



## A Black Perspective in Community and Youth Work, 2002

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THE UNIVERSITY  
of MANCHESTER

A Community Work Unit Conference 2002

# A Black Perspective in Community and Youth Work

## Saturday 26th October 2002

A report of a day conference for community workers, youth workers, volunteers and activists who came together to develop their understanding and practice

Conference Facilitator: Daniel Nkrumah

February 2003

*Supported by the University of Manchester's Widening Participation Project*

# A Black Perspective in Community and Youth Work

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Conference Venue: Chancellors Conference Centre  
Chancellors Way, Moseley Road, Fallowfield, Manchester M14 6NN, 0161 907 7414

This conference report is based on contributions from all who participated in the conference.

**Conference facilitator:** Daniel Nkrumah

**Conference organiser:** Sue Pollitt

**Conference report:** Kate Sapin

## **Workshop facilitators**

Dave Allport	REWIND, Sandwell
Kaleem Anwar	Lancashire Youth & Community
Alison Healicon	Community Work Unit
Addy Lazz-Onyenobi	Community Work Unit
Paul Mattis	Black Health Agency, Manchester
Stella Osammor	Broad African Resource Council, Manchester
Pravin Patel	Pravin Consultancy, Leicester
Shabnam Sheikh	Werneth & Freehold Project, Oldham

## **Workshop scribes** (Community Work Unit)

Apinke Adebisi, Michael Clarke, Mary Kenny, Annette Rimmer, Kate Sapin

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## 1. Conference Participants

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Shaun Braithwaite	Let's Get Serious, Manchester
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Michael Clarke	Community Work Unit
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Chris Macintosh	M13 Youth Project, Longsight, Manchester
Stuart Marlow	Sale West Youth Centre, Trafford
Paul Mattis	Black Health Agency, Manchester

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*Thanks to all who participated.*

## 2. A Definition of a Black Perspective

*A black perspective recognises the collective capacity of black people to define, develop and advance their own political, economic, social, cultural and educational interests. "Black" provides a historical and cultural context, whilst "perspective" supplies the unique analysis and consciousness-raising tool for action. A black perspective equips black people to continue the fight for self-emancipation and create a body of knowledge, develop strategies that contribute to their intellectual freedom and political liberation.*

John Best

## 3. Introduction

At the outset of this year's conference, I outlined some important questions about issues that relate directly to a black perspective and deserve further attention in the community and youth work profession. These were:

- Race and racism • How can we begin to have an understanding of the roots of racism if we have not first developed our understanding of the concept of race and how this concept has been used socially and politically?
- Identity • How important is the concept of self and what happens when there is a mis-match between self-perception and other people's perception of you? How long we will continue to divide on the basis of our differences? When will we begin to truly unite on the basis of what we have in common as human beings?
- Community • What is a community? Who defines communities and community needs?
- Change • What can individuals and organisations do to bring about real change?

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A black perspective • What are some of the key principles of a black perspective?

I used the following definition from the 2001 conference as a starting point for 2002:

*You do not have to be black to work from a black perspective. A black perspective is one which challenges perceived knowledge about human equality issues, in particular the roles and contributions of black people in world history. A black perspective asserts black people's rights to self-determination and political autonomy. Wherever there is oppression, there will always be resistance. A black perspective relates to a liberation struggle, which includes spiritual, economic, ethical, moral and ideological battles. A black perspective challenges racism in all forms.*

The Community Work Unit conferences on a black perspective were designed to enable community and youth workers to reflect on their practice, meet with others and discuss the challenges of developing anti-oppressive practice in their own work settings. The first conference on a black perspective in 2001<sup>1</sup> was planned in response to enquiries from community workers and youth workers from around the country who had seen our short course on *A Black Perspective in Community and Youth Work*, which has been offered over a number of years, and wanted to be able to access an intensive version to enable those travelling a long distance to participate. Evaluations from the 2001 Conference recommended an annual event to coincide with Black History Month.

The 2002 Conference enabled participants to select participative workshops facilitated by community and youth work practitioners on a range of current issues and practice (see the summary in the next section). Five workshops, each repeated in the morning and the afternoon, enabled participants to attend their first choices. The workshops were small enough to facilitate discussions (the size ranged from six to thirty-six participants) on different aspects or themes in relation to understanding, implementing and developing a black perspective in community and youth work. Participants were encouraged to contribute their own perspectives and experiences to discussions – and to relate the issues raised to their current practice. Scribes recorded the discussions and the facilitators compiled the information from the two sessions for this report, which we hope will be of use in further training and professional development.

Through the workshops and general discussions which took place during the conference, participants had the opportunity to develop their understanding of these issues and seek clarity where necessary. This report attempts to reflect some of the discussion and clarification that took place so that you can use the material to inform your practice as a community and youth worker. The feedback from participants via evaluation sheets and verbal suggestions indicates that participants acquired something positive from the conference that they could apply to their everyday work

This report is based on contributions from all who participated in the conference and includes a summary of the workshops, a report of each workshop, general learning points and evaluation. As the conference was held during Black History Month, some background information was enclosed with the conference materials and can be found in Appendix B: Black History Month. Additional Appendices include some information about the Community Work Unit, a resource list and an evaluation form if you wish to return any suggestions for next year's conference.

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<sup>1</sup> The report from the 2001 conference is available from the Community Work Unit.

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I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the participants, workshop facilitators and scribes, and everyone who assisted in the smooth organisation and running of the conference. I hope that we will all take away the following:

1. Sometimes we need to question the obvious in terms of definitions. Whose definitions have we accepted?
2. There is no “them” and “us”; there are only people.
3. We have a shared future beyond the colour line, which relates to our human identity. Adopting black perspective principles will positively assist human equality work.

Daniel Nkrumah

## 4. A Summary of the Workshops

### **A. A Black Perspective on Domestic Violence Issues and Practice**

The workshop facilitated by Shabnam Sheikh and Alison Healicon provided an opportunity to explore relevant issues such as: the provision of appropriate services, barriers to the take-up of services, the cultural implications and effects of racism on the issues and practice, forced marriage guidelines, the one year rule. Scribed by Mary Kenny

### **B. Sex and Relationships Education with Black and Minority Ethnic Communities**

The workshop facilitated by Paul Mattis looked at how we identify the educational needs of young people from black and minority ethnic communities in relation to sex and relationships? What are the issues for practitioners and providers? How do we identify, develop and promote best practice? The workshop discussed the information collated from consultation carried out through the national Sex Education Forum project on sex education. Scribed by Kate Sapin

### **C. A Black Perspective in the Connexions Service**

The workshop facilitated by Pravin Patel and Kaleem Anwar explored ways to engage holistically with black and white young people and their communities and for workers and managers who are anticipatory in how they work to develop services. The workshop examined the relevance of a black perspective for all working with or within the Connexions Service. Scribed by Michael Clarke

### **D. A Black Perspective on Parents Power**

The workshop facilitated by Addy Lazz-Onyenobi and Stella Osammor explored a range of educational issues and practice, e.g. involving members of black and ethnic minority communities in tertiary education, empowering black parents and engaging them as partners in their children’s education, exploring and the achievements of black people in history, literature, science, art, etc. Scribed by Annette Rimmer

### **E. De-Constructing “Race” with Young People**

The workshop facilitated by Dave Allport discussed the myths of “race” to expose the concept as a social construct and highlight their implications for community and youth workers. As negative attitudes and fear have meant that these areas of work are underdeveloped, the workshop also considered innovative ways to work with young people around the issues of “race” and racism, such as the development of peer education projects linked to national research. Scribed by Apinke Adebisi



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## 5. Domestic Violence and Forced Marriages Workshop

*Facilitated by Shabnam Sheikh and Alison Healicon*

A black perspective on domestic violence recognises that racism limits the choices black women experiencing domestic violence have in Britain today. It is the responsibility of community and youth workers to challenge the effects of racism so that women are better supported, have access to appropriate information and are able to make choices, which ensure their own safety and that of their children. The conference workshops provided an opportunity to discuss current knowledge and highlight good practice in statutory and voluntary organisations in order to identify action and recommendations which could be followed through in our places of work specifically in relation to our support of women experiencing domestic violence. We also shared information relating to changes that are taking place in various institutions to develop guidelines for working through cases of forced marriages. As last year's report also addressed issues of domestic violence, this year's will focus on discussions on forced marriages.<sup>2</sup>

