



Ordinary People Extraordinary Lives

CELEBRATING ACHIEVEMENT AND UNITING COMMUNITIES



ENFIELD RACIAL EQUALITY COUNCIL



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All those who nominated individuals

All of the individuals who were nominated and whose life stories were recorded. With a special thanks to those whose biographies we could not include in this booklet.

FOREWORD



I am pleased to present this booklet entitled 'Ordinary People, Extraordinary Lives : Celebrating achievement and uniting communities' . This catalogues the achievements made by 32 Enfield individuals from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, ages, and abilities. The universal message that shines through all of the short biographies is one of overcoming adversity, perseverance, positive thinking, helping others, and giving back to the community. As a collective document, this also highlights the tremendous commitment and contribution made by our local multi-cultural communities towards British society.

I hope the snapshot life stories inspire you, the way they do me, to achieve your goals, in whatever spheres you wish, and regardless of any barriers that may be in your way.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to be 'Bill Price'. The signature is stylized with a large loop at the end.

Cllr Bill Price
The Worshipful, the Mayor of Enfield

INTRODUCTION

Chaudhury Anwar MBE
Chair of Enfield Racial Equality Council



BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Enfield Race Equality Council (EREC) works toward creating a borough in which residents and visitors are free from harassment and discrimination in all aspects of their life, valuing and celebrating cultural diversity in all its forms.

Based at Community House in Edmonton, EREC offers local public, voluntary and private sector bodies support in actively promoting race equality particularly in the context of the Race Relations legislation. EREC aims to successfully advocate on behalf of organisations and individuals at a strategic level, to ensure that the needs of all in the borough are met. It also offers support to individuals who face harassment or discrimination at work or in the community.

Enfield's ethnic diversity incorporates an incredible range of residents, organisations and businesses from well established Turkish and Greek Cypriot, African Caribbean and Asian communities to the more recent arrivals from Central African countries and Eastern Europe. Such diversity also leads to a wide range of religions being established in the borough with 10 per cent of the population being Muslims. The 2001 population census showed that over 39 per cent of the borough's 274,000 residents were from an ethnic minority background. It is expected that these figures will rise to nearly 50 per cent in the next few years.

Whilst such diversity is to be celebrated, EREC is aware that it has not led in many cases to real changes and improvements to the way in which many services are delivered.

INTRODUCTION

Areas of EREC's work include:

- Discrimination against refugees and asylum seekers.
- Countering the increase in the activities of far right organisations in the borough.
- The increase in Islamophobia.
- The under performance of children from certain ethnic minority communities in the boroughs schools.
- The disproportionately high unemployment rates affecting certain Black and ethnic minority communities
- Discriminatory service delivery in relation to housing, health and social care.
- Negative media reporting of immigration and asylum issues.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The Positive Images project was developed by EREC as part of the Government's 'Connecting Communities Initiative' and was funded by a Home Office Race Equality Grant. The Mayor of Enfield launched the project at EREC's Annual General Meeting on 22 July 2004.

The project aims to tackle the underachievement and the negative stereotyping of Enfield's ethnic minorities by celebrating the achievements of all communities and building positive and respectful relationships between people of different ethnic origins, faith, age and ability.

INTRODUCTION

The above is to be delivered through the production and promotion of this booklet, which documents the achievements and life stories of 32 individuals from differing backgrounds, ethnicity, ages and abilities. The booklet will be forwarded to all schools in the borough of Enfield, free of charge, alongside an invitation to attend a training programme which informs teachers how the booklet can be used to promote race equality, tackle discrimination, promote achievement and citizenship.

In producing this booklet, nominations of local achievers were invited through advertisements in local media, publicity materials at public buildings and letter writing to local community organisations. Nominations were drawn from every walk of life and following interview; the final 32 were selected by a panel to be included in the booklet. Selection was focussed on showcasing the diversity of achievement and overcoming barriers, and not on rating achievements.

Indeed, the greatest message, which is highlighted by the biographies and the project, is that achievement in life is so much more than personal academic and career progression; it is making a difference to your community. The nominees were invited to a 'Celebration of Achievement' ceremony at Forty Hall, Enfield on 17 May 2005 and were awarded certificates of achievement.

Information gathered from the project will be used to develop a resource pack and poster set presenting the biographies and positive achievements of community members and training ideas to highlight the range of positive work undertaken in the area of race equality and the contribution of a multi-cultural nature of life to the borough. This will be available to a range of organisations including the media, schools, colleges and local employees.

Chaudhury Anwar MBE
Chair of Enfield Racial Equality Council

BIOGRAPHIES



BIOGRAPHIES

Yasemin Brett



Yasemin believes the experiences of women from her mother's family as single women, widowers, or divorcees, and some of the resulting challenges, inspired her to do the work she is doing today.

Yasemin is married with one son and a cat. She was born in Istanbul, Turkey and has lived in Enfield for 22 years.

Yasemin is a local councillor and the Chair of the Standing Advisory Committee of Religious Education. She is also involved with 'Friends of Bangladesh', an international organisation that provides funds to villages and women's groups to do development work.

Yasemin believes the experiences of women from her mother's family as single women, widowers, or divorcees, and some of the resulting challenges, inspired her to do the work she is doing today.

Yasemin's parents were in a mixed marriage, her mother Turkish and her father Bangladeshi. The cultural differences, while enriching, also presented challenges for her when growing up. Yasemin lived in Bangladesh during the war and as a result is aware of discrimination and suffering. The war claimed three million lives.

In the 1970's, Yasemin came to England as a student. She became involved in women's affairs in the Turkish speaking community, and went on to community work in Islington in the 1990s at a women's advice project and for eight years at a nursery project in Hackney, that helped children between the ages of 3 and 5 to integrate into the education system.

In 1994, Yasemin became a local councillor. She has very active surgeries where she deals with a variety of issues. She believes that while discrimination can be experienced as an ethnic minority woman, she has been given opportunities and therefore should exercise them. She is proud of having become Mayor and been able to raise funds for voluntary organisations, but most of all, of having the privilege of being welcomed into the lives of the many people in the borough.

Yasemin feels she is currently at a crossroads in her life. She would like to gain a greater understanding of different religious cultures and hopes to write some books.

BIOGRAPHIES

Trevor Duke

Trevor was born in Hackney and was brought up in care. From a very young age he faced abuse both inside and outside of care homes and had horrendous experiences at the hands of the mental health system. Add to this the discrimination he faced as a person with dyslexia, he struggled from an early age to achieve his potential.

Despite this, Trevor has achieved an incredible range of success throughout his life. This includes running the London marathon ten times for charity, completing a range of coaching qualifications, and playing an active part in the London Forum of Sport and Disabled People. He has also won the Hansen Award and supports disabled people to take part in athletics.

