

**London Schools and the Black Child III**  
Reaching for the Stars





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## conference programme

### Chair: Diane Abbott MP

- 9-10am Registration and refreshments
- 10-11.30 **Opening Plenary**  
 Diane Abbott MP Welcome and Introduction  
 Ken Livingstone Mayor of London  
 Trevor Phillips Chair, Commission for Racial Equality  
 Garth Crooks BBC TV and Radio presenter  
 Grace Ononiwu Lawyer, Crown Prosecution Service  
 Dr Stan Mims International Guest Speaker
- 11.30-1pm **Workshops**
- 1-2pm **Lunch**
- 2-3pm **Afternoon plenary**  
 Achievement Awards  
 Stephen Twigg MP Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, DfES  
 Kwame Kwei Armah Actor and playwright  
 Lee Jasper Director, Equalities and Policing, Mayor's Office  
 Trevor Phillips Chair, Commission for Racial Equality
- 3-4.30pm **Workshops**
- 4.30-5.30 **Closing plenary**  
 Sashi Sivaloganathan Vice Chair, General Teaching Council for England  
 Leroy Logan Chair, Metropolitan Police Black Police Association

## workshops

Black Boys: LDA Education Commission Report

- Lee Jasper; William Atkinson; Yvonne Thompson; Joyce Moore

Supporting Black Teachers: GTC Achieve Network

- Judy Moorhouse; Steve Morrison; Shiraz Chakera; Dr Rob Berkeley

Parents Part I: Parents and Governors Network

- Dawn Stephenson; Pauline Thomas

Parents Part II: Helping Your Child Achieve

- Ken Barnes; David Simon

DfES Aiming High: The Government's response

- Velma McGregor; Greg Roachford; Oveta McInnis; Foyla Bailey;  
Ina Powell

Pupil Exclusions

- Professor Cecile Wright; Sandra Richards

Black Teachers

- Ivy Scott; Ele Noel Beswick

International Solutions

- Dr Stan L Mims

Education: An Afrikan-centred approach

- Bro Mbandaka

Youth Empowerment and Engagement

- Leroy Logan; Sandra White; Bevan Powell

Coaching and Parental Empowerment

- Derek Browne; Amechi Udo

## foreword by Ken Livingstone, Mayor of London

Taking up the issue of African-Caribbean underachievement in schools is vital. The projected patterns of migration into the capital over the next 15-20 years are such that it is imperative that we ensure we do not leave any child behind. In order to do that, we must be able to deliver an education that is responsive to the needs of London's diverse communities.

I am encouraged by the work and resources that the Department for Education and Skills has put into minority ethnic achievement in schools, through programmes such as the London Challenge. Progress has been made in improving educational outcomes for African-Caribbean heritage children in our schools. However, it remains the case that there is still a great deal of work to be done. In 2003-4 only 10 per cent of the poorest Black Caribbean boys in London achieved 5 or more A\* - C grades at GCSE level, according to new performance standards which must include English and Maths. The potential damage to the future employment prospects for those boys who do not meet these standards is obvious.

One concrete change we can make is to ensure that the teaching profession reflects the communities it serves. London has changed, and our public services need to reflect that fact.

The Cattle Report on Community Cohesion as long ago as 2001 made the point that there is a need to ensure that the teaching ethos of each school reflects different cultures and to address the lack of minority ethnic teachers in schools. We should also be concerned about the impact on learning when only 42 per cent of African-Caribbean heritage children in London feel that they are respected by their teachers. I have no doubt that a teaching workforce that looks like London will go a long way to addressing these issues. It cannot be right that in some of our boroughs 48-50 per cent of the pupils are black, yet only 16-18 per cent of the teachers that teach them are of similar heritage.

I want to thank Diane Abbott for her work in leading these conferences and setting the agenda in such a positive way. Her work, and that of the London Development Agency, is essential to making the kind of progress we need to ensure that our education system meets the needs of all Londoners.



Ken Livingstone, Mayor of London



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- 1 Community Cohesion: A report of the Independent Review Team chaired by Ted Cattle (Home Office, 2001)
- 2 DfES London Challenge: Survey of Pupils and Teachers 2004



## Supporting London Schools and the Black Child – Department for Education and Skills

department for  
**education and skills**  
creating opportunity, releasing potential, achieving excellence

The strategy aims to focus mainstream school improvement programmes and targeting activity on identifying and addressing underachievement; increasing accountability through the publication of achievement data; and building capacity across the system. It includes a national project funded to the tune of £1.7 million to begin tackling the barriers to achievement for African-Caribbean pupils. Working with 30 schools in 20 Local Education Authorities (LEAs), 14 of which are in London, the project aims to support schools in developing leadership capacity to lead a whole school approach to raising black achievement and to equip teachers with the necessary skills to respond to the needs of African-Caribbean pupils.

As part of the African-Caribbean project we have been working with the National College of School Leadership (NCSL), which has provided training for senior school managers from the 30 participating project schools. The project is now being extended to 100 schools that will be supported by three Regional Directors working via the Secondary National Strategy, and we will continue to work with the NCSL in order to support school leadership teams.

In addition to this, the KS3 National Strategy is running a black-Caribbean project focusing on academic mentoring and in autumn 2004 we launched a Primary African-Caribbean Project via the Primary Strategy in five LEAs. We are planning to extend this work nationally from September 2005.

There is encouraging evidence that many pupils have benefited from our targeted approach to improve standards and black pupils in particular have made significant improvements in recent years. Between 2003 and 2004, the percentage of Black Caribbean and Black African pupils achieving five or more A\* to C at GCSE and equivalent has improved by more than 2.5 percentage points:

- Black-Caribbean pupils – up 2.8 percentage points to 35.7 per cent.
- Black-African pupils – up 2.6 percentage points to 43.3 per cent.

We recognise that there is still along way to go and that we need to continue to work in partnership with schools, parents and local

communities to deliver effective change. We are determined to continue to raise standards for all young people and to make a real difference to the education and life chances of minority ethnic pupils.

# 1 Introduction

## **Diane Abbott MP, Hackney South and Stoke Newington**

'I have worked and campaigned over a number of years on education. My particular mission has been to try and ensure that all our children, whatever their skin colour, can achieve educational excellence. The 2004 London Schools and the Black Child conference was in a series I organised going back to the 1990s and it was the third organised on a Londonwide basis. I would particularly like to thank the Mayor of London, Ken Livingstone, and the Greater London Authority for the financial, practical and personal support that has made this work possible.



'The 2004 conference was solution oriented. Since its inception, the London Schools and the Black Child initiative has many important achievements to its credit. Perhaps one of the most important was the launch by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) of the Aiming High programme. This was a pilot programme and the first ever targeted at specifically raising the educational achievements of Afro-Caribbean pupils. The DfES had previously used our conference to announce the initiative, so I was pleased that the minister responsible, Stephen Twigg MP, attended our 2004 conference to report back on this important government initiative.

'We also had a range of workshops especially designed to give parents and the community practical weapons in the fight for educational excellence for our children. Among the issues covered were: pupil exclusions; the role of school governors; the position of black teachers; and what parents can do to support their children at school.

'We were also privileged to have as our international speaker Dr Stan Mims who gave an inspired address based on his vast experience working in education in the United States. I believe that our 2004 line-up of plenary speakers was the best to date. They included: BBC TV and radio presenter Garth Crooks, Chairman of the Commission for Racial Equality Trevor Phillips, brilliant young lawyer Grace Ononiwu and prize winning playwright and star of BBC's Casualty Kwame Kwei-Armah. Summaries of their speeches can be found in this report.

'The 2004 Conference also saw the launch of an important report by the Education Commission of the Mayor's London Development Agency. The report, *The Educational Experiences of Black Boys in London Schools 2000-2003*, attracted a great deal of media attention in the weeks running up to the conference and further placed the conference at the heart of the education debate. Also launched at the conference was the General Teaching Council's ACHIEVE network, aimed at all those working in the area of race equality and awareness in our schools.

