

# Diversity

Newsletter of the Diversity Council

Advocating equality

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## Celebrating Black History Month



*The Diversity Council celebrating Black History Month in Brick Lane with Prof. Ismail Abdullahi*

*Full details in the next issue of Diversity*

This issue of *Diversity* celebrates Black History Month by looking at the needs of refugees in Europe. We look at how Manchester is meeting the needs of refugees, and take a look into history of slavery. Larry Elliott's article in the *Guardian* looks at the economic factors which give rise to refugees. It is also worth remembering that the largest number of refugees in the world today are in Africa and Asia. Uganda and Tanzania have given support to millions of refugees – without questioning if they are “political” or “economic” refugees. Just one town in Pakistan supports a million refugees from Afghanistan – soon to be multiplied two or three times with the current war there. The real needs – material as well as information – of the refugees are often forgotten – except by the refugees themselves.

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## **Editorial**

### **The Diversity Council digs roots**

This issue of *Diversity* focuses on reports from The Black Contribution to British Librarianship Conference held on 5 July 2001 at Manchester. The Diversity Council (DC) celebrates Black History Month by action to consolidate the new organisation. The DC Interim Committee has decided to retain the name *Diversity* for this Newsletter and to make it a quarterly publication. A number of funding applications are being made to ensure its survival. What better way can one think of mainstreaming social exclusion than by supporting this important initiative?

At the same time, discussions about the scope of the Diversity Council are also going on. We have moved away from the previous agenda of a Black Workers Group as well as from the earlier initiatives around Equal Opportunities and are moving towards an all-inclusive agenda to unite all groups and communities struggling against exclusion. The Government and the European Union talk of "Social Exclusion" to refer to all forms of marginalisation. The key point is to unite all those struggling for real equality so that we do not fight small localised battles but come together in a larger struggle which holds better scope for success. Bob McKee, in his talk at the Manchester conference explains what the term "diversity" means to him.

Yet another version is included in the recently published *Social and*

*Racial Exclusion Handbook*<sup>1</sup> which uses "Diversity" as a term that is "used to include all people, communities and groups who consider themselves excluded from the 'mainstream'. It thus includes Black people, ethnic minorities, women, lesbians, gay men and transgendered people, disabled people, people excluded because of their class, [and] travellers and refugees among others." It is also interesting to note that *Library Management* is producing a special issue on "diversity", not on racism, equality or social exclusion. In the final analysis, the real issue is one of social justice and human rights. This debate is by no means over. Send in your views of what the term "Diversity" means to you.

The Diversity Council is fast becoming a force in the information field. A number of important steps have been taken since the first issue of *Diversity* in June 2001. We have had a very successful Leadership Training Workshop on 27-28 September conducted by Prof. Ismail Abdullahi from the USA. This was made possible by financial and other support from the LA. A report on this will be in the next issue of *Diversity*.

Another important development is the setting up of the Diversity Council mailing list for all members of the DC and all those who are interested in our activities – [diversity@jiscmail.ac.uk](mailto:diversity@jiscmail.ac.uk). The consolidation of the Diversity Council needs a lot of behind-the-scene hard work. Ann and

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<sup>1</sup> *Social and Racial Exclusion Handbook for libraries, archives, museums, and galleries*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, August 2001. Published by Social Exclusion Action Planning Network.

Gulshan have been working on the constitution which will be discussed at the next meeting of the DC Committee on 15 November 2001 to be held at Wolverhampton. Check with your DC contact if you have not seen a copy of the draft Constitution and Rules. This is your chance to influence the work of the DC.

An important task that needs to be intensified is the collection of signatories for the letter to form the DC as a Group of the LA. We have to date received 60 completed letters from LA members and 16 from non-members. Please encourage more LA members to sign the letter and persuade those not members to join. This is the only way we can mainstream ourselves into the Library Association. The letter was reproduced in the first issue of *Diversity* – or write to your DC contact for copies.

We are also seeking active members for a proposed Editorial Group to produce *Diversity* and to be involved in other communications activities. If you are interested in being a member, please write to the Editor.

Finally, we wish to make it clear that all views expressed in *Diversity* are those of the individual writers and not those of the Diversity Council or its interim committee. Send your articles, views, news and reports on your work for inclusion in future issues of *Diversity* to the Editor at the address below.

Shiraz Durrani

### **Unity in diversity**

The Black Contribution to British  
Librarianship Conference  
Thursday 5 July 2001  
Manchester, England

Keynote address by Dr Bob McKee, Chief  
Executive of The Library Association

*[The following is a summarised  
version of Dr McKee's address.]*

This conference today is very important to me, socially, professionally and personally. Socially because of the troubled communities around Britain which give clear evidence that issues of diversity have not been adequately addressed in our society. Professionally because it's my job to think about the future for our profession, and in that future issues of diversity and equality will have to be addressed by the professions and institutions which shape our society. And personally because I have a deep personal commitment to the concepts of diversity and equality.

Important steps have been taken in recent months with the creation of an interim Diversity Council committee bringing together representatives from a number of interested ethnic and cultural groups; and with the decision to seek to become a formally recognised Group within The Library Association. These are important choices: to move away from the fragmentation and internal politics of the past; and to work inside rather than outside the professional association. I welcome these choices and believe that they point to a clear and constructive way forward.

I want at this point to pay tribute to a colleague and good friend who has helped us with making these choices. Sometimes an external catalyst is needed in order to move forward – and that positive intervention has come from Ismail Abdullahi who has brought his experience with the Black Caucus of the American Library Association to help and guide us. Recently the President of The Library Association and I had lunch with Ismail, and he reaffirmed his commitment to our cause and his support for our diversity agenda.

Diversity is complex. It covers issues of race and religion, of culture and ethnicity, of social class (particularly here in Britain) and a range of other factors – relating for example to gender or sexuality or age or disability – which express the differences between us. And it should be about acknowledging, affirming, recognising, respecting, sometimes celebrating those differences within a social framework of equality and inclusivity. It should not be about discriminating, denigrating, disadvantaging people on the grounds of their difference.

That's why I'm pleased that, as the debate has evolved, the term "diversity" has come to the fore. Other terminology can be excluding but "diversity" is inclusive of all the issues where difference is a factor. Over time, we shall address all aspects of diversity – but today our focus is on one particular facet of diversity: the situation of black and minority ethnic colleagues within our library and information profession in the UK.

