that you'll ask a further 10 friends or individuals to join.

Together we make a difference
Simon Woolley

Haringey seeks Turkish Bench members

Haringey is the fourth most diverse borough in London. It comprises a rich mix of people from Africa and the Caribbean and Mediterranean. It is also home to over 40,000 Turkish speakers - about 15% of the population. Haringey Magistrates' Court would like to see this mix reflected in the court. They would like to receive applications from people from these communities - particularly Turkish groups.

Who runs my city?



Contrary to the popular myth that Black people have no interest in decision making institutions the reality is often that they do not know where decisions are made and who makes them.

It is this in turn that creates a perception by people that they have little or no control over politics in their day to day lives and the policies they can influence whether in the areas of education and housing or social services and the judicial process.

This knowledge gap has been the principal inspiration for our Who Runs My City project. The project pack seeks to physically map out key decision making institutions on a fold out poster accompanied by a booklet that comprehensively lists all institutions in a city.

By distributing thousands of these packs through community and faith groups, colleges, and schools we hope to raise awareness of the nuts and bolts that make a city function, as well as raise confidence for individual and collective advocacy in local communities.

Already with a successful track record of running this project in Birmingham where 5,000 booklets and maps were distributed, we are now launching the project in London.

With the financial support from the London Councils the challenge to comprehensively map out London has been immense and we will be launching the project pack and website with Ken Livingstone, Mayor of London and Jim Fitzpatrick, the Minister for London on 25th April at City Hall, GLA.

The project website is a dynamic and ever evolving source of information and we have already visited many community groups and colleges and will visit many more over the coming months.

We welcome feedback on the accuracy and fullness of the information on the website so we can continually improve and add to it.

Furthermore, if you know of any groups or organisations that may be interested in a visit from OBV to run a workshop or deliver a talk around the project, please contact Leon Green on 020 8983 5471.

Also watch this space as we launch the project across other UK cities and London boroughs over the next twelve months.

Derby's Nigel Hallam - a man of merit

Managing a huge court workload is just a small part of Nigel Hallam's day, and this Clerk to the Justices loves a packed week.

Derby Magistrates Court has been part of the Magistrates Shadowing Scheme for two consecutive years, and Nigel has taken on the challenge each time with gusto.

So at the end of last year it came as no surprise when he won a CJS 'Justice Award' for outstanding commitment to diversity for his work with the scheme.

Linda Mayhew, Area Director for HMCS Derbyshire nominated Nigel for going the extra mile while still managing to successfully carry out his role as a busy justice's clerk. She said: 'Nigel has worked tirelessly to improve Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) representation on magistrates' benches across Derbyshire.'

Nigel's commitment to the Magistrates Shadowing Scheme has seen the percentage of BME magistrates rise to a level which reflects the make-up of local communities. Having provided a role model to people who have come through shadowing and entered the magistracy, he has encouraged them in turn to become role models themselves and the numbers of BME applicants continues to rise.'

Nigel who has been a valuable supporter of OBV, speaking at many of the scheme's seminar events commented: 'I am honoured and absolutely delighted to have won a National Justice Award. I hope that the work surrounding the Magistrates Shadowing Scheme continues to improved confidence in the criminal justice system.'

The national awards were established in 2004 by Baroness Scotland, Minister of State for the Criminal Justice System (CJS) and Law Reform, to recognise the diverse work carried out by those working in the CJS across England and Wales.

But the Justice Awards win is not the first time Nigel has been recognised for his commitment to the scheme. In 2004 he was honoured with an OBV 'Leadership in Diversity Award'.

The awards were presented to court members who were exceptional in their enthusiasm, energy and passion for the programme.

Two Derby shadows have already been appointed, and two others are currently in the application process to become magistrates.



Nigel Hallam receives Justice Award from Baroness Scotland

Koreans wanted by the courts

The Borough of Kingston has the largest Korean community in the country - 23,000 live in London and Surrey, of which approximately 10,000 live between Kingston, Surbiton and Merton borders.

Many Koreans run successful businesses in the area and the courts services would like to see them apply to become magistrates too.

The drive to see magistrates benches reflect the community becomes a real challenge when places like Kingston, with such a large percentage of any one community, has no representation within its ranks.

Unfortunately, initiatives to encourage Koreans to apply to become magistrates have so far failed to attract any takers.

Waltham Forest champions diversity



Lord Falconer, Waltham Forest magistrates and shadows at the graduation ceremony

Waltham Forest Magistrates' Court is a top diversity champion. The court is among those with the largest numbers of Black and minority ethnic (BME) magistrates. Of its hundred and three bench members thirty-two are from BME communities. Twenty-two are of African-Caribbean background and ten from the Asian sub-continent.

The court took part in the 2006 Magistrates Shadowing Scheme and one participant Shaique Choudhury is already appointed as a magistrate, with another three currently going through the interview process.

Huw Richards, Bench Legal Manager said: 'We are keen to see our Justices of the Peace (JPs) reflect our area. This part of London is very ethnically mixed - we ask the area Advisory Committee to send us BME JPs and they are very good at providing them.'

Huw definitely wants Waltham Forest to take part in the 2007 shadowing scheme again this year. He says: 'The scheme provides enormous scope to increase the courts intake, but we want people to apply, not just see it as information gathering, they should see themselves as JPs.'

Waltham Forest has two Asian Legal Advisors and an African Caribbean Bench Training and Development Committee Chairman.

“There are large Korean communities living in South West London and every effort is being made via the Korean Embassy to recruit community members either via the local courts or through the OBV Magistrates Shadowing Scheme. It is essential that the courts represent the communities which they serve for there to be confidence in the Criminal Justice System. We hope to report on the progress of this initiative in future newsletters.”

Yvonne Powell
Merton Advisory Committee magistrate



Make Your Mark

On Thursday 3rd May there will be local government elections across England to decide who will run your Council for the next few years. The issues that will be determined based on the elections will range from how often litter is collected from your front doors and recycling policy to what investment will be put into youth services like clubs and sports facilities, and the student selection policy of local schools.

Voting is one of the most effective methods to use your voice and influence decisions that affect your daily lives. Women who make up over half the UK population successfully fought for the vote, and in fact were only granted the right nearly 100 years ago. So the vote although assumed as a fundamental right has not always been so. Similarly, some readers will remember that Ghana which celebrates its 50th anniversary of independence only granted its Black majority the right to vote that many years ago.

Ironically, the challenge in the UK today is not the fight for the right to vote, but the attempts to encourage and inspire people to use their voice and their vote at each local or general election. Politics is a two-way street that relies on politicians to respond to peoples local needs, but also for people to have their say during and at election time.

However, another threat rears its ugly head at these local elections that may spur people into ballot stations to cast their vote.

The far-Right and racist parties like the BNP are capitalising on poverty in areas such as the North West and parts of Yorkshire claiming to help local people, but in fact sowing seeds of hatred and taking progress backwards.

In areas where they have won local seats they've created further divisions and frightened away financial investment for local communities. There can be few stronger arguments in playing a full and positive role in your local elections and making your voice heard.

The deadline for voter registration is 18th April

The voting age is 18 but you can register at 16 - which helps with bank credit, and financial references, as well as proof of address when making financial purchases.

You can register and vote in local elections if you are a British, Irish Republic or Commonwealth citizen, as well as a European Union (EU) citizen.

If you would like to know how to register to vote please visit www.aboutmyvote.co.uk

Understanding Power

Understanding Power, OBV's flagship citizenship education programme for schools has been distributed to over 10,000 schools and colleges across the UK.