Since 2004 I have continued to try to progress the London Schools and the Black Child agenda. The Mayor and I have been working with trade unions and others to discuss how best to take forward the Mayor's stated policy aim of building a teaching workforce that looks like London. I have also been building links with teachers and academic institutions in the Caribbean in order to share experiences, and I continue to meet regularly with education ministers to discuss black children and the education system. This ensures this critical issue remains high on the agenda until such time as it is no longer necessary.'

## 2 Morning plenary

### Ken Livingstone - Mayor of London

'I am delighted that the London Development Agency has started seriously to take up and deal with these issues, because you will not have a successful London economy while so many of our black children fail in our schools and because of our schools.

'I wish that one of my responsibilities, as well as transport and the fire brigade, was schooling in this city. I can think of no more urgent policy than to offer the sort of teacher training that has worked so successfully in the United States.

'I have to say that our problem is not with the DfES. They are aware of the problem and are working with us in developing good solutions. I have been particularly struck that this is the first time this conference has had the sort of media attention it should have been getting all the way along. It has been a pleasure to see the issues we have been raising starting to get into the main news bulletins. It is interesting that when you raise the issue that London's schoolteachers should reflect London, the people that have been silent for decades when the patterns of discrimination replicated themselves suddenly find they have become champions of the standard.

'We are not seeking to reduce the standard, we are seeking to reduce the pattern of discrimination. My hope is that the teaching profession does not make the same mistakes that the policing profession made 30 years ago, when they resisted accepting that there was a problem.

'We must persuade the government of the urgency of this, because here in London 43 per cent of the children in our schools are from an ethnic minority. If you don't understand the dimensions of that and the problems that black children face (and virtually half of the 43 per cent are black children) then you cannot be an effective teacher in our schools. We will, however, give you the support and assistance you need to become so.

'The nature of the mini-economy that is London is such that any child coming out of school who can't read or does not have a proper grasp of maths or computer skills will not make it in this city. The economy is now so different to the rest of Britain that we need to have a curriculum and teaching methods that fit our children for the jobs in our city, which will be a quite distinct regional agenda in terms of education. If we project forward and look at the differential birth rates of London's communities we can say that in the next 15 years, 80 per cent of all the new people coming into the workforce in this city will be people who are not white. Any firm that cannot cope with positively welcoming people of colour into their firm, cannot reach out to recruit them and cannot provide training



opportunities once they have got them, is a firm that is going to fail. They will be cutting themselves off from much of the potential and talent in our city.

‘My job is to tell the government, teachers, unions and the schools in the city about the problem and keep the pressure on to do something about it. It is also to tell the firms that they must change as well. We need to tell them that if they want to take their firm forward they have to think of working with second chance programmes. I intend to put in place in the next four years the pattern of opportunities so that firms can work with us to reach out into communities for the people who have gone through the system. We have a duty to deal with the children who failed in the past, and give them the second chance they were never given to end the pattern of endemic discrimination.’

**Trevor Phillips – Chair, Commission for Racial Equality**

'I speak this morning as a black parent; I speak as a passionate supporter of education, the most important influence on our children.

'I am also somebody who has spent a lot of time in schools and I believe that the fundamental issue of our time is equality, for black people this means that our origins must not determine our destinies.

'Last year I promised that the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) would work with OFSTED to bear down on schools under serving black children; a year ago the CRE team led by myself met an OFSTED team and we set up steps for changing the inspection process to make race equality an inescapable process. Not an add-on, but a must do.

'Since then OFSTED have changed the questions asked of LEA's on inspections. They have changed the inspectors practice and trained those inspectors what to do. We have signed an agreement with OFSTED on dealing with schools that don't want to change by using regulatory compliance action. We are serious about this.

'Several schools and local authorities have now been monitored by OFSTED because their performance is not up to scratch with race equality. Some schools have actually been failed because of this. Next year we intend to do more.

'It matters who is in charge. Teachers matter. The most successful headteacher in the country is of Caribbean origin. Dexter Hutt is the most distinguished of the super-heads. Last year he raised the performance of three schools. The previous year he changed the performance of one Birmingham school from nine per cent good passes to 32 per cent. The year before he raised the performance of another school in Birmingham from 16 to 52 per cent. The point is that it can be done.

*'Dexter Hutt proves it matters. We need more black teachers, and if we have to pay them more to get them there then let's pay them more in the same way that we do the science teachers.'*

'We must also recognise diversity. I want the curriculum to deal with slavery, as these things matter. But diversity is not a substitute for a decent education, or for equality. 'We are in danger of being conned, by being told we're recognising you, we are accepting your difference. Being given that as a substitute for true equality and attention to our needs.



‘Racism is different. It’s not more important than sexism or ageism but it is different. It is big and ugly and evil and it will not go away by being hidden and drowned behind a lot of other ‘isms’.

‘We cannot allow racism to be swept under the carpet. This is an issue of principle, this is an issue of our future, as long as racism is here we’re not going to go away, we keep on and we will keep on doing this.’

**Grace Ononiwu – District Crown Prosecutor, Blackfriars Trial Unit**

'I am a solicitor by profession and I am currently employed by the Crown Prosecution Service as a district prosecutor. I head a unit that deals with all of the prosecutions for the boroughs of Hammersmith, Fulham, Kensington and Chelsea with approximately 120 staff. My dream.

'I can only tell you about my journey, and how it was that I was able to get where I am today. I think that parents have a very important role to play. When I tell you my story you will hear how my mother's influence and encouragement kept me going, and I think everything I am today is down to her.

'I went to the local comprehensive school, no black teachers, not one. But my parents got involved. They wanted to know that I had done my homework. They wanted to go to the parents evening.

*'I remember having a conversation with my teacher and I told her that I wanted to be a lawyer. She gave me a hundred different reasons why I couldn't do it, but not one reason why I could. And that affected me.*

'The turning point for me was when I took my O levels, as they were then, I failed every single one of them. My mother was very calm and said, "Well Gracie, that's what you are worth", and I have never failed again.

'I took those exams again and I passed them, then I did my A levels and I walked those. Then of course I went on to university, and then to law school and got my solicitor's finals.

'When I finished law school I had to do articles, it is like a traineeship. I sent out 70 applications. I got one interview. I went to that interview, and I got the job even though I had to travel two hours each way every day. I did it because I understood the importance of qualifying and achieving my goal.

'I joined the Crown Prosecution Service after I had spent a year in private practice defending, and I continue to climb the ladder. It is important not to pull that ladder up. Now I help my colleagues to progress. I also mentor under-graduates who wish to become lawyers in the future, and I take work experience children into my office. It is about giving something back.

'In my position I see too many of our children going through the court system. Wrong venue. They should be at school. I know how easy it is to



cross that line, I was very close. If it wasn't for my parents and the support they gave me I wouldn't be standing here talking to you today.

'I speak as a parent myself now, and I think it is vital that as parents we instil in our children the confidence, the determination and the enthusiasm to succeed. It's not just about knowledge. Let's invest in our children. I happen to agree they are worth it.'

**Garth Crooks – BBC TV and Radio presenter**

'I have two young children and I stand before you as a parent who has finished one career as a professional footballer and now pursues another as a BBC broadcaster. But parenthood is the most difficult career in the world and probably the most important.

'Like most parents, I'm concerned about my children's future. The challenge is to make sense of the chaos that exists in our communities. Who do I trust? Society's latest ideologies or something I know.

'Well I know that I'm black. My children are black and, because of that fact, they are facing huge challenges in modern day Britain.

'When our parents came from the Caribbean all those years ago, they came with hope, vision and a great desire. They wanted a quality life for themselves and a bright future for their children.

'These things gave us a sense of pride, community, and family. They were the days when children weren't afraid of completing chores and parents weren't afraid to ask, the days when schools were a necessity not an option.

'My mother prepared us for school. Clean and tidy and ready to learn. She brought us up to be polite and respectful. Those were the values of our parents. The question is, have we also placed them at the hearts and minds of our children?

'Much is wrong with the education system today, and those charged with the responsibility for affecting change must do so. But our role as parents must be to ensure our children are fit for purpose, strong in body, mood and spirit, ready for the challenge.