Possibly the achievement that Trevor is most proud of is the tough counselling process which he has undergone and which brought up many horrific memories and feelings. This has led him to realise that he cannot live his life through hate and that he does not have to take responsibility for the bad things that were done to him. As a result he feels positive and looks forward every day to achieving even more with his life.

He believes that everyone needs support and a positive outlook on life, whatever their background and abilities. He brings this belief into all he does. Trevor is proud of his achievements and knows that others are too. He wants everybody he comes into contact with to value themselves and believe in their worth as individuals.



Trevor has achieved an incredible range of success throughout his life. This includes running the London marathon ten times and playing an active part in the London Forum of Sport and Disabled People.

BIOGRAPHIES

Patricia Obichukwu



Patricia's experience and knowledge has empowered her to act as a mentor and community liaison for her community, and even with her busy schedule, she still devotes her time to a lot of voluntary work.

Patricia is married with four children. She was born in Ogidi, Nigeria, and is one of eight children.

Patricia runs her own business and is Chair, Vice Chair and Director of other social enterprise companies and voluntary organisations. She has served as a Non-Executive Director for a local NHS Hospital and is a community empowerment network representative.

Patricia is a qualified Trainer and Consultant and is committed to addressing issues of inequalities in service provision, respecting diversity, and empowering Black and Minority Ethnic groups.

After coming to England in 1982 to pursue her career, Patricia studied catering and Business Management and obtained degrees in Health Studies and Training and Performance Management.

Through personal experience and her work, Patricia has witnessed the disintegration of families caused by stigma, barriers and racism in mental health services, and a lack of effective holistic care for Black users and carers.

This has been the driving force for setting up the Ebony People's Association, a mental health charity for Black people of African and Caribbean origin. This service has faced many challenges since its inception.

Seven years later, Ebony People's Association is still going, and has received sector borough recognition for good practice in partnership working from the Social Services Inspectorate (2001), despite not receiving adequate funding for years.

Patricia's experience and knowledge has empowered her to act as a mentor and community liaison for her community, and even with her busy schedule, she still devotes her time to a lot of voluntary work. Her future plans include setting up a mentoring programme for young people.

BIOGRAPHIES

Zhen Gui Guan

Zhen is 18 years old, was born in Shi Cuan, China, and currently lives alone in Enfield. He came to England when he was 15 years old as a refugee.

He receives support from Social Services, who will look after him until he is 21 and he has several friends from college. Working part time in a Post room, Zhen is also a student and a keen supporter of Manchester United, with Ronaldo being his favourite player.

Zhen became a refugee when he witnessed the murder of his parents for following the outlawed Fa Lun Kong in China. Until then, Zhen's family were vegetable, fruit, and rice farmers and Zhen attended school.

The police killed Zhen's parents, and as the police knew that he had witnessed the murder, Zhen felt, in order to survive, he had to flee. At first he hid in China for a few months. After six months the police found him in a flat and he had to move again. He spent a month hiding in a temple while family friends gathered money to get him out of the country. Snakeheads eventually brought Zhen to England.

Zhen was placed with foster carers in West London prior to moving to North London in 2003 with new foster carers.

Not only has Zhen learned English; he has also taken key skills in Information Technology. He continues to study one day a week at a training centre in Enfield and is slowly developing his life.

Unfortunately Zhen only had leave to stay until he was 18 and the Home Office refused to extend this. Zhen does not want to return to China, as he has no friends there, no work or place to live and he would never be able to return to the region where he was born. He is currently appealing against the Home Office's decision and is waiting for the outcome of his appeal.

Zhen would like to gain more knowledge, become a sportsman, or work in administration.



Police in China killed Zhen's parents, and as the police knew that he had witnessed the murder, Zhen felt, in order to survive, he had to flee.

BIOGRAPHIES

Nardia Foster



The year Nardia was born there were race riots in her hometown, and throughout her childhood she couldn't understand why some people hated her without knowing her.

Nardia was born in Smethwick, West Midlands, and is married with three children. She currently teaches psychology part-time and works for the Professional Association of Teachers as a regional union officer. She is also a foster carer and a writer.

Both Nardia's parents died when she was young. Her father died when she was 11 and her mother while she was a student. As Nardia was one of seven children, life was hard. They were all encouraged 'to go for it', to study, and to make no excuses.

The year Nardia was born there were race riots in her hometown, and throughout her childhood she couldn't understand why some people hated her without knowing her.. It was only later she realised that there was a bigger picture.

When Nardia told her Deputy Head that she wanted to be a teacher, the response was that she would never become a teacher; she should train to be a nurse. Nardia went on to teacher training but always felt, because of the words of her teacher, that she didn't deserve it. It has made her more aware of the impact of words on others.

While working as a teacher Nardia discovered that she enjoyed psychology so she went on to take a degree in Psychology and a PGCE in Special Educational Needs Management. During her work as a primary school teacher for 10 years, Nardia felt that there was a lack of knowledge and ignorance about Caribbean culture and low educational expectations of African Caribbean children.

The result was a two-year journey into researching and writing a book on Caribbean history and culture. Nardia aims to make this book available in all schools so that children, educators and parents know the truth about the history between the Caribbean and Britain.

Nardia also runs a drama group at her church for young people, aimed to provide opportunities for those who are normally excluded from drama groups. She has found that this helps to improve their behaviour at school, within the church, and between parent and child.

Nardia plans to write another book in the future.

BIOGRAPHIES

NAME

Vijay was born in the Punjab in India. She is married with three children, and also has two grandchildren and one dog. Vijay is currently Chair of Naree Shakti, President of Hindu Dharam Sabha, local community organisations, and supports a variety of people and charities through a wide network that she has developed over the years.

Vijay grew up in a small town with a very religious family. One of her uncles was in politics so from the age of five she gained the boldness of being in public life.

At eleven, Vijay was elected as the youngest social secretary to Merhaath (my hands), a women's and children's organisation dealing with domestic violence.

In 1965, Vijay immigrated to Kenya in East Africa.. As she was a qualified teacher, she taught dressmaking, arts, and crafts. In 1972 she immigrated to England with three children and joined the Paris Academy School of Fashion, where one of her designs, a wedding dress, won first place and was publicly displayed.

Vijay worked as a Housing Officer for a couple of local authorities during the 1980s. As English was not her first language she found that she was often misinterpreted and vice versa. Vijay felt that during this period the local authorities could have done more to assist their ethnic minority staff, such as providing training to enhance their language skills.

Heart surgery led to her eventual retirement but she remained active in her community work.

Vijay's community work has always been high profile and she has been responsible for organising and planning events involving MPs, local councillors, senior public sector workers, and advisory panels on life in the borough, domestic violence, health, and welfare issues for the Asian communities.

This has lead to her receiving 13 awards from the community since 1990, including Woman of the Year (1997).

Vijay plans to carry on working with women in the future. She will fight for women's rights and expand the Naree Shakti project, particularly the services for older people.