### What is Domestic Violence?

The Women's Aid's definition of domestic violence is as follows:

*The term domestic violence describes the physical, emotional, sexual or mental abuse of one person (usually a woman) by another (usually a man) with whom they have or have had a close or intimate relationship. Domestic violence is abusive or controlling behaviour, which is used most frequently by men to maintain power over 'their' women and may include threats to kill or harm the woman and/or her children or other family members.*

*(Women's Aid, July 1998)*

Another definition would be:

*Domestic violence may and often does, include a range of abusive behaviours, not all of which are inherently 'violent'. Violence can mean among other things threats, intimidation, manipulation, isolation, keeping a woman without money, locked in, deprived of food, or using (and abusing) her children in various ways to frighten her or enforce compliance. It can also include systematic criticism and belittling comments e.g. 'you're so stupid and ugly no one else would want you.' Sometimes the abuser's behaviour fluctuates wildly: he may offer 'rewards' on certain conditions or in an attempt to persuade his partner that abuse will never happen again.*

*(Barron et. al, 1992)*

In the conference workshop, participants defined various elements of domestic violence, namely:

- Violence, veiled by culture, religion, ignorance and/or denial.
- Behaviour, which is often condoned/accepted in society. It is only just being recognised and there are still huge misunderstandings about it, value judgements about women and many still think it only happens in the home.
- Mental torture and violation
- Physical torture, physical assault, hitting, murder
- Harassment, rape, threats to abuse children
- Name calling, undermining through verbal abuse
- Bouts of indulgences

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<sup>2</sup> The report of the 2001 Conference, available from the **Community Work Unit**, includes definitions of domestic violence from a black perspective, barriers for black women facing domestic violence and good practice with black women facing domestic violence.

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- Depriving women of access to money and other essentials, restriction of movement, isolation
- Being told what to or what not to wear
- Financial control
- Not allowing someone to thrive/develop
- Disharmony, fear, dependency, manipulation
- Happens everywhere, abuse of one family member on another/present or previous partner
- Children and young people are often involved either directly or caught in the middle. Disabled children are an unheard group who experience a whole spectrum of torture inside and outside the home. In Black and Asian communities these children have even less access to services than their white counterparts.
- Power and control, domination

Domestic violence is experienced in all cultures, religions and countries, but for black women living in white western societies, there are further issues in terms of her experience of racism.

### What are the Issues for Black Women?

Some of the considerations and barriers for black women in relation to domestic violence were identified through discussion of a case study<sup>3</sup> designed by Shabnam, one of the workshop facilitators, to highlight current practice in participants' work places. Some of the issues raised included:

- Language: women who do not speak English may have to rely on interpreters. Lack of interpretation services (even though it is against the law not to offer a first language interpreter), mean that children have been used to interpret, sometimes exposing them to brutal language about violence and rape. Most interpretation and translation services are difficult to secure. In some places there is a bilingual bank, but even then it can take two or three days for an interpreter. It should be immediate, if necessary in the middle of the night. Nevertheless, interpreters are no substitute for having a diverse workforce where there are fulltime workers who have community languages. Employers need to be pro-active in seeking out new recruits with these skills.
- Trust: Women need to be able to identify a place that is safe and people who can be trusted. Where are the safe places? We need to recognise the importance of being able to listen, give respect, choices and information.
- Procedures and Access: it is a big step to take for a woman to approach an advice worker. We need to be aware that a woman may have been referred on many times.
- Outreach: we need to be creative in order to reach out to women who may not be able to read, or cannot get out of the house except to doctors, clinics, schools.
- Professional workers: workers often lack awareness and use stereotypes. Training and networking must be prioritised so that we have up-to-date information and can refer onto appropriate people. Indeed many women's refuges are found to be racist and Black and Asian women sometimes feel they have jumped 'out of the frying pan and into the fire'.
- Human rights are not always recognised by society.
- Asylum seekers were another group who experienced hidden violence but had no rights to income support making escaping impossible. Some women were deported from Britain and yet the establishment knows that they will be returning to situations of torture and violence.

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<sup>3</sup> The case study is included in the Conference Report for 2001 available from the Community Work Unit.

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- Safety of workers: workers may be harassed and labelled by colleagues and members of the community for taking action. It is our job to challenge racism but many feel isolated and fear losing jobs. A black perspective is sometimes a lonely perspective! Whilst we cannot change what people think, we can change the way they behave, especially if they are breaking the law, not operating in an anti-oppressive way, which is part of their job.
- Community organisations can be seen as breaking up families.
- Be creative in order to reach out to women who may not be able to read, or cannot get out of the house except to doctors, clinics, school
- Data collection: ensure that black peoples' experiences are recognised.

### Implications of the “One Year Rule”

- When someone marries abroad, s/he sponsors the individual to come here and has one year to prove that the marriage is working. If not, the individual may be deported and has no access to state assistance.
- Many women have difficulty returning to their original country as a divorcee.
- If an individual has experienced violence in the marriage, she can seek status to remain here in her own right. A solicitor is required to make the case. It can take five years to fight the case during which time she is not entitled to any benefits. She is allowed to get work but this is often difficult with language barriers and childcare responsibilities.
- If the marriage works, the husband may get a stamp on his passport meaning he can stay. Sometimes domestic violence begins after the “one year rule”, because the men know they cannot be deported.
- Sometimes if the husband has sponsored the wife, he stalls in getting her passport stamped in order to maintain control over her, or to prevent her from reporting violence.

### What are Forced Marriages?

Shabnam, one of the workshop facilitators, has been involved in the development of guidelines for police officers working with cases of forced marriage or with people who feel they are being set up to go abroad to marry. These guidelines were distributed and explained to highlight good practice and demonstrate a clear recognition of the links between forced marriage and domestic violence. In doing so, it sends a message to take this issue seriously “Dealing With Cases of Forced Marriage; Guidelines for Police” published by the Association of Chief Police Officers, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Home Office clearly set out the difference between arranged and forced marriages:

*In arranged marriages the families of both spouses take a leading role in arranging the marriage but the choice whether to accept the arrangement remains with individuals. In forced marriage at least one party does not consent to the marriage and some element of duress is involved. Forced marriage is primarily an issue of violence against women. Most cases involve young women and girls aged between 13 and 30 years old, although, there is evidence to suggest that as many as 15 per cent of victims are male. (Stobart, 2002)*

The guidelines go onto to show the incidence of forced marriage:

*Currently, some two hundred cases of forced marriage are reported to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office each year. Many others go unreported....the majority of cases of forced marriage encountered in the U.K involve South Asian families. However, despite appearances, this is not solely an “Asian” problem...there are also cases involving families from East Asia, the Middle*

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*East, Europe and Africa... the issue of forced marriage should not be used to stigmatise any community*

A video, "Narina's Story", highlights the plight of a young Pakistani woman. Narina was worried about marriage from the age of eleven and began to protest. She experienced verbal abuse from her father and became suicidal and self harmed. Her story is one of courage and escape from Pakistan with the help of the British Consulate. (Although they will fund your flight back home, you must guarantee that you will pay this back!)

There is little provision for young people to get help. In Oldham, workers have produced new leaflets about forced marriage, which are written in an accessible way for young people, and offers them support and resources. People under sixteen are dependent on the Social Services to take responsibility for them, but forced marriage does not fit easily into our idea of 'Child Protection'. Nevertheless, it involves elements of child abuse. In some instances, gay and lesbian young people are often taken abroad with the idea that an arranged marriage "will sort them out".