'There is a worrying ignorance of how to raise the attainment of Black-Caribbean boys. There could be a correlation between the educational attainment of our black children and the growing dissipation of our cultural values. Is there equally a correlation between our children's behaviour and the things they watch and the music they listen to? Can we change the mindset of future generations and place the same emphasis on education as we do on sport and music? If we can, then our children will not just be performing at the venues, but running them.

'We have got to practice what we preach. That means playing our part with our schools and our teachers. Not necessarily accepting it when they get it wrong but challenging it in a professional and dignified manner. It



means being bold, standing up for what we believe. Not being ashamed of those things that shape us.

‘So reach for the stars, our kids deserve it, they are worth it. If you don’t prepare your kids to succeed at school then you are preparing them to fail. This conference is a testimony to the undeniable fact that black parents are preparing their children to succeed.

‘As for those youngsters who think they are gangsters, it’s time to impose zero tolerance. We must change our children’s perspective on education and make it the mantra for an entire generation. Education is everything.’

**Dr Stan Mims – International guest speaker**

‘Failure is not an option when it comes to children. This is the centrepiece of my conversations in the schools that I have worked in. In Brooklyn, District 17, mainly consists of Caribbean children. In five years we went from last to the top 20 in New York.

‘To accomplish this task, we taught every last student.

‘We launched a mass recruitment effort; in fact, we were head to head with the authorities here in England in recruiting teachers from Barbados, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago to get teachers to work with us and to make things happen for children of colour. With that programme we were able to develop leaders to work in our schools, to become head teachers, which we call principals.

*‘We recruited teachers of colour because we knew that we had to give an example of people that look like our students in front of our students.*

‘We also had massive training in parenting. Parents should be involved in the education of their children. We got grants from large corporations and brought parents into the schools.

‘When we looked at the data we saw that when some teachers heard a strange tongue they assumed that the child was mentally challenged and didn’t promote the youngster to the right grade. We stopped that insanity and held people to account and made things happen for youngsters of Caribbean descent.

‘We looked at how we trained teachers and how we needed to train and equip them. When we hired new teachers we said, “You are going to work in districts that are largely children of colour and you must do eight weeks of training in our culture. Not only will you do eight weeks of what we call infusion or culture boot camp, you must then come for refresher courses once a month for the entire school year.

“You are going to deal with youngsters who may not have all of the homework done, they may speak with a different dialect, but we don’t want that to be a factor that will prevent you teaching our youngsters.”

‘When we launched that whole approach, teachers who did not look like us, who did not have backgrounds like us, they began to take note of what we were doing.



‘You have to inspect what you expect. When we started inspecting what we expected from everyone - directors, head teachers or principals - that is when we saw growth and instruction.

‘Now we have got to make sure it happens for all of our youngsters. When we start putting all of these ingredients together then conversations change. Youngsters who look like all of us began to achieve, because failure is not an option.’

Dr Stan Mims is Director of District Education, East St Louis, Illinois, USA

### 3 Afternoon plenary

#### **Stephen Twigg MP - Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Department for Education and Skills**

'Education provides life chances to young people, giving them opportunities, whatever neighbourhood they are born in, whatever the qualifications of the parents and whatever the colour of their skin. The national strategy to raise minority ethnic achievement allows us to identify areas of good practice and those schools that need additional support.

'It is vital that we recognise achievement. There are many individual black students, girls and boys, whose success must be celebrated. There are also many good schools. At St. Bonaventure's Roman Catholic school in Newham, 71 per cent of the black pupils achieved at least five A\* to C in their GCSEs last year. At Stockwell Park school in Lambeth, 53 per cent of its pupils achieved five A\* to C this summer, a rise from 11 per cent three years ago.

'We know what makes a difference. Strong leadership, a whole school culture with mutual respect and high expectations, teaching that engages every single pupil, strong parental and community involvement and a complete intolerance of racism or bullying of any kind.

*'We must have a more representative workforce. Parents and pupils need to have confidence in the education system and teachers need to be equipped to teach effectively in an ethnically and culturally diverse school community. African and African-Caribbean adults, especially men, must be encouraged to train as teachers.'*

'The Teacher Training Agency has targets to increase the number of black and minority ethnic teachers entering the profession. They need help to retain their skills and enthusiasm and they must be given equal opportunities to move on and up.

'The National College for School Leadership has two programmes, 'Equal Access to Promotion' and 'Shine', which develop and support aspiring black and ethnic minority senior and middle managers.

'Parents are children's first educators. They must be supported and encouraged to work in partnership with the schools their children attend. When Queen's Park Community School in Brent held a parents' meeting on black achievement, they set up parent workshops to explain the curriculum and a forum to listen to parents' views.



‘Gifted and talented black pupils, and those with special educational needs must be identified and given appropriate support. Parents must have guidance on the GCSE subjects that their children are taking, and success stories must be promoted to counter negative stereotypes.

‘The level of exclusion of black pupils, particularly black boys, remains unacceptably high in our schools. We are encouraging schools to reduce them. Schools in the boroughs of Lewisham, Wandsworth and Enfield are mentoring boys in year seven and this is already making a difference. Pupils have a much more positive attitude to work and are growing in self-confidence.

‘London schools are exciting and vibrant places, and this is due to the talent of pupils and the expertise of the teachers and others working in them. We must harness this talent, to ensure that every child in every school reaches their full potential.’

**Lee Jasper – Director for Equalities and Policing, Mayor’s Office**

‘At the present rate of progress, we will not achieve a diverse rate teaching workforce for London until the middle of this century.

‘We need to set challenging targets of teacher recruitment at local educational levels. They need to be set at 25-30 per cent, year on year, so that we can bring that down to a diverse teaching workforce in ten years, not nearer 50.

‘We can talk about the quality of our commitment, and the complexity of our policy, but if it does not result in a reasonable rate of progress for London then it is not worth the paper it is written on. It is not acceptable that in the year 2004, black teachers are so underrepresented in our schools when compared with the pupil populations they are asked to teach. It is not acceptable progress. You hear about the policy efforts, and I welcome the government’s commitments, but it must be remembered that it is the quantum output that is the key.

‘Education is a fundamental human right, and we want to see that reflected in government policy towards our community. We have seen a lot of people say you cannot blame us or blame this. But if we can accept our responsibility for the failure of our children, then I say to teachers please accept your responsibility in helping us to overcome that problem.

‘I have seen in the media all sorts of programmes seeking to run down black men. We are not a national sport for people to take pot shots at. I know that when we are talking about taking self-responsibility and cultural change, change seems to be far in coming. But we have already produced a change, and don’t let anybody say that change cannot happen. We are already part of a process of achieving change, and what the government has announced is a direct response to yourselves and to Diane bringing them to the table.

‘The first and most critical step in building the political case for change is to change our priorities. This generation, my generation, your generation cannot be the first generation whose legacy to bequeath to their children is a society that offers fewer opportunities than those bequeathed to us by our parents. We must not be that generation.’





### **Kwame Kwei Armah – Actor and playwright**

'The theme of the conference this year is 'Reaching for the Stars', which has been made possible because we have taken to heart last year's theme of searching for solutions.

'In the media of late, the Afro Caribbean boy has taken a lot of flak. I have read accounts and news items that reflect the negative rather than the positive, and I see the trend of having a black face expose the negative polemic of others.

'A role model of mine, the novelist, playwright and activist James Bourne, once said "The ultimate end point of the debate is to uplift not to deflate. But, having the brows taken over by these mercenaries, it limits effectiveness of those who want to write produce and create from the heart." His continuity of thought throughout his writing career enabled a generation of black playwrights and writers to perceive that we are a continuation of voices that have existed since the beginning of time – black voices, Caribbean voices.

'You know one of the theories I hear planted about that we as West Indians, Caribbean people do not value education. That we do not aspire to cerebral excellence. I stand here to defy that. Every one of my mother's children holds a minimum of a Masters degree. More than half of my extended family went to fee paying schools and each member of my family belongs to the working class, which meant they worked day and night and sacrificed everything to enable us to be what we are today. They reached the stars and they grabbed them and pulled them down to earth. How dare they say that we as West Indians do not value education? I have to say it to them – Fie upon them!