We have visited over 4,000 students over the last two years delivering workshops and roadshows in Birmingham, Bristol, Manchester and the London Boroughs of Tower Hamlets, Hackney, Lambeth and Lewisham.

The aim of the programme is to identify and explore issues that young people face day-to-day: music, news media, gangs, and gun crime.

By discussing these issues and notions of power around these themes with young people we are able to seamlessly look at power at different levels: Government, the Courts and Law, and Human Rights.

The programme incorporates film,

comedy, panel discussions, cd rom, interactive activities and guest speakers including Rt. Hon Charles Clarke MP, Dawn Butler MP, and actor Kwame Kwei Armah.

We have inspired hundreds of students to play a proactive role in engaging with political and civil society that they hopefully will take with them into adult society.

We believe that there is an ongoing relevancy and need for this programme and receive regular requests for the packs by teachers and students.

We are still accepting opportunities to run the programme in schools across the country, and the booklets with an accompanying teacher's guide are available free of charge from our head office.

Please contact Leon Green on: 0208 983 5471 or email leon@obv.org.uk



Citizenship Education - East London students take part

On Route to Westminster

MP mentors congratulated and pledged their support to twenty-one Parliamentary Ambassadors at the MP Shadowing Scheme graduation ceremony at the House of Commons recently.

PM Tony Blair, David Cameron and Menzies Campbell all gave the OBV and Electoral Commission MP Scheme participants their full backing to pursue their ambitions to become Members of Parliament.



Councillor and scheme graduate Sukhinder Gill speaks about his plan for Barking and Dagenham

Parliamentary Ambassador Wing Yee Li hopes to become a Liberal Democrat MP



MP Scheme graduate Floyd Millen with mentor Rt Hon Charles Clarke

Don't forget...

With the English local government elections fast approaching, the Electoral Commission is supporting electoral registration officers to make sure that all the electors in their area are on the electoral register, so they can vote in May's elections. Despite efforts by electoral registration officers and the Electoral Commission to highlight the importance of registration, it is estimated that around 8-9 per cent of the eligible population are not completing their registration form and returning it to their local authority, leaving them ineligible to vote.

The recent Electoral Administration Act 2006 extended the deadline for registration to eleven working days before polling day, and the Commission is urging electoral registration officers to ensure that as many electors as possible have returned a registration form in time for them to vote in the forthcoming local elections.

Rates of registration vary and the Electoral Commission's research has shown that certain groups of people are less likely to be registered than others. This includes those who have recently moved house, young people and those who live in densely populated urban areas, particularly London, where the mobile population means people are slipping off the register, often without realising.

Registration rates can also vary amongst different BME groups, and voter registration rates on the whole are lower among people from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds, who are up to three times as likely to be unregistered as white people. And while our research has found that members of ethnic communities are extremely positive about the value of voting, low turn out at local elections may mean people are not aware of how easy it is to register and vote. To guarantee that everyone understands how to register, the Commission offers information in a variety of languages including Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, Gujarati, Urdu, Polish, Punjabi and Welsh.

There is ongoing concern about the level of voter turnout, particularly in local elections, but our research has found time and time again that people continue to remain interested in issues that affect them. They want to have a say in the way decisions are made and to know that their voices have been heard. Conversations with neighbours, colleagues and in any social gathering show that there is no shortage of views on issues which are 'political'. Ensuring that people are included on the electoral register is fundamental to harnessing that positive aspiration and reconnecting people to the political process.

For more information or to order any of these resources please visit www.electoralcommission.org.uk/publicawareness

Welsh Assembly Scheme

If you are interested in gaining an insight into the work of the Welsh Assembly or interested in working in politics, this is a unique once in a lifetime opportunity.


We will launch our Welsh Assembly shadowing scheme in late April and welcome applications from those interested.

Please contact 020 8983 5474 and we will send you an application pack.

OBV Manchester takes off

Operation Black Vote Manchester hopes to bring new dynamic political life to Moss Side. The new campaign group was launched by key speaker, playwright and actor, Kwame Kwei Armah, renowned for his political campaigning.

A large audience of local activists, council workers, MPs, local Councillors and young people came together to help kick start the campaign. Organised by Manchester Black led Churches and spearheaded by Bishop Doye Agama, the new group will work alongside OBV to politically galvanise local BME groups.



PARTY POLITICAL BROADCAST

It is not an understatement to suggest that for Black and minority ethnic communities the forth-coming general election-tipped to be in the next two or three years – will be as crucial as the historical election of 1987. Back then the election of four Black MPs; Keith Vaz, Paul Boateng, Diane Abbott and Bernie Grant, made political history and inspired a generation to believe that change could happen.

The historical break-through of 1987 was driven, in no small measure, by grass roots activism, and the need to tackle social and racial injustice. Today there is still that positive approach, but an added dynamic comes from the party political imperative that recognises the power of the Black vote.

We have learned to be cautious about rhetoric from party leaders from all sides of the political spectrum and focus more on the mechanisms that will deliver change. Equally we have learned that no meaningful change can occur without our communities being centre stage. Empowered Black communities could therefore decide who holds the balance of power and the keys to Downing Street.

In this issue Party bosses outline why it is important for their respective parties to be more representative and reflect the views of the wider society.

Keith Vaz MP

The Ethnic Minority taskforce was set up by the Rt Hon Hazel Blears MP, the Party chair in July 2006 in order to reconnect Britain's dynamic ethnic minority community with the Labour Party. I was pleased to be appointed as Chair of the taskforce by Hazel Blears MP.

Through a series of meetings both formal and informal over the last six months the EM taskforce has sought to identify the needs and concerns of Britain's ethnic minority community and to act as a conduit between them and the highest levels of the Party so that Labour, the party of Government, is aware of the impact its policies are having on the wider community.

The events have ranged from 'Diversity Nite' at the Manchester Labour Party conference attended by over 700 people to challenging policy meetings in places like Tower Hamlets and Leeds.

Serious dialogue has taken place between fellow party members and Members of the Cabinet, but we want to see the ethnic minority communities better represented throughout the Labour party in parliament as well as in local CLPs (Constituency Labour Party). As the current round of selections for members of Parliament begins it is important that we see an increase in the total number of ethnic minority people in parliament which currently stands at 12.

Historically Labour has been the most multicultural of the major parties in both policy and membership. Since 1997, Labour has had record numbers of ethnic minority councillors, Members of Parliament and Lords representing not only members of their ethnic and faith groups but all their constituents in all levels of society.

Under Tony Blair's leadership, the commitment of the Labour party to ethnic minority communities has continued and evolved. Ethnic minority membership at all levels has continued to exceed that of the other major parties. The Government has an enviable record in protecting and promoting the rights of ethnic minority

individuals.

The 2000 Race Relations Act placed real and genuine responsibilities on our public bodies to consult ethnic minorities, to consider the effect of a policy on them and most importantly to work towards the elimination of unlawful discrimination in all its forms.

More recently, the Commission on Integration and Cohesion has been established as a means of ensuring that individuals can feel the same affiliation to their geographic as their ethnic communities.

Throughout Tony Blair's term of office, emphasis has been placed on allowing individuals to fulfil their potential, regardless of background, and ethnic minorities now enjoy unprecedented economic, social and educational success. With BME consumers now holding £156 billion in terms of spending power, the success of these communities under the Labour Government is set to grow.