*The needs of victims of forced marriage will vary widely. They may need help avoiding a threatened forced marriage. They may need help dealing with the consequences of a forced marriage that has already taken place. Whatever an individual's circumstances, there are basic needs that should always be considered, including:*

- *personal safety*
- *confidentiality*
- *accurate information about rights and choices*

*(Stobart, 2002. p. 3)*

The guidelines, drawn up mainly for police officers and being taken on board for discussion and policy-making in other professions, set out some 'First Steps' if the victim is present and forced marriage has been suggested. These steps are outlined below to provide guidance and as an example of good practice:

- *Recognise and respect the victim's wishes*
- *See the individual immediately in a secure and private place*
- *See the individual on their own – even if they attend with others*
- *Contact, as soon as possible, a trained, specialist (person) who has responsibility for such matters*
- *If under 18 years of old, refer to Child Protection Officer*
- *Reassure the victim of ... confidentiality*
- *Establish a way of contacting them discreetly in the future*
- *Obtain full details to create a report to pass onto trained or specialist (personnel).*

*(Stobart 2002. p. 4)*

## A Black Perspective on Work on Domestic Violence

The workshops identified the following principles for work on domestic violence and forced marriages:

- Understanding of cultures and religion
- Developing best practice and sharing
- Challenging stereotypes
- Educating from a black perspective about domestic violence
- Having a black perspective in data collection
- Accepting and being accepted
- Taking risks but being mindful that it is a risk
- Having a global responsibility – building on this

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- Respecting the individual
- Considering confidentiality and trust issues
- Supporting from a black perspective through understanding, awareness and empathy
- Not just adding on the involvement of black people, but from the beginning through action planning and timescales on any work, ensuring full participation
- Commitment

## Sources for Work on Domestic Violence

Barron, et al (1992) Evidence to the Home Affairs Select Committee Enquiry into Domestic Violence, WAFE, Bristol

published by the Association of Chief Police Officers, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Home Office. Copies are available from: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Room G/55, Old Admiralty Building, London SW1A 2PA, Tel: 02070080230

Women's Aid Federation of England (1998) "Domestic Violence: Research Findings and Current Policy and Practice", A Women's Aid Briefing Paper, Bristol

Copies of the 'Narina's Story' video: clu@fco.gov.uk, Tel: 0207 6904446  
faction@factionfilms.co.uk.

## 6. Sexual Health Education with Young Black People Workshop

*Facilitated by Paul Mattis, Black Health Agency, Manchester*

The aim of the workshops was:

- to explore a number of key issues for practitioners working with young people from African/Caribbean and Asian communities on sexual health issues.

The objectives were to identify these through putting the following questions to the two workshops:

- What is happening in your area in relation to sexual health education and young black people?
- What are the barriers for the development of appropriate services?
- How do we take forward good practice in our work?

## Existing practice and issues arising

The workshops started with participants looking at examples of Sexual Health Education and young black people in their areas of work. Respondents were clear that a majority of the young people they work with appear to be sexually active and need to be taking responsibility for their actions. Some of the issues that arose from this sharing of experience were:

1. *The practice of Sexual Health Education with young black people is carried out with different approaches in different settings. Many projects were not designed to address sexual health issues, but this is where a lot of sexual health education went on. The good practice therefore relies on workers in contact with young people to be trained on the issues, ready to respond to need when it arises and having resources (such as time for informal chats, leaflets, posters, condoms) available. Sexual health education took place for example:*
  - During the provision of other services, e.g. counselling, drop-ins. If the materials are there relevant education can take place naturally. For example, one young woman came in to the office for something else, but there was a demonstrator for condoms and she asked to try it out.
  - Through targeted work with specific age, gender or interest groups, which may not have Sexual Health Education as their primary purpose

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- In work with a general health education brief.
  - In multi-agency projects (e.g. with Probation, the Brook Advisory Service, schools) for joint provision of advice, support and clinical services.
  - Often within generic youth work, for example, issue-based sessions on relationships discuss whether you have to love someone to have sex? Is it better if you love someone? The conversation includes ambitions, hopes and self-esteem to enable the members to make choices. The members will be able to say what they want and who they are which will help them in their sexual relationships. All of this is a holistic approach to sex education but it is not always labelled as such.
  - At drop-ins, young women can come in and ask questions and get condoms. They will play with the condoms (blow them up etc) and we are happy for them to do that.
  - In detached work: we take sex packs out on detached work. We always say “there is no such thing as a free condom.” They always get the educational information as well.
2. *Sexual Health Education with young black people needs to be targeted for black people to be effective. Young black people are not accessing “mainstream” services. White young people use Brook and mainstream health provision, but black young people tend to come only when the project specifically targets them.*
- The take-up of provision needs to be examined to establish effectiveness. An example was provided of funding being withdrawn from a clinic because it was “under-used”. However, 75% of the users were black so that the provision was clearly addressing a need in these communities.
  - Black people often feel (and/or recognise) that the services are not for them. A service “for all” only attracts some individuals. Unless there is a stated black provision, black people don’t use the service. (This seemed to be more true in areas where the black and minority ethnic populations were smaller in proportion to the white population.) Black people often experience racism in other services. If we provide black “spaces”, black people don’t have to describe themselves, such as why their food is different and certain things can be left at the door.
  - Given the opportunity to develop relationships in a targeted group enables a whole host of issues to come out. Targeted work is anti-oppressive. We have to be proactive to address needs. A few young people with similar experiences in a small group can then go out and talk to others in a peer education model.
  - Some respondents felt that we need specifically targeted work, broken down into different types of groups, e.g. black/white, male/female, lesbian/gay,/bi-sexual, disabled young people. Some young people need a supportive environment before coming out with feelings.
3. *Sexual Health Education needs to include work with parents, which is important, but separate work. Community and youth workers need to work with parents to develop mutual relationships of trust and understanding.*
- We need a holistic approach with parents and communities, especially when funding does not allow particular types of work or when the subject is taboo. Some parents object to the young people getting condoms.
  - Sometimes we can work with parents via the young people – by empowering them to raise issues with their parents.
  - Young people become parents themselves. We are educating future parents.
  - We create a platform for discussion and the knowledge grows and spreads. You find a pocket of people to develop a relationship. You can slowly build relations and issues about sex and relationships will gradually emerge. It is not immediate.
  - We invite parents to events to build trust so that they know what we are about. When people have more understanding they will have more trust.

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- Before, our (African) community wouldn't talk about sex as it was sacred. Now we have a shared basis for discussions. Before developing the group, knowledge was not expressed and it was very uncomfortable talking in sessions.
- Parents need education on disabled young people's needs. Some parents want to attend the disabled young people's groups, speak out for the young people and are often over-protective and assume that young adults do not have sex. A lot of the time, the young people do not want the parents involved. Colleagues say that parents don't want to know or shouldn't know.
- Some parents think young people should get sex education at school and do not provide their children with any sex education. However, schools are not tackling the issues.

### Barriers to Implementing Appropriate Services for Black Young People

Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The targets imposed by funders can be barriers if they don't address black people's needs. Funding doesn't always match needs. Have to work to other organisations' agendas.</li> <li>• Lack of funding for black organisations.</li> <li>• The "hard-to-reach" label perpetuates stereotypes. We need to outreach and go where people are, but it is not difficult to make contact.</li> <li>• There appears to be collusion between funders and services – no one seems to be checking what they are doing? They don't seem to be providing a service for black people.</li> <li>• Time spent on funding applications</li> <li>• Services going into Connexions where black people are not represented</li> <li>• Funders don't want to fund LEA projects – but neither do the LEA's.</li> </ul>
Parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Because of worries about parents' responses, we don't always present work as sexual health, we hide what we are doing.</li> <li>• Lack of trust of workers (maybe there's a reason!)</li> <li>• The empowerment of young people is not always accepted.</li> <li>• Young people's reports of activities are not always accurate.</li> <li>• Do we ask permission of parents?</li> <li>• Parents have other priorities, e.g. GCSE's.</li> <li>• Conflict of needs</li> <li>• Sometimes parental approval depends on how Sexual Health Education is presented.</li> </ul>
Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inappropriate facilities</li> <li>• Outdated resources. The language is not encouraging.</li> <li>• Lack of targeted provision</li> </ul>
Young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They don't want to always talk about sex. They think they already know it all.</li> <li>• The young men don't want to admit their lack of knowledge.</li> <li>• Peer respect can be an issue in groups.</li> </ul>
Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Because people's culture is their support base, to break away from your own culture into white institutions is isolating and difficult. To go against your culture is difficult.</li> <li>• A lack of support can lead to young people "going off the rails." Two young gay friends put themselves in dangerous situations because of lack of support from their community.</li> <li>• The "up front" sexual attitudes of some young men can put others off.</li> </ul>
Ignorance of cultures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The cultural complexities in Asian heritage families are not always appreciated. There are different groupings and more than one way of</li> </ul>