Our lunch meeting with Ismail took place at the recent American

Library Association Conference and I want to share with you today some examples of diversity initiatives within ALA which are, I believe, transferable to the UK.

Issues of diversity and equality – of civil rights and civil liberties, of intellectual freedom and freedom of expression – go to the very heart of political, institutional and civil life in the USA. And they are therefore very serious business for the ALA.

The theme of the ALA Conference was also the theme of the Presidential Programme of the outgoing ALA President Nancy Kranich; libraries as the cornerstone of democracy. And in a collection of essays on this subject edited by Nancy Kranich and published by ALA she makes the connection between democracy and diversity:

"In the United States," she writes, "libraries have greeted the self-determination of succeeding waves of immigrants by offering safe havens and equal access to learning. They continue this mission today. Libraries ensure the freedom to read, to view, to speak, to participate. They are the cornerstones of democracy."

This link between libraries and democracy reaffirms the enduring values and ethics of our profession and the central role of our profession in society. We give people access to knowledge. That is our fundamental mission. And access to knowledge underpins independence of mind and equality of opportunity – freedom of access to information, freedom of thought, freedom of expression. So our profession and our library services stand for fundamental principles of freedom, independence, equality,

opportunity, democracy. Here in Britain I think we undervalue and underplay our professional contribution to these basic freedoms.

And, just as we stand for a fundamental set of social values and principles, so we also stand for the concept of community; the concept of an interconnected and interdependent society. Because a library, like a community, is built on the principle of mutuality – the principle of a community of place or community of interest coming together and sharing resources for mutual benefit. Libraries are about sharing (resources) connecting (through membership and mutuality) and trusting (through the act of lending), and these are the essential characteristics of healthy neighbourhoods, communities, and societies.

All of which explains why libraries are often described as the most inclusive of public institutions – and points to a fundamental paradox. Because this most inclusive and democratic of public institutions has a workforce which does not reflect, particularly at senior level, the diversity of our society. If libraries are so including, why does the library profession appear to be so excluding?

Our mission, as the professional association in the UK, is to promote the highest standards of library service and practice – and we will not achieve these high standards unless we use all the talents of all the people.

I want to set a specific target for our professional association of helping to make our library and information workforce more

reflective of the rich diversity of our society. Our latest figures show that just 2.2% of The Library Association's members describe themselves in ethnic categories other than "white" as do 1.9% of professionally qualified members and 2.5% of members earning higher salaries. These percentages are simply too low. The result is that when employers seek to diversify their workforce, in order to reflect the community they serve, they cannot find sufficient professional library staff of black or minority ethnic origin. They are left with an unacceptable choice if to diversify their workforce means to deprofessionalise their workforce. I want to work in detail with a small number of employers in the first instance to see if we can find ways to achieve diversity *and* professionalism within their library and information workforce.

We have to find ways to make employers acknowledge the diversity agenda – but we also have to find ways to make the library and information profession an attractive and accessible career choice for people of black or minority ethnic groups.

It was with this in mind that I attended the ALA Conference. They have been engaged with diversity issues longer than we have. So what can we learn from experience in the United States?

The first thing that is clear is the importance of getting diversity onto the agenda, recognised as an issue worthy of attention. This can be a long journey requiring determination and fortitude. Diversity is now one of the priority action areas identified by the ALA. There is a Diversity Committee and

an Office of Diversity and a range of diversity-related initiatives. But this had taken many years to achieve.

So the first step here in the UK is to get diversity on the agenda at national level, and also at regional and local levels; and not just in relation to public libraries, but also in academic, special and national libraries. The establishment of the interim Diversity Council committee is an important first step towards this.

What is then needed is affirmative action to take the diversity agenda forward. The ALA, like our association in the UK, adds value for its members around two key areas of activity – advocacy and education – and it is noticeable that the ALA has brought considerations of diversity into both areas.

The campaigns and awards supported by ALA promote the contribution made by people of black and minority ethnic origin in American society, through role models and through initiatives like the Coretta Scott King Award for the best of African American writing and illustration.

So, we are working on the development of a programme of awards which will recognise and celebrate the contribution made by people of diverse ethnic backgrounds to our profession in the UK – and our new careers literature contains images which reflect, to a degree, some of the diversity in our society.

The diversity agenda has a strong presence in the professional literature in the United States and

this is not replicated yet here in Britain. We need to look at ways by which we can encourage more writing in our professional press on diversity issues.

And diversity has also been taken into account by ALA when considering professional education. I was particularly impressed by the Spectrum initiative founded by an endowment to provide Spectrum scholarships which give financial support to people of black and minority ethnic origin who wish to become professionally qualified. The Spectrum scholars are supported by a programme of mentoring, and a condition of the scholarship is participation in the Spectrum Institute – an intensive training programme to develop leadership skills and also enable the Spectrum scholars to build up a strong network of peer group support.

The Spectrum programme gives participants more than financial support, leadership training, mentoring, peer group support, and the opportunity to achieve professional qualifications and a professional career. It also fosters within the Spectrum scholars a sense of personal and professional worth and self-esteem. I met a number of Spectrum scholars and other colleagues associated with the Spectrum programme while I was at the ALA Conference and I gave them a commitment – that when I returned to the UK I would look into the possibility of developing a Spectrum-style initiative here in Britain.

So we have a number of ways to go forward: by establishing a Diversity Group within the professional association; by

seeking to get diversity recognised as a priority action area within the Association's corporate plan; by developing a programme of awards to recognise and celebrate the achievements of black and minority ethnic librarianship in the UK; by looking to develop a Spectrum-style initiative to encourage people of black and minority ethnic origin to achieve professional qualifications; by developing more accessible routes to professional qualifications; by establishing strategic partnerships with key agencies which promote the diversity agenda in UK society; and by exploring opportunities to articulate the diversity issues within our publications programme and our professional press.

This is a challenging agenda for action. But, with determination and fortitude, it is achievable.

We are entering a new era as a profession in the UK with the coming together of librarians and information scientists into one unified professional body, the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals. This is a tremendous opportunity for new initiatives and new approaches. I hope that today I have given you some indicators of how, over time, we might develop new initiatives and approaches to take forward the diversity agenda within our professional association and our professional community. Thank you for listening.