Vijay grew up in a small town with a very religious family. One of her uncles was in politics so from the age of five she gained the boldness of being in public life.

BIOGRAPHIES

Rina Choudhary



Rina has dealt with many incidents of racial abuse experienced by her clients and is now the Vice Chair for Enfield's Racial Incidents Action Group.

Rina was born in Sylhet, Bangladesh and is married with four children. While growing up in Bangladesh, Rina's father always inspired her to do better. As he had many English friends, he would talk about English food and how he found English people to be very friendly.

Rina was taught to appreciate the building of knowledge and, along with her siblings, she learnt many languages including Bengali, English, Manipuri and Hindi.

Rina first came to England in 1972. She was expecting her second child and spoke only a little English. Rina and her husband lived in East London. Her new life was daunting and she did her best to try to learn the customs and language of her surroundings.

Two months after she arrived, Rina's second son was born prematurely, which meant making daily trips on her own to the hospital to visit him. By travelling on her own and talking to people on the way, her confidence was boosted and soon she started to interpret for other Bangladeshi women in the hospital who could not speak English.

The women showed such great appreciation that Rina felt inspired to help more people in the same way. Rina went on to help at a children's school, translating for families in need.

Rina started work as a development worker for Community Aid in 1989, and became the organisation's Co-ordinator ten years later. Community Aid is a voluntary organisation, which primarily works with Asian communities. It provides many services, which include projects for elders, advice, and an after-school club.

Rina has dealt with many incidents of racial abuse experienced by her clients and is now the Vice Chair for Enfield's Racial Incidents Action Group. When Rina began work with Community Aid, there was much opposition and objection, especially from some men in the community.

However, after years of building trust among the community, hard work and dedication, it is those very people who showed opposition that are accessing the services provided today. Rina is particularly proud of how the organisation has and does empower women.

When Rina retires, she would like to work with older people, particularly women, focusing on environmental issues and rights of ethnic minority people.

Serajul Islam Molla

Born in Bangladesh in 1936, Serajul came to England in 1967 settling in South London before moving to Enfield with his wife and three children.

Over the next 26 years he became a teacher and taught in a number of primary school across the borough of Hackney, until his retirement in 1992.

Serajul's teaching career began in his home country as Head of Department at the Lal Monir Hat College and was borne out of his desire to educate himself and overcome the difficult start he had in life.

Serajul went to live with his paternal uncle when he was only four years old following the death of his father and of his mother, six months later. The death of both of his parents and their lack of wealth turned him into a determined character who, by his own admission, has always taken up the challenge to better himself at every opportunity.

Education offered him that chance. The Head of the English Department at Dhaka University had a profound influence on him, introducing to him to the works of William Wordsworth and in particular his poem on 'daffodils'.

Entranced by this beautiful flower, Serajul vowed that he would see them for himself and made plans to come to England. Armed with his University Degree and Post-Graduate Diploma, Serajul arrived in England to pursue his personal ambitions and to establish a long and successful teaching career.

Serajul has built on his achievements throughout his life by involving himself in a range of community based activities such as becoming a founder member of the Enfield based Kathakolt Bangla and Vice Chair of the Enfield Bangladeshi Welfare Association, a position he held up to last year, despite having lost all but 20 per cent of his sight due to diabetes.

Undeterred by his disability and change in status, Serajul took on a new challenge as a major figure in the Camden based Third Age project.

His advice to those wishing to succeed is to 'never give up hope or put yourself down, always keep going. You can get there.'



Serajul has built on his achievements throughout his life by involving himself in a range of community based activities such as becoming a founder member of the Enfield based Kathakolt Bangla.

BIOGRAPHIES

Dr Gilbert Igboaka



At first Gilbert wanted to become a surgeon but because of his humanist views he struggled with the death of patients and decided to move into diagnostic medicine.

Gilbert was born in Ihiala, Nigeria, is married with five children, and has lived in Enfield for 15 years. He is currently a Consultant in Pathology, Chairman of Helping Hands, a community empowerment network representative, and a trustee of several community groups.

Gilbert's father worked in hospitals as a nurse and Gilbert grew up in the company of doctors and nurses. It was at this time he decided that he wanted to be a doctor.

At first Gilbert wanted to become a surgeon but because of his humanist views he struggled with the death of patients and decided to move into diagnostic medicine, pathology.

This work fulfilled his aspiration to be a surgeon. In order to become a Consultant Pathologist Gilbert had to study and achieve many qualifications including a Degree in Medicine and Surgery, six years training and becoming a member of the Royal College of Pathologists.

Gilbert's path was not always easy, as he grew up in Nigeria at the time of the Biafra Crisis (1966-70). During his first year at university he had to flee the troubles, which had now escalated into a full war. As a result Gilbert lost four years out of his education.

Gilbert came to England and found that being a black doctor in England in the 1970s meant he faced extra challenges. He had to prove himself beyond reasonable doubt and had to take a series of English exams before he could practice. He also experienced severe shortage of funds and was discriminated against further in the job market. At each stage, it was difficult to move forward.

Gilbert overcame these challenges by working hard and by making himself knowledgeable and well informed so that he could gain respect for his views. He also formed a group that liaised with the government of Nigeria to ensure that student doctors were able to gain the funds they needed to access education and to continue their training.

Gilbert is proud that he has been able to achieve his professional aspirations whilst also contributing to the community in other ways.

When he retires he plans to spend more time doing voluntary work and using his medical knowledge and skills to help black and ethnic minority people with health issues prevalent among them.

BIOGRAPHIES

Richard Armstrong

Richard is 41 and was born in Edmonton, London. He has succeeded in fulfilling his ambition of pursuing his passion for sport and supporting others in making the most of their potential.

Richard has learning difficulties and difficulty in walking, and as a result of others' prejudices, suffered name-calling and derogatory remarks throughout his childhood.

Despite this, his strength of character and the support of his brother, who told him 'think about what you do and not what they say', has led to him taking the view that he can pursue anything he wants. He has learnt to ignore negative remarks and do the best he can and be proud of himself.

He also has support in this from others including One-to-One, a local community project, and his coaching tutors.

Determined to make a success in all he does, Richard has gained numerous qualifications in football and athletics coaching through the One-to-One organisation and the Football Foundation. He has also competed in the North London Olympics and events in Greece and the USA. Later this year he is due to compete at an event in Glasgow, Scotland.

Richard also finds time to pursue his passion for gardening through his work at a day centre in Enfield and by undertaking a NVQ.

Richard would like to gain further qualifications in athletics and football coaching and is committed to help others into learning sport. He believes that Enfield can do more to promote race equality by creating more opportunities for people to come together through sport.



Determined to make a success in all he does, Richard has gained numerous qualifications in football and athletics coaching through the One-to-One organisation and the Football Foundation.

BIOGRAPHIES

Tamanna Choudhury



Following her introduction to One-to-One, Tamanna started taking part in activities and eventually became a member of the Management Committee of the organisation.