Gordon Brown's economic policies have reflected the Labour Party's dedication to helping ethnic minorities. During his tenure, funding per school pupil has risen by over £1,000, with over £30,000 more teachers in schools than under the previous Government.

This funding has been targeted at those areas where it is most needed: urban areas that often have large ethnic minority communities.

The results are clear. Ethnic Minority communities have benefited hugely. Results for Black African and Caribbean students are improving faster than any other social group, and Bangladeshi youths are swiftly approaching the level of achievement of their South Asian peers.

These successes are not about social engineering or Government control, but about empowering individuals and communities to utilise their innate ability.

Francis Maude MP

As a politician I'm used to hearing people accuse us of cynicism – of doing anything to get elected. But when it comes to building a more representative Party, that just isn't the case. Over the last year David Cameron and I have taken great strides toward making the Conservative party more inclusive.

After all, a mono-ethnic party cannot hope to represent a multi-ethnic country and that is exactly what we aim to do – represent. The Conservative Party must reflect broader society, if not least of all because we will benefit from the talent which BMEs can bring to the party and to the country.

Whereas in the past we thought it was enough to just open the door to ethnic minorities, we've realised that more has to be done to invite people in. To encourage members of BME communities to listen to us or even join us, we have to act to show that they are welcome.

We've done a great deal to attract BME candidates. For instance people like Wilfred Immanuel-Jones, Priti Patel and Alok Sharma have been selected to stand for Parliamentary seats. Perhaps the biggest victory in last May's local elections was the sheer number of BME Councillors we had voted into office.

Shabbir Ahmed is the new Conservative Lord Mayor of Coventry and the first Muslim to hold the title.

We've also created a new fund to help young people from BME communities across Britain to experience life in Westminster. Those selected for the internships will have the opportunity to work at Conservative Headquarters or in Parliament itself.

Conservatives are also holding a series of major events in Britain's larger cities, in partnership with Operation Black Vote, to encourage BMEs to engage with politics.

Finally, we're monitoring our own progress. By checking to see how well we are doing, at all levels, we can act to ensure that we effectively represent BME communities.

In the end, our aim is to help build a united society. In the past, when it came to ethnic diversity, we were part of the problem. Now that's no longer true. Now we are determined to be part of the solution – and we'd like your help.

If you would like to apply for an internship, or have any comments or questions, please feel free to email me on chairman@conservatives.com

Ming Campbell MP

Liberal Democrats have always cherished and sought to support diversity and creativity. The celebration of the individual, ensuring that all can contribute fully to their communities and take part in those decisions which affect them were key tenets in drawing me towards the arms of liberalism.

It is why, since being elected Liberal Democrat leader, I have made a personal commitment to making my party more representative of those whom we serve.

I want to encourage those who have not previously engaged in politics to get involved. That is why we have been working in conjunction with Operation Black Vote to ensure that we attract more talent from our ethnic communities.

As part of this project the Liberal Democrats are launching an internship scheme to recruit people from Black and Minority Ethnic groups into key positions, such as in the Leader's office, the press

unit and the Whips department.

We need to establish role models now for future generations. This will provide a platform for yet more BME recruits and for securing new candidates and elected members. To this end, we have allocated a fund worth £200,000 to support those from ethnic minorities who have been selected to fight target seats.

At the beginning of the year the Liberal Democrats and I hosted a reception for members of BME groups. I was struck, but not surprised, by the wealth of talent we already have within our ranks. But we need more. The event was a successful beginning, but is only the start of my commitment to make our party more reflective of modern Britain.

We must make the corridors of power more accessible to all this country's people. I intend to put the full weight of my leadership into making that ambition a reality.

Mentor ex-offenders Reduce re-offending

The Workout Project is looking for volunteer mentors to join a unique initiative that rehabilitates former prison inmates by finding them employment and training so that they can rebuild their lives and leave behind a life of crime.



Steve Rawlins helps offenders to break addictions

The Workout Project, based in south-east London has already placed over 90 former prisoners in either work or training.

The project is managed by Steve Rawlins, a former prisoner who is also a committed Christian. He explained: "One reason for Britain's high prison population is due to the high re-offending rates amongst ex-prisoners. Sixty per cent of people released from prison will re-offend and be back in prison within two years and a key reason for this is because ex-prisoners either lack the skills necessary to find regular employment or suffer from addictions which prevent them from finding work.

"The Workout Project breaks the cycle of re-offending by helping ex-offenders develop the skills and confidence they need to find work. If they need support to break addictions, we help link them to the appropriate services. Job mentors play a key role in rehabilitating people we work with by giving them the practical support they need to

build a new life for themselves, a major part of which will be helping them find employment."

Steve was released from prison in 2003 after serving a 13 year sentence for drug trafficking. He was converted to Christianity whilst inside and it was mentor support that enabled him to rebuild his life upon release. "I promised myself I would not go back into prison upon my release, and my mentor has helped me to keep my promise," he said. "He befriended me whilst I was in prison, and continued to support me upon my release. He also recommended me for my current job. Mentoring is a powerful tool to break the cycle of re-offending and that is why we offer this support on The Workout Project."

Robert is just one of the many ex-offenders The Workout Project has been able to help. He had served a 3 1/2 year prison sentence for burglary and came into contact with The Workout Project whilst in prison. They assigned him a mentor, who worked with him whilst inside and met him upon his release from prison. Robert was then given a place on a life skills training induction course and given a voluntary work placement.

He was also assigned a job coach who helped him compile a CV, taught him interview techniques and helped him find a job. After being with the programme for two months, Robert found a job as a trainee drug counsellor and has served in that role for over 12 months.

Steve said: "Anyone who is interested in being a mentor just needs to be willing to give of their time, energy and expertise. Mentoring support is a valuable life-line to our clients, and our mentors will play a role in helping our clients to become productive citizens in our society."

Can you help?

Phone Steve or Mathy 020 7940 8250

Hindu Aid charting change

Hindu Aid one of the biggest charities in Britain has taken on the task to help increase awareness of global poverty. The charity encourages people in the Hindu community to become more aware of global issues and to help resolve them.

The charity's current programme is the Development Awareness Network Agenda (Project DANA), initiating courses around development and education in global and climate change.

Ramesh Kallidai, Vice Chair of Hindu Aid said: "We want people in the Hindu community to take more of an interest these issues because they affect us."



Ramesh Kallidai informs Hindu community about global issues

"We want people in the Hindu community to take more of an interest these issues be cause they affect us."

For further information visit www.hinduaid.org.

Tamil Youth Parliament Programme



Paul Sathianesan meets the Prime Minister

Newham councillor, Paul Sathianesan, is at the forefront of ensuring that the Tamil community have a voice. He currently runs the Tamil Community Forum, whereby one of the projects involves bringing together a team of people to help stop anti-social behaviour. In addition he recently launched the Tamil Youth Parliament in Newham, where he seeks to encourage young Tamils to become more involved and engaged within their communities.

For further information contact Newham Council on 0208 430 2000.

Painting a new picture

Artefacts Edutainment is leading the way as a social enterprise business that gives young people in the community the opportunity to use art as a way to curb problems such as crime, substance abuse and anti-social behaviour. The organisation uses artists and performers to carry out different projects ranging from training workshops to exhibitions to help people view social issues in another way.

For more information visit www.artedutain.org

Black Oxford heritage tour

Artistry Events and Ruskin College have developed the first Black tour-guiding programme to train members of the community to deliver the Black Oxford guided heritage walking tour.