### **Seize the time**

Black Contribution to British Librarianship  
Conference . Unity in Diversity  
Thursday, 5<sup>th</sup> July, 2001  
Manchester  
Shiraz Durrani

#### **The past**

Last year's Black Contribution conference was, in many ways, a pioneering one which laid the foundation for many changes that we see today. Prof. Ismail Abdullahi was here with a clear message to organise and unite in order to mainstream race issues in the information world in Britain today. We got a clear commitment from Bob McKee of his and LA's support for Black information workers.

As we meet today, we need to reflect on where we are and where we want to go. I will talk later about the positive and negative forces around us. But the key question for us is "what has each one of us done in the last year to progress our struggle?" I will leave each of us to answer this question.

#### **The struggle of the positive and the negative**

As is the case in any situation, there are positive forces and there are negative forces in play in the context of equality. Our success will depend on how well we understand these forces and how well we strengthen the positive and weaken the negative forces. Let us look at these forces before deciding how best we can move ahead.

#### **The positive forces**

Global climate of resistance.  
There is a new climate on a global level which sees people from around the world making a stand against social oppression and

economic exploitation – against corporate globalisation which cannot see beyond the mega profit motive. It is estimated that over 3 million people all around the globe have taken an active part in the anti-globalisation movement since Seattle – not to mention the millions of workers and peasants around the world who resist daily in a number of different ways.

So what is the connection of all this with the library world and to “Black contribution”? It is that when we struggle against racism and inequality in our workplaces, we are part of a global movement that has decided to take action to improve people’s life chances, rather than waiting for solutions to drop from the skies. We are thus stronger than the sum total of the number of people who are present here in this hall.

#### **Government policy**

Partly as a result of the growing global movement of resistance, the Government has come out with a radical agenda for change in the way that the government (central and local) operates. The whole programme around social exclusion through the work of the Social Exclusion Unit, the neighbourhood renewal programme, programmes around lifelong learning are part of this broader picture. Also included here are various changes in law with the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, the Human Rights Act, as well as recommendations of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry. All these provide the support structure that can strengthen our search for racial justice. It is worth remembering that it was the struggles of the family and community for justice around Stephen Lawrence’s murder that

led to the Inquiry and its recommendations.

The programme around Best Value provides a valuable tool to ensure that the equality agenda is taken on board by all service providers. It is here that we can become effective by using all these tools which are now available to us in the battle for social and economic justice. A positive climate has been created at a national level.

This is then reflected in the information field. There has been positive policy guidance from the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, in terms of documents such as *Libraries, Archives, Museums, and Galleries for All*. At the same time, requirements for meeting the Library Standards and for the Annual Library Plans give very clear directives on what is expected in terms of social exclusion and racial equality for minority ethnic communities.<sup>2</sup> Again, there are some very powerful tools here for social and racial justice and it is important that each one of us becomes aware of these Government requirements and not leave it to library and information heads to address these issues in isolation. It is our right as well as our responsibility to be active in this area of work.

Another positive factor is the supportive attitude of the Library Association and of Bob McKee himself. We heard the very positive message that Bob gave

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<sup>2</sup> Further details on these positive developments are given in *Social and Racial Exclusion Handbook for libraries, archives, museums, and galleries*. (2d ed., September 2001) available from the Social Exclusion Action Planning Network.

earlier this morning. The door of the LA has been unbolted from within and it is for us to take the first step inside to make the Association more positive towards social and racial equality. It is said that even a dead tree does not fall down on its own – it needs to be pushed down by an activist before planting a new one. The very facts that six Black Contribution conferences have been held, that this time we are meeting as part of the Umbrella conference, that Bob has found time to come to these conferences are all indications of the support from the Association. All that is missing now is our action.

At the national level, the Resource funded report *Open to All?* Has come up with comprehensive recommendations on all aspects of social exclusion. It has also led to the formation of two national programmes, the Social Exclusion Action Planning Network and the Quality Leaders Project for Black Library and Information Workers<sup>3</sup> (about which we will hear more later today). All these developments have the support of the Library Association and Resource.

#### **Our agenda**

I come to the most important development now. While all the positive things I mentioned earlier are important in themselves, they remain merely positive objective factors if we do not take advantage and push our agenda forward. And what is our agenda? It can be summed up in a few key terms: vision, unity, organisation,

commitment and action. With the active support of the American and British Library Associations, personified by Prof. Ismail Abdullahi and Bob McKee, we have taken a giant leap towards meeting our agenda. It remains for us to ensure that we take the opportunities now open to us and move from feeling sorry for ourselves to becoming active agents of positive change – in the profession, in our workplaces and on our streets.

And we have reason to be proud of our achievements over the last year. The positive development is that a number of organisations active in the information field came together to form the Diversity Council in March 2001. These organisations are the African Caribbean Library Association (ACLA), the Asian Librarians and Advisors Group (ALAG), the Chinese Library Support Group, Race, Class and Equality Group and the Vietnamese Library Support Network. The Diversity Council has launched its own publication *Diversity*, copies of which are available today. We have at last taken control of our destiny and have found our voice.

We have even moved the agenda further by mainstreaming the issue of race. Our past struggles had been around the formation of a “Black Workers Group”. While it is important to focus on issues of racial justice, it is also important to realise that we can strengthen ourselves and achieve better results if we join hands with other sections of the community who are disadvantaged. We must guard against getting caught up in false hierarchies of oppression which can only lead to divisions among

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<sup>3</sup> Further details about the work of these two organisation can be found in (1) *Social Exclusion Action Planning Network Newsletter* (monthly); and (2) *QLP News* (quarterly – Issue no. 1 is available today).

those who should be working together.

Developments in ICT make it possible – indeed necessary – to link up with other peoples and struggles to ensure our own success, otherwise we remain an isolated, marginalised group. We must join hands with all positive people who share our struggle, vision and agenda. The Government talks about “social exclusion” and includes the issue of racial equality under this agenda. The organisations behind our new-found unity decided to go for the term “diversity” which Bob described very well in his talk earlier today. It is under this broad concept that we hope to reach new heights.