'I stand here as a working class African Caribbean, who grew up in a country where I had to see across the seas to show me that the sky is the limit. Now this generation does not have to look that far, we have award winning authors, playwrights, artists, photographers, MPs.

'At the highest level of business and art we are beginning to make glorious inroads. Now, in my opinion, is the best time to be black, ambitious and talented. The doors are beginning to open. We all know that education is the only true elevator and that is why I praise you for finding solutions for our children'.

## 4 Closing plenary

### **Sashi Sivaloganathan – Vice Chair, General Teaching Council for England**

'I went into teaching because of a philosophy my parents gave me: leave the world a better place than how you found it. As a teacher, I only have one philosophy when I walk into a classroom. That is.. they will achieve.

'The school I work in now is the best school I've ever worked in. It is a special school for kids with emotional and behavioural difficulties who have been excluded from other schools.

'I asked some of my current year 11 kids what makes a good teacher. "Good hygiene, Good dress sense, strictnes."

'When I talk to children, strictness really means you won't allow me to fail. You won't let me get to the point where I will be excluded. You will pull me back. When we talk about a safe and secure environment, it isn't just a physically safe and secure environment we are talking about, but an emotional one as well. We will not let you fail.

'I have spoken to a lot of teachers today. The General Teaching Council is in a special position in that one of our remits is to advise the Secretary of State. When we talk to you at conferences like this, or when we get involved in a network, it is so important because we are not just learning from each other. We can make this policy, we can make this happen everywhere.

'I'm very honoured, but it has not always been so easy. People talk about a glass ceiling. I can talk about a concrete one. I couldn't even see the top. I remember telling a head teacher I did some work with, that I would like to become senior management one day. "Well. I don't know if you're the front that we want to see." Institutionalised racism, not overt, just attitude and little comments.

'Today, the General Teaching Council is there to support and share the good practice that goes on. We talk about teaching as a whole, not just teachers. We talk to parents, we talk to pupils, we talk to governors, we talk to everybody who has an investment in teaching.

'We can look at where children are failing, we can look at exactly what good teachers are doing, what good parents are doing, what is actually working. Let's share that so that the failure and the successes aren't pocketed, but are successes all over London and all over the country.



'It is important that when we build the future it is a real future. It's not just for one generation, it is for every generation that follows. We must enable every single young person, regardless of where they come from, how they speak, what they look like, to achieve their potential. Not just be part of society, but to actually stand up and say I have made the world a better place. My life has been worthwhile. I am not nobody, I am somebody.'

**Leroy Logan – Chair, Black Police Association**

‘In the Police Service I think we have a unique and authoritative voice in certain issues that affect people’s lives. We know that policing has been used in a way that causes intolerance and devalues communities. In the Black Police Association we recognise that in policing we have a very clear influence, positive or negative, towards young people especially.

I was born in Islington, and went to a normal state school. I realised from a very early age that if I hadn’t had my father behind me and my mother quietly praying for me then I wouldn’t be standing here in front of you. I cannot underestimate the importance of parenting and the values of community and family.

‘The police have a very clear influence, positive or negative, on young people. I remember as a child I would actually run away from police officers. Not that I was doing anything wrong, because I was scared.

‘Still, I went on to further education, became a scientist and worked in the National Health Service. Then I decided to join the police service. I believe it was a calling and I responded.

‘The first ten years have been tough, but I am encouraged by the desire to challenge opinions about police officers and police staff from black and other minority groups. Our aims and objectives are to make the changes that we all want to see.

‘So far as I am concerned change will come through our young people. We must trust in young people, develop our leadership programme and the work that we are doing in response to recent new legislation. We must protect our young people by educating them in a safe environment.

‘For there is a crisis out there. At three or four o’clock in the morning London changes. It is a totally different universe and unfortunately a lot of young people are lost in it. They don’t feel they are worth anything and they don’t believe anyone else is worth anything. That is how the spiral continues. Our young people must understand the world in which they live, not only to change their environment, but also to influence other young people.

‘Our youth programme is now going out across London. The priority is those boroughs where there is crime in the black community with drugs and firearm offences, Haringey, Hackney, Southwark, and Newham are in the first phase.



‘Young people remind us of community and family values. We must see where they are coming from and put it in the context of music and media influence and of course, computer games. We have to challenge them not to alienate them, but to give them alternatives.’

## 5 Workshop discussions

### **Black Boys: LDA Education Commission Report**

#### **Speakers**

Lee Jasper; William Atkinson; Yvonne Thompson; Joyce Moore

#### **Introduction**

The London Development Agency funded a year-long project into the underachievement of Afro-Caribbean boys to find out why they are failing at school and what can be done to change the situation.

Sixty per cent of all Afro-Caribbean people in the United Kingdom live in London. Minorities are what make cities great and we wanted to prove this statement, encourage more role models and show our youngsters that their dreams are attainable.

#### **Key Issues**

- In general black pupils feel that black teachers are more encouraging and have higher expectations of them.
- It should be a matter of routine to have high calibre black teachers in our schools, and more black professionals acting as school governors.
- The teaching force needs to be stable and of the highest calibre. It is only then that you can challenge, engage and move children on.
- The power of schools to improve or inhibit the life chances of young people is significant. All children, irrespective of race, gender or background, come to school with the potential to learn.
- To recruit and retain the very best teachers we must offer the necessary salaries and ensure that the resources and the levels of challenge are in place.
- We need a commitment from all stakeholders to confront the issue of black underperformance.
- Critical factors in the underperformance of children are negative peer pressure and insufficient levels of parental involvement.
- We need more parents in the classroom. This has a transforming effect on learning by changing the attitude of their child, the teachers, and other black children in that classroom.

### The Report

This report highlights how many black children feel about their education and learning. It also looks at the educational experiences of children of all nationalities and all ethnicity groups and compares experiences.

An independent Education Commission was established by the Mayor to consider the data from previous research, DfES monitoring, and pupil questionnaires and interviews. Some questions were:

*Do you think black pupils often have a different school experience to white pupils?*

Forty-nine per cent of Black-Caribbean boys said yes, in contrast to only 14 per cent of white boys.

*How important do you think getting a good education is?*

Eighty-six per cent of Black Caribbean boys said very important, compared to 73 per cent of white boys.

*Do you talk to your parents about school every day?*

Caribbean boys had the lowest positive response.

Due to the 2002 Race Relations Amendment Act, the data gathered from these questions and the other research could be monitored and analysed by both race and gender.

At GCSE, on average 51 per cent of pupils of all races gained five or more A\* to C grades. Analysing by race this includes: Over 70 per cent of Chinese pupils; 35 per cent of Black-Caribbean girls; and only 21.6 per cent of Black-Caribbean boys. In some individual London boroughs that figure goes even lower.

At key stage four, Black-Caribbean boys are the lowest performers of all ethnic groups. Black-Caribbean girls are the lowest of all girls. Chinese and Indian pupils were the highest in all groups.

By the end of key stage four, Black-Caribbean pupils (boys and girls) achieve 17 per cent lower grades than white pupils.

The data gives the same message throughout. Black-Caribbean children, specifically boys, are the lowest performers of all ethnic groups.

### Report Recommendations

The report makes 72 recommendations aimed at different stakeholders in the education system, these include:

- *There must be an appropriate demographic representation of teachers in London schools.*
- *Teacher training providers need financial support to help them reach recruitment targets for trainee black teachers. The Teacher Training Agency needs to develop specific strategies to meet these targets.*
- *There should be a Londonwide support network for black teachers.*
- The DfES should establish a five-year strategy for raising the achievements of Black-Caribbean students and pupils.
- It should be a legal obligation for parents to attend school events to get progress reports about their children's education and suggestions as to how they can help. Parents should be in contact with the school on at least a monthly basis and should, if necessary, be paid for taking time off from work to do this.
- A percentage of the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grants should be used to raise the level of attainment of Afro-Caribbean pupils.
- London boroughs with 10 per cent or more of African or African-Caribbean pupils should develop action plans to maximise attainment levels.
- Black parents must talk to their children, especially their sons, about school on a daily basis.
- The National College of School Leadership should provide more short courses for black and minority ethnic teachers.
- Schools must work with black community groups and supplementary schools.
- Everyone – parents, teachers, schools, education authorities, local government, central government and especially the pupils themselves – must work together to change the situation.
- The success of those Caribbean pupils who are bucking the trend and excelling in school should be highlighted and celebrated.