The accredited programme is delivered as four residential weekends at Ruskin College, Stoke House. The programme will provide potential guides with the detailed understanding of Black culture and history as well as communication, health and safety and practical tour guiding skills to deliver Black Oxford heritage walking tour.

Applicants successfully completing the programme will be competent to lead a tour party of up to 19 people around various colleges of Oxford University informing visitors on the achievements and contributions of Oxford's Black scholars from the 1800s. Guides will receive a fixed fee for each tour they deliver.

There are only ten places available on the programme so prospective applicants will have to have communication skills and a good knowledge of Black history.

National Patron of Black Oxford and Principal of Ruskin College, Professor Audrey Mullender, said: "I am delighted that Ruskin College is part of this exciting initiative. At Ruskin we specialise in offering students innovative programmes that aid their self-development.

Pamela Roberts, Founder and Executive Director of Artistry Events, said: "The development of the first Black Oxford tour guiding programme is a natural progression and builds on last year's initial training. It is good to see the growth of the project; my aim is to have enough trained guides to provide the Black Oxford heritage tours on a daily basis. In addition, the course offers potential applicants the opportunity to access the cultural heritage industry; a industry were Black people are underrepresented."

For further information please contact: Pamela Roberts, Executive Director, Artistry Events on 01494 535 684, 07950 785 050 email info@Blackoxford.net



Pamela Roberts Black Oxford tour founder

School children delivered by hand

Hammersmith councillor, Antony Lillis, praised Langford Primary School's continued plans to crackdown on truancy by launching a second route for the campaign known as 'Walking Buses'.

The initiative is used by parents who are worried about their children playing truant or who want to get their children to school safely. Walking Buses involves school pupils in a group following a scheduled route led by adults to and from school.

For further information contact the council's education welfare advisers on 020 8753 2877.



Adults lead the way

Lambeth family support service

A new Family Support Service (FSS) was launched in Lambeth with the intention to give support to young people who have become homeless. The service also offers help to those families in the hope that young people who are in temporary accommodation can move back home and resolve those relationships and difficulties.

For further information about FSS call 0207 926 5135 or email familysupport@lambeth.gov.uk.

Sight impairment in focus

Birmingham Focus recently launched a project aimed at raising awareness of sight loss among Birmingham's Black and minority ethnic (BME) communities. The project called Community View intends to encourage BME communities with vision impairments to seek treatment.

To find out more visit Birmingham Focus at www.birminghamfocus.org.uk or call them on 0121 478 5222.

identity

To be or not to be
The word Black used to describe
people of African descent and
latterly as a political catch-
all for visible ethnic minorities
could be abolished Lester
Holloway explains...

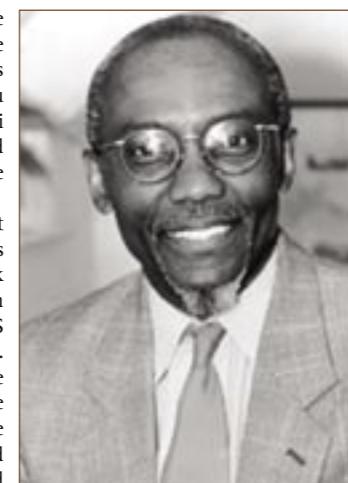
The right to call yourself 'black' could hinge on the outcome of a little-known consultation. The Office of National Statistics, which runs the census, is asking for views on whether to abolish so-called 'colour coding'. Some campaigners claim that terms 'black' and 'white' are racist constructs that are a barrier to true equality for descendants of Africa. But others point to the long battle to reclaim the word 'black' a term of abuse but is now a badge of pride. Some might dismiss the arguments as academic or irrelevant, but for many the notion that 'black' might be removed from ethnic monitoring forms has huge significance.

Fears that the word 'black' could reacquire the negative vibes it had before the US civil rights struggle are fuelling a bid to Stay Black. Two major campaigners putting arguments for and against are Toyin Agbetu founder of voluntary monitoring organisation Ligali who is campaigning for the term African-British, and Professor Geoff Palmer, who is leading a passionate push to keep black black.

To understand how this consultation came about we must go back to 2001, when the last national census took place. Over 70,000 people wrote the words 'Black Caribbean' to describe themselves, because this term was absent from the census forms. Two years ago ONS began gearing up for the next census, due in 2011. Agbetu attended the ONS event and condemned the lack of African-heritage representatives among those present. Subsequently Agbetu was invited onto the ONS's Diversity Advisory Group where he continued to advocate that the word 'black' was negative and insulting.

Agbetu took the African-British campaign to Scotland, where ONS's equivalent was consulting on ethnic monitoring terms, and came close to abandoning the words black and white after Agbetu encouraged local groups to join the lobby for the change. He said: "The word 'black' was always a racist construct. White, black, brown, red, yellow - it's a hierarchy of colour-coding. Race was the whole justification for the enslavement of African people - this propagation that there are several races of humans and Africans were one of the low ones."

But not everyone shares his views. Prof Palmer said: "Marcus Garvey, Martin Luther King, Steve Biko - all these people have worked jolly hard to try and turn the word around. To give it dignity. If you get rid of it you're



Professor Palmer:
Keep black campaigner

confirming in white people minds that it is negative, that it is derogatory."

What the word means will vary enormously depending on who you talk to. To some it is a description, to another a political statement. From Black Panthers, black caucuses and black power, the word has spanned militancy and peaceful civil rights movement. With black beauty and black pride, it has embodied self-awareness that celebrates the bodies of African men and women and the rich history of the continent before Europeans arrived. But you can also break the word down further. Many Black Americans favour the one-drop rule, meaning one drop of black blood makes you Black. It's a philosophy that was taken up by the anti-racist movement in Britain during the 1960s and 70s, forging a coalition between Asian and African-Caribbean peoples to demand an end to racism.

Despite a constant erosion of Black as a unifying banner, with many Asian communities rejecting the word, leading campaigners still hold this definition close to their hearts. But increasingly communities are fragmenting, with national, regional and tribal identities

coming to the fore.

Tensions between Caribbean and Asian communities in Birmingham, and some of the underlining issues about fair shares of regeneration monies and ownership of shops, have heightened this debate. Increasingly dual identities, for example Black and Caribbean, is seen as the way out of this conundrum, keeping the word 'black' alive while allowing the process of national identity to flourish. But ultimately the decision to choose or lose the term will depend on whether Africans and Caribbeans, in the main, feel that it encapsulates an identity they still want to hold on to.



"This is yet another waste of time and money, and I would question the long-held British obsession with labelling those it considers the other. It is often claimed that such labels assist in the provision of equitable treatment of all citizens. Rather they help (by identification of race) the continuation of discriminatory practices. Proof of this lies in the fact that years after this data was first collected there is little improvement in the social, political and economic power afforded Black citizens. All UK Black people (regardless of origin) are seen as 'outsiders' and there is no discernment of their origin. This implies it does not matter. Yet western Europeans are fiercely protective of their national, and even regional, identities. What we need to be changed are the racist, colonial attitudes practised across Europe, and not the labels used by western Europeans in their attempt to marginalise us."

Ronald Fraser-Munroe
Artist, Activist & Schwartz



"The term Black doesn't say anything about where a person is from, it doesn't acknowledge your heritage or where you are born. I prefer to be recognised as African British as it reminds me where my parents are from and my culture. I know a lot of the older generation prefer to be called Black especially if they were part of the campaign to make the term acceptable and I wouldn't want to ignore that, but I think African British also brings people together."