#### **The Negative forces**

Yet we must not be carried away with the above positive factors. Corporate globalisation is not about to go away from our lives. The threat of stealth privatisation of libraries remains, as shown by recent developments in Haringey Libraries. The General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) allows for privatisation of all services, including libraries. Whether the privatised library and information services become a reality, whether they have time for equality in their quest for private profit is something that will be decided by our action – or inaction. This aspect will be further explored in the December 2001 issue of *Information for Social Change*.

At the same time, the library profession, as a profession, remains a very conservative one with most management reluctant to change, to ensure equality in practice, and to meet new and old

needs of excluded communities and peoples. There remains a basic democracy deficit in workplaces and in the forums where policy is made and resource allocated. As the Institute of Race Relations has said, “anti-racism is about breaking hierarchies, traditional methods of working, of relating to people, of becoming more broad based in representation and concerns. The challenge of racism is a challenge to democracy”. The challenge can be met only by active action on the part of each one of us, certainly not by lamenting in private about “our lot”.

A further danger is that in face of new laws and requirements for equality, a conservative management will create a false “equality” – equality in form, but not in content. All the right boxes of equality will be ticked, but racist and unequal practices will continue as before – perhaps a little better hidden and a little more difficult to prove. Constant vigilance and challenging of such hidden inequality will be needed on the part of our communities and progressive information workers.

The real test of whether there is any change in policies and practices will be made by the ultimate performance indicator – whether there has been any real redirection of resources to address inequalities. Decades of historical inequality cannot be overcome unless there is a move to create a level playing field by increasing the resources for services to those who have been marginalised. Redirection or increasing resources, besides providing the means of achieving equality, also carries a powerful symbolic

message to all staff and all communities about the real commitment of elected Members, politicians, managers and leaders to creating a society based on social justice and equality. But this is one area which many politicians, senior and middle managers and some “leaders” are not too keen to discuss, let alone redress. Yet it is only the practice of our leaders and managers which can provide the proof of their commitment to equality.

Another threat facing us is that of losing sight of specific aspects of equality – race, class, gender, sexuality, disability etc. – in the general search for resolution of “social exclusion”. Or worse, to allow managers and staff to address those aspects of equality they feel comfortable with, thereby creating a hierarchy of exclusion and playing one against the other. Thus they may be happy to address disability, but not racism; gender issues but not sexuality. They may then claim that they have “dealt with” social exclusion when in effect, they have done no such thing. Government and employer policies need to be more focused on specific aspects of exclusion if it is going to lead to any meaningful change.

At the same time, we must guard against a tendency among ourselves to become judgmental and decide that the resolution of one form of oppression should take priority over that of other forms. The principle we need to establish should be that it is the right of every oppressed community to resist their oppression. We then need to forge a unity of all people seeking their own liberation. This is the

approach I believe that the Diversity Council has taken.

#### **The way ahead**

Leaders and managers.

The responsibility for ensuring equality in our society and in our profession lies with each one of us. I recommend that all managers read Gus John’s article<sup>4</sup> reproduced in the first issue of the *QLP News* and ask themselves three questions:

1. “Where do I stand on the issue of equality?”
2. “How can I get rid of the blockages which prevent equality?”
3. “What policies and practices have I initiated to ensure equality in service and in workplace”.

Perhaps all managers need to sign up the CRE’s Leadership Challenge<sup>5</sup> as an indication of their commitment to racial and other equality. The CRE initiated the Challenge because it believes that “real change is possible only when leaders in all walks of life decide to take personal responsibility themselves for effecting change in their organisations, as well as society as a whole”. Action under the Challenge can be categorised under three main headings:

- **The public profile**

Leaders can:

- Use their position on committees and boards to

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<sup>4</sup> John, Gus Equality and Entitlement *QLP News* No1, July 2001 pp. 1-12

<sup>5</sup> See: The Leadership Challenge, Commission for Racial Equality 2001 available at <http://www.cre.gov.uk/>.

put racial equality issues high on the agenda.

- Raise racial equality issues and report on achievements in their annual reports, public statements and speeches.
- Extend their personal support and endorsement of racial equality to mainstream events and campaigns where the issue would not otherwise be raised.
- **Acknowledging and celebrating achievements**  
Leaders can:
  - Ensure that they and their organisations are at the forefront of best practice in their sectors.
  - Encourage leadership among their colleagues, contemporaries and counterparts.
  - Take pride in promoting their successes of their racial equality programmes.
- **Commitment to action**  
Leaders can:
  - Build racial equality measures and strategies into their organisations' decision making and planning processes.
  - Call for regular progress reports.
  - Steer for development – setting performance goals and milestones – of programmes of practical action that will help eliminate discrimination and unequal participation.

The key challenge is whether the profession has the leadership to sign up to the Leadership Challenge.

**Black and other excluded people.**

Black and other excluded people also need to take action. All positive people – “excluded” or not – need to unite, organise and seize the time to make a real difference in ensuring equality in the information field. Revolutions are made by millions of small steps taken by millions of people. How can we in the information field take these small steps and seize the time and start a revolution for equality?

**Seize the time – unite to organise**

- Join the Diversity Council.
- Form focus groups around each aspect of oppression and exclusion.
- Join the Library Association and sign the letter to form the Diversity Council as a Group of the Library Association.
- Join the Quality Leaders Project for Black Library and Information Workers.
- Join the Social Exclusion Action Planning Network.
- Raise your voice for equality: contribute to *Diversity* and to the *QLP News*.
- Get involved in preparing for the next Black Contribution conference.

As the Chinese story says, a “foolish old man can move mountains” – with persistence, determination and focused action. We can start the process of moving the mountain today.

**20 years of ACLA**

Ann Thompson  
Secretary ACLA  
[www.libraryannie@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:www.libraryannie@yahoo.co.uk)

December 3<sup>rd</sup> 2001 will mark the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the African Caribbean Library

Association, an event which will be celebrated at a special dinner with many members past and present and lots of friends of the organisation.