- Parents need to ensure their children are exposed to role models in their own family, church or community. These should include black people who have achieved academically.
- Parents should meet regularly with head teachers to discuss how their individual school is dealing with these issues.
- This report is the evidence needed to get things done. We must keep the debate going to ensure that progress is made.

This workshop was sponsored by the London Development Agency,  
[www.lda.gov.uk](http://www.lda.gov.uk)

## Black Teachers

### Speakers

Ivy Scott	Vice-Chair, The Lydiard Group
Elena-Noel Beswick	Deputy Head in specialist Technology College, Secretary of the Lydiard Group
Roselle Samuel	Secondary school teacher in middle management Treasurer of the Lydiard Group

### Introduction

This workshop was sponsored by the National Union of Teachers and facilitated by the Lydiard Group. The union works to improve equality and representation of black teachers with the teaching profession.

### Key issues and recommendations

- *The NUT is urging the Teacher Training Agency to introduce a national strategy to increase the number of black teachers in the profession.*
- The NUT wants to see black teachers as the norm in schools and not always as token role models or the ethnic experts.
- The retention of black teachers is a major issue. The NUT would like to see the government commission an independent research group to identify the reasons why black teachers do not stay in education.
- Black teachers are often in insecure and junior posts. They are under-represented in senior management positions and a lot of black teachers stay on the bottom of the scale in school. Promotion is a major issue.
- There is a need to take positive action. There should be a concerted strategy on the recruitment and retention of black teachers and a clear commitment on the part of the government.
- One of the fundamental tools is statistical information about black teachers in the profession. Hopefully, the Race Relations Amendment Act will provide us with that vital information.
- Specific training for black teachers needs to be widely available and it must be evaluated to find out how many of the attendees go on to make head-teachers or senior managers. This must be backed by a clear professional development strategy for black teachers.

- It is essential that the needs and aspirations of black teachers are an integral, yet explicit part of every policy. They must be considered part of the mainstream and included in policies about the recruitment, retention and promoting of teachers in general.

### **The Lydiard Group**

The Lydiard Group is a collective of dynamic African-Caribbean women educators. Their mission is to empower Afro-Caribbean women and their families through inspirational, personal, professional, cultural and educational programmes, and has established the London African Caribbean Education Network Project.

The Lydiard Group has personal development programmes for educators and teachers. These include seminars on interviewing techniques, ICT, stress management, assertiveness training and promotion.

National Union of Teachers information can be found on [www.teachers.org.uk](http://www.teachers.org.uk). For further information on the Lydiard Group, please visit [www.lydiardgroup.com](http://www.lydiardgroup.com)

## Supporting Black Teachers: Achieve Network

This workshop was sponsored and facilitated by the General Teaching Council for England.

### Speakers

Judy Moorhouse  
Steve Morrison  
Shiraz Chakera  
Dr Rob Berkeley

### Introduction

The General Teaching Council (GTC) for England was set up four years ago as an independent professional body for teaching. Its role is to maintain a database of registered teachers, act as a regulatory body on standards and provide a single professional voice to the government and other professional stakeholders on educational matters.

There are many people within the teaching profession who want to do something about the underachievement of so many young black people. The key is how we as a group can share our knowledge, build relationships and harness our individual and collective strengths to raise attainment and improve the life chances of all young people.

*The GTC believes that the teaching profession is most effective when it is representative of the communities it serves. It needs to be informed and constructed by the variety of voices that make up society.*

In cases of misconduct and incompetence, teachers can now have their cases heard by panels of their peers. This is in line with other established professions.

The GTC also advises the Secretary of State for Education on a range of education matters from standards of initial teacher training, through to retention of teachers and professional development.

To inform policy work, the GTC has regular teacher meetings, focus groups and established networks.

The ACHIEVE network is a professional development network aimed at all those committed to promoting race equality.



### Key Issues

The current situation is scandalous:

- Seventy per cent of black boys in London do not get five GCSEs graded between A\* and C.
- Only four per cent of undergraduates starting at Oxford University are black.
- Nationally, black boys are three times more likely to get excluded. In some London boroughs it is nine times.
- Black Caribbean girls are the lowest performing group of girls

The most scandalous aspect is that this is nothing new. It has been happening for more than 30 years. Underachievement is a tragedy for a community or a group but it is actually about thousands or indeed millions of personal tragedies.

However, there are also considerable successes. The lesson we can take from that success is that none of the negative outcomes are inevitable and a timely intervention does work. The aspiration must be for all young people to reach their potential.

*An important aspect is the background of teachers in London schools. We need more black teachers and we need them to be successful at all levels. Black and minority ethnic teachers remain chronically underrepresented in comparison to the pupil populations they teach.*

*This is an issue about equality in our schools. If schools cannot, recruit, retain and support black teachers that what does this say about a school's attitude to race equality? If they fail to reflect the diversity of the community in their staffing practices, how can we expect this diversity to be recognised in the curriculum or in the ethos of the school?*

*Any institution that claims to be of public service, that is interested in educating all children should engage a diverse range of people in so doing, and use that diversity in order to be effective.*

In many professions where there has been historic under-representation, networks have been formed to identify racism and offer support so that people can learn from each other and promote the profession to others in that community. The GTC is launching the ACHIEVE network to play that role.

We are launching the new ACHIEVE network to promote race equality in schools. The impetus is the chronic underachievement by some ethnic minority young people, many of whom are leaving the education system with racist values and lack of tolerance.

We know that there is under-representation of black and minority ethnic teachers in the workforce and research also tells us that there are extra barriers in the career development of black and minority ethnic teachers.

The ACHIEVE network will provide a means for educational professional to exchange ideas about their experiences and their practices with people with similar interests and backgrounds. This will ensure that successful strategies are spread across the system quickly and effectively and that professionals have access to both the latest policy developments and grassroots solutions.

We will encourage the sharing of ideas in order to:

- tackle minority ethnic pupil underachievement
- allow all pupils to live in a multi-ethnic society
- ensure the teaching workforce is representative of the community it serves and encourage the professional development of all its members.

The network is open to all education professionals with a particular interest in promoting race equality in schools. We are looking for teachers, teaching assistants, heads, senior managements, LEAs and governors to join.

The GTC believes that all educational professionals have a responsibility to ensure that race equality is being delivered for in their institution and so we will be looking for strong membership in all communities.

*In order to be effective as a black teacher in England you have to be an agent of change.*

*We need to hear your voice to know how we can improve both the system and status of black teachers and the academic and social achievements of black students.*

This workshop was sponsored by the General Teaching Council for England. Further information on the ACHIEVE network can be found on the GTC website, [www.gtce.org.uk](http://www.gtce.org.uk)

## **Aiming High: The Government's response**

### **Speakers**

Velma McGregor; Greg Roachford; Oveta McInnis; Foyla Bailey; Ian Powell from Northumberland Park School in Haringey and Kingsdale School in Southwark.

### **Introduction**

In 2002 the Government committed itself to developing a national strategy for raising the achievement of Afro-Caribbean pupils. For the first time this became a government priority.

Out of this came the Aiming High African-Caribbean Achievement Project. The pilot scheme works with 30 schools across the country and gives them extra funding and resources to focus on improving black achievement.

All schools must take the strategy seriously and they need the skills and resources to deliver improved results. If successful, the Aiming High project will be rolled out across the country.

