People in Harmony

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NEWSLETTER

Issue 52, Spring 2010

PIH AGM/Annual Conference 2010

Mixed Race & The Arts

Date: Saturday 17th July 2010
Time: 11.00am-5.00pm
Venue: Ealing Friends Meeting House, 17 Woodville Road, Ealing, W5 2SE

Speakers include:

- Dr Kevin Searle, *"A Yellow-Ass Nigga'?: Hip Hop and the 'Mixed-Races' Experience"*
- Tara Munroe, *"Hidden Secrets of the Past: The Unveiling of the Casta Paintings"*
- Nicole Moore, *"The Journey So Far"*

Contact us at info@pih.org.uk for more information or to book a place!

Feature

Will mixed race be the largest minority group by 2020? Not according to reliable data and projection figures...

The Growth of the 'Mixed Race' Population

"Mixed-race people are the fastest growing ethnic minority group (defined according to the National Statistics classification) in the UK and are predicted to be the largest minority group by 2020" [Wikipedia]

"The 2001 census recorded mixed race for the first time showing the UK has the largest mixed race population within the EU. This is the fastest growing demographic group here, with half mixed race Britons aged 18 years of age... by 2020 mixed race group will be the largest ethnic minority in Britain - increasing by 50% in the next decade" [PR Conversations website]

"The mixed race group is the fastest growing ethnic minority group in the UK and is expected to become the largest by 2020... If government watchdog figures are right, mixed race Britons will overtake Indian people to become the UK's largest ethnic minority

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group within 25 years, reaching 1.24 million. Seventeen-year-old Seeder is from Manchester. She said: 'I actually expected mixed raced people to be the biggest ethnicity'". [BBC radio 1]

Statements of this kind are not atypical of the views expressed in the blogosphere, in quality daily newspapers, and on radio and TV. They are difficult for the public to verify as statistics of the current growth rate of the 'mixed' group and its projected future size are hard to locate. Once subjected to print and unchallenged, they tend to gain credence and take on a life of their own as demographic fact. Indeed, when presented with the true picture, one event organiser recently suggested retaining these erroneous statements as they would attract more 'mixed race' people to the event.

The most reliable data on the growth rate of the 'mixed' group are the Experimental Population Estimates by Ethnic Group prepared annually by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) for England. They are called 'experimental' as the methodology to compile them is still subject to review. The latest figures – for mid-2007 – were published on 5 February 2010, so we can now calculate the growth rate of the Census ethnicity categories over a six-year period (mid-2001 to mid-2007). The 'Mixed: White and Black Caribbean' category grew the slowest of the four 'mixed' categories: from 234,400 to 282,900, a 20.7% increase.

The 'Other mixed group' increased from 154,300 to 212,000 (37.4%) and 'Mixed: White and Asian' from 187,200 to 260,900 (39.4%). However, the 'Mixed: White and Black African' category grew fastest of all, from 78,300 to 114,300, a rise of 46.0%. Although the growth rates of these 'mixed' categories were significant, they were not the highest. The 'Black or Black British: African' category increased from 491,100 to 730,600 over these six years, a rate of 48.8%. Further, the 'Chinese' category grew by a phenomenal 76.3%, from 227,000 to 400,300.

Population projections to 2010 and 2020 are much more difficult to compile as they involve complex calculations of future birth and death rates, fertility rates, and net migration. In Britain civil registration data (births and deaths) are not ethnically coded in spite of a recent review of these procedures and the requirements of the Race Relations Amendment Act 2001.

The most reliable projections available, prepared by Professor Phil Rees of Leeds University for the UK, indicate a 40% growth rate in the 'mixed' group between 2001 and 2010, to reach almost one million, and 30% during 2010-2020 to achieve around 1.2 million, although still smaller than the pan-ethnic Asian (3.5 million) and black (1.6 million) groups.

Peter J Aspinall, Reader in Population Health, University of Kent

Feature

A Small Victory
by Sarah Rutherford Morrison

My ire was building.

'She is light-skinned, with Afro-Caribbean features – broad nose, full lips' (was I really saying this?) 'and brown, tightly-curled – but not Afro – hair. Got that?'

How on earth did I come to be describing my younger daughter over the phone to an online casting directory? She's only four, and despite being a 'retired model', has no intentions of signing up for the entertainment industry. She'd rather be a doctor. Or an ice cream lady.