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	<p>working.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All communities have an understanding of sexual health. People are not ignorant; they may have different starting points. Do some communities need more support? Why don't we hand over funding to them to develop their own education?</li> <li>• Are there any communities who don't want their young people to be well? It is a political issue: who defines the "problem" and the "knowledge" and the "solution".</li> <li>• One person was killed as a result of a young woman's involvement in a drama project after she was sent to Pakistan because of issues raised in a group.</li> </ul>
Politics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A lack of trust on both sides.</li> <li>• Misunderstanding of equal opportunities. Not understanding that communities needs vary – and services need to address specific and particular needs in order to be equal.</li> </ul>
Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessing young black people can be difficult in some areas, e.g. in areas where black people are in smaller population groups. In larger more diverse areas, multi-make-up groups are common.</li> <li>• In some areas, there is a lack of experience and knowledge. We need to learn from others. We need to set up training about work with particular groups.</li> <li>• In some areas, black people are not always identified or recognised.</li> <li>• Is it "hard to reach" or "we don't know"?</li> <li>• Over-demand from service providers – asking us for access to black young people.</li> <li>• Disabled young people often not able to access services without parental approval.</li> </ul>
Lack of trained staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workers are not aware of a black perspective and have no understanding of black communities.</li> <li>• Organisations control and promote sexual health from just one perspective without enough understanding of communities and no awareness of the diversity of views.</li> <li>• There is an assumption that "professionals" know what they are doing.</li> <li>• Lack of appropriate facilitators</li> <li>• Some workers lack confidence in working on these issues.</li> <li>• Age gaps</li> <li>• Lack of support from other workers.</li> <li>• Lack of other black and ethnic minority workers</li> </ul>
Conclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resources are needed to sustain and assert what communities themselves believe to be good sexual health education</li> </ul>

### Taking Forward a Black Perspective in Sexual Health Education

1. *We need to promote Sexual Health Education at various levels:*

- Peer education where young people are involved in the educational process
- Education for parents
- Education for self
- Education for the organisations/services
- Education for funders.

2. *We need to have a varied approach to work on Sexual Health Education and to:*

- Challenge workers about their attitudes, especially negative attitudes to black people.
- Be open to learning and to being challenged.



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- Spend time with staff and programme training into the agenda. Don't assume that other staff know about community and youth work, sexual health or a black perspective.
- Distribute condoms and issue-based training at particular times to reach different groups.
- Carry out targeted work with young men using male workers. A lot of sexual health work is around women and pregnancy; the men also need educating.
- Ensure that male workers provide a positive role model for men to talk about emotions. Male workers need training together and need to talk about these issues.
- Split the groups male/female and see what happens! If men and women are together, then the dynamics are different.
- Have support groups for staff. If isolated, have regular meetings to discuss good practice and problems arising. Someone with the same experience can offer support.
- Include Sexual health education in everyday community and youth work. Sometimes we make work specialist when it isn't. Some staff want to engage with young people without a specialty. The quality is important, not the specific content.

### 3. *We need to allocate resources to black communities.*

Appropriate resources are key to good practice. It was suggested that we should follow the model developed for care of adults and elderly in black communities where funding is dedicated to communities so they provide their own services. Hand over the resources for alternative provision to black communities to carry out their own education on sexual health issues.

- We need continuity of resources, not one-off projects. We need sustainability not short-term funding. With proper funding, black organisations could develop consultancies and training for institutions to enable education at various levels.
- Do professionals challenge communities' ways of protecting themselves? On whose authority? Who decides what is taboo? Who defines the "problem" or good practice?
- We need promotion of models of good practice with consultancies. The problem is that funding depends on who you are and how you apply. Who chooses the criteria, which are constantly changing?

### 4. *Black and white workers need to understand the issues.*

- The identity of a worker impacts on the issues discussed as colour can affect relationships and it is sometimes easier to share with others that share your own experiences. However, young people (and others) can see beyond colour if a worker is "down" with the issues; if white people are dealing with the real issues, black people can relate to them.
- A black young person may initially see a black worker as more credible than a white worker. For example, a particular white worker co-facilitated with a black worker and was a driving force in facilitating the group. However, when the white worker went out of the room, the young people immediately discussed their experience of racist language with the other black worker.
- White workers have a key role to play in ensuring resources are allocated to black people, in promoting a black perspective and in challenging other white workers.

## Key Principles of a Black Perspective on Sexual Health Education

1. Respecting people's rights, e.g. rights to prayer. Respecting and celebrating differences.
2. We need to develop awareness of a black perspective, e.g. cultures and history to develop a way forward for the re-education of workers.
3. Treat all people with dignity and respect
4. We have choices; there isn't just one road; work against stereotypes. A black perspective has many avenues.

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5. Consultation and peer education – not deciding what is relevant to others.
6. Resourcing communities for self-education and development of services.
7. Look at history and what's happened can change the present. The future will be brighter!

## Sources for Sexual Health Education

Paul Mattis works for the Peer Education Project based in the Black Health Agency in Manchester. The project works with 11-25 year old Black African Caribbean people in inner-city areas within Greater Manchester to raise awareness of sexual health and reduce high-risk behaviour. Contact details: Peer Education Project, Kath Locke Centre, 123 Moss Lane East, Hulme, Manchester M15 5DD, Telephone: 0161 455 1502, [www.blackhealthagency.org.uk](http://www.blackhealthagency.org.uk), email: [peered@blackhealthagency.org.uk](mailto:peered@blackhealthagency.org.uk)

## 7. A Black Perspective in the Connexions Service Workshop

*Facilitated by Pravin Patel and Kaleem Anwar*

The workshop's main statement suggested that to engage holistically with black and white young people and their communities, services need to be developed and provided by workers and managers who can be anticipatory in how they work. The workshop examined the relevance of a black perspective for all working with or within the Connexions Service.

The session started with a "getting to know" exercise where each participant was asked to define his or her favourite place. Placing the topic within a particular context followed this with the claim that "if you go to the Connexions website, it is evident from the twenty-seven page document about Personal Advisor Training that personal and professional interest drives the agenda"<sup>4</sup>. The claim was that other than three bullet points to indicate that work with parents and carers should take place, the document does not provide any further guidance as to how this should take place. This was then used as the basis for some of the group work and discussions that took place.

Some of the statements included in a "Summary of Responses to the Consultation on the Guidance on Professional Practice for Personal Advisors" highlight areas in which community and youth workers can be involved in Connexions:

*"National guidelines on when to refer young people and the professional limitations on a Personal Advisor would be useful. Pilot projects indicate the range and responsibility of Personal Advisors plus their professional experience varies greatly. There is a need for minimum definition and standards." [Page 4]*

*"Confidentiality between different agencies working with and in a Connexions Partnership, e.g. Youth Service, Youth Offending Team, Social Service, needs to be addressed. Problems occur when relevant information on clients is not shared between the different agencies and sometimes it is not shared between Personal Advisers within the same partnership. More guidelines and/or protocols are needed on this. There are also instances where agencies have information/records about clients not within the knowledge of the client. How can this be dealt with?" [Page 7]*

Comments from UNISON members include the following:

*"Experience of staff working with "hard to help" client groups with multiple barriers tells us that there is an issue around 'burning out' even in pre-Connexions services*

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<sup>4</sup> Introduction to Connexions: A Guide for the Diploma Personal Advisers.

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*where the Careers Service has become more focused on this client group. Given the nature of the work, the Personal Advisor needs the opportunity to work with colleagues to discuss cases in a confidential setting. The aim of this should be to provide the Personal Advisor with the opportunity to discuss strategies that could be tried as well as to discuss their own feelings about working with the client (i.e. counselling models of supervision as support rather than the manager model of supervision which can be counter-productive.)* [Page 15]

Another key question posed concerned the issue of a black perspective within the Connexions Service where it was stated that unless there is a black perspective within Connexions, the consequences may be very frightening. This was based on the correlation between underachieving by some minority ethnic groups within the education structure and the notion that the same services that have failed so many could not be relied on and trusted to provide meaningful changes without the involvement of the communities that were excluded from any form of consultation. This particular point also became one of the central points of discussion before the group work started.