### **The Aiming High Strategy**

The schools chosen to take part in the pilot scheme have large numbers of African-Caribbean pupils, many not achieving their full potential. These schools are forward thinking and prepared to make changes in their approach.

The schools are closely monitored and expected to focus on several target areas:

- Raising the number of African-Caribbean students achieving five good A\* to C grades at GCSE;
- Reducing the level of exclusions of African-Caribbean pupils
- Getting parents move actively involved in their children's education
- Creating a culture based on success, high expectations and respect at all levels.

The curriculum materials across the school must reflect the diversity of Britain and the world and, more specifically, the African-Caribbean children in the school.

After 20 years of a static national curriculum, we are finally realising how important it is that the materials reflect the children in the school, and give an understanding of the contributions that black people have made.

The schools are leading edge schools in terms of racial awareness and diversity. Students from all backgrounds focus on success, and the belief is that anyone can succeed, no matter what level they started at.

### **Northumberland Park School**

The pilot project lasts for one and half years and Northumberland Park School in North London has been involved from the outset.

They began by setting up a working group to lead the rest of the school in raising the attainment of African-Caribbean students.

Groups of suitable students working towards their SATS or GCSE examinations in summer 2005 were then identified, with approximately 72 students from two age groups.

### **Staffing**

The focus is also on raising staff awareness. An initial inset day looked on race issues and formed a mission statement:

*'We want students of African-Caribbean descent to aim high and achieve their full potential. Students will be supported to do their best, will be treated fairly by all staff and will be fully prepared for their future when they leave school. The curriculum will reflect diverse cultures and will be relevant to the students'.*

*Black members of staff work directly with the small groups of students and act as consultants. The consultant teacher is there to support and listen, to help the student academically, socially and emotionally.*

Consultant teachers meet regularly with the students to encourage, motivate and give them an extra push towards fulfilling their potential. They are genuinely concerned about the students' future and value each one as an individual. The students themselves appreciate that someone is interested in them and believes they can succeed.

The school has consultancy groups and an enrichment programme, including cultural trips, for the students in order for them to extend their skills.

### Parents

Improving relationships with parents and carers is also very important. A specific parents' launch of the initiative was organised and a parents' focus group was formed.

### Speakers and role models

Outside speakers were invited to give talks to both students and parents. Successful black role models who are available to come into school and speak about their experiences were also invited so the students see that hard work and perseverance can bring success.

### Students

Students have become responsible for their own learning and are more independent, we help them to have self-confidence and self-esteem. There have been positive changes in behaviour, attitude towards school, relationships with teachers and a great improvement in academic performance.

### Use of statistical data

The school uses data monitoring to look at each individual student. The staff can see how each pupil is getting on and track them through each term in each different subject.

Exclusion data is also monitored and by seeing patterns and acting, we are able to reduce the exclusion rate. It is making a difference. The ethos is changing, the students are relating and feeling part of the school.

### **Kingsdale School**

Kingsdale School joined the Aiming High pilot project in January 2004. It is a multi-cultural school where 35 per cent of the students and 30 per cent of the staff are African-Caribbean.

The school surveyed the views of teachers, parents, governors and pupils, and then put together an action plan.

*This praised the leadership of the head teacher and senior management team and the fact that staff had been recruited from an African-Caribbean background in order to reflect the children at the school and provide good role models.*

### Parents

Parents were encouraged to be fully involved in the life of the school. Regular meetings between parents and teachers were scheduled, targeting the parents of those pupils who were underachieving and in danger of exclusion.

A parents' group was also set up, talking about curriculum areas and allowing parents to have access to the school.

### Mentoring

Mentoring projects were introduced into the school. This helped to raise the pupils' self-esteem and they became much more polite and willing to learn.

Each department across the school had to show how they were going to tackle diversity and show how this was going to be communicated to the pupils.

### Students

A focus group was set up to monitor the project from students' viewpoint. All the children felt that the project brought them respect from their teachers.

Children performing significantly below their ability were identified and teachers held accountable. Personal tutors used this data to raise concerns directly with the child and talk about specific problems.

All this extra work will result in better grades for African-Caribbean pupils.

Schools can and do make a difference.

This workshop was sponsored by the Department for Education and Skills,  
[www.dfes.gov.uk](http://www.dfes.gov.uk)

## Parents Part I: Parent and Governors Network

### Introduction

The Black Londoners Forum currently has over 1700 members. We want to work to ensure that there is a voice from our people on policy and so we lobby and tackle government on a range of different issues.

Afroice is organised by the Black Londoners Forum, and is a network that aims to share information and ideas to help parents become more involved with their children's education.

More black parent governors are crucial to help us deal with these and other issues. We must train and empower black parents to feel they can step into that position.

Afroice supports parents and puts together ideas on best practice. It is specifically focussed on the attainment of our children and looking at the way forward. Parental involvement is absolutely vital to a successful education.

Parents need to be proactive and provide a voice for our children, going into schools and standing up for their rights.

### Future activities

We will:

- Offer advice and information and look to create a database of all the information that parents need so we can then exchange ideas and pass on good practice
- Make information available via a dedicated website
- Publish regular newsletters to keep parents informed of important developments
- Hold workshops in the local community, so that no matter where you are, we can come together and share information and solutions
- Train parents to be effective as governors, to be able to network and positively influence school policy
- Ensure that all parents feel empowered to get involved
- Help parents consider how they can become more involved in their children's education.

For more information on the Afroice Parent and School Governor Network, please contact Afroice, c/o Black Londoners Forum on **020 8709 978**

## Parents Part II: Helping Your Child Achieve

### Chair

Denise Brown

### Speakers

David Simon – Founder of Ebony Saturday schools and author of the book ‘How to Unlock your Child’s Genius’.

Ken Barnes – Founder and president of ‘100 Black Men of London’, community mentoring organisation.

Oliver Lackey – Member of 100 Black Men of London.

### Introduction

This workshop sought to show what parents and the community can do to help support their child’s education.

### Key Issues

We need to raise parents’ awareness of what they need to do to enrich the learning environment as a whole. Even though our young people face issues such as institutional racism at school, the foundation of learning should be in the home.

To start on this programme parents should think about the following questions:

- Have you undertaken any reading on the national curriculum?
- Have you made an education action plan for your child that has built in strategies?
- Does your child have a mentor?
- Have you made financial plans to support your child’s education?
- Have you identified resources, especially cultural resources such as museums, to support your child’s learning?
- Do you know about the power relations within the school?
- Have you given your child guidance on how to cope with issues that may affect their learning, such as bullying, racism or negative peer pressure?



- Have you developed a support network with other parents?
- Do you celebrate your child's educational achievements?
- Are you aware of the government's short and long-term educational policies?

The aim is to show parents how they can support their child's education. Parents can often do a lot more than they realise. Always remember that the parent is the first and most powerful teacher of all.

This workshop was sponsored by Pride Parenting magazine

For further information on the work of David Simon and Ebony Saturday Schools, please email [ebonyeducation@hotmail.com](mailto:ebonyeducation@hotmail.com)

For further information on the work of 100 Black Men of London please email [info@100bmol.org.uk](mailto:info@100bmol.org.uk)

## **Pupil Exclusions**

### **Speakers**

Professor Cecile Wright

Dr Sandra Richards

### **Introduction**

Exclusion affects us as a community, as families, and leads to social and economic instability. Society at large needs to be concerned about this issue.

There is a strong correlation between being excluded from school and being an adult with no qualifications, no employment and ending up in the criminal justice or mental health system. Exclusion from school can be the catalyst for other exclusionary experiences throughout life.

The Rowntree Foundation funded a national research programme to look at why children are excluded, why is it becoming a systematic experience, and also at those young people who were successfully re-integrated into education.

It questions whether young people really deserve this and gives a voice to those caught up in this dehumanising experience.

Thirty-three excluded young people contributed. It mapped the changes in their lives over an 18-month period. Often they were thrown out of school at a critical moment in their educational career, and were then left in educational limbo. The only further input they received was through community education.

However, the majority of the young people in this study were reintroduced into education or some sort of vocational training activity.