ACLA was the first Black library organisation in this country. Founding ACLA was a unique and courageous act. Fourteen African and Caribbean librarians braved a snowy night in 1981 to meet at Hornsey library in Haringey to formally organise themselves. Myself and Kassa Tsegeye had no difficulty in reaching out to black colleagues since the need was so clear. My inspiration, Dr E.J. Josey (the first Black man to be president of the American Library Association) whose book I read at Library School *What Black Librarians are saying* stated how the Black librarian needs to be alert and focused in support of Black people in communities and in the profession. Since their needs were frequently not met black people were mis-educated by biased writing of their history and an important role for the Black librarian was to promote a positive and honest history of black people.

The most important factor for drawing ACLA together was the universal pressure of racism that we all experienced in our respective library authorities, in recruitment and promotion, professional interaction, and resources and funding. We gave each other support, mentoring and advice.

Along the way we have worked with some outstanding professionals, writers and artists such as Buchi Emecheta, Grace Hallworth, John La Rose, S. Sivanandan, Grace Nicolls, Alex

Pascal, Marcus Garvey Junior, Tony Martin, John Clarke (a rare Chief Librarian) Eric and Jessica Huntly, and Dr E.J. Josey just to name a few.

Though there were have been many years of struggle, there have been many enjoyable moments along the way, such as the stone-laying ceremony for the Marcus Garvey Library in Tottenham, when the son of the great man came especially from the USA; my first and only IFLA conference on African soil; the presentation of an award to Dr Josey by the Mayor of Haringey; ACLA's involvement with the International Black Book-fair of Radical Black and Third World Books. And the internationally acclaimed bulletin of "Dragon's Teeth" by the National Committee on Racism in Children's Books.

We are pleased that there is now, after so many years of struggle, a new and positive focus in the profession regarding race equality and social inclusion. The development of the new Diversity Council as an LA Group is a positive action. Instigated by Dr Ismail Abdullahi of the Black Caucus of the American Library Association, it seeks to bring together all similarly concerned groups to work collectively. We look forward to working in a sharing and concerned environment.

Most importantly I wish to thank all those members past and present, friends and colleagues who have devoted so much time and effort in the development of ACLA. All that is left to be said is to be active and be alert. Join The Library Association and the Diversity Council. If you are of African or

Caribbean origin do join ACLA and become involved.

“Dare to struggle, dare to win.”

### **Diversity Discussion list**

Philip Pothen writes:  
Welcome to the new Diversity Council mailing list for all members of the DC and all those who are interested in our activities. Hopefully it will become a forum not just for sharing information, but for discussion as well. You should all have received an automatic welcome message, but just to say that if you want to post a message on to the list, simply send a message to:  
[diversity@jiscmail.ac.uk](mailto:diversity@jiscmail.ac.uk)  
This message will go to all members. If you want to get in touch with me as list “owner” ie. If you want to leave the list, join someone else, etc. then send a message to:  
[owner-diversity@jiscmail.ac.uk](mailto:owner-diversity@jiscmail.ac.uk) or [philip.pothen@kcl.ac.uk](mailto:philip.pothen@kcl.ac.uk)  
Please inform colleagues and friends about this list, and encourage them to join!

### **Manchester library meets needs of refugees**

Hoi Dong

*[Address on last page]*

#### **Refugee Working Party and Officers Working Party**

In September 1991 a cross-departmental working party was established by the City Council to address the needs of refugees from the Vietnamese and Somali communities.

The terms of reference for the working party included:

- To review and co-ordinate the services provided for refugee in the city in the areas of Housing, Social Services, Education, Leisure (including libraries), and to recommend improvements.
- To produce an information pack (translated into the relevant languages) for refugees.
- To fully involve representatives of the refugee communities and appropriate non-statutory organisation in the work of the working party.
- To review the opportunities currently offered to refugees in term of employment within the City Council, and to propose action to improve matters.
- To investigate all avenues for procuring additional resources for refugees in Manchester.

Each participating department drew up an action plan to address issues which the communities had highlighted.

For the Libraries and Theatres Department this included:

- Co-ordinating the production of an information pack for refugees. The need for information on such vital matters as finding accommodation, providing heating, claiming for income support and sorting out schooling was top of the list from feedback with the community representatives. An information pack produced in both English/Vietnamese and English/Somali was widely distribute so that it could be used by both the refugees themselves and the agencies which were trying to help them.

- The post of Advisor: Vietnamese Library Services was added to the establishment of the department.

The Refugee Working Party was never intended to go on forever – The aim was to ensure that refugee issues became an integral part of service planning.

As such, it evolved into a smaller Officers Working Party Group which addressed the task of researching the needs of other refugee groups in Manchester.

The starting point for this was provided by the City Planning Office which produced a detailed “Social Survey of the Somali/Vietnamese communities in Manchester”. Resources were not available to carry out such an in-depth exercise for other refugee groups. So the Officers Working Group set up a series of separate consultation meetings with representatives from Bosnian, Sudanese, Iraqi, Chilean and Vietnamese communities.

Although the meetings were informal they were structured around a set of questions which aimed to build a picture of needs of each group set in the context of their culture.

At this Working Party, the overriding aim of this exercise was for departmental action plans to reflect these needs where possible.

The library service was able to promote its meetings rooms, offer display space and also make community representatives aware of existing material in their language. Suggestions were also given by the refugees of books

which could be added to the library stock.

#### **Services for Vietnamese community**

In the case of the Vietnamese Library Services in Manchester, at first a small collection of books was established in 1982, with help from local volunteers. Due to the popularity and usage of the collection, Manchester Libraries have recognised the importance of this service to the community, also as a result from the extensive work was done by the Refugee Working Party, and have made a real improvement in the library services to Vietnamese people by creating a post of Library Advisor: Vietnamese Library Services added to the establishment of the department. This post is based in North District, where the majority of Vietnamese people live, but also has a city-wide responsibility in promoting awareness of Vietnamese culture as well as developing the service as and where necessary.

#### **Services offered:**

Crumpsall library is gaining national attention for its services for the Vietnamese community. It has the largest collection in the country of:

- Vietnamese books
- Music Cassettes & CDs
- BBC tapes
- Videos & Video-CDs
- Leaflets & Periodicals
- Displays at Libraries & community venues to promote services
- Spoken-word
- Vietnamese Word-processing, CD-ROMs and Internet Services
- Dual-language books

#### **Activities:**

The library has organised events for the community such as:

- New Stock Launch organises on a yearly basis, stock sale also included.
- Provides dual-language story telling and cultural awareness sessions to school children and staff both in schools and in libraries, this greatly benefits the local children in the community.
- Author talk event took place at Crumpsall library and is planned to continue.
- Helped organise "One Hundred Years of Cheetham & Broughton 2000 Exhibition Preview" at Crumpsall Library. An exhibition illustrating the community life during the last century.