The first task of the workshop consisted of four groups discussing the following question: *Based on your knowledge please list the target groups identified by the Connexions Service within your area.* The feedback was based on the areas that were represented within the groups and their replies to the question included:

Target groups identified by the Connexions Services

- Blackburn Excluded Pupils and Students and non-achievers / attainers.
- Warrington Multi-Agency working, Black and Minority Ethnic young people, Youth Offending Team, The Voluntary Sector, The Youth Service and the Education Welfare Service.
- Tameside All Young People, Black Young People and Disabled Young People
- Manchester Young Women, twenty five percent of the “hard to reach” Young People
- Trafford: Connexions Targets Young People age 13- 19 (25 years) for Young People at risks of Exclusion, Offending and Homelessness.
- Tees Valley Connexions: Provides a framework that is “Universal” and caters for all young people between the age of (13-19) and (19-25) for certain groups such as those with disabilities, Black and Minority Ethnic groups, asylum refugees.

One of the groups that consisted of participants from Blackburn, Manchester and Trafford stated that the priority target groups were: Teenage Parents, Special Needs Groups, Unemployed Young People, Drug/Alcohol Users, Travellers, Young Asian Women, Offenders and those that are at risk of re-offending, Truants, Lesbian and Gay Young People and Young Under-Achievers such as some white young people. The phrase “no effect; no Dis-Connexion” was also used by some of the participants within this group who stated that they knew very little or nothing about the Connexions Service.

The second task of the workshop consisted of the following question: *Based on your knowledge, can you give some examples of where the Connexions Service has made a difference to black communities, not just a young person?* Some of the answers included: “Lack of knowledge” and “Don’t know”. Some of the issues raised included the views that there was exclusion due to a lack of understanding of the Service by the black communities and that there was a lack of any clear strategy for engagement and a lack of any diversity training.

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The third task consisted of the following question: *If you had control over your local management committee responsible for the Connexions Service, how would you tackle the growing number of young people from Black Communities deemed to be 'failures'?* The feedback from the groups included:

- Look at the Services to see how they have shaped the lives of some young people.
- Ask the young people about their experiences and how they could be different.
- Try to influence the mainstream Education Service, including the governing bodies.
- Empower parents and carers to challenge the quality of service offered.
- There is a need to develop specific projects that target particular groups.
- Challenge what is deemed as failure within the Black and Minority Ethnic sector.
- Challenge White assumptions and Black acceptance.
- Look beyond young people and address the issues affecting the whole communities.
- Question the Crime And Disorder Strategy and its imposition and impact on the Connexions Service.
- Re-write the Connexions Service document to make it more "user friendly".
- The agencies should be looking at themselves and how they are failing some young people.
- Connexions is part of structure based on social control that should be disbanded with an investigation on the organizational culture that remains the same.

The session ended with the facilitators giving some **Key points to guide the Connexions Service within the framework of a Black Perspective:**

- The majority of young people from black communities face social and institutional barriers to learning and thus are at risk of being pushed to the margins of society.
- To keep young people and black communities in mainstream education and training and to prevent them from moving to the margins, it is essential to provide a service that is equipped with the right knowledge and skills, including staff who are bilingual and are racially, religiously and culturally sensitive of a person's individual and collective needs.
- To achieve the above, the Connexions Service needs to take into account the existing social and institutional structures, which are deemed as inherently racist.
- The participation of young people and adults from black communities at all levels of the decision-making process has to be an essential element of providing a service that is universal and is based upon equality of opportunity.

The workshop ended with some comments about the Connexions Service as a whole. It was stated that as a service, it's the greatest change that has taken place in relation to providing a structure to what is available to young people from a variety of organizations and it is very important that all interested parties are involved in its development in the coming years.

**Principles of a black perspective in the Connexions Service:**

- The Connexions Service is not as widely understood as it needs to be.
- People with power and control in the Connexions Service won't change it.
- We need to equip young people to have command and control of the Service.

**Sources on Service:**

Pravin Consultancy, PO Box 5098, Leicester, LE4 7XW\_

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## 8. A Black Perspective on Educational Issues Workshop

*Facilitated by Addy Lazz-Onyenobi and Stella Osammor*

The Development Education movement, which “aims to raise awareness and understanding of how global issues affect the everyday lives of individuals, communities and societies and how all of us can and do influence the global”<sup>5</sup> has been gathering momentum for about 25 years. Yet at the beginning of the last century, there were Black and Ethnic Minority people in Britain practising Development Education whether it was talking about their experiences as slaves or as political ambassadors for their countries. There is a history of education that belongs to Black and Ethnic Minority people and this needs to be recognised within the wider educational context, particularly in the community.

In the last few years, we have seen major shifts in a crucial area of education. One of the key thrusts of recent legislation has been to increase the power and influence of parents in education. The delicate balance between home and school has been altered so much that the home-school relationships are no longer about the obvious, for example, good communications, reports, parent's evenings etc. According to Bastiani (1987) parental involvement has been brought into the arena of politics, policy and action.

There are several important strands in a black perspective on education, including young people in education, parents and their role, the wider community of schools and colleges and the national curricula. The primary focus of the workshop was to examine the nature of the contribution that black parents can make to their children's education through involvement in school governing bodies, particularly as many African and Asian parents see education as an avenue of escape from a life of poverty or crime. Other over-arching themes discussed were the importance of *informal* as well as formal education, adult education as well as children's, the impact of racism on children and parents and of sexism and poverty. Education is increasingly seen by members of the community as the critical catalyst to unlock the great resource and asset that black communities represent for multi-cultural conurbations such as Manchester.

We believe that education needs to motivate and challenge black children to give their best using the glorious history of the African and her erstwhile heroes. We have seen how such education has greatly motivated young black people in some schools in America as well as a few secondary schools here in Britain. From a black perspective there should be **progressive** and **child-centred education** which will give children a more connected and 'whole' experience of learning that stresses the need to enhance self-esteem, promote equality and value children's own experiences and lives.

We have seen, through black people's involvement in the voluntary sector in Manchester, a serious under-representation of black people at all levels: as members of school governing bodies, members of management committees, staff and volunteers. Parents want our organisations to be advocates for their children in schools *before* the social services are called in and *before* our children are excluded. If, in the future, black parents are seen to be part of the decision-making apparatus of the city, they will be in a position to influence their communities positively and work towards improving the fabric of black communities as well as the wider community.

The **1986 Education Act** was intended to open enrolment into schools, make 'opting out' a possibility and increase the power of governing bodies through local financial management. The Act was also supposed to increase the parental role in education by:

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<sup>5</sup> [www.dea.org.uk](http://www.dea.org.uk)

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- increasing the number of parents on governing bodies
- giving parents a greater say in curriculum, and
- making annual report to parents – obligatory.

Community workers and schools can develop “Parents Power” through a pro-active approach. We should enable all parents to participate in the running of schools by encouraging those parents that feel marginalised to be involved. This means that parents and children should be listened to. Parents should be given the opportunity to develop their skills and confidence to be able to work in partnership with those that teach their children. Unfortunately, in our view, the legislation has not improved or increased the participation of black parents in schools.

At the outset of the workshop, not everyone in the group accepted that the term “black” embraced everyone who was not a part of the dominant white group governing British (and global) society. Some Asian group members felt that the term had been appropriated by African and African Caribbean groups and often neglected Asian perspectives. Nevertheless, this did not detract from the wealth, vigour and friendly nature of the discussion.

The workshop participants looked at the curricula, from a black perspective, and agreed that it should be progressive and child centred, promote self-esteem and equality and give value to the life experience of those children. Black and white children should learn about history from a black perspective. The school curriculum is often Euro-centric, white and Christian. Schools need to include religious and cultural diversity in their staffing, curriculum and extra curricula activities. We questioned the training of teachers and other education workers. Where is the black perspective in their training?

The motivational skills of some teachers were also questioned. The attitude was often “If he doesn’t want to learn, then just leave him.” Some teachers were not doing enough to motivate alienated children who may not be getting support at home. This, together with the ease at which black children are stereotyped, labelled and excluded from schools, was seen as the result of blatant discrimination.

Parent Power should enable all parents to participate in the running of schools and should be pro active in involving those parents who feel alienated. Parents need to be listened to and children have rights. Parents are sometimes blamed and pathologised instead of enabled to be confident, robust and encouraged to work alongside their children. It is much easier to blame parents than change the education system. The Education Acts could give parents the opportunity to develop skills and the confidence to work in partnership with teachers.

## Issues Affecting Parental Involvement

In the workshop groups we discussed issues which parents face. Participants shared both personal and professional experiences. A Chinese member of the group had worked long hours in a kitchen and felt her child had not gone to university because she was ill informed about the structure of the education system. Additionally she had no time to attend parents’ evenings. Schools are often not pro-active in involving parents, particularly those who may be living in poverty or who have had a negative experience of education and may not have the confidence to participate.