It was all down to People in Harmony. The night before, this newsletter had been my bedtime reading and Reya El-Salahi's article had caught my eye. Reya had been unable to register with the Casting Call Pro website as they did not have a 'mixed race' (or even the contentious 'other') option in their 'ethnicity' section. Abashed that I, an actor with a profile on the site, had not noticed this, I got on the phone, convinced that I could sort it out there and then. I could not have been more wrong.

While I have only been the mother of mixed-race children for six years, I have been in a mixed relationship for thirteen, and would not be a member of People in Harmony if I were

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Dear Friends,

It's nearly time to meet up again at the annual general meeting and conference. It will be lovely to see as many old and new friends as can make it this. Come along for the day and join us at 11.00am for coffee/tea and biscuits before we start the AGM at 11.30am on 17 July at the Friends Meeting House, Ealing, London. The theme of the Annual Conference this year is 'Mixed Race & The Arts' with an exciting and varied programme of artists, speakers and performers starting at 2.00pm. Check out the front page and our website for further information.

We were pleased to co-op Emmanuel Nnatuanya, a chartered accountant, to the committee at our February meeting. Denis Matthews is stepping down as treasurer at the AGM and Emmanuel is willing to take on the role. We have some vacancies on the committee and are looking for people with specific skills and interests to fill roles to assist in developing the work of the charity. Meetings are now held at the Gestalt Centre, Islington. The committee has decided to employ a part time worker to help with some of the organisational tasks such as securing support for the AGM and newsletter material. There is also a lot of scope for volunteers to join in and either take forward their own ideas or contribute to ongoing work

Look out for our new website design coming soon which will be a content management system making it easier for access and regular updates. We were pleased to find a volunteer, Sonja Lindo, through it4Communities and she has been transferring content to the new template that Matt had been working on and adapting to suit our needs. Contributions of poems, articles, photos etc are always welcome to share on the site or, of course, in the newsletter,

Jill Olumide and myself accepted an invitation to give a presentation in March at the fourth Mixing & Mixed-ness seminar, held at the London School of Economics. The presentation was called 'What has People in Harmony learned about Mixed Race & Public Policy?' and included a brief history of PIH, the work of the organisation, concerns about policy shortcomings raised by members with a focus on education and adoption, the benefits of grassroots organisations and areas of public policy covered at the recent public sector conferences that we've hosted.

If you receive a subscription reminder please try to remember either to renew for a year or, better still, place your subscription on standing order. Unfortunately if subs are not renewed it will not be possible to continue to send out the newsletter and other information from the charity. It would be a great pity to lose touch with members.

Look forward to seeing many of you at the AGM.

In Harmony,

Val

complacent or completely naïve about racial issues. But I have to admit that I was not prepared for the response I got from CCPro. First they told me that mixed-race performers should simply tick the box that was 'closest to their look.' Which is how I found myself describing my daughter, as a hypothetical example of someone whose 'look' was neither approximately white, nor approximately black.

Sarah Rutherford Morrison and family

Then I was told that a mixed race option 'would not be used by employers who will be seeking very specific criteria.' This simply made no sense. Yes, casting directors *do* often look for *very* specific criteria – which is why, when they need a mixed-race actor, they require those actors to be identified as such. I myself have written a play with a mixed-race protagonist – and when it is cast, we will be searching databases like Spotlight, which do allow mixed-race actors to be found – not CCPro.

The arguments went on. Their next worry was that they'd be opening the floodgates. If they allowed 'mixed race', what next? Would actors be banging on their doors demanding a 'Caucasian/Afro-Caribbean/Asian/Chinese' box? Oh the horror.

Worse, what if actors started calling themselves 'mixed race' willy nilly? I, for example, am one-sixteenth Indian, but am about as far as you can get from what a casting director would be looking for to play a mixed-race character – what if I listed myself as mixed in the hope of getting more work?

Hang on. More work? *More work?* It would really enhance my career to be considered for the sheer excess of mixed-race roles out there, would it, instead of the paltry few parts for white people? Sarcasm was getting the better of me.

The phonecall was not a pleasant one. We went round and round in circles, with new arguments coming at me like the heads of Medusa every time I cut one off. These guys were not for budging. But neither was I.