Richard Johnson
Researcher

"In my opinion discussions on identity should not be limited to the wishes of the few but should be opened up to the populace at large. The process should be open and transparent and put to a National referendum. The term 'Black' has a history rooted in emancipation and empowerment of some black people. Whilst, the term being proposed 'African British' may well prove to be divisive, as some people from the Caribbean and non African countries may not feel that they are not represented by the terminology."

Mohamed Kebbay
Policy Co-ordinator - Black Londoners Forum

"My parents are from the Caribbean and I was born here in the UK, for census purposes, I have always referred to myself as Black British of Caribbean descent. I believe we fought for the right to be called by our colour and not 'coloured'. However we also need to recognise that some of us are also proud to be British.

A Guardian article in 2000 reported as follows: "Mr Straw declared himself proud to be British and insisted that he did not accept the arguments of some of the liberal left or the nationalistic right that the idea of Britain as a cohesive nation was dead. The existence of people happy to be known as 'black British' or 'Chinese British' demonstrated that 'Britishness' had a future".

Jack Straw speaks of a 'future', my fear is if young people do feel do not feel British they will not invest in Britain."

Melanie Hamilton
Office & Information Manager - London Civic Forum

“The existence of people happy to be known as 'black British' or 'Chinese British' demonstrated that 'Britishness' had a future”

Jack Straw

equality in our Lifetime?

The struggle for social, political and economic justice has been central to the history of Black political participation in Britain. In the 1780s, freed African Olaudah Equiano fought for the abolition of slavery. In the 1980s Bernie Grant's political and community campaigns radically influenced attitudes on race. Yet today the fight continues for a fair and democratic society.

Starting with the enslaved African campaigners we look at the intensity and passion which drove some of Britain's most prominent activists to tackle racism and social injustice, and how they helped put Britain on route to becoming a more egalitarian society.

Richard Sudan remembers prominent enslaved African campaigners

Two hundred years ago the transatlantic slave trade, which had seen around four million people taken captive like wild animals from their African homes, was banned – although slavery itself continued for years afterwards.

The 1807 ruling simply meant that kidnapping new Africans was banned by the Royal Navy. But it wasn't until the Abolition of Slavery Act in 1833 that slave trading finally stopped in Britain. The slave trade had far reaching implications, both economically and socially. It defined the way society viewed Black people and its shadow still hangs over us today.

Thousands of brave slaves fought and lost their lives in the battle to end their suffering. Among the long list of names stretching across the Atlantic was Ignatius Sancho who was born aboard a slave ship in 1729 and taken to Greenwich, where he served as a slave.

A bright and resourceful man, Sancho became a butler and later a tradesman. He also became a prolific letter writer denouncing the injustices of the trade despite slave masters banning slaves from becoming literate. His tireless and eloquent campaigns forced abolitionists among others to recognise him as proof that slaves were human, not the soulless beasts of burden which many regarded Africans to be at that time.

Sancho bought his freedom with money from his savings and his intelligence, creativity and determination saw him rise to a level of influence unheard of for an African in 18th Century Britain.

Unlike in the United States, Britain never officially banned Black people from voting, but the requirements to own land ruled them out from having an electoral voice. But along with a long list of other credits Sancho as a political activist and community campaigner was the first known African to vote in a British election.

Although many history books cite William Wilberforce, Thomas Clarkson and Granville Sharp as key protagonists in the abolition of slavery, it was Olaudah Equiano who's writing and political activism accelerated the unacceptability of slavery.

In 1745 West Africa-born Equiano was kidnapped into slavery as a child. He served as a slave in the Navy and with a Merchant Quaker. Equiano's acumen enabled him to work as a tradesman and save enough money to eventually buy his freedom.

Equiano became a campaigner in Britain articulating the dehumanisation and suffering of slavery. He skilfully utilised the language and Christian sensibilities of his oppressors to make the political case for abolition.

Equiano's masterpiece was his ground-breaking book, the life of Olaudah Equiano the African, (1789) in which he chronicles his life under cruel masters and overseers. It was a bestseller and after reading of such brutality, British polite society could no longer hide behind the façade that slavery was purely an economic venture that hurt no-one.

Ottobah Cugoano was a friend of Equiano and a neighbour of Sancho. Cugoano was born in Ghana in 1750, and kidnapped into slavery. In Britain he served as a servant for a well known artist. Cugoano joined the activists of the day and in 1787 wrote Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil and Wicked Traffic of the Commerce of the Human Species, the first anti-slavery book to be written in English by a Black person. (After the book was published Cugoano vanished from historical record.)

Another abolitionist was escaped Maryland slave Frederick Washington Douglass, a great

orator and anti-slavery writer who also promoted women's rights. Internationally known for his extensive lectures against slavery, Douglass campaigned in Britain and spent two years here holding lectures in halls and British churches attracting huge crowds. In 1847 Douglass launched the North Star, an anti-slavery newspaper, published until 1860. His autobiography the Life and Times of Frederick Douglass, was published in 1882. He became the first African-American to be appointed to high office in the US Government. The late 19th Century and early 20th Century witnessed an unprecedented rise of Black political activists. By then slavery had been abolished for nearly a century but racism and social injustice were still endemic in British society and the Empire, and a new generation of Black British activists responded accordingly.

The struggle for complete emancipation now took on a global dynamic, with solidarity between Black people from Africa, Asia, and the Americas.

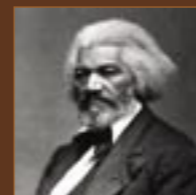
The great composer and activist Samuel Coleridge Taylor, the first non-white MP Dadabhai Naoroji (who was Asian), Lord John Archer of Battersea and Henry Sylvester Williams were all key in their own right, but were also instrumental in organising the world's first Pan-African Conference. Williams was the catalyst. Born in Trinidad, he attended Kings College Cambridge and was in 1897 admitted to Gray's Inn to study law. Williams established the African Association where he successfully lobbied MPs to ask questions in Parliament about the condition of Black people in the British Empire. Three years later he called for the first Pan-African Conference.

“slavery had been abolished for nearly a century but racism and social injustice were still endemic in British society”

Black delegates from around the Diaspora, including the great scholar and thinker W. E. B. Du Bois, came to Westminster Town Hall to discuss issues relating to people of African descent throughout the world. Williams declared, 'to the nations of the world the problem of the 20th Century is the problem of the colour line'.

These pioneers were among the most high profile of campaigners against slavery but the battle was fought out by many more. At the time their battle was simply to bring about the end of slavery, but equality was just as difficult.

Although Black people are no longer enslaved and, as far as the law is concerned at least, are equal to their white counterparts, Britain is still far from the level playing field it claims to be. Two centuries after slavery on ships was banned, it's surely about time that equality became a reality. Equality in our lifetime has to be the goal.



Frederick Washington Douglass



W. E. B. Du Bois

Connecting

Political & civic engagement
Get involved

Communities



A straw poll on any high street would prove that a large slice of the British public have no idea of how to begin the process to becoming an MP, a Magistrate or a Councillor, yet government and the courts are major rulers of our lives.

The 'How To' shadowing schemes, started in 1999 and run by OBV, are designed precisely to show the route to becoming part of these important decision making bodies.

The schemes have made a major contribution to increasing BME participation in government and civic institutions and over 100 of those who have taken part in the Magistrates Scheme have applied to become JPs, and many MP and Councillor Scheme shadows have stood in general and local Council elections.