*“My child was good at maths but drifted without support. He gained a grade ‘C’ in his interim paper. I was told later that if he had completed the higher*

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*paper, he would have passed this, but I didn't know the system. Information is power."*

*"My parents did not have the language to negotiate for me in the education system, so this really disadvantaged me."*

Gender issues were also raised. In some cultures, the mother's role is still in the kitchen. Black and Ethnic Minority mothers may have little confidence, language and education and no one to encourage them. The important role of mothers was highlighted through the phrase: *"the hand that rocks the cradle, rules the world"*. Mothers, as main carers, spend more time with their children and it is important that we give attention to educating and politicising mothers.

Participants stated that parents need to value themselves before they will see value in educating children. *"I always thought I had no part to play in his education, that the school knew what they were doing, not me. He became labelled. It was not until my second child that I reassessed myself and educated myself, built my confidence and challenged the teachers. My second child is confident, my first has emotional baggage"*.

Participants saw the need for adult education as paramount. How can parents support children when they have often experienced that discrimination themselves? While this experience means black parents can offer strategies for children to deal with racism, racism can leave parents demoralised and low in self-esteem. Schools could open their doors to parents and involve them in learning with their children and increasing their skills e.g. in I.T. It was acknowledged that many parents living in poverty were "too busy keeping their lives together and scraping by, using drugs, having mental health problems, etc. to participate in any educational pursuit". It is our job to inform and empower parents and children and raise confidence to challenge the education system.

Some Asian group members commented upon the high expectations of some Asian parents and how this sometimes placed undue pressure on children *"to be a doctor or you'll end up in a restaurant like me"*. Yet Asian young people often had different ideas and were not so bothered about education. There were also pressures of religion and culture, which made life difficult in white Christian-dominated schools. These pressures needed acknowledgement. Some children collapse under all this pressure. Muslim young women were often under particular family pressure and many underachieve educationally because of this some parents do not want their daughters to 'go astray' and their behaviour is strictly monitored. Many young Asian women have to fight to stay on at school. As parents and workers, we must consider the pressures on our children and learn not to compare their achievements with others. We need to treat them as individuals.

The issue of children being used as interpreters at parents' evenings was seen as unacceptable. Although generally, it was seen as essential not to talk 'behind children's backs', all parties need to be involved in discussions about a child's educational progress. It was pointed out that whilst teachers may need to consult with parents, often our job was to advocate for the child or young person who might be in conflict with both teacher and parent. As community and youth workers, we need to ensure that children and young people are listened to and have a voice in their education, what it should be, where it should be, etc.

### The Need for a Pro-active Role with Parents

The discussion moved into the arena of community work and positive action. Schools need to acknowledge that they can be intimidating institutions and establish informal parents'

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groups to provide informal alternatives to parent's evenings. Parents need to join together and share experiences and knowledge in order to act as a collective force to challenge or guide schools. There should be effective communication between parents and teachers so neither party makes assumptions about what the other is doing.

We discussed that parents now had a choice of schools and could go to a panel to gain entrance to a school, which may not be in their geographical area. Nevertheless, the parent needs to *write* to the panel and many cannot write in English. The language used to communicate with parents should be clear, without educational jargon.

Refugees and asylum seekers were seen as facing particular barriers to participation in education. We need more flexibility in the education structures. When children are moved around from home to home, school to school, how can they focus on school with all of the trauma they have to contend with? Schools could have a regular 'focus day' where parents meet and share some ideas, games and techniques for home education. Participants also felt that there could be more government funded after-school clubs including other beneficial activities such as food co-ops, book and toy libraries, etc. The importance of schools widening their language base and employing teachers who reflect local communities was discussed in detail. Participants also pointed out that mosques have often led the way in empowering parents. Religious leaders and community workers will inform schools about the needs of Islamic children and will also inform parents about their responsibilities.

### What is a Black Perspective in Education?

The workshop looked at whether there is a different black perspective for each black community or whether the *experience of racism* join all black communities together with a common goal? A black perspective should be about challenging racism rather than 'multi-culturalism', a non-political term. Rightly or wrongly, we use the word 'black' to join us together in the fight against racism. "Black" should encompass diverse viewpoints whilst acknowledging the oppression that groups other than the white dominant groups experience. However, at least one member of the group felt that as an Asian woman the term excluded her.

In relation to education, a black perspective should recognise and celebrate diversity and recognise that everyone has different educational needs. "Equal" does not have to mean "the same". A black perspective isn't about treating everyone the same, nor equal, it's about having an anti-oppressive approach; in other words, pro-actively encouraging people to know about and be proud of their cultural background. When people have been discriminated against throughout history, their support and education needs are different to those belonging to dominant groups. In order to be "treated equally", the inequalities need to be addressed.

Too often education is based on a white perspective and we are all expected to accept this passively as the only, or most important perspective. A black perspective should be everyone's perspective as a black perspective recognises the many cultures in schools. You do not have to be black to have a black perspective as a political approach. We need to be open-minded, welcome diversity, treat people appropriately and respect different needs.

Black and Minority Ethnic parents and children need the opportunity to be included and take part in the decision-making. Attention needs to be paid to different requirements to enable participation. For example, if this conference had been held on a Friday, some Muslims may not have come; it is on Saturday, which may exclude some Jewish people. More



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understanding of diverse religious and cultural needs within the education system will enable participation.

Having a black perspective is not just the responsibility of black communities; it is also the responsibility of us all.

## How Can We Address “Parent Power” with a Black Perspective?

- Support the development of parents groups, a collective response that educates and empowers black parents. These groups will raise confidence, politicise parents and enable them to challenge and participate in the education system.
- Informal work like ours is hugely important in challenging the formal system.
- Schools should go into different communities and employ/train people from these communities to do outreach work, engaging and informing parents and children.
- Some areas have established local representatives to visit homes, establish relationships with parents and encourage their involvement.
- We need an alternative to the punitive Educational Welfare Officer approach. We need to start the dialogue with more black parents and children.
- We need to become advocates for black and Asian Communities.
- We need to educate parents to have open minds and not to place undue pressure on their children.
- As the saying goes, “*Educate a man and you educate an individual. Educate a woman and you educate the world.*”
- Campaign for the educational curricula to include Black and Ethnic Minority history.

## Sources for Educational Issues

Allen, G. & Martin, I., eds, (1992) Education and Community: The Politics of Practice Cassell, London

Bastiani, J. (1987) Parents & Teachers, NFER-Nelson, Slough

Ohri, A. (1997) The World in Our Neighbourhood: Black and Ethnic Minority Communities and Development Education, Development Education Association

## 9. De-Constructing “Race” with Young People Workshop

*Facilitated by Dave Allport*

The workshop was based on the belief that to have a fuller understanding of issues regarding the racism(s) present in society, there must be an acknowledgement of and exploration of the construct of ‘race’. This historical socio-political-economic construct underpins and is the ‘bedrock’ of the racism(s) that we still experience today. With this in mind, the workshops explored the origins of the social construct that we call ‘race’ in terms of where it came from, when and some of the people who were involved.

The workshops discussed whether there are different types of racism, e.g. institutional, personal, cultural, structural, English, white, anti-Semitic, street, extreme right, demonological, plantocratic, pseudo-scientific, anti-gypsy/traveller, anti-asylum seeker / refugee, Islamophobia, internalised, media, inaction.

A “three stages of ‘race’ theory” was outlined<sup>6</sup>:

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<sup>6</sup> covered in depth in Fryer (1984) in the chapter entitled “The Rise of English Racism”.

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- Demonological: the “demonisation” of anything “black” in the very early usage of the English language, creating a foundations for some of current negativity which is still prevalent.
- “Plantocratic”: the myths crated about black people by the plantocracy (British plantation owners) in the Caribbean in order to “justify” their inhumane treatment of slaves.
- Pseudo-Scientific: the so called “scientific proof” that black people were inferior to Europeans designed to create an acceptance of the treatment of black people, e.g. brain size, laziness, sexual morality, physical differences, which still contribute to stereotypes.

The workshop explored some of the myths and untruths on which racist ideologies are based, such as the dehumanisation of Afrikan people and false categorisations of people. Some of the lies that were created centuries ago still have implications today. For example, the colonialist linking of black people and monkeys persists in the current trend of chanting “monkey noises” and throwing bananas from football terraces at black players.