The first thing I did was ask them to delete me from what I described as their 'racially pure' database. Then, in consultation with Val Hoskins and Reya El-Salahi, I started a facebook group encouraging people to voice their protest and boycott the site. I contacted all the high-profile people I knew in the industry, asking them to call CCPro and remonstrate with them.

Christopher Simpson (mixed-race star of *Brick Lane*, *White Teeth* and *Spooks*) was particularly generous with his time, though he was very nearly derailed by CCPro's claim that they offered actors a 'free text' box in which they could state their own definition of their ethnicity. This sounded quite reasonable, until I pointed out that the 'free text' box was not in the ethnicity section, but was a general box in which actors are free to advertise shows they are currently appearing in, special skills, etc. Employers would simply not be looking there for an actor's ethnic/racial casting potential; they would look *in the ethnicity section*.

My long talk with Chris, though, helped me analyse my own personal motivations for this crusade. Was I trying to protect my children? he asked. Was I fearful for them in a world that didn't understand mixed race? 'They are going to be ok, you know,' he reassured

me, bringing an unexpected tear to my eye. And I stopped banging my head against CCPro's solid brick wall for a moment to listen to him remind me of all the positive things about being mixed. I know I have given my children a gift, not a curse.

After about a week of bombarding CCPro with phonecalls and emails from various sources, they finally cracked. It was a call from my agent, Jackie Williamson, that did it in the end. 'Next time you want something done,' she advised me, 'pretend you're an agent.' Wise words.

I haven't rejoined CCPro. I probably should, in order to applaud their action; but I am unconvinced that they learned much from this episode. Their system is still far from ideal. Top directory Spotlight (itself still imperfect) allows actors to list up to 3 'role types' (they avoid 'race' or 'ethnicity') from a list of 20 – including, of course, 'mixed race'. CCPro, on the other hand, allows us to choose only one, from a list of just 11. And I do feel that they caved in primarily because pressure was building from the people of power within the industry – the agents and the casting directors – rather than because they saw the light on the principle of what they were doing.

The whole concept of race, ethnicity and casting within the entertainment industry is overdue for a big debate. A bright light needs to be shone on the way casting decisions are made and how an industry which is largely exempt from the Race Relations Act deals with that responsibility. The success of the CCPro campaign is a tiny victory; it's up to us to decide what we want to tackle next.

Sarah Rutherford Morrison
www.sarahrutherford.com

Article

Cross-cultural Parenting - a father's experience across 40 years.
By Peter Goble

My name is Peter, and my path crossed Berlina's in 1970 when I started work as a nurse-teacher in a hospital in Zambia's 'Copperbelt', where she was enrolled as a student nurse. I was a total newcomer to Africa, having never left the British Isles in my life until then.

On my first working day I saw her photograph on a board in nursing-school, amongst those of thirty or so other students. Turning to an expatriate colleague who was showing me round, I pointed her out, asking "Who's that one?". Something in my tone or maybe the smitten look on my face made her smile: "She's very special, that Berlina Loti", and so it proved to be. She was and is a very, very special woman.

Although a student nurse when we met, Berlina had already established herself in a professional career in pre-independence Northern Rhodesia, now Zambia. She was a confident, clever and outstandingly assertive young woman from a highly-respected African family. A trail-blazer in a young country, bold, adventurous and unafraid of the rigid racial conventions that had oppressed others for several decades of colonial rule by Britain.

Her mother died tragically young, so that Berlina combined a mother's responsibility for her much younger sisters with a demanding career, supporting as well as being supported by her father, blind since childhood, but nonetheless a man of invincible self-reliance, working for the mining company, a respected elder in the tradition of Zambian society, and in the local church. Berlina is very much her father's daughter, and they held each other in huge respect, their affection being of a more formally expressed kind, as is the Zambian way. BaTata (as we called him) died at an advanced age in 2006.

Berlina and I quickly formed a close relationship, and this led to no little trouble for us within the mining company that employed us both. Inter-racial relationships were frowned upon, and discouraged. Despite six years of Zambian independence, there was still a strict racial divide in mine employment practice, with almost all supervisory and managers' posts reserved for Europeans, regardless of the talent and huge experience of indigenous

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Obviously not!?