The participants overwhelming say that taking part in the schemes has given them the skills and confidence to follow their aspirations.

The MP scheme has just graduated and the Magistrates scheme will begin recruiting again by mid-May. The Bristol Councillor scheme is ongoing and a Welsh Parliament programme will be announced later this month.

The schemes, open to BME communities across Britain, are a marvellous conduit for connecting communities. The magistrates who volunteer their time to mentor the scheme participants (shadows) enjoy the opportunity to learn about their shadows' cultural background and the shadows graduate fully understanding the justice process.

After graduation participants become Parliamentary and Community Ambassadors, they carry on the work by informing and encouraging others within their community to consider taking on a leadership role.

Why I decided to make a difference

Jennifer Luwaji - Lancashire

I became an ambassador for the OBV magistrates shadowing scheme because I am aware of the general discrimination faced by BME communities. Statistics show that they are high level victims of crime and tend to receive harsher court penalties.

Taking part in the shadowing scheme has helped me gain realistic knowledge of 'life as a magistrate' and has given me a variety of skills that has helped me apply to become a magistrate.

I learned that Magistrates themselves require people like you and I to help them gain a greater insight into the experiences of Black and minority ethnic communities and I feel that I have an important role to play in this.

More importantly, the scheme has equipped me with the knowledge and confidence to take on the role of community ambassador. I am now actively encouraging others to take up leadership roles and consider becoming magistrates.

I have collected the names of over 30 people who are interested in becoming magistrates. If some of these people apply that would be a wonderful start to changing the face of the magistracy. However there is still quite a way to go! Every one of you reading this has a role to play. Go on - make a difference!

To hear more from Jennifer contact her on: 01617610409/ jluwaji@hotmail.com

Kuldip Chohan, Bedfordshire

At the launch of the scheme in Bedfordshire I asked myself 'what does this mean to me.' A realisation hit me that the scheme had become part of an extended era in my life - serving the community in a positive way.

Operation Black Vote had provided me the opportunity of getting involved and making a difference to society. As well as shadowing a magistrate, I was now also an ambassador spreading the message across a community where many would not even contemplate becoming a magistrate.

In my first role as an ambassador I decided to stage an event and I want it to make a real difference. I arranged a religious prayer at my house and invited 100 guests for the occasion.

It was the ideal opportunity to promote Operation Black Vote and the Magistrates Shadowing Scheme. So I sought the help of the Magistrate Association and Operation Black Vote to help manage the event. Terry Rooke, Chairman of the Bench at Bedford Magistrates' court and community liaison magistrate came to the event to speak to my guests on the day.

It was a hot day, after the religious activities, Terry gave a speech on what magistrates do and how to become one. I made a short speech on OBV activities and used the period at the end to spread the word. A short session was arranged with guests who were interested to hear more others left with leaflets.

The event was a success and I also arranged talks at the local temple and the local school. I now use every opportunity to talk about the subject and make people realise 'that they can make a difference but you have to be involved.'

I have applied and hope to fulfil my dream of becoming a magistrate.

JENNIFER LUWAJI ENCOURAGING OTHERS TO FOLLOW HER LEAD ▶

Sylbourne Sydial, London

Since coming to Britain in 1992 I have been keenly aware of the need for more Black and ethnic minority people to become involved in politics. I joined the Conservative Party which I voted for in past elections. This, of course, went against the norm, as I believe the average Jamaican votes for Labour.

My view is that we need to be proactive and belong to all the major political parties in order to make a difference.

Before joining the Conservatives I was a member of a political group in the UK, which was affiliated to a major political party in Jamaica. I wanted to be part of the political process here but intended to go back to Jamaica. However over a decade later I am still here and as result I have had to re-evaluate my political journey.

Since becoming a Parliamentary Ambassador as part of the MP Shadowing Scheme I have worked with MPs and Councillors familiarising myself with their role; helping on the campaign trail, in surgery and in the offices at the Houses of Parliament.

I find my talks in schools and colleges very rewarding and I have developed a political participation programme called 'Making a Difference'. This encourages young people to see politics not from a distance but as something they own and are involved with.



▲ KULDIP AND TERRY MAKING A DIFFERENCE



Nigel Hallam
keen scheme
supporter

A View from the Bench

I first became involved with the Magistrates Shadowing Scheme in 2004 when the Derby and South Derbyshire Advisory Sub-Committee was selected to be part of the second phase.

The original seven Shadows were assisted by fourteen Mentor Magistrates - six shadows completed the programme having seen many elements of the Criminal Justice System.

Visits took place during the programme to the Crown Court to observe proceedings and to the cell complex of the court, as well as the opportunity to go 'behind the scenes' at the offices.

Presentations on the Family Court, administration, finance and the role of the National Probation Service all added to the depth of understanding of the shadows, who also undertook six observations in different types of adult courts including an authorised observation of a Youth Court.

In July 2004 I was delighted to help at the OBV national training week-end for all shadows taking part in England and Wales at that time. Two of the six Derby shadows successfully applied to become Magistrates and were appointed in 2005. Southern Derbyshire was again part of the 2006 scheme.

THERE ARE MANY BENEFITS FROM TAKING PART IN THE SCHEME SUCH AS:

- It provides the opportunity to meet and question people from within the Criminal Justice System.
- It offers enhanced understanding of diversity and BME issues for Judges, magistrates, court staff and officials
- It creates better awareness of the opportunities to volunteer within the courts, not just as magistrates but as witness service, victim support and for paid employment within the various parts of the system.

The media reports have provided excellent evidence of active court and community engagement. The court received invitations from local community groups for me, bench officials and mentors to visit temples, mosques, Divali and other events, which raised the profile of courts and criminal justice agencies.

*Nigel E Hallam DMS, MCMI, Barrister
Clerk to the Justices and Secretary to the Advisory Sub-Committee, Southern Derbyshire Magistrates' Court*

For more information about the OBV and Department for Constitutional Affairs Magistrates Shadowing Scheme and other programmes please telephone OBV on: 0208 983 5426.
Email: info@obv.org.uk

X BV ON THE ROAD

Over the past decade OBV has travelled the length and breadth of the UK and many other countries empowering Black communities and challenging institutions to be more inclusive and representative. Here are some of the memorable events and milestones over the past few years.



October'02 Reverend Al Sharpton spearheads 'Political Assault on Westminster'

APRIL'02 Operation Black Vote's campaign to encourage greater political participation in the democratic process toured the country. It teamed up with national Black and anti-racist organisations including the 1990 Trust and National Assembly Against Racism to encourage BMEs to vote on election day.

MAY'02 OBV celebrated Paul Boateng becoming a cabinet minister. In an unprecedented step Downing Street announced the first Black appointment to high office since the first elected Black MP 110 years earlier.

OCTOBER'02 America's leading Civil Rights campaigner and presidential candidate Rev Al Sharpton took a break from his presidential campaigning to come to London. Sharpton visited to spearhead a rallying call for the Operation Black Vote 'Political Assault on Westminster' march in April 2003. The African Caribbean Positive Image Foundation awarded OBV the Prestigious 'Bernie Grant Award'. OBV was also honoured for its website design, content and style.

SEPTEMBER'03 Tony Blair held a special reception to welcome the next generation of Black MPs. Twenty-five political hopefuls from the Operation Black Vote and CRE MP Shadowing scheme were invited to meet the Prime Minister in his Westminster Chambers.