Video and audio footage<sup>7</sup> provided evidence from leading geneticists and the Human Genome Programme which discredit the notion of ‘race’ and demonstrate that we all have shared ancestors who originated in Africa much closer in time than had been believed previously.

Examples of how the deconstruction of ‘race’ can be made accessible to young people and how ‘academic theories’ can be used in project work with young people in both formal and informal educational settings were provided. One example was the ‘REWIND’ Anti-racism Peer Education Project from Sandwell in the West Midlands, which used some of the above examples in work with young people. Sessions that challenge stereotypes, examine “identity”, question the “us and them” belief systems, all challenge and undermine racist ideologies. The idea is to discredit the idea of different races and point out the social construction of race, which results in racism.

The workshop promoted recognition for the fact that training needs to be provided in organisations and agencies as well as with a range of “professionals”. Sometimes there is an assumption that people in certain positions or professions are aware of racism, but this is often not the case.

Participants shared their experiences of being involved in work that challenges racism and prejudice. Positive examples were provided as well as some very negative experiences. Black staff are often expected to do “this kind of work” which adds extra pressure with a lack of empathy and support from other staff and management. Relying on black staff with other job descriptions prevents the development of long-term strategies and resources for positive work in this area.

## Key Principles of a Black Perspective on the Construction of “Race”

There was constructive debate in both workshops around what should be included in the key principles of a ‘black perspective’.

1. There was much dialogue (and general agreement) that bearing in mind what the workshop had shown in terms of people being categorised and labelled (divisively and falsely) that self-identification should be key to moving forward, as opposed to

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<sup>7</sup> E.g. “Race Myths”, BBC Radio Four (2000), “The Difference”, Channel 4 (2000)/

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*“ticking the boxes that have been created by the very system that is oppressive based on what we tick!”*

2. There were suggestions that a black perspective does not always have to be promoted by black people. In many organisations, it is left to the black members of staff to develop any work based on “black issues”, which unfairly adds pressure and workload on black staff. White members of staff are also prevented from developing their awareness and knowledge of these issues. Ironically, a lack of knowledge and need for more training are often the reasons given by white staff for not engaging with black issue-based and anti-racist work.
3. It was suggested that we needed to “unlearn” the flawed belief systems that have been created to construct and continue the fallacy of “race” and its endemic family of racism(s).
4. There was general agreement that education, both formal and informal, is crucial to the process of positive change. We need to be educating our children and young people in a much more inclusive way, recognising the histories, achievements and contributions of all peoples of the world as opposed to the often Euro-centric (and at times tokenistic) methods that we often employed currently.

The values and beliefs that influence and underpin the content of the workshops are supported by many theoretical perspectives and the epistemological standpoint of “constructionism”. Below are some quotes from recent publications:

*We must break free from all ideas of racial purity and national identity, first by confronting the bloodstained histories of colonialism, slavery, fascism and genocide, and then by looking forward to claim a shared future beyond the colour line, embracing true planetary humanism.* (Gilroy, 2000)

*If ‘Race Thinking’ can be dismantled, the practices of exclusion and subordination which result from such thinking can be more effectively challenged.* (Grosvenor, 1997)

*“Myths have settled and are not challenged. This means that little is done to alter traditional practices and thinking.”* (Alibhai-Brown, 2000)

*Ideas about “race” and nation are among the most powerful sources of human identity and division in the contemporary world. Indeed, both “race” and nation are so rooted in the way we think about the world that we tend to take the categories for granted. Yet it is precisely through their apparent ‘naturalness’ and immutability that racism and nationalism do their ideological work, often with dire consequences for human lives.* (Jackson and Penrose, 1993)

## Sources for the Social Construct of “Race”

Alibhai-Brown, Yasmin (2000) Who do we think we are?, Penguin

Fryer, Peter (1984) Staying Power, Pluto Press

Gilroy, Paul (2000) ‘Between Camps’, Penguin

Grosvenor, Ian (1997) ‘Assimilating Identities’, Lawrence and Wishart

Jackson & Penrose (1993) Constructions of Race, Place and Nation, UCL Press

Dave Allport works for REWIND, which carries out peer education work in schools, youth work and training for organisations and community groups. Telephone: 0121 500 1655.

## 10. Learning Points from the Conference

At the end of the day, the conference participants were asked to contribute any thoughts that arose from conversations held during the day. The observations about what we learned and what we need to continue to consider and discuss were made:

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- An analysis of racism, race and prejudice is necessary to develop a black perspective. We need to be clear about the differences between prejudice and racism. Everyone is prejudiced; not everyone has power. A black perspective is not about likes and dislikes, but understanding how racism operates in society.
- Clear direction about a black perspective can come from a white person who has something to tell us all (black and white) because a black perspective is political.
- A black perspective can be related to political and social contexts and may come from the “baggage” of different and sometimes personal experiences, e.g. of specific geographical areas, work with different age groups. These all inform and form our understanding of a black perspective. We are not going to get uniform common ground.
- Black people are not homogenous. “Black” is a political word which needs to be an inclusive umbrella term, e.g. African and Asian people have different experiences, but “black “ can unite us. Everyone has the right to self-determination and how we are represented. Although the word “black” in some situations has been demonised, we can claim it as a strong and proud umbrella term for all black people.
- Although we talk about a black perspective, we have been brought up with a Euro-centric way of thinking, via our education, society, daily contacts. We have to re-educate ourselves to develop a true black perspective.
- A lot of issues have been highlighted, but *accessing resources* is the key issue. For example, in the North East, we have information about drugs, but not about a black perspective and certainly not about a black perspective on work on drugs issues. We need resources and tools for work with colleagues and young people.
- Who defines the community? Who defines the needs? Who allocates the resources? Work with Black and “Ethnic Minority” groups is often marginalized. Agencies will fund work, but not consistently. We need to engage with communities so that they define the needs and the funding is allocated to the black communities to provide services.
- Unity is strength. We need to get together and get the “pie” and the “cake”!
- Some black communities are small in number and overlooked. We need a support mechanism for them. They don’t have a political platform and they are left on their own.
- Whilst we acknowledge the work by people in the University to effect change, over the last 30 years, black people have been dissected and examined. Despite that, we are not eating at the top table and eating the cake. We are still fighting over the bones. We are clear that we are not the problem. We would like to see massive conferences on race relations. White institutions are getting the funding, not the black people. The University needs to look at itself critically, and see itself as part of the problem. The same people are retaining the colonial tradition. We need to meet to discuss strategies for the way forward. We know racism exists. We need to make a way forward.
- Organisations are made up of individual people. Each and everyone needs to take responsibilities for making change.
- A black perspective is about inclusion of people so that we can share in the “pie”. Let’s get into positions of power and education to make changes.
- The opportunities need to be created for black people to make changes.
- We need networking of black organisations nationally to provide support.
- Today is the start of a process involving people from similar lines and interests. We need to exchange contacts and continue networking.

## 11. Evaluation of the Conference

Evaluation of the conference was carried out through forms distributed to conference participants. The workshop facilitators and conference organisers also met to discuss the conference to relay their own views and discussions with participants. The evaluation and feedback was generally very positive. Participants and facilitators had enjoyed the day and

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## A Black Perspective in Community and Youth Work

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found the discussions useful for reflection on and planning practice. Particular comment was made on the positive atmosphere, the range of participants and workshops as well as the relaxed and luxurious venue. Feedback indicated that an annual event was a good idea. Additional points on practical issues included:

- A larger number of attendees could have been accommodated easily. Some of the workshops had very small numbers.
- Although most participants enjoyed the food, some felt that the menu could have been more reflective of the group.
- The overall programme timing worked well – but some workshops did not take break or make time for introductions and evaluation.
- A warm-up session all together at the beginning would have been useful to facilitate participation in the workshop discussions.
- More details about the workshops should have been included in the conference packs.
- Some participants had not received the information prior to the day, as their organisations had not passed on the mailings. The booking slips need altering to include participants' addresses as well as the funders.
- Signs are required for the workshops and crèche facilities.
- The crèche workers need to come on time.
- Some requested a weekend or 24 hour event.
- Some found that some of the workshops could have been more focussed; others found them well planned and delivered. Sometimes the varying feedback came from the same workshops.