Not obviously mixed race
Obviously not mixed race
This is the assumption
That seems to make sense
But obviously not always
Because what if you don't see
If you fail to recognise
The distant African past in me

I know it's not obvious enough for you to see
And why do I make such a fuss about it then
You may say
We're all African in the end
Or in the beginning
We were
But I am talking here
About a more tangible past
That is still firmly imprinted in my soul
And in my spirit
For me to feel and know
But only a few people would tell me
That it shows

Talking about this is not easy
Because I endanger the white
And the mixed race community
Being on a difficult boundary
So should I just give up my case
Should I deny my soul and spirit
And the voice of the darker ancestors
Who speak through me?

Yes, this is the thing for me
I cannot give up my quest
Even if you can't see
My African-ness is confirmed all over again
By experiences of otherness
And stories of difference
Which take ages to explain:
"Though I've tried to find the answers
To all the questions they ask
Though I know it is impossible…
Don't ask my why."

And yet I make the effort
I need to explain my being
On this dangerous boundary
Which protects me
But also saddens me
I look so assimilated
Yet I rebel against it
Because my assimilation
Distorts my history

Nobody knows
Who can claim me
And who can't
And though race is a silly concept
I am always outraged, outraced
Outnumbered
By that high percentage of white melanin
That disguises my being

Yes, it's obviously not obvious
What I am all about
Yet I will try and find the answers
To all the questions you ask.
And I hope it won't be impossible
So ask me why.

By Ursula Troche

Zambian workers locked into subordinate (and much less well-paid) roles and functions.

At one point, called to my own manager's office, I was told that, if I persisted in my relationship with Berlina, I would be "put on the next plane back to London". I called her bluff, knowing it was just unenforceable bluster. But my work contract was not renewed, and Berlina - now a qualified registered nurse - accompanied me back to England in 1973, pregnant with our first-born child Mwape William, to a tumultuous but happy start to our partnership of 36 years.

Our tiny flat in Birmingham was so damp that mushrooms grew on the skirting board and, huddled round a paraffin heater for warmth, Berlina made me promise that - whatever hardships we had to face - I would always see to it that she was warm in our cold climate.

Life was indeed hard for our small family, money was tight and for a while during 1973 we survived the three-day week and frequent power cuts. Berlina and I took Mwape, cosy in a faux-fur coat and 'John Lennon' hat, long walks in his second-hand pram; we did our clothes-washing by hand in the bath; bliss was sharing a bottle of 'off-licence' cider in front of our small black-and-white two-channel TV.

Peter Goble

We never experienced hostility as a mixed-race couple, although my mother's reception of Berlina lacked warmth, whom she failed to acknowledge as a titular 'daughter' by refusing to answer Berlina's humbly calling her "Mother", a snub that my wife found it hard to forgive, especially as she had lost her own mother while still on the threshold of adulthood.

Once, out walking together, a small group of Afro-Caribbean men jeered at Berlina, presumably for taking my arm. But this was an isolated incident, and we were generally met with curiosity and approbation, rather than negatively.

With a growing family, Berlina and I returned to Zambia to work during the 1970s, and I was quickly and lovingly assimilated into her wider African family, and socialised into African society through marriage, and through our work with the Zambian health ministry.

Without a doubt, these influences have been the making of me, humanising me, softening my rigid, neurotic personality, and opening my mind to a wider world-view that that gained through my English up-bringing and education. Berlina's life with me has not been easy: it has taken me a lifetime, with her loving patient, patient support, and the wisdom of our children, to acknowledge the subtle but pervasive racism underlying many of my perceptions, attitudes and behaviours; even (or especially) as these have affected, and wounded, the people I love most, my wife and our three children, now grown adults.

I was unable, or unwilling - for example - to hear or acknowledge what my wife and our children told me about the racism they experienced at the hands of their school-age peers, their teachers, and in their wider encounters with British society. Much has changed, of course, but much remains the same. Their experience of racism was heightened when we moved from the more diverse West Midlands to South Essex, a much more ethnically homogeneous region, and a less evolved one in its acceptance of racial and cultural diversity.

Perhaps it's difficult for the members of any family to know how it compares to others, or indeed to know if any comparison is valid or worthwhile. So what follows is an intensely personal testimony. I count myself blessed to have met my wife, and for her grace, fortitude, integrity, wisdom - and beauty; and for the appearance of these same qualities in our offspring, and more besides. It's idle to speculate on how much these qualities are 'out of Africa', of that culture and landscape, and how much 'natural' and the result of personal effort. And it matters less.