### **Main findings**

- Support from family and friends is crucial. When a child is excluded from school it is not just the child that is excluded, but the whole family.
- Many of these young people felt that what had happened to them was unfair. They were traumatised and felt a sense of betrayal. It was important that they received unconditional support and that someone believed in them.
- Community organisation and networks are also vital. Parents need to mobilise the assistance of community groups and have access to resources to keep the educational input going. This keeps the young people focussed and motivated.
- The attitude of the young people was also important. They have taken a tremendous knock in terms of self-esteem but many still had high aspirations in terms of education and were astute enough to discern between temporary factors against their interest and the significance of getting an education.

### **Key Issues**

#### *Teachers and educators*

*Educators must have an informed perception of the children they teach. If it is not correct this will result in them behaving towards a child in a way that is not supportive of the child.*

Children are at school to get an education, teachers are there to offer a service to our children. Parents should be working with teachers to raise the achievement of the child.

*The teacher needs to be fully aware of the issues concerning the particular child. The research shows that when this is done the teacher becomes more effective and less likely to exclude the child based on some misunderstanding.*

Teachers working directly with young people who are at risk of exclusion or have been excluded often have positive effects on those young people. However, sometimes the teachers are themselves marginalised by colleagues.

Teachers should also seek to build relationships with the community. They cannot relate to a young person if they know nothing about their community, and this results in the child becoming ostracised and confused.

There must be constant dialogue between teachers, parents and pupils. Parents must feel part of the education process and their ideals and concepts should be considered.

Youth and community workers, supplementary schools, mentors and other additional groups are doing a fantastic job with young people both in and out of school. A system to support and fund this work needs to be put in place.

We must have high expectations of everyone within the system – the teachers, parents, and the young people themselves. Everyone should always push on to the next level of achievement.

### **Further comments**

- Education is a right not a privilege. There is no other European country where permanent exclusion of a child is accepted. The root of the problem is that it is now enshrined in British law as part of the Education Act.
- In Europe different mechanisms are used to engage with difficult children, as systems are based on the premise that education is a right not a privilege. This is taken for granted, so teachers do what they can to educate that young person.
- There is too much power in the hands of the head teacher and the school governors. They exclude a child yet it is up to the LEA to find a solution.



- The system encourages exclusion because schools are organised in competition with each other. The problem is the market entering into education. As soon as a child is a problem, there is a pressure to get them out rather than help them get extra help when they need it.
- Exclusion is now used as a weapon against our children. It is no longer considered a final punishment and parents are left powerless.
- Circular 1099 is a government guideline on exclusion. It states that exclusion should only be as a last resort, and it suggests other solutions. Parents need to be aware of these guidelines and what they can do in this situation.

## International Solutions

### Speaker

Dr Stan Mims

### Introduction

Black and Caribbean communities in the United States have the same cultural background and family values as those in Britain. There are also many similarities between the British and American education systems and the problems our children face.

We share your lack of black teachers. We are unable to attract and retain black teachers. In the United States there are less than 200,000 black teachers out of a teaching force in the millions.

The Bronx is a district where all the students are black and Latino, but 80 per cent of the teachers are white.

The US law 'No Child Left Behind' states that 50 per cent of all the schools must reach their targets in any one district. This means that 40 per cent of the eighth graders need to be performing above standard in each sub-group of ethnicity, gender, language, income and special educational needs.

We have worked hard to achieve these goals against a background of underachievement, low expectations and inherent racist attitudes.

### Key issues – the New York experience

#### Head teachers

Head teachers must realise that they have the greatest power in the world to make things happen for the children in their school. They must support any initiative.

To change schools you have to hold head teachers to account. But they themselves must be supported and able to keep up their own professional development.

Once head teachers understood the problems they can go back to their schools and drive the initiative.

Head teachers must in turn support the teachers. Examples include finding mentors, sending them to a workshops, introducing job targets to help each individual teacher move up to the next level.

### Classroom teachers

Teaching is a difficult vocation and successful individuals have to be conviction driven. It all becomes worthwhile when a youngster comes back to say 'I'm somebody because you believed in me'.

Everybody involved in the education system must learn what rigorous, quality education really is. When good pedagogy is happening in the classroom it must be recognised and celebrated.

*Teachers are open to change and innovation. Look at how you can re-tool and retrain the teachers. However, any training must be ongoing, sustainable and embedded. The teachers must find the energy and enthusiasm needed to help them tackle underachievement.*

### Parents

The greatest impact you can have on a school is to get parents and the local community involved. There are lots of extremely talented people just waiting to help.

It is crucial to keep parents on side. In the United States we see parents less and less as their children get older. So we had parents meetings in the mornings and the evenings, and introduced baby-sitter and translation services to encourage all parents to turn up. We taught parents how to work with the system, to push if they encountered problems, to speak to teachers and find out exactly why their child was failing.

Parents must be able to trust the system. The head teachers and classroom teachers must be transparent and they must work with the parents.

When asked, many parents didn't think the curriculum was good enough. They wanted it to be more rigorous and quality driven. They wanted their children challenged. So we changed the curriculum to what the parents wanted, and the result was a rise in the number of high-achieving school.

### Learning

*Improvements in the level of achievement can be made. We need to change the expectations of the teachers, ensure the level of teaching is rigorous and challenges the children, and increase the intensity of parental involvement.*

Potential failure has to be acted upon early, as it will only get worse as the child goes through the system. If no action is taken, they will leave school with no qualifications and inadequate life skills.

We have to be advocates for the children. Too many times underachievement is more the result of incompetent teachers than children who cannot learn. Teachers must not see a child as problematic and labour-intensive, they must see a child with possibilities.

We should always celebrate the youngsters who achieve good results in national exams. When you do, it makes other kids think I want to be like that next year. Celebrate and recognise the smallest success.

#### Education for minority ethnic groups

In the United States, Hispanics have gained ground over the last decade because they have worked the system. They have always done well in maths because it is non-verbal, non-bias and consistent. English language learners play to their strongest subject until they mastered the language.

With any minority group, the kids need to be in school and the parents need to learn how to play the system. We have to be astute enough to become part of the culture of those who have the wherewithal to get somewhere.

#### Conclusions

To deal with high exclusion rates it is important to identify reasons. Demand better behaviour from your students, but also ensure that disciplinary action is fair and just. Exclusion should only be used as a last option after alternatives have been tried.

Constantly remind children about the importance of their exams, it must be a personal issue to them, the desire to succeed needs to be intrinsic and embedded.

Continue to put the need of the black young person centre stage. Keep it on the lips and minds of the politicians. Remember, if we don't care as educators, then nobody else will.



## Education: An Afrikan-centred approach

### Introduction

This workshop was chaired by Brother Mbandaka.

### Key issues

- *Children learn best when they can see themselves in their own learning materials and when they are educated within their own cultural matrix. This is what white children experience when they go into school, thus black children are at an immediate disadvantage.*

### The current situation in the British education system

- The basic philosophy and teaching materials of many schools create a barrier to equality. Alongside this the mindset and personal education of teachers themselves often favours one ethnic group of pupils over another.
- In the early years of education black children are ahead of other groups, by secondary school they are declining rapidly.
- Only approximately five per cent of black children will go on to higher education after leaving school. In some areas 90 per cent of all black boys are leaving school functionally illiterate.
- Black pupils are four times more likely to be excluded. Four out of five permanently excluded do not return to mainstream with 40 per cent ending up in the criminal justice system.
- In order to be accepted in society, many Afrikan-heritage pupils feel that they must deny their true identity and assimilate the ideals of a Euro-centric education system.
- Black children score 20 points above average when they enter school but leave school 21 points below average. This is the only group for which this is true.
- The root cause of the catastrophe facing our children and young people is institutional racism. Both the education system and other key institutions in society are inherently racist.
- The nature of the British educational system is designed to promote, preserve and protect the status quo. That is, the social order, cultural values and political objectives of the society.