Thirty three-year-old Tamanna was born in Edmonton, and has a learning disability.

Tamanna's early school days were very unhappy as the education authority sent her to schools which failed to meet her needs and where she faced racist abuse on a daily basis.

Tamanna suffered from epilepsy until the age of 14 and her bad experience at school made her condition worse. She felt extremely alone as no action was taken at school to help her.

As she grew older, Tamanna became stronger and more confident and began to challenge her tormenters. As a result, her days of education became more tolerable. Despite this success, Tamanna was glad to move on from school.

However her next experience of education, at a training college in Buckinghamshire, was no more positive. Hoping to live a more independent life and develop her own path she faced more insecurity as her home was vandalised and she became increasingly isolated.

Once she returned home, Tamanna was able to value the support her family gave her and learnt a valuable lesson that there were people there to support her and help her achieve her potential and ambitions.

Following her introduction to One-to-One, a local community organisation supporting people with learning disabilities, Tamanna started taking part in activities and eventually became a member of the Management Committee of the organisation.

She also spent time as an advocate highlighting the issues and discrimination faced by people with learning disabilities, and helped to design and produce a play focussed on these issues.

Alongside the above, Tamanna has studied and trained at Enfield, Hackney and Southgate Colleges, where she earned a range of qualifications including a NVQ in Business Administration. Eighteen months ago, her perseverance, ability, and desire to help others who have experienced the same obstacles, led to Tamanna successfully applying to work as a National Self Advocacy Worker for Peoples First.

Looking forward, Tamanna wants to develop her skills and experience and urges all who face the barriers she has overcome to be brave and not allow others to think they are better. She also hopes that the borough takes the issue of bullying even more seriously.

BIOGRAPHIES

Adele Steadman-Lynch

Forty year old Adele is Head of Year 8 at Salisbury school in Enfield and is responsible for founding the African Caribbean Forum at the school, which aims to support students of African Caribbean origin to 'Aim Higher'.

The 'Aim Higher' project seeks to instil young people with confidence in their own ability, their history, and equips them with the tools to be successful in the education system, with very positive results.

Brought up on the Blackbird Leys estate in Oxford, Adele never dreamt of pursuing a career in teaching, as by her own admission, she was not particularly fond of, or good with children.

As a teenager she faced a great deal of racism and was not supported by her family or the school she attended. This changed when she spent time in America, educating herself to degree level and taking on new challenges.

Her return to the UK saw her change career direction and take up the challenge of becoming a teacher, which she did with great energy and enthusiasm, first in Haringey and then in Enfield.

Her commitment to her pupils and their success is evident. Colleagues describe her work as outstanding and praise her ability to take time to prepare fully and engage with all the young people she works with.

Having experienced such a negative experience of education herself, Adele is clear that she can understand some of the experiences of her pupils and, as such, ensures that she relates to them and understands the context in which they are attending school.

Adele believes that all children have potential and opposes all those who attempt to 'write-off' Black children.



As a teenager, Adele faced a great deal of racism and was not supported by her family or the school she attended. This changed when she spent time in America.

BIOGRAPHIES

Nadine Bowling



Nadine feels that it is important in her work to praise the achievements of pupils in her charge and goes to great lengths to give them encouragement and support.

Brought up in London, Nadine has put her childhood experiences of school into good practice in her professional life. As a learning mentor her key role at Salisbury school is to offer support and encouragement to African Caribbean pupils through the 'Aim Higher' project, which she and her colleagues established.

As one of the few black children in her school, Nadine whilst popular was not always made to feel able as a student and lacked encouragement from home. As a result she had to develop a deep sense of self-belief and confidence in her own ability.

She feels that it is important in her work to praise the achievements of pupils in her charge and goes to great lengths to give them encouragement and support in all that they set out to do. Her success is obvious, as many have kept in touch with her after leaving the schools in which she has worked.

As well as setting up the 'Aim Higher' project in Salisbury school, Nadine also established a Peer Mentoring programme in Greig City Academy in Hornsey, where she describes the children as 'fantastic' and having taught her many valuable things about life.

Despite facing the doubts of other colleagues about the value of the work she does and the importance of supporting the children she works with, Nadine is determined that her students know that she values them and will back them at all times.

Her four children, her pride and joy, who help her to reflect on her practice and offer her great support, keep her feet on the ground.

BIOGRAPHIES

Nimet Sayar

Nimet is a divorcee with two children living in Enfield and works in Turkish and Kurdish community centres as a volunteer.

Since 2004 Nimet has been working with the City Learning Centre as a voluntary trainer and with the BME Carers' Support Service in Haringey.

Additionally, she also works as a volunteer for the Balik Arts organisation and is a Connexions Personal Advisor, working with Turkish, Kurdish and Turkish Cypriot young people.

Her voluntary work with community centres in North London has involved many different roles, such as Chair person, community representative, presenter and education project co-ordinator.

Nimet entered the UK as a refugee in 1987 from Turkey because of the political situation and applied for asylum seeker status. In 1998 she was granted leave to remain in the UK.

Nimet left behind a successful business that she had set up, and sadly her first-born child, a son, with her family.

She only had intermittent contact with the rest of the family, during her first years in the UK. Once she was granted leave to remain, Nimet's husband and son arrived in the UK to join her.

During the early years of being in this country, Nimet took every opportunity to improve her English, while also raising her children. Now that her children are more independent she is able to concentrate more on progressing her education, career, and voluntary work.

In Turkey, Nimet completed high school and started a university course, but then had to leave the country. In the UK she has taken a Connexions Personal Adviser Diploma course and is currently doing an NVQ level 3 in Training.

Nimet's goals are to continue with lifelong learning and career development, gaining secure and long-term employment. She wants to stabilise her financial position and contribute to the funding of her children's' education.



Nimet's voluntary work with community centres in North London has involved many different roles, such as Chair person, community representative, presenter and education project co-ordinator.

BIOGRAPHIES

Margaret Greer



Margaret's earliest lasting memory of school was a teacher telling her when she was nine years old that she would 'never achieve anything'.

Margaret was born in Hackney, London and currently lives in Edmonton. She has two brothers, two nephews, and eight godchildren. She is a singer and Manchester United fan.

Margaret works as a Union convenor for Social Services: Children and Families, she is a childcare social worker, sings at conferences and charity events, and chairs a women's and Black workers' group.

Margaret describes her childhood as good despite her parents splitting up when she was seven. Her earliest lasting memory of school was a teacher telling her when she was nine years old that she would 'never achieve anything, to go back to her street, you stupid little black girl'.

This led to other pupils teasing her about her ability to learn. She was then put in a class without any of her friends.

She feels that a lot of her problems were due to the fact that she had darker skin and acne. Her mum was her strength and Margaret sees her as a powerful and inspiring woman.