But something was redeemed in me that day in 1970. A day that saw (as in a favourite old song of ours) "Two World's Collide"; part of a process, perhaps, that sounds 'redemption's song' more widely amongst the peoples of our changing world.

Research

Mixed Ethnicities in Stepfamilies

This is to invite you to support a small research project on mixed ethnicities in stepfamilies.

My name is Yvonne Ayo and I am a researcher and family therapist working at the Tavistock Centre in London doing research into ways in which people of mixed heritage talk about their cultural heritages in stepfamilies.

Mixed race identities and stepfamilies have often received negative attention in both research and popular media. Although these ideas are changing it is important that the voices of mixed heritage peoples in stepfamilies are heard. The research aims to help professionals who work with mixed heritage families.

I would like to interview individually the following family members: a parent, step-parent, child/step-child and step-sibling(s) who have been living as a family for at least three years. The child/step-child should be at least 15 years of age and the step-sibling should be at least 10 years of age although I can be flexible about this if a step-sibling is younger, say 9 years, and the parent/s consider an interview appropriate.

Each interview will last about an hour and will be recorded. Confidentiality of those families who participate will be maintained throughout the project. The interview will be carefully approached and wishes and comments of the families will be respected at all times. They can choose not to answer questions and can withdraw from the research project at any time.

If you know of any family whom you think may be interested in the research project, can you please contact me on my direct line or my email address as follows:

Yvonne Ayo
Tel: 0208 938 2218
Email: yayo@tavi-port.nhs.uk

Mixed Race in the 21st Century

Growing up as a mixed white and black African Caribbean child: what is this experience? I am carrying out a research project which aims to understand how children, aged 11 to 16 years, of a white and black African Caribbean heritage experience being mixed race in the 21st century.

There is still very little research in the UK highlighting the voices of mixed race individuals, and even less with children. If you are a parent of a child of this age and racial mix (or know of any children), I would like to talk to your child to see whether they are interested in taking part in this project, and if so, to interview them.

I am mixed race and have a personal interest in this area. In addition, I am carrying out a doctoral degree in Clinical Psychology at the University of East London, and my research findings will be written up in the form of a doctoral thesis, where summaries may be later published (all names and data will be anonymous and kept confidential). The information gained will give an understanding of how mixed-race children experience themselves, as well as what their experiences are with others and society. This may benefit clinical psychologists in their work, but also other agencies such as the government, schools, and other organisations.

If you are interested in your child taking part in this project, please contact:

Carla Levy via email at u0831975@uel.ac.uk or telephone the department of Clinical Psychology at the University of East London: 020 82234567.

The project is funded by the University of East London and is also approved by the University's research ethics board.

Feature

My Name Is Ramon

(Part 2)

In 1989 I went to Pakistan for the first time in my life. It was the middle of summer and the heat was unbearable. In the heavily populated and polluted city Karachi there were tanks roaming the streets. The heavy military presence was due to the recent assassination of General Zia, President of Pakistan. Whilst in Karachi I visited the tomb of Muhammed Ali Jinnah, founder of Pakistan. I took the slow train to the Punjab and went to Lahore and spent time exploring the beautiful Badshahi Mosque as well as the Shalimar Gardens and then onto the Swat Valley describe in travel books as the Switzerland of Pakistan. I met so many wonderful

and kind people on my journey to find my fathers village. My final crossing into the village, surrounded by water, was on a rickety leaking wooden boat.

I spent four weeks with my family in Toru, Mardan situated in the North Western Frontier Province of Pakistan. Struggling with the heat, diet, language and the constant stream of family visitors and trips to meet extended family members I became conscious of a whole world that belonged to me that I had had no previous knowledge of. My academic studies together with the personal journey I made to Pakistan gave me an insight into my head and heart that I could rationalize.

On my return to England I chose to study for a Postgraduate Certificate in Education at Bradford and Ilkley Community College. Bradford continued my Asian experience. An exciting multicultural city that felt familiar to me. There were, however, no other Asian, black or dual heritage students on the course. As a latecomer to Education I was passionate about continuing my learning experience, this led me to teaching as my chosen career. My own experience of school drew me to work in inner-city multi-cultural schools where working class black, Asian and dual-heritage children were struggling, in the same way I had, to make sense of their role in the world. These struggles are multi-faceted but at the heart of these conflicts lay the unifying barrier of difference, the colour of our skin.