SEPTEMBER'03 The Executive & Professional Network awarded OBV the coveted 'Men & Women of Merit' award.

FEBRUARY'04 Michael Howard - who was Conservative leader at the time - joined Operation Black Vote and other campaign groups to condemn the rise of the far Right and the BNP in North Western towns, and committed to prevent their growth nationally.

SEPTEMBER'04 The Asian Media and Marketing Group awarded Operation Black Vote the 'GG2 Democracy in Action Award' at the annual GG2 Leadership and Diversity Awards 2004.

JANUARY'05 At PROUD's Department for Constitutional Affairs National BME Conference OBV was voted best campaign organisation.

MARCH'05 American civil rights leader Jesse Jackson visited Britain on the invitation of OBV. He urged Black Britons to 'think big' in politics and business. Speaking at a breakfast with 200 black leaders at London's City Hall, Jackson called for more self-confidence and 'organised strength'. Jackson addressed an audience of 1,500 at an Operation Black Vote-organised rally in central London.

APRIL'05 A coalition of Black and faith organisations toured through Black Britain to inspire and engage local communities in marginal seats to vote in one of the most critical elections of a generation for Black communities. Equipped with a 40-page Black manifesto and pledge cards the 'battle bus' campaign travelled to areas selected from the 70 seats where the Black vote could decide who won and who lost.

SEPTEMBER'05 Harriet Harman, The Minister of State for Constitutional Affairs, addressed BME community groups at a special 'Power in Unity' gathering hosted by Operation Black Vote. She gave her assurance that appropriate steps will be taken to ensure communities are registered and empowered to vote.

MARCH'06 Operation Black Vote's Councillor Shadowing Scheme received the 'Supporting Local Democracy Award' at the Local Government Chronicle Awards.

MAY'06 OBV said the local elections of the British National Party in Barking and Dagenham was a sad day for politics and London, and feared a racist backlash on local Black communities.

JANUARY'07 In a historical move Operation Black Vote wrote an internal paper for the Liberal Democrats that proposed to radically transform it into a more inclusive and more representative party.



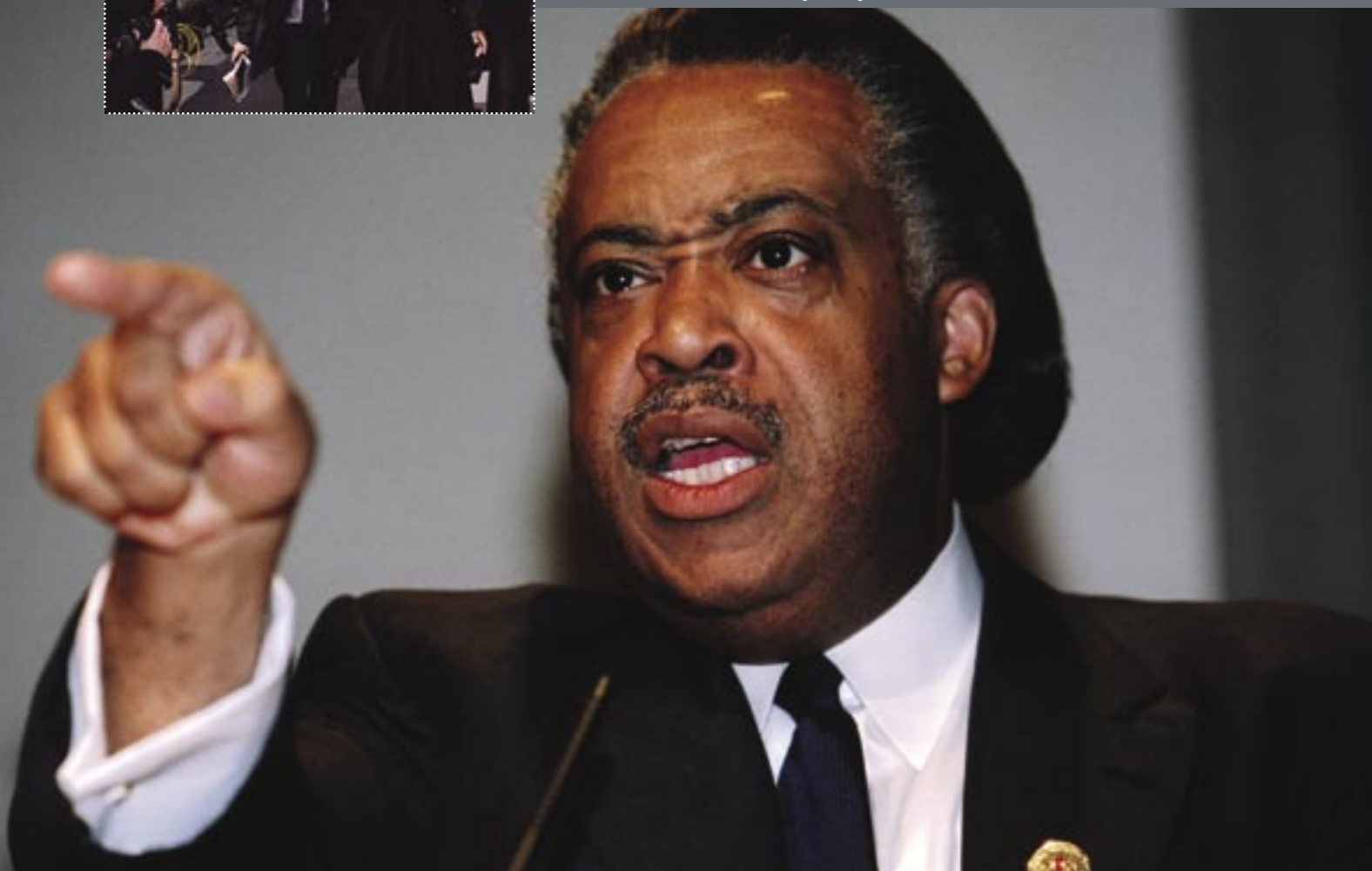
June'04 100ft Mayoral campaign poster



June 04 Mayoral candidates launch campaign



April'05 Battle bus takes to the road



March'05 Civil Rights Leader Jesse Jackson address OBV rally



March'05 Faith leaders speak at rally



September'03 Tony Blair welcomes OBV MP scheme shadows

Influence the mental health agenda Become a Board Member

Mental healthcare and legislation is failing the Black community. **Matilda MacAttram** advises on what you can do to help stop widespread abuses within the system.

The failings in mental health services is increasingly being recognised as one of the most critical issues facing African-Caribbean communities living in Britain today. With mental health legislation currently under review health and race equality campaigners are keen to see the wider community engage their work to influence the new 2006 Mental Health Bill which is currently being debated in the House of Lords.

There is a growing consensus amongst community leaders, race equality campaigners and practitioners that changes to this law are critical to the future health and welfare of Black and Ethnic Minority communities. This has led the campaign group Black Mental Health UK to launch an online campaign calling for the protection of the rights of the most vulnerable in the community and address the widespread discrimination within the services.

The adverse impact mental health services have had on black communities was highlighted in the Health Care Commission first national census on inpatient care.

The census report entitled 'Count Me In' found widespread discrimination within the services with African-Caribbeans being 44 per cent more likely to be sectioned than a British white person despite similar rates of mental ill health. The census revealed that rates of sectioning are so high for this group that black people now make up over 30 per cent of those detained in medium secure psychiatric settings despite making up less than three per cent of the national population.