Work with community groups:

Produce quarterly community's newsletter in conjunction with Manchester Vietnamese Community Association.

- Work with Vietnamese Cultural Group to run Mother Tongue classes for children at Abraham Moss Centre on Saturdays.
- Help organise celebrations for the Vietnamese Moon festival and New Year which are the most important festival on the Vietnamese calendar.

In 1995 the Refugee Working Party and Manchester Libraries & Theatres Department had contributed for Manchester City Council winning the Local Authority Race Award for its outstanding services for refugee communities in Manchester run by the Commission Racial Equality organisation. Manchester's winning entry showed how seriously the City Council took its responsibilities

towards the different needs of the refugee communities settled in the city and to encourage these communities to participate in the life of the city.

The initiatives include: a Vietnamese library service, a survey of the Somali community, the provision of Halal meals in schools, a Somali linkworker and a translation and interpretation service.

### **Diversity Council and *Diversity* welcomed**

#### **(1) Wishing every success**

"I write to acknowledge receipt of your recent newsletter on behalf of our Chairman Mr Gurbux Singh, to congratulate you on the successful launch of the Diversity Council...I wish the Diversity Council every success for the future."

- Hendy McNellie  
Commission for Racial Equality  
25 June 2001

#### **(2) Another step forward**

"CONGRATULATIONS!!! For publishing the first newsletter of the Diversity Council. This is another step forward in the establishment of the Diversity Council. Thanks for working hard to make it happen. It is good to see "the historic photo" on the front page. I am hopeful that we will achieve our goals of the inauguration of the Diversity Council on March 14, 2002, election of the officers, adoption of a new constitution, and inclusion of the Diversity Council as a new LA group."

- Prof. Ismail Abdullahi  
Clark Atlanta University;  
11 June 2001

**(3) We welcome the organisation**

“Thank you for sending me information about the Diversity Council. We welcome the organization and look forward to working with you on promoting the agenda. By post I am sending you information about the cultural Diversify Network of Broadcasters”.

- Parminder Vir  
Producer/Advisor – Cultural Diversity.  
Carlton Television. 11 Jun 2001

**(4) A welcome development**

“ Thanks ...it looks a welcome development”.

- Dave Muddiman, Principal Lecturer,  
School of Information Management, Leeds  
Metropolitan University. 11 Jun 2001.

**(5) Another milestone**

“I received a copy today and wanted to say congratulations. Another Milestone reached?

Do you receive *Impact* magazine? We have a subscription which I disseminate to Equal opportunity representatives in this Directorate (Community and Environment). I find it a very useful magazine – thought provoking but also full of positive (black and white) images of people who make a difference in terms of celebrating diversity.

Full of useful information and they arrange the British Diversity Awards. I thought it would be a useful item to add to your useful publications list

Also have you seen *Rural Racism in the UK : examples of community based Response* edited by Paul Henderson and Ranjit Kaur of the Community Development Foundation 1999 (190197412X) We have found it very useful in Shropshire – might be useful for

other rural counties with small ethnic populations”.

- Susan White  
Shropshire, 14 August 2001.

**(6) Questioning accepted practice...**

“...in this morning's mail was the latest issue of the *Australian Library Journal* questioning what had happened to critical thinking in the profession - where is the successor to *Revolting Librarians*???. Perhaps the Diversity Council will be able to reintroduce a questioning of ‘accepted’ practice today! ”

- Patricia Layzell Ward  
Editor, *Library Management*  
2 Oct. 01

**news and views**

Library services for visually impaired people from ethnic minority communities
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At a meeting held at Manchester Central Library on 6<sup>th</sup> September 2001, representatives of: Calibre NLB, RNIB, STV, Manchester Public Libraries [Included Asian, Chinese and Vietnamese service managers], Birmingham Public Libraries Leeds Public Libraries reviewed the current position, future prospects and determined an agreed plan to carry out a pilot project to test a methodology for services improvements for people who are doubly disadvantaged and often unknown to service agencies. Further details from: - David Owen at Share the Vision at: [sharethevision@nlbuk.org](mailto:sharethevision@nlbuk.org) (Source: Social Exclusion Action Planning Network).

### **Unity in Diversity Conference 2002**

A meeting to discuss the date and programme of next year's "Unity in Diversity Conference" will be held soon. The date of the meeting will be decided at the DC Interim Committee meeting. Please inform your DC contact if you wish to participate – or send your ideas and suggestions if you cannot attend. If the programme for the Conference does not meet our requirements, there will be no one to blame – except ourselves.

#### **Positive discrimination**

### **Report endorses women-only lists for would-be MPs**

Lucy Ward, Political correspondent, *The Guardian*. Wednesday 8 August, 2001

The only way to knock down the barriers blocking women's election to Westminster is to opt for positive discrimination such as all-female shortlists, a study by the Equal Opportunities Commission finds.

Political parties need to adopt measures such as quotas for women candidates and then keep these in place for a significant period to ensure a permanent culture change, the commission says.

And, in a finding which will endorse the criticism of many female Labour MPs, the study warns that Labour's short term use of all-women shortlists - dropped in 1996 after a legal challenge - in the end created a backlash against female candidates. In the selection for this year's general election, men came forward asserting that now it was "their time", the report notes.

The report, *Women in Parliament: a comparative analysis*, confirms

that, following the election Britain has continued to lag far behind much of Europe and other countries in terms of women's national political representation - it languishes at 33rd place in the world league.

### **Race and class ... and equalities**

The Race and Class Group, one of the founder members of the Diversity Council, has changed its name to "Race, Class and Equalities Group" (RC&E). This change reflects the remit of the Network which addresses all aspects of equality. It takes as its starting point, the need to struggle against all forms of social oppression and economic exploitation. It was felt that the previous term, "Race and Class" did not fully reflect all the aspects it seeks to address. The focus will be on social justice and human rights.