My life in Bradford had helped me to identify more with my Pakistani identity. In the summer of 1990 I moved to London a dynamic and diverse city where I would feel comfortable. I enjoyed the art scene in London and made frequent visits to galleries, theatres and jazz clubs. I heard a multitude of languages spoken on the street and tasted food from all over the World. I attended talks given by high profile Asian men, Hanif Kureshi, Salman Rushdie and Tariq Ali, who described their own personal journeys. During these discussions I was able to assimilate a variety of different perspectives and views about race and identity.

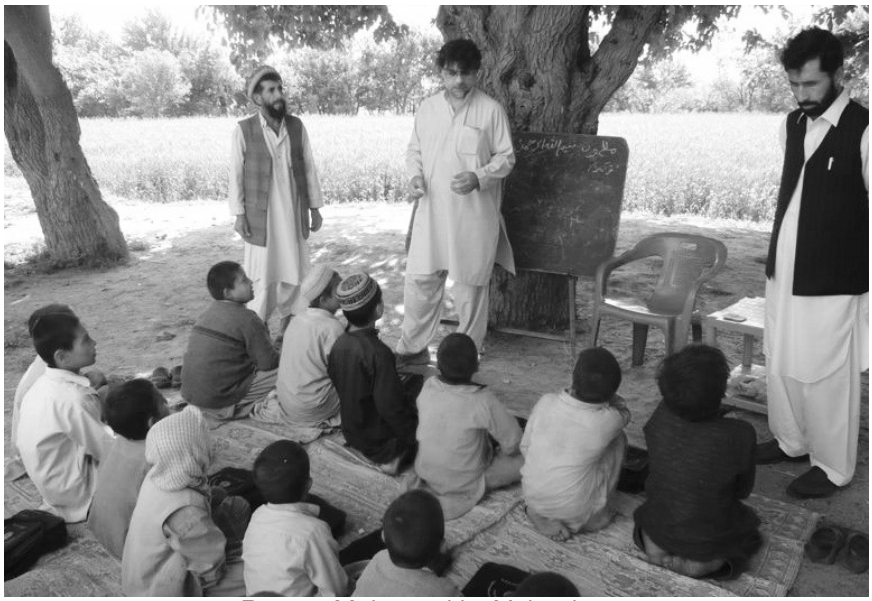
The London school's where I worked embraced the diversity of the city. Children, parents and staff would openly engage in discussions and debates about race. Children were encouraged to challenge prejudice, promoting respect and understanding of an individuals life experiences. These ongoing debates seemed as natural as breathing, this openness supported the curriculum in all areas but especially when there were projects and subjects discussed during Black History month, highlighting an understanding of Black and Asian histories that had previously been ignored and bringing to light forgotten heroes.

School provided me with a space to continue to explore my racial heritage and to learn and teach about other's experiences. However, away from the comfort of an enlightened school I would find myself on the terraces watching football, 'The Beautiful Game', surrounded by 'fans' screaming racial abuse, they ignored my presence, because I wasn't a 'black bastard' I was the 'good Paki'!

During the early 1990's I became increasingly involved in the wider football debate. At this time I was writing of my experiences on the terraces and the racism I saw and experienced. I was invited to attend meetings of the Football Taskforce a government organization chaired by David Mellor at the Houses of Commons. These discussions brought about Kick Racism out of Football a government-funded organization that actively sort, through education, to eradicate racism from the terraces. Locally formed organizations mirrored the aims of Kick Racism out of Football; in Sheffield this group was called Football Unites Racism Divides (FURD). One of FURD's aims was to raise the profile of black footballers, working with an academic (Phil Vasilli), who was researching a book about black

Did You Know...?

Moniza Alvi, poet and writer, was born in 1968 in Lahore, Pakistan to an English mother and Pakistani father and was brought to Hertfordshire, England when she was a few months. Alvi studied at the universities of York and London and worked for several years as a high school teacher, but is now a freelance writer and tutor for the Open College of the Arts, living in London. *'Presents from my aunts in Pakistan'* was one of the first poems she wrote before visiting the country of her birth. "I found it was important to write the Pakistan poems because I was getting in touch with my background."