Girls who had previously been her friends bullied Margaret at school. This led to her lacking self-confidence and not feeling as good as everyone else.

Margaret was able to overcome her difficulties by reading. She started out with simple books then progressed to reading more culturally specific books such as Maya Angelou and Alex Haley. This taught her about who she was and about being proud of her history.

Margaret went on to channel her energies into sport, particularly netball and the heptathlon.

She is proud that she has been able to complete her Diploma in Social Work, buy a house and become the Deputy Chair of the National Black Members' Committee of Unison.

Her family and friends are particularly proud of her singing and her willingness to support other people.

Margaret's plans for the future include studying for a Master's Degree.

BIOGRAPHIES

Ngoma Ngunga



Regardless of the circumstances, Ngoma has been seen as a leader. At school, his teacher trusted him to lead and be a good example to others.

Ngoma is married with four children, three living in England and one in Holland. He was born in Kinshasa, Congo (Democratic Republic) and arrived in England four years ago as a refugee. He is currently looking for work following the completion of his Community Interpreter's course.

For most of his life, regardless of the circumstances, Ngoma has been seen as a leader. For example, every year in class, his teacher trusted him to lead and be a good example to others; he became a football coach even though he was not trained in this area; he was student representative for ESOL at Southgate College; and he currently chairs a community group.

Ngoma was forced to leave the Congo for not supporting the government in power. As Congo is French speaking, Ngoma arrived in England without any knowledge of English. He has since gone on to take a series of courses including community interpreting.

Ngoma has set up the Kongolesse Children's Association, a community group that provides a range of activities for young African people and their families and has over 200 members.

Although he acknowledges the loss of opportunity of living and working in the Congo, Ngoma has been proud of the way his family, particularly his daughter, have progressed since arriving in England four years ago. His daughter received an award from her school for achieving the highest SAT result in the year.

Although Ngoma has a degree in chemical engineering he sees his future as working in the community sector, preferably as an interpreter and a football coach.

BIOGRAPHIES

Ashraf Hossain



Ashraf arrived in England with one pound in his pocket. Shortly after, he set up the Pakistan Football Association and played in the St. Albans Sunday League.

Ashraf is 70, married, and has three daughters. His parents died when he was very young and he had to support and educate himself.

Ashraf was born in West Bengal, India and arrived in England in 1962 with one pound in his pocket. Shortly after, he set up the Pakistan Football Association and during 1963 - 1964 played in the Sunday League in St. Albans, Hertfordshire.

The death of Ashraf's parents forced him to change his plans for the future. Due to the lack of funds he could not train as a doctor and so instead funded his BSc Degree in Chemistry through his work as a footballer.

Ashraf immigrated to England aged 28, and started work at the YWCA as a table cleaner. He shared a house with kitchen porters and would sleep there at night whilst they would sleep there in the day.

His second job was as a tailor in Aldgate East. Eventually he went to work for Glass Technology as an analyst chemist, and then went back to college in Liverpool to qualify in MBSSG - Scientific glass technology.

In 1980 Ashraf was a founder member of the Friends of Bangladesh, an organisation that is still running today. He now acts as Chief Fundraising Coordinator for the organisation.

In 2000, Ashraf founded and became Chairman of the Bangladesh Over 50's club, which is based in Enfield and provides a lunch club for lonely people, fitness classes, and encourages others over 50 to provide advice to each other.

Ashraf's main support for his achievements has come from his wife. His wife provided him with financial support when studying for his degree, and when their business failed she provided him with the time and energy to help set up organisations to aid others.

As his next goal, Ashraf plans to set up a care home for Asian people in the borough.

BIOGRAPHIES

Sharon Hemmings

Thirty six-year-old Sharon is Black British, was born in Hackney and currently lives in Southgate.

Sharon works as a Social Worker with Cheviots: Children with Disabilities, which specialises in providing services to disabled children.

Teachers at one particular school have praised her for her professional manner in supporting the children and families at the school.

A parent of two children herself, Sharon is clear that she wants to set her children a positive example - particularly through her work and success, much as her own mother did when she was growing up in Hackney and Enfield.

Sharon followed her mother's footsteps into care work and despite facing a lack of encouragement to gain further professional qualifications from managers at various work places, she was determined not to let that dissuade her and pursued her ambition to gain qualifications through her own resources.

This culminated in her achieving a social work qualification from the University of Hertfordshire in 1998. This was a tough journey as the travel from home and childcare arrangements made it difficult, but her own determination, belief in ability, and the support of her family, her mother in particular, saw her through.

Her graduation ceremony, with family flying in from Jamaica to celebrate with her, was a special moment and proved to her that her own maxim, 'you have to believe in yourself and not those who doubt you. Use their view to make you more determined', was correct.

Sharon is determined to continue to build her own skills and play a part in developing improved services particularly for Black children across the borough.



Sharon followed her mother's footsteps into care work and despite facing a lack of encouragement from managers at various work places.

BIOGRAPHIES

Dennis Graham



Dennis feels most proud when the general public come up to him and congratulate him on brightening up the environment.

Dennis is married with one stepson. He is one of seven children who currently live all around world. He also has one niece and one nephew. Dennis currently works as a Building Management Officer, is active in his Church and is a keen gardener and musician.

Dennis was born in Portland, Jamaica, and for the first 10 years of his life was very frail and was protected from his environment. Although fruit trees surrounded his home, he was restricted to the house.

Dennis never really got to know his environment as he was always aware that he would be leaving it and going to England. He came to England when he was 10 years old in 1964, and lived in Clapton with three brothers and sisters.

Dennis's father was a keen gardener who kept flowers. He remembers his father having lots of large dahlias, and being surprised that his father, a big man, cut flowers and put them in a vase, as, 'men don't do that'.

Dennis studied throughout his life and is particularly keen on computing. He has always felt that because of his asthma, negative influences, and lack of encouragement to achieve, he was prevented from achieving more.

After leaving school he became an automobile spray painter. He held a variety of jobs prior to taking up his current post as a building management officer.

Although not part of his job description, Dennis started to improve the environment of Community House, a community building set in urban Edmonton which houses many of Enfield's charities, by developing and maintaining the gardens.

He was rewarded for his efforts in 2004 when Community House was highly commended in its category of Public Building in the Enfield in Bloom competition.

Dennis feels most proud when the general public come up to him and congratulate him on brightening up the environment.

He is also an inventor and plans to have his engine marketed and built in the future. He would also like to make a record and get a degree in religious studies.

BIOGRAPHIES

Mala Hingorani

Mala is a widow with two daughters and four grandchildren. Mala was born in Hyderabad, India, and has been living in London for 38 years.

Amongst other things Mala baby-sits for neighbours, cares for her eldest grandchild, is a voluntary driver for people, and is involved with several community groups.

In her free time Mala enjoys yoga, tai chi, swimming and line dancing. Mala had a happy childhood in India and received a good education. She wanted to become a teacher from the age of four.