### **Social Inclusion – PAG report**

The Social Inclusion Policy Advisory Group of the Library Association is finalising its Report which will be submitted to the LA later this year. A draft is now available to members of Diversity Council for comments and suggestions before the report is finalised. Please contact the DC if you would like to receive a copy of the draft. All views should be sent to Shiraz Durrani before 5 November 2001.

### **A free market in hypocrisy**

...A century ago there was a liberalised regime in which capital - mainly from Britain - was exported to finance development in the Americas, southern Africa and Australasia. Mass emigration let the people follow the money,

providing the system with some flexibility. When times got tough, as they frequently did, it was possible to seek a better life somewhere else. Migration was globalisation's safety valve.

The contrast with today could hardly be more stark. The west is not exporting capital to fund rapid development in poor countries; indeed, rising debt burdens and shrinking aid budgets mean that capital is actually being sucked out of some of those countries that can least afford it. There was much high-flown talk at this year's G7 summit in Genoa of a Marshall Plan for Africa, but little evidence that this was anything more than a sop to the anti-globalisation protesters on the other side of the security fences. The original Marshall Plan was an act of supreme generosity by the US, not a soundbite intended to garner a few cheap headlines.

Read the full report: [Special report: globalisation](#); refugees in Britain. **Larry Elliott**. Monday September 10, 2001. *The Guardian*.

### **Debts of slave owners and racists**

It is extremely superficial to talk of any social or economic phenomenon in Africa without taking into account slavery and colonialism. That history has scarred the suffering continent for five centuries and its current misery is the effect of that, not the cause. Africa is not suffering because its inhabitants are of an inferior race as they are often directly or indirectly represented. There is misery in Africa because it has been exploited in a cruel, long-

term, merciless and systematic way.

UNESCO and other recognized authors admit that African slavery has been the greatest tragedy in history for its extent and duration. Tens of millions of Africans were snatched from their communities over a period of more than 400 years, and transported by force to the Americas and the Caribbean. Doudou Diene, director of UNESCO's Intercultural Projects Division, confirmed that this history is virtually absent from the collective memory and history books, including African ones.

Read the full article in *Granma International/ online edition*. August 15, 2001.

### **On the horrific events of last Tuesday....**

In his article following last Tuesday's horror [September 11, 2001], John Pilger asks: "If the attacks on America have their source in the Islamic world, who can really be surprised?", while Noam Chomsky ends: "Again, we have a choice: we may try to understand, or refuse to do so, contributing to the likelihood that much worse lies ahead."

Noam Chomsky's article "On the Bombings" is online at: <http://www.lbbs.org/chomnote.htm> and John Pilger's "Inevitable ring to the unimaginable" at: [www.lbbs.org/pilgercalam.htm](http://www.lbbs.org/pilgercalam.htm). Both are good places to start when trying to understand why this happened.

### **Globalisation and information**

A special Issue of *Information for Social Change* – edited by Ruth

Rikowski - has globalisation and libraries as its theme.

Libraries and Information, along with so many other public services, are under serious threat from the GATS and global capitalism.

Don't miss the special issue of *Information for Social Change* that will be coming out in December 2001, on this theme.

Writers in the issue will include: Anneliese Dodds, Shiraz Durrani, Fiona Hunt, Clare Joy, Bill Lehm, Sharhrzad Mojab, Alex Nunn, Jonathan Rutherford, Robert Silver.

"The clauses of the GATS and their underlying logic would ... imply the transformation of libraries into profit making ventures. ... Already, information is becoming privatised." Michel Chossudovsky, University of Ottawa

"Imagine a world without libraries... it could happen." British Columbia Library Association, Vancouver

For copies please contact:  
[john.pateman@merton.gov.uk](mailto:john.pateman@merton.gov.uk)  
ISC web site –  
<http://libr.org/ISC/TOC.html>

**WTO and GATS on Radio 4**  
*You and Yours*. BBC Radio 4,  
Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> October 2001  
The WTO and the GATS

"What does the General Agreement on Trade and Services mean to you and me? World Trade Organisation members must open up their service sectors to competition from private companies. So, could we see our health services and our schools run by private foreign firms?"

*Copies of the transcript of the above available from Ruth Rikowski,*  
[rikowski.uk@tinyworld.co.uk](mailto:rikowski.uk@tinyworld.co.uk)

### Services for Traveller Communities

Open to all? Training Course  
Wednesday 7 November 2001,  
11am-4pm, Sutton Central Library,  
St Nicholas Way, Sutton, Surrey  
SM1 1EA

Travellers are "recognised as one of the most severely educationally deprived sections of the community ... In addition to the problems normally associated with lack of basic skills, Travellers often experience prejudice and discrimination from the settled community making it even more difficult for them to get the services they need" (*Reaching Travellers: Save the Children*).

The course sets out to address the needs of Travellers, arguably the most socially excluded group in our society.

Details from: John Vincent,  
Wisteria Cottage, Nadderwater,  
Exeter EX4 2JQ  
fax: 01392 256045. e-mail:  
[john@nadder.freeseve.co.uk](mailto:john@nadder.freeseve.co.uk)

### Diversity focus

The next issue of *Library Management* will be a special one on Diversity. Contents include:

- E.J.Josey and Ismail Abdullahi: *Why diversity in American libraries?*
- John Pateman: *Reasons to be wrathful.*
- Shiraz Durrani: *Combating racial discrimination: the role of the QLP.*

- Irene Owens: *South African libraries...1960s and 1970s.*
- Dennis N. Ocholla: *Diversity in LIS workplace: a South African perspective.*
- Maurice B. Line: *Management musings.*

*Library Management*, ISSN: 0143-5124. Editor: Patricia Layzell Ward, [layzellward@celtic.co.uk](mailto:layzellward@celtic.co.uk)  
The issue on Diversity is Vol. 23 Nos. 1&2 2002. Due out early January **available on free trial from [www.emerald-insight.com](http://www.emerald-insight.com)**

### News from LINK

Librarians and information workers all over the world share many common problems and experiences. Many workers, especially in the "South" have developed library techniques to suit local conditions. Their solutions, however, may be applicable elsewhere. To facilitate the sharing of these ideas, some interested librarians got together to form LINK.