Ramon Mohamed in Afghanistan

professional footballers, and with the help of family members they recovered the history of Arthur Wharton (1865-1930), Britain's first black professional footballer. Finding Arthur Wharton, was for me, a seminal moment in the teaching of black history, he encapsulated all that was missing from the teaching of sporting role models and their history.

In 1995 a young ambitious architecture student, Stephen Lawrence, was brutally murdered by white racists in South London. The Macpherson report on the death of Stephen stated that the Metropolitan Police Force had seriously hampered the investigation into his murder and the infamous phrase 'institutional racism' was endemic within the police force. Concern was raised that 'institutional racism' existed in other public organisations. Racism was still knocking on the door. I was hearing racism and racist chanting on the football terraces. At times I felt uncomfortable especially when visiting particular football grounds.

My love of sport influenced all areas of my teaching, creating a vehicle with which to engage children; team results led to understanding numbers, finding out where different teams came from secured their geographical knowledge. My own reading skills were greatly improved when in my early twenties I discovered books about my sporting heroes, Sebastian Coe along with his dad Peter wrote a book called Running for Fitness this was the first book I had ever read. Local team sports during the late 70's and early 80's reflected the racism in professional games, the last thing I needed after a day working on the building sites was more racial abuse. Marathon running created a space for me away from the building site where I had the freedom and isolation to relax my mind, I set my own pace and goals.

Teaching in London, in an environment where shared values created a space where I felt comfortable, enabling me for the first time to truly develop my potential. I introduced after school clubs; teaching and developing children's skills in football, cricket, netball, basketball and tag rugby, along with other interested local schools we set up Friendly Leagues, competitive sports not only inspired children to focus and work hard in training sessions they also improved co-operative and communication skill. I also introduced specific Asian sports and games such as Kabbadi and Carrom Board. The local secondary school had a fully equipped gymnasium and as part of the Y6's transition to Y7 they would visit the school once a week after school working closely with secondary school staff and pupils. Our primary school was desperately in need of good sporting facilities and at this time I worked closely with the school's governing body, Sport England and the Local Authority to build a community sports hall, it was the only purpose built sports hall in the area at the time.

At the turn of the Millennium a new world order was about to burst upon all of us after the destruction of the Twin Towers in America, bombings in London and Madrid and the subsequent rise of Islamic fundamentalism. I felt uncomfortable. In the media my surname 'Mohamed' became associated with 'terrorism'. I did not belong to any particular group in which I could confide my feelings. I began to think irrationally. I was neither Christian nor Muslim I was neither Black or White I had an 'English' and 'Pakistani' family. I felt emotionally threatened. Old feelings of insecurity and isolation came flooding back.

'Which side are you supporting' I was asked on more than one occasion? I was reminded again that somehow I was different and did not belong.

By Ramon Mohamed
http://ramonmohamed.com/

Book Review

The Other Face of the Moon: Finding My Indian Family
Reviewed by Veronica Dewan

This poignant memoir recounts two journeys made by Asha, a young woman adopted by a couple from Barcelona who needs to rediscover India, the country she left behind, aged six. She also hopes to learn the identities of her biological parents and understand the circumstances that led them to abandon her. Through these journeys, Asha gradually reconstructs her past.

Daughter of the Ganges, a previously published account of the author's first visit to India, now forms Part 1 of this book. Asha's intention with her original memoir was to show how she had benefited from being adopted and to support families contemplating adoption of children from other countries. Part 2, The Other Face of the Moon, records a second visit to make a documentary film of her earlier journey. Unexpectedly, she receives critical information about her biological family that had been previously withheld from her. By the end of this second trip, Asha is determined to share her story with other adopted people and to encourage them to begin the journey to seek out their roots as early as possible, for it is rarely a straightforward path.

In 1995, Asha travels to India from Spain with a group of volunteers as part of an NGO. As well as gaining work experience in a school, she revives memories of her early life by visiting the orphanages in Nasik and Mumbai where she was once cared for by nuns. One nun gives her vital information about the circumstances of her abandonment. Although profoundly painful to hear, Asha hopes that by knowing the truth she will find some peace. On returning to make her film, seven years later, she is shocked to be told that the earlier version of her abandonment is untrue. She discovers she has an older sister, also called Asha. It is this sister who is 'the other face of the moon', representing how life would have been had she remained with her Indian family.