Like her Auntie, she eventually wanted to become a head teacher; this she achieved for two years in India before coming to England. Mala gained her qualifications in India, taught for four years, completed her family, and then came to England.

Throughout her time as a teacher Mala experienced racism. In her first job Mala wasn't allowed to eat in the staff room. The teachers thought she should eat with the children, as she would not be able to use cutlery.

At her second school she was subjected to racist jokes, was not allowed to use school facilities, and was demeaned and ridiculed with remarks such as 'You lot coming dripping with degrees to take our jobs; I will never give a promotion to a Black person.'

Mala was only promoted when she joined a language school and got her first upgrade as part of a positive discrimination scheme. During this time Mala's husband died which meant that the family struggled financially.

After retiring from teaching, Mala joined and ran the Asian Mahila Samiti - a group that eventually merged with Enfield Saheli, a voluntary organisation working for Asian women. She has also supported Naree Shakti as a Committee Member.

For over 10 years Mala has run the North London City Circle social club, helping people to meet and socialise together and has also volunteered to teach ESOL at Enfield College.

Mala aims to maintain good health, to help people who are housebound and unable to speak the language, and to mentor young people.



Throughout her time as a teacher Mala experienced racism. In her first job Mala wasn't allowed to eat in the staff room. The teachers thought she would not be able to use cutlery.

BIOGRAPHIES

Isabell Coates



Isabell has two projects underway, one is to refurbish a school in Chapel Town, Jamaica and the other is to set up a Saturday school in Edmonton.

Isabell is married and had six children, one died 12 years ago. She also has ten grandchildren and two great grandchildren.

Isabell, born in Clarendon, Jamaica, has lived in Edmonton for 42 years and has been an active church member. Every day she does voluntary work for the community.

Isabell lost her father when at school and children used to tease her about this. As a result, she hated school.

In Isabell's mother's day, fathers did not believe in educating their daughters. Her mother, however, helped her by teaching her to read.

Isabell remembers giving a girl at school her dinner money for her to teach her to read. This girl used to take her money and run off and did not help her.

Isabell always admired a local woman called Mrs Harvey who used to be at church giving support to families who were poor. Isabell decided that she wanted to be like her and help people when she grew up.

Her aim of being like Mrs Harvey was fulfilled when Isabell started work. First of all she was a baby walker at Holloway Prison for over 10 years and later she went on to set up Friends From Across the Sea, a charitable trust that works with children and young people in Enfield and overseas.

The organisation provides help to children and their families in need, and raises funds by running events such as raffles, cooking and organising social events.

Isabell worked as a carer until she retired and during this time she regularly visited people in hospital and volunteered for her local church.

She studied for an Open University course in care work and is particularly proud of her driving license. To ensure that her charity is successful, Isabell regularly attends training courses.

Isabell plans to carry on chairing Friends From Across The Sea and has two projects underway, one is to refurbish a school in Chapel Town, Jamaica and the other is to set up a Saturday school in Edmonton.

BIOGRAPHIES

Lillian Okoro

Lillian was born in Westbourne Park, London, and is separated with three children. She also provides short-term care to youth facing difficulties. She is the Managing Director of Angels Childcare, which provides a day care nursery and two after-school clubs.

Lillian describes her father as a crude businessman without barriers, who always did it big and reached the top.

Lillian remembers talking to him about business and politics as she grew up. She vowed that when she left school she wouldn't work with children, as it was too great a responsibility.

After college she became a dispensing technician in a pharmacy, worked behind a beauty counter and in sales management, and this all lead to her running large pharmacies across London.

After marrying and having children and wanting to return to work, Lillian looked around for childcare and was surprised about the limited choice available.

She decided that she would establish a scheme that would meet her own childcare needs and also provide her with an income, and thus, started an after-school club in Edmonton 10 years ago. Four years later Lillian set up a playgroup and subsequently in 2003, a nursery.

Lillian obtained several qualifications to ensure she was equipped to run her business including a HNC in Childcare many certificates. She is currently studying for a degree in Childhood Studies.

Lillian's path has not been without difficulties. The existence of her after-school club was jeopardised when the plans were made for the hosting school to take over her provision.

The rent was put up fourfold within the same year in an attempt to drive her out, but with the support of the parents Lillian was able to hold on to her club. The nursery also faced closure threats due to issues of planning and funding, but Lillian successfully fought against this. Lillian is proud she is still running her business after 10 years.

In the future, Lillian plans to provide a group of childcare settings in North London and to continue to provide a good quality service that keeps its personal touch. At some point she would like to go into politics, to be the voice of children.



Lillian's path has not been without difficulties. The existence of her after-school club was jeopardised when the plans were made for the hosting school to take over her provision.

BIOGRAPHIES

Tara Gauria Padharia



Despite this punishing and tiring schedule, Tara remained positive at all times and her uplifting approach to life saw her continue to help others.

Born in Nairobi, Kenya, Tara has lived in Enfield since 1985. Tara and her husband ran newsagents for many years and raised two sons. Her family had to give up the business when her husband became ill and Tara was unable to meet the demands of the work and caring for her husband and her two children.

In addition, her mother who lived in the north of England fell ill and Tara would travel to and from Lancashire regularly to help her, returning to continue to look after her own family.

Despite this punishing and tiring schedule, Tara remained positive at all times and her uplifting approach to life saw her continue to help others.

While working with disabled people at the Park Avenue Disabled Centre, she also was active in setting up and developing the Roshni centre for Asian elders and has been an active member of the Hindu Dharam Sabha in Enfield, of which she is now the Secretary.

This, despite her own admission, that she is a little shy and initially nervous when meeting people.

Not only does Tara offer support to elders who she believes need help because of the way society ignores their needs, but she also takes part in a scheme designed to work with young women and girls in the community.

Tara believes it is important to look after elders who are suffering. In return, older people can help youth within the community by passing on the knowledge of their experiences, their culture, and their religion.

Seevaratnam Velupillai

Seevaratnam is a widower of 18 years, and has two sons and five grandchildren. He was born in Batticaloa, Sri Lanka.

As a young man, Seevaratnam's head teacher encouraged him to go to university where he studied maths and physics. In 1948 Seevaratnam came to England to be articled and qualified as a chartered accountant. At that time he met his wife, an English lady, and married her.

After qualifying, Seevaratnam returned to Sri Lanka and remained there until 1967, when due to civil disturbance, his sons' education was interrupted.

He returned to England to ensure that they had an education. While in Sri Lanka, Seevaratnam was employed by the largest firm in the country with 140 staff. It was a British firm of chartered accountants and he was the first national to become a manager, a partner, and then senior partner.

Seevaratnam was particularly proud of this as he was at the top of his profession and his role gave him a lot of status.

Seevaratnam retired at 65 and joined several community organisations, all of which wanted him to do accountancy work. He has been involved with The Rotary Club, Tamil Relief Centre, Ruth Winston House, Enfield Saheli and is currently Chair of Crossroads Care Enfield.