In relation to the content, a few participants were frustrated by a lack of a common definition of a black perspective. Others enjoyed the development of their thinking around the language and variety of ideas expressed. Some found particular workshops over-generalised, but the most consistent feedback addressed the thought-provoking nature of the discussions and the need to continue to revisit the issues on an on-going basis.

Participants clearly did not feel intimidated and felt they could share their views and speak out. On the whole, participants found the conference to be very stimulating and informative. Of particular mention were the sharing of ideas and thoughts about how to take the issues forward, the enthusiasm of participants and the wide range of knowledge and views expressed. Participants developed confidence in taking the work forward though sharing their aims and struggles.

### Next Steps for the Conference in 2003

We are planning a conference for next year on Saturday the 11th October 2003 with options for overnight accommodation prior to the day and an informal gathering over an evening meal at the end of the day. Information will be sent to all previous conference attendees when available. If you have any particular requests or requirements for the planning group, please give us a ring.

## A Black Perspective Conference next year: Saturday, 11 October 2003

With options for a Friday night stay and/or Saturday evening meal  
Limited reduced places for reduced fees for young people and members of voluntary organisations. Booking forms available now.

# A Black Perspective in Community and Youth Work

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## Appendix A: What the **COMMUNITY WORK UNIT** can offer



THE UNIVERSITY  
of MANCHESTER

- staff with over 20 years experience of a range of consultancies, supervision, monitoring and evaluation of projects and project staff, advice in relation to specific developments
- expertise in anti-oppressive issues and practice in community and youth work, staff development, adult education and supervision
- a network of contacts and information, a specialised library of resource materials, case studies, adult education and research methodology, equal opportunities training and practice
- over twelve years' experience of developing and running learning programmes and conferences for community and youth workers in the Northwest, UK and Europe
- currently active, experienced practitioners from diverse cultures and backgrounds: 12 Recognised Tutors, 15 Approved Assessors and over 70 Approved Supervisors
- customised practice-based courses developed in consultation with workers and employers with a Continuing Professional Development Transcript award
- support for students not traditionally represented in higher education (e.g. black, working class, with no previous experience of tertiary education), including drop-in sessions and workshops, detailed guidelines, individual support
- programmes accredited by the University of Manchester and endorsed by the National Youth Agency
- a nationally recognised qualification recognised by the JNC, the national committee of employers, trade unions and professional bodies which sets the standards for qualifications, pay and conditions in the field
- flexible and part-time progression routes with options to meet individual needs

Community Work Unit  
Centre for Continuing Education  
University of Manchester, Manchester M13 9PL  
0161 275 3292

# A Black Perspective in Community and Youth Work

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## Appendix B: Black History Month

### **Background to Black History Month**

Carter Goodwin Woodson was born in 1875 in New Canton, Virginia, USA. The son of a former slave, Carter graduated from a humble background to become a teacher of history, English, Spanish and French. In 1912 he received a PhD from Harvard and he has been credited with the title of “Father of Black History”.

Through his research and teaching Dr. Woodson sought to redress the balance of information and knowledge about black people’s glorious past and contributions to events and accomplishments in world history.

In 1926, Carter G. Woodson started black history week, where he promoted the contributions of black people to schools, colleges and community groups. Through his efforts Black History Month was established in 1976.

### **What is Black History Month?**

Today, Black History Month is dedicated to highlighting and celebrating the contributions and achievements of black people in the shaping of world history.

Black History month in the U.K. recognises the term “black” in a political context, which is to say it is an inclusive umbrella term.

Black History Month is celebrated annually, specifically during the month of October, although events and contributions are made throughout the year.

Let us celebrate the rich and beautiful tapestry of cultural diversity in the UK and in acknowledging the beauty, let us not forget those people who have made and continue to make significant positive contributions.

Daniel Nkrumah

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# A Black Perspective in Community and Youth Work

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## Appendix C: Useful Resources

- Adams, Bell & Griffin. (1997) Teaching For Diversity and Social Justice, Routledge
- Allen, G. & Martin, I., eds, (1992) Education and Community: The Politics of Practice, Cassell, London
- Alibhai-Brown, Yasmin (2000) Who do we think we are? Penguin
- Ansari, Kizar H. (1995) Managing Cultural Diversity at Work Kogan Page
- Bastiani, J. (1987) Parents & Teachers, Slough: NFER-Nelson
- Belenky, et. al (1986) Women's Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self Basic Books, New York
- Benioff, S. (1997) A Second Chance: Developing Mentoring and Education Projects CRE Publications
- Blackmore & Drake (1996) Understanding Equal Opportunities Policies Prentice Hall
- Braham, Rattansi & Skellington (1993) Racism and Anti-Racism Sage
- Carmichael, Stokely & Hamilton, Charles V. (1967) Black Power Vintage Books
- Chomsky, N. (2001) 9 – 11, Seven Stories
- Dadzie, Stella (2000) A Toolkit for Tackling Racism in Schools Trentham Books
- Derman-Sparks, L. & Brunson Phillips, C. (1978) Teaching / Learning Anti-Racism, Teachers College Press
- Donald, J. & Rattansi, A. (1992) 'Race', Culture & Difference, Sage Publications
- Fryer, P. (1984) Staying Power: A History of Black People in Britain, Pluto Press
- Gilroy, Paul (2000) Between Camps, Penguin
- Grovesnor, Ian (1997) Assimilating Identities, Lawrence and Wishart
- Gundara, J.S. (2000) Interculturalism, Education & Inclusion, Sage Publications
- hooks, bell (1995) Killing Rage: End Racism Henry Holts
- Hughes, Douglas (1970) From a Black Perspective Holt Rinehart
- Jackson & Penrose (1993) Constructions of Race, Place and Nation, UCL Press
- Joseph, J. et al (2002) Towards Global Democracy: An Exploraiton of Black Perspectives in Global Youth Work, Development Education Association
- MacLeod, Jay (1995) Ain't No Makin' It: Aspirations and Achievements, Westview Press
- Meachim, et al Focus for Change: Gender and Race Inequality & the Media, Beehive Press
- Molefi, Kete Asanta. (1998) The Afro-Centric Idea, Temple University Press
- Ohri, Ashok (1997) The World in Our Neighbourhood: Black and Ethnic Minority Communities and Development Education, DEA
- Saardar, Z. & Davies, M.W. (2002). Why Do People Hate America? London: Icon
- Stobart, Eleanor (2001) Dealing With Cases of Forced Marriage; Guidelines for Police, Association of Chief Police Officers, Home Office
- Verma, GK & Bagley, C. (1979) Race, Education and Identity, Macmillan
- Women's Aid Federation of England (1998) "Domestic Violence: Research Findings and Current Policy and Practice", A Women's Aid Briefing Paper, Bristol

## Relevant Webpages

[www.racearchive.org.uk](http://www.racearchive.org.uk), [www.infed.org.uk](http://www.infed.org.uk), [www.irr.org.uk](http://www.irr.org.uk), [www.dea.org.uk](http://www.dea.org.uk),  
[www.blackhealthagency.org.uk](http://www.blackhealthagency.org.uk)

## Other resources

"Narina's Story", a video, [clu@fco.gov.uk](mailto:clu@fco.gov.uk), Tel: 0207 6904446, [faction@factionfilms.co.uk](mailto:faction@factionfilms.co.uk).

REWIND: Peer Education with Young People 0121 500 1655

Black Health Agency, Manchester 0161 455 1502

Contact Sue Pollitt at the Community Work Unit, 0161 275 3292: for additional copies of this Conference Report and/or the report from the *2001 Community Work Unit Conference on a Black Perspective in Community and Youth Work*, which includes worksheets for use in training, to book spaces for the 2003 Conference or to propose a workshop for future conferences.



# A Black Perspective in Community and Youth Work

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## Appendix D: Evaluation / Feedback Form

*To help us plan future conferences, please let us know your views.*

1. What was the most positive aspect of the conference or the conference report?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What was the least useful aspect of the conference or the conference report?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. What do you think should be included in future conferences?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. Would you like to be involved in conference planning?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. Any other comments

*Thank you for your contribution.*

Name:	
Contact address:	
Contact telephone:	

*Please return to: Sue Pollitt, Community Work Unit, Centre for Continuing Education,  
University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9PL or fax: 0161 275 3300.*

Our reference: Course number FN284A02  
Conference Report 2002