Asha's conflicts surrounding her identity and sense of belonging particularly resonated with me. Although born in England, I was adopted by white parents and travelled to India in 1983 in search of my father. As Asha crosses the streets of Mumbai she dresses in a salwa khameez, has the same appearance as everyone else but is no longer able to speak her first language, Marathi. Having the demeanour of a European and being told she can no longer call herself Indian increase feelings of rejection. It is only when she finally meets her sister and extended family that she gains more of a sense of belonging.

Part 1 includes Asha's reflections as a volunteer with the NGO, challenging her own western values and emphasising the importance of listening and learning about local customs and cultural norms. Diary entries by her mother are also included here, recording the mother's perceptions of her daughter's transition into her new family. Given how few documented records of her past exist, this is a significant part of Asha's story but I found the voice of the adoptive mother a distraction. I was acutely aware of Asha's repeated expressions of gratitude to her adoptive parents for sharing their privileged lifestyle with her. She has lived with a deep sense of guilt for having been raised in Barcelona, but her ties with her biological family, her community and first language were severed; the extended family, from whom she was separated, was very poor but they stayed together. Any responsible adoption placement will implement ongoing post-adoption support to address the complexity of severance, search and reunion, to help people displaced from their roots gain a stronger sense of self.

Had Asha not made the second trip to India, it is unlikely that she would have been reunited with her biological family. This raises the issue of sharing information and acting in the best interests of 'the child', subtle and covert abuses of power in the bureaucratic minefield of adoption. Is the adopted adult forever to be referred to as the adopted child? Whose interests are being protected? I would recommend reading of this profoundly moving story, translated from Catalan, by all stakeholders to transnational and

transracial placement. In the hazy world of adoption, when we think the journey is over it is usually just beginning.

Veronica Dewan is a freelance trainer, consultant and writer.

Review originally published as "A never-ending journey" in Adoption & Fostering, Fall, 2006

Resources

On Racial Frontiers: ***The New Culture of Frederick Douglass, Ralph Ellison, and Bob Marley*** *by Gregory Stephens,* ISBN 0-521-64393-7. This is a study of three heroes of black culture linked by their mixed race origins; Frederick Douglass, the nineteenth century anti-slavery activist, Ralph Ellison, twentieth century American novelist and author of Invisible Man, and Bob Marley, the best known of all Jamaican reggae artists. Gregory Stephens argues that their mixed race heritage enabled all three to escape racial boundaries, whether imposed by black or white. Stephens calls them "integrative ancestors" who "people from more than one ethnic or national group can claim as their own." This, Stephens argues, is exactly what Marley became, an international icon through whom "multiethnic and multinational audiences" can create themselves as "a multiracial imagined community".

Black Mahler, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor Story*, retold by Charles Elford*. Coleridge-Taylor was born to a white English mother and black African father in 1875, just 10 years after the U.S. Constitution's 13th Amendment abolished slavery. Coleridge-Taylor wrote the highly successful choral trilogy, "The Song of Hiawatha," while still a student at London's Royal College of Music. For more information visit: www.blackmahler.com

Lara *by Bernardine Evaristo,* publ Bloodaxe Books Ltd ISBN 978-1852248314. Lara is a mixed-race girl raised in Woolwich, a white suburb of London, during the 60s and 70s. Her father, Taiwo, is Nigerian, and her mother, Ellen, is white British. They marry in the 1950s, in spite of fierce opposition from Ellen's family, and quickly produce eight children in ten years. Lara is their fourth child and we follow her journey from restricted childhood to conflicted early adulthood, and then from London to Nigeria to Brazil as she seeks to understand herself and her ancestry.

Hair Power - Skin Revolution: A Collection of Poems and Personal Essays by Black and Mixed-race Women *by Nicole Moore* Publ Matador Pb ISBN 978-1848763937. The collection includes contributions from forty-eight authors, that explore the issues, interests, cultural and historical influences that have shaped their times and their imaginations. The writers offer empowering and creative ways of understanding and relating to the themes of hair and skin. They tell their narratives, presenting their views in passionate, intelligent, humorous, strong and reflective voices, some unheard; some previously published in the former two Shangwe anthologies.

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Is There a Mixed Race Culture? *By Marie Macey (race, identity and culture)*	**£2.50**	**£2.50**		
Resources and Sources:- Dealing with Racism *(with children)*	**£3.00**	**£2.50**		
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