He likes helping people and by overseeing the accounts for charities he is doing this.

Seevaratnam's aim in the future is to slow down and to complete his family history, including cataloguing all family videos, holiday videos, and photograph albums. He would also like to continue with some charity work.



Seevaratnam's aim in the future is to slow down and to complete his family history. He would also like to continue with some charity work.

BIOGRAPHIES

Divya Shah



Divya found herself having to financially support her cousins, fight for accommodation to live in, and to look after the children for two years. Since then, she has always had a soft spot for children.

Divya is married with three children and has lived in Enfield for nearly 25 years. She is a foster carer and works with Enfield Social Services: Children and Families. Divya also carries out voluntary work.

Divya was born in Mombassa, Kenya and lived near the port. When family members were waiting to sail, everyone would come into her house and her mum would not turn anyone away.

She also remembers people arriving from India, in transit, and her family would give clothes to make them as comfortable as possible. Divya's mother had a giving nature.

At the age of 18, Divya came to England following problems with her country's government. She had just finished school and was sent to live with her aunt. She felt very isolated as she knew some English, but was not fluent.

Divya started work in a chocolate factory, joined evening classes, and helped support people arriving in England in similar circumstances to herself.

Following a family tragedy, which saw the death of her aunt and uncle by an arsonist who set fire to the bakery beneath their flat, Divya became a carer to eight children at the tender age of twenty.

Divya found herself having to financially support her cousins, fight for accommodation to live in, and to look after the children for two years. Since then, she has always had a soft spot for children.

Divya has worked in a variety of jobs including bank work and is a bereavement counsellor. She is currently secretary to Naree Shakti and is the organisations' benefits advisor at drop in sessions.

Divya also works with a woman's organisation for 14-21 years olds that indirectly assists parents to deal with young women's issues.

Divya plans to form a group for children with disabilities, so they can meet, discuss their own problems and views, and plan their own care needs and futures.

BIOGRAPHIES

Steve Beckles-Ebusia

Steve was born in Edgware, London and is married with two children. He has lived in Enfield for the last two years and is a keen writer, poet, salsa dancer and Arsenal fan.

Steve is currently a Learning Mentor at Kingsmead School, supporting and encouraging students to reach their maximum potential. Steve works with small and large groups of students from Years 7 to 11 helping them to plan homework/coursework or revision strategies, and to improve their attendance, punctuality, confidence and self-esteem.

He also arranges transition programmes for Year 7 students who have just moved up from Primary schools.

Steve grew up in Harrow, which was not a multi-cultural area at the time. He found that both during his childhood and in later life, what counted around him was how you looked rather than what you achieved.

Steve once went to a careers interview in the legal field and was encouraged instead to get into track and field, athletics. In order to succeed he has had to challenge negative stereotypes and work to 100 per cent. He expects those around him to also do the same.

Steve believes that his experiences of this environment have made him stronger. He uses his own experiences in his mentoring and encourages young people to achieve anything they wish to, not necessarily what others might want them to.

After training in electrical and electronics engineering and becoming a computer engineer, Steve changed career and studied Social Science at university.

He uses all his skills in his current role and has set up football competitions for students to focus them on positive actions. The competitions are known as The Premiership and rewards are given for good behaviour and participation.

Steve is particularly proud of the children's book he has written based on his sons' experiences. The book is available in Haringey libraries.

Whilst presently studying to become a psychotherapist, Steve aims to complete his second book by end of the year. He says his aim in life is to make a mark so that people know he was there.



Steve once went to a careers interview in the legal field and was encouraged instead to get into sport. In order to succeed he has had to challenge negative stereotypes and work to 100 per cent.

BIOGRAPHIES

Denise Headley



Despite, or maybe because of the birth of her twin daughters, she has impressively juggled the demands of childcare with those of a politician and representing the needs of her constituents.

Thirty three-year-old Denise followed in a long family tradition of involvement in politics when four years ago she successfully ran for office and was elected as councillor for the Edmonton Green ward in Enfield.

Despite, or maybe because of the birth of her twin daughters, she has impressively juggled the demands of childcare with those of a politician and representing the needs of her constituents.

Over the four years, she has built up an impressive portfolio of responsibilities, which include the role of Deputy Chief Whip and Deputy Leader on the environment.

The latter has allowed her to take forward her interest in environmental issues including tackling the building of incinerators, and the erection of mobile phone masts in the area.

She is passionate about the need to tackle issues of importance to local people and to ensure that her constituents are not overlooked in regard to decisions that are made which affect their quality of life.

Born in Hackney and schooled at the Sir John Loughborough College in Tottenham, Denise successfully completed a Business and Administrative Degree at the Thames Valley University in Ealing before embarking on a career in the banking sector.

Denise has a long background in community work from working at Supplementary schools and being involved with local residents groups.

Whilst she is proud of this and her achievements as a councillor, Denise is most proud of her daughters and her abilities as a parent.

She draws this from her own upbringing and the support and guidance she received and still receives from her own parents who keep her focused and clear in her objectives.

BIOGRAPHIES

Michaela Russell

Michaela lives alone, and has a younger sister. She is also an auntie and has two nieces and a nephew. In her free time Michaela likes to rave, go the cinema, eat out, and go shopping.

Michaela was born in Birmingham and has been living in Enfield for six years, first in foster care with her little sister and now independently.

Michaela has been in the care system since she was eight years old. Her mother was unable to cope with looking after two children as she suffered with mental illness and Michaela's father died when she was little.

Up until Michaela went into care she didn't attend school. Michaela's childhood was spent moving between London and Birmingham and foster placements, she didn't attend school regularly until Year 5. Although she could read and write, Michaela was unable to spell and was below key stages. Many years were spent trying to catch up.

Michaela found it difficult to make friends at school until Year 5 as much of her time was spent looking after her little sister.

She stayed with several foster carers but fortunately was able to stay for a long time with Auntie Pat who encouraged her to study. Although Michaela struggled with some of her studies, she liked drama and art, and always enjoyed having different hairstyles.

After leaving school Michaela went into beauty and then hairdressing. Michaela has achieved six GCSEs and is studying for a City and Guilds Certificate in Beauty.

She currently has a hairdressing apprenticeship doing European hair and has already completed an apprenticeship in African Caribbean hair. Michaela still attends college for practical and theory courses.

Michaela puts her achievements down to being very optimistic, and always looking for the best. She makes sure that everything is perfect and aims to make the best of everything for herself and her sister.

Michaela plans to travel with hairdressing, work abroad, open her own salon, work in shows, and compete in hair competitions. One day, she says, she may even become a social worker..



Michaela puts her achievements down to being very optimistic, and always looking for the best. One day, she says, she may become a social worker.