For people from African-Caribbean communities their treatment and care is marked by coercion and control, and they are more likely to be misdiagnosed and over medicated once detained within the system. The census report also found that black people are 50 per cent more likely to be placed in seclusion and 29 per cent more likely to be forcibly restrained. This is of serious concern to human rights groups as these figures come seven years after the publication of the David Bennett Inquiry report into the tragic death of an African-Caribbean patient in mental health care. Bennett died after being forcibly restrained by a team of five nurses for almost half an hour. The Inquiry report concluded mental health services are institutionally racist.

Health campaigners believe the 22 recommendations within the Bennett Inquiry report should be a fundamental part of the 2006 Mental Health Bill. Instead proposals within the 2006 Bill include a widening of the definition of mental disorder and provisions to allow patients to be forcibly treated within the community.

Black Mental Health UK's online campaign is calling for the recommendations within the Bennett Inquiry Report and provisions within race relations and human rights law to be included in the 2006 Mental Health Bill.

Opposition to proposals in the Bill has also come from peers from all political parties who condemned it as unethical and unworkable when it was presented to the House of Lords in November last year. A lobbying letter on Black Mental Health UK's website is calling for the race equality and human rights provisions to be at the forefront of changes to the law in order to address the widespread discrimination within mental health services.

But influencing the provision of mental health services need not stop at supporting BMH UK's campaign. There are 10 mental health trusts across London alone. Recruitment to these boards happens throughout the year whenever vacancies arise. The need for ethnic minorities to join these boards is paramount as not one currently reflects the communities which they serve.

Matilda MacAttram is founder of Black Mental Health UK
www.blackmentalhealth.org.uk



African-Caribbean communities are more likely to be misdiagnosed
Matilda MacAttram

To find out more about board membership and becoming a mental health act commissioner go to:

NHS Appointments Commission:
www.appointments.org.uk/appointments.asp

Below is a list of just a few Trust websites, there are many more nationwide:

Barnet, Enfield and Haringey Mental Health NHS Trust:
www.beh-mht.nhs.uk/

Camden and Islington Mental Health and Social Care Trust:
www.candi.nhs.uk/

Central and North West London Mental Health NHS Trust
www.cnwl.org/index.html

East London and The City Mental Health NHS Trust
www.elcmht.nhs.uk/

North East London Mental Health NHS Trust
www.nelmht.nhs.uk/

Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust
www.oxleas.nhs.uk/

South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust
www.slam.nhs.uk/

South West London and St George's Mental Health NHS Trust
www.swlstg-tr.nhs.uk/

Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust
www.tavi-port.org/

West London Mental Health NHS Trust
www.wlmht.nhs.uk/index.asp

The Gloucestershire Partnership NHS Trust
www.partnershiptrust.org.uk/

Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health NHS Trust
www.bsmht.nhs.uk/

Derbyshire Mental Health Services NHS Trust
www.derbyshirementalhealthservices.nhs.uk/

Bedfordshire and Luton Mental Health and Social Care NHS Trust
www.bedfordshire.nhs.uk/default.asp

The Electoral Commission

Doing politics with young people

Produced by The Electoral Commission, the *Democracy Cookbook* is a comprehensive resource pack containing independent information about how politics works, what our democratic institutions do and why they matter.

Match the essential ingredients to the tried and tested activities in our recipes section to serve up dishes of democracy and portions of politics for young people.

To order your free copy call 020 7271 0592 email dopolitics@electoralcommission.org.uk

Democracy matters



On the 12th April the Disability Rights Commission will be conducting a one day training session on the goods and services provision of the Disability Discrimination Act.

The event is being hosted by the Black Londoners Forum at Brixton Base. The training event will run from 10-4pm

What do delegates get?

An accessible training course and materials tailored for participants. Information about cases to illustrate the law. Interactive training with the opportunity to discuss and ask questions about Part 3.

The event will take place at Brixton Base, 44-46 Offley Road, London SW9 0LA

Places are limited so to avoid disappointment Book Now! Please email Mohamed on Mohamed@blacklondon.org.uk

Tel: 020 8709 9780. fax: 020 8983 6830 Black Londoners Forum, 18A Victoria Park Square, London E2 9PB



JOIN OBV!
REGISTER BELOW



Apex Trust

Tackling crime and unemployment - together

The Apex Trust **JobCheck** helpline provides vital confidential advice and information about a range of issues that affect ex-offenders seeking employment. The helpline receives thousands of telephone calls and letters each year from ex-offenders, employment services, employers, universities and colleges requesting help and advice on ex-offender employment issues.

JobCheck is vital for users and we are always looking for people who would like to help provide this important service. If you are able to give just eight hours per month we would be very happy to hear from you. (Advisors are fully trained).

Could you help? Call us on: 020 7638 5931/ Fax: 020 7638 5977

Email: jobcheck@apextrust.com
Apex Charitable Trust St Alphage House, Wingate Annexe, 2 Fore Street, London EC2Y 5DA. Website: www.apextrust.com

JobCheck helpline - 0870 608 4567 - 10am - 5pm Monday - Friday



OBV

OPERATION BLACK VOTE REGISTRATION FORM

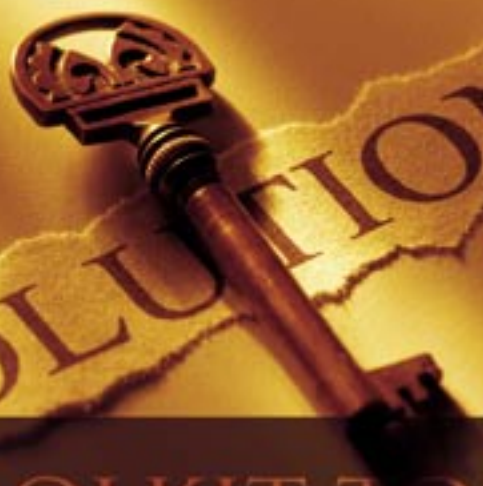
Please register to receive information about Operation Black Vote's projects, events and programmes, including the MP, Councillor and Magistrates' Shadowing Schemes.

NAME _____
 ADDRESS _____

 LAND LINE _____
 MOBILE _____
 EMAIL _____

Sign up on line at:
www.obv.org.uk/info/webfeedback.html

Have you ever participated in an OBV programme? YES NO



A TOOLKIT TO COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

Confronted with problems in areas such as housing, schooling, healthcare, racism and lack of social facilities many ordinary people feel a great sense of powerlessness and frustration.

For every problem there is a route to getting help. This may include holding to account those responsible for delivering a particular social service.

The toolkit to community empowerment is a series of leaflets showing you how to address these or other challenges - as an individual, a group or community.

HOW TO...

...WRITE TO ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES
SUCH AS YOUR LOCAL COUNCILLORS AND MEMBERS OF
PARLIAMENT

...REACH MEMBERS OF PUBLIC BODIES
LIKE THOSE IN CHARGE OF HEALTH, EDUCATION,
ENVIRONMENT ETC

...CONTACT THE MEDIA
THE NATIONAL, LOCAL AND ETHNIC MEDIA AND JOURNALISTS
COVERING SPECIFIC TOPICS

...WRITE A PRESS RELEASE

...ORGANISE A PUBLIC MEETING
FORM A LOCAL COMMITTEE, STEERING GROUP, GETTING FUNDING

You will find all this and more
in OBV's empowerment pack.



Contact OBV

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