LINK is a network that intends to be an informed, experienced and realistic forum that will raise awareness of "Third World" library issues within the information-related professions of the "North". It aims to link librarians and libraries in the "South" with colleagues worldwide, for their mutual benefit, and to provide support, briefing and continuing information to individuals who intend to do information work in developing countries.

LINK is now an organisation in liaison with the Library Association. It was decided to plan to hold a one-day conference in Glasgow

next August to tie in with IFLA in Glasgow. It will be a joint conference of LINK, ISC (Information for Social Change) and Book Aid International. The Conference's working title is *Libraries under fire: information provision in times of conflict.*

LINK publishes *LINK-UP*. Copy date for December 2001 issue: mid November. Theme: "Students and training".

Details from: Gill Harris  
[gillian@grharris67.freemove.co.uk](mailto:gillian@grharris67.freemove.co.uk)

### Check this out

#### **Social inclusion and libraries; a resource guide**

<http://www.la-hq.org.uk/groups/csg/si/si.html>

This new resource is intended for all public library professionals, particularly those whose role is to put policy into practice. It aims to provide an easy way in to recent publications, research and networked resources about social inclusion that might be relevant to public libraries.

<http://www.bettergovernmentforolderpeople.gov.uk/>

Welcome to the Better Government for Older People web site. This site is sponsored by ICL to facilitate the Programme's [Network](#). It provides an online forum for communication between the teams of people engaged in the work of the programme (requires member Log-in) and is actively updated to contain their latest experiences and findings.

**RIMA 2001 Keynote speech**  
by Clive Jones, Chief Executive

Carlton Channels & Chair of the Cultural Diversity Network.

Britain has become an exciting multicultural nation increasingly at ease with the diverse nature of its population and enriched by different talent and skills reflected in the mosaic of communities that make up our towns, cities and villages.

We still have problems and we still have a long way to go. There are still xenophobes who believe that Foot and Mouth is being spread by asylum seekers. We still have to live with the horror, tragedy and murder of people like Stephen Lawrence. But, there is also the reality that there is in this room, where we've gathered today to celebrate multiculturalism in the British media.

The reality out there and all around us in London, is what we've tried to achieve in the new Crossroads in the mix of stories, characters and talent, that we are attempting to put on the screen. Cultural Diversity for me is not about political correctness or an assault on Britishness, it's about reflecting modern Britain. At last year's RIMA, Greg Dyke reminded us why it was important for the BBC to reflect the new multicultural Britain. Whether you are a commercial broadcaster or funded by the licence fee we are faced with a stark choice — either we adapt what we do, or we will become increasingly irrelevant to modern Britain.

That is what led to the establishment of the Cultural Diversity Network, an industry-wide, industry led body, which is committed to changing the face of British television. The membership

includes the BBC, ITV Network Centre, Carlton, Granada Media, GMTV, Channel 4, Channel 5, BSkyB and ITN, and a range of other industry bodies and regulators including ITC, BSC, RTS and BAFTA.

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### Read and reflect

Josef Szwarc

*Faces of racism*

Amnesty International

21 Aug 2001

*Faces of Racism* describes key aspects of racism and related forms of prejudice throughout world history. It shows how manifestations of racism, like imperialism and segregation, have recurred and persisted. Topics are presented in a novel A to Z format. Some, like apartheid and genocide, offer new insights into well-known subjects. Others, like porrajmos and ZOG, will introduce the general reader to relatively unfamiliar issues.

Published by Amnesty International  
UK 24.8.2001. £ 9.99.

From: "Global Book Marketing"

**Peter Abrahams**

*The Coyaba chronicles;*

*Reflections on the Black*

*experience in the 20th Century.*

Aug 2001.

Few people could speak more authoritatively about the black experience in the twentieth century or from such a unique experience as Peter Abrahams. Long recognised as one of Africa's first black writers of the fifties and sixties with *Song of the City* (1945) and *Mine Boy* (1946), Abrahams

has travelled and lived in the worlds most famous urban centres and counted as his peers such renowned literary figures as Richard Wright, James Baldwin as well as the 'father' of the Pan-Africanist movement, George Padmore.

In this larger than life memoir, personal history is the basis for the examination of the challenge for people of colour to be whole and unselfconscious ...readers will be struck by the portrayal of an international brotherhood of black reformers and revolutionaries and the international connectedness of our problems and solutions.

Hardback £14.95  
Published by Ian Randle  
Publishers, Kingston, Jamaica  
From: "Global Book Marketing"

***Philosophy and Social Action***

ISSN 0377-2772 (India)

Vol.27 No.4 Oct-Dec. 2001

Includes:

- Attack on liberty of women – Martyr of liberty Dr. Homa Darabi
- Women count – at last! (on the resolution on women, peace and security at the UN Security Council, Oct. 2000).
- The philosopher of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: Bertrand Russell.

***Goan Overseas Digest***

[www.goacom.com/overseas-digest](http://www.goacom.com/overseas-digest)

ISSN 1474-4074 (Wimbledon, London)

Includes:

- On being Goan in the West
- Native American History: *Pocahontas*.
- *Racism in the Catholic Church*

***Diversity***

*Diversity* is the quarterly newsletter of the Diversity Council. The editor welcomes articles views, and information.

The Diversity Council can be contacted through its interim Committee made up of:

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Gulshan Iqbal

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## Diversity Council Profiles (1)

### **Gulshan Iqbal**



Gulshan Iqbal is the current Chair of the Asian Librarians and Advisors Group (ALAG) having been involved since joining the profession. She currently represents ALAG and the Diversity Council on the Equal Opportunities Sub-Committee of the Library Association.

Gulshan obtained her BA (Hons) in History and Post Graduate Diploma in Librarianship from the University of North London. She has been in librarianship for the last 16 years, starting with Enfield Libraries as a Community Librarian.

Currently, Gulshan is the Team Leader for Community Services at Hounslow Library Network. Her responsibilities include the Library at Home, the Mobile Library Services, Ethnic Communities and supervising a library service for the Feltham Young Offenders Institute.

Gulshan is an Urdu language specialist for CILLA (Co-operative of Indic Language Library Authority) and also works as a translator with various publishers. Her hobbies are reading, cooking, music and watching television. Last but not least she is one of the founder members of the Diversity Council.