BIOGRAPHIES

Burhan Uddin



Burhan's ability was such, that despite his responsibilities, he still found time to help friends with their work, even though he was not able to get to school himself.

Nineteen-year-old Burhan was born in Bangladesh and came to the UK in 1993 at the age of seven. Burhan had to leave school at 15 without any qualifications after his family were forced to leave their home in Newham and his father suffered ill health.

Such were the family's housing problems that they were forced to move home on five different occasions.

As the eldest child in the family, Burhan had the extra responsibility of caring for his five younger siblings and his father throughout this disruption. He found not being able to settle into a school and continue his education particularly difficult, as he had always been a successful student.

Burhan's ability was such that, despite his responsibilities, he still found time to help friends with their work, even though he was not able to get to school himself.

His desire to succeed academically drove him to return to education at Enfield Training Services in 2003 and, as a result, he has achieved a range of qualifications including NVQ Administration Level 2 and has extensively developed his skills in IT.

Described by tutors as a model student, Burhan is determined to develop his ability to help others and has represented learners at a Connexions conference and designed and created a leaflet aimed at attracting more young people to education. He is currently looking for work in the field of IT.

Burhan refuses to approach life with anything other than a smile on his face and believes that this approach will help him succeed and overcome the problems he and his family now face.

BIOGRAPHIES

Elizabeth Mitchell

Elizabeth has one son and three grandchildren. She was born in Manchester, Jamaica and is one of eight children.

Elizabeth's father died when she was seven and her mother always worked hard. Her brother and sister looked after Elizabeth and, as she was the youngest, she received a lot of care. Despite hardships, Elizabeth grew up in a loving family.

Elizabeth had her son at a very young age, before she was 16. She always loved children and wanted to have her own. She took care of other children in the school holidays such as cousins, nieces and nephews.

Elizabeth came to England in 1964. Although she wanted to be a nurse, she had a child to support and could not afford to study nursing and look after her child.

Instead, Elizabeth joined the production line of Ford Motor Company. She retired from working at Ford after 33 years and seven months service.

Elizabeth has been a foster carer both formally and informally for many years. She loves looking after people and will take anyone as she says 'people are people'.

She currently is a carer to two children aged 5 and 8 years old, and also provides emergency care to children of all ages.

Elizabeth is proud of the fact that her foster children never want to go home, and that they regularly stop her in the street and greet her as 'Miss T', the name by which she is known in her local community.

Elizabeth also visits people in hospital where she takes in home cooked dinners and often ends up taking in several meals, as she befriends others while visiting friends. She doesn't like anyone to feel lonely.

Elizabeth also ensures that she has plenty of food in her house as she often distributes food to people in difficulty. She is particularly pleased that she can drive as it means she can visit more people and give people lifts.

In the future Elizabeth plans to continue with her flower arranging, cake baking, learning how to use a computer, and delivering community work.



Elizabeth retired from working at Ford after 33 years and seven months service. She has been a foster carer both formally and informally for many years.

BIOGRAPHIES

Sunny Nwachukwu



Sunny recognised the lack of African dance in the United Kingdom, renewed his interest in African dance and gathered a few people together to form Ogene (metal gong).

Sunny is married with four children and was born in Jos, Nigeria. He is a musician who runs several community based projects teaching young people how to dance.

Both Sunny's father and elder brother are musicians, and his earliest memories are of watching his father dance.

Sunny started dancing at seven and hasn't looked back since. He started out in African dance but at 17, he became unfulfilled and moved on to contemporary dancing.

It was only when Sunny came to England, 19 years ago, was homesick, and recognised the lack of African dance in the United Kingdom, that he renewed his interest in African dance and gathered a few people together to form Ogene (metal gong).

The aim was to use this group as a tool to show African dance to a wider community. Sunny went on to teach Nigerians African dance, and in 1997 Adanta (African Dance and Theatre Association) was formed. The organisation started by providing African dance classes for young people, but then went on to attract adults.

Sunny studied for a degree in accountancy and economics after arriving in the UK. His family expectations were that dancing was not a career. Sunny left Nigeria to improve his status and to gain academic qualifications. To date Sunny has had difficulty in finding accountancy work and has also realised that he did not really want to do this work.

Instead he is now the Coordinator of Adanta, and works with young people in Enfield and Brent on community projects dealing with behavioural difficulties.

The highlight of his work has been taking 50 young people to dance at Buckingham Palace for the Queen's jubilee.

Sunny plans to expand the work of Adanta by using African dance to build bridges between communities and break down racial barriers.

BIOGRAPHIES

Nixon Mitchell

Nixon was born in Sheffield, Yorkshire, has one brother and two sisters, and lives independently. He has lots of friends, is a churchgoer, and a Manchester United fan.

Nixon was six years old when he left Sheffield and came with his family to live in London.

He liked school and had lots of friends. He really liked infant school as he felt he learned more quickly there. He was seven years old when, one day on his way home from school, he was knocked down by a car.

Nixon spent 7-8 months in hospital and suffered from brain damage. This led to his learning disability today and meant that he had to learn everything over again. His rehabilitation involved speech therapy and attending a special needs school.

With the support of his family and his school, Nixon has gone on to take a variety of courses. He has studied English, Maths, Computers, and Art, post 16 at college.

Nixon has lived independently since he was 28. His parents returned to Grenada to live and he visits them every two to three years and talks regularly to them on the telephone. He is well travelled and has been to Trinidad, Tobago, Grenada and Antigua.

Nixon has worked in many jobs including stewarding at Tottenham Hotspur and working in a hospital. He currently works at a supermarket in Enfield as a trolley assistant.

Nixon wanted to stay in education and has undertaken further training. He attends evening classes at Enfield College and is studying for his ECDL in computers. He particularly likes graphics, presentation and the Internet. Nixon is very proud of the fact that he has recovered from his accident, is healthy, and that he can live, work and study independently. When he passes his ECDL, Nixon will look for new job opportunities.



Nixon spent 7-8 months in hospital and suffered from brain damage. This led to his learning disability today and meant that he had to learn everything over again.

USEFUL CONTACTS

For further information about the Positive Images Project and Race Equality in Enfield, and advice about racial discrimination:

Enfield Racial Equality Council
Community House, 311 Fore Street,
Edmonton, London N9 0PZ

020 8373 6271/2 info@enfieldrec.org.uk

For information about race equality in Enfield Schools and in Enfield Council Services:

LCAS Developments
Tile Kiln Lane, London N13 6BY
020 8803 4460

Enfield Council
Policy Team, Civic Centre, Silver Street, Enfield, EN1 3XY
020 8379 3113

To report a racial incident:

Racial Incidents Action Group
C/o Enfield Council, PO Box 50, Civic Centre, Silver St, Enfield,
EN1 3XA

020 8379 4182

For information and advice about race equality issues nationally:

Commission for Racial Equality
St Dunstan's House, 201-211 Borough High St,
London, SE1 1GZ

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