- *Many of the same issues that had to be addressed in the police force due to the Stephen Lawrence inquiry, must now be addressed in the education system.*

### **Solutions and recommendations for change**

- We must identify and address the specific needs of Afrikan-heritage children.
- We must stop trying to fit black children into a system and situation that was not designed to compliment their nature, needs or ability.
- Afrikan-heritage children should be able to use their own cultural history, traditions and experiences as a learning tool. They must be given knowledge of themselves and their background.
- *We must ensure that all teaching professionals and experts understand the culture and community of the children they teach.*
- Everybody involved in education, must respect and celebrate racial and cultural pride in the context of both learning achievements and daily community life.
- Young black people should be heard. They need to speak up about what they are experiencing in schools and what changes need to be made to ensure equality of opportunity.
- Black parents must work together for change. We must bring our communities together and be active in different groups and organisations to push for change.

## 6 London Schools and the Black Child Achievement Awards



'The London Schools and the Black Child Achievement Awards are intended to recognise that despite the many obstacles there are black children achieving in our schools and others who are making an enormous contribution to the education of our children.' Diane Abbott MP

### **Claudia Jones Supplementary School – Outstanding Contribution to the Supplementary Schooling Movement**

'You will forgive me if this year if we have chosen to honour a Hackney supplementary school, the Claudia Jones supplementary school. You will be aware that Claudia Jones is significant not least because it is named after one of our great political leaders, Claudia Jones, a woman who sacrificed herself for a cause. However, you should also be aware of Claudia Jones's stellar performance down the years in helping black children achieve all that they can be.

'I speak of what I know, because for many years my son was a faithful Claudia Jones attendee, and I say to parents, if you don't support your local supplementary school, you should. Claudia Jones has been serving the community for many years and celebrated its 21st anniversary this year, and those of you who work in the community will know the struggles with funding, and institutions that the women who founded Claudia Jones have had to go through to get where they are today and survive for 21 years. It gives me enormous pleasure to award the Claudia Jones Supplementary School the London Schools and the Black Child



Achievement Award for their outstanding contribution to the supplementary schooling movement.'

### **Yvonne Pitkin – Outstanding Contribution to Teaching**

'Our next award is to one of the distinguished ranks of black teachers. We have called at this conference for the recruitment of many more black teachers to London's teaching work force. However, equally important is that we are also calling for the support and the honouring of the black teachers who are out there day-to-day, trying to make it better for our children. Yvonne Pitkin is somebody who has been down there in the trenches, more years than she would like me to recall. She is head of English and Maths at Waltham Forest College and has won many plaudits for academic and educational excellence. Generations of black students can point to Yvonne Pitkin and say that she made a difference.'



### **Jamila Johnson – Outstanding Academic Achievement**

'Jamila Johnson attends Prendergast School in Lewisham, south London. She is a school girl who is currently studying Spanish, French and English literature at A level. Jamila has a total of 11 GCSEs, including seven As and two A\* grades, and is applying to some of the UK's most prestigious universities to read Modern and Medieval Languages. Jamila has enjoyed the support and guidance of her parents and the commitment of the teachers who have taught her throughout her primary and secondary school years.'

### **Victor Oderinde – Outstanding Academic Achievement**

'Victor attended Cardinal Pole Roman Catholic Secondary School Hackney, and in his GCSE's achieved seven A\*, two As and one B grade. Victor is now studying English Literature, Maths, Further Maths and Politics and wants to become a corporate lawyer. Victor attributes much of his success to his parents.'

## 7 Conference recommendations

London Schools and the Black Child III produced a huge amount of lively discussion and debate.

Here are the main recommendations from the event:

- The teaching workforce should represent the student population it serves.
- There should be more black teachers in London schools to reflect the high percentage of black pupils.
- Stringent targets for the recruitment of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) teachers need to be set and rigorously applied.
- The Teacher Training Agency (now Training and Development Agency for Schools) must develop specific strategies to meet these targets.
- Teacher training providers (ITTPs) should be given increased incentives to recruit BME teachers.
- An independent Londonwide network for BME teachers should be established to support black teachers in schools and encourage shared learning.
- The need of the young black child must be paramount in raising achievement and must be kept as the primary focus.
- Teachers must be given the skills to teach diverse pupil populations. Teachers who have qualified overseas are crucial in keeping London schools running, however it is vital that they are trained to meet the cultural needs of all London's children. This is particularly important when teachers have come from countries that do not have diverse populations.
- Teachers should be encouraged to use the curriculum creatively to educate children on diverse cultural history and traditions.
- Black parents need to work together for change and be active in the education of their children. More black parents are needed as school governors to shape the leadership of schools. Parents should join groups such as Afroice to build a strong black parent-governor organisation.
- Support should be given to parents to attend meetings with teachers, particularly to parents who have to take time off work.

## 8 International guest speaker

### Dr Stan L Mims

‘Good morning everyone. First of all I must tell you that failure is not an option. Failure is not an option when it comes to children that look like the both of us. I keep this at the centrepiece of my conversation throughout the schools that I have worked in, in New York and especially Brooklyn, in the Bronx and currently in Illinois.

When I worked in Brooklyn I worked in District 17. District 17 largely consists of Caribbean children, and when we first took over that district as Superintendents it was the first time we had a stable population and the leadership of superintendencies deputy was controlled by people of colour. Out of 42 districts, District 17 rated dead last. In five years we were very pleased to say that we went from dead last to the top 20 in the city of New York.

We accomplished that task by doing the following: we said we will teach every last student.

*We did a massive amount of recruitment among teachers of colour because we knew that we had to give an example of people that look like our students in front of our students. To accomplish that task, we launched a mass recruitment effort.*

In fact, we were head to head with the authorities here in England in recruiting teachers from Barbados, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago to get teachers to work with us because we knew they had a sustained pedagogy to make things happen for children of colour. We needed people in front of our children to say “You will learn and failure is not an option”.

With that programme we were able to develop leaders to work in our schools in terms of being head teachers, or principals. And those principals instil the view that you must inspect what you expect. We have massive training in parenting. Many times people feel parents are involved and should be involved in the education of their children. We said “Forget the chatter, we will put our money where our mouths are and make things happen for parents.” So we got grants from large corporations and brought parents in, not only in the mornings to take our parent training but also in the evenings, because we knew we had parents working two and three jobs at any given time to make ends meet.

We also found by looking at other data that our district was for the most part a transit spot for parents coming to New York, and that they were largely coming to our district in the Bronx because of affordable housing.

We also had different walk-in centres when parents came into our district. We knew we had to provide a central information point for them for aspects such as public assistance, housing and how to gain access to all the things that New York City had to offer. We created our welcome centre as a means of getting parents and their students into our system, in order to break the mystique of coming into a system that had traditionally been hostile to children of colour from the Caribbean islands.

We also stopped the insanity whereby because a teacher heard a strange tongue it meant that child could not learn. When we looked at the data we saw that there were long trends that supported the view that once teachers who did not look like us heard a strange tongue, they assumed that the child was mentally challenged and therefore would not promote the youngster to the right grade. In other words, because a child came in reading at this level in a particular country, we had teachers that said "you don't know our standards, so you will not go to the right grade". We stopped that insanity, held people to account and made things happen for youngsters of Caribbean descent. I am proud looking at the data in New York City. We found that in terms of students that are really achieving, our Caribbean students were outperforming our African-American children.

We compared this to the Districts, and found we were underachieving in aspects such as literacy and numeracy. Looking at the lessons we have learnt from other districts and District 17, our large Caribbean district, we started looking to see if we could just build a sense of community. We did this because we found that this sense of community existed among our Caribbean parents, so we took to parent training in earnest and found the additional dollars to look at the quality. We looked at how we trained teachers who were largely of Anglo descent, Jewish, and how they needed to train and be equipped in how to work with children of colour. We launched a massive campaign.

When we brought and hired new teachers into our area, we said "forget the work in Scarsdale or some of the wealthy districts around New York City - you are going to work in districts that are largely children of colour and you must, must as in mandatory, undergo eight weeks of training in our culture". In other words, we will give you a wake up call early on. We are not asking you to do this in eight weeks, we are demanding this as a part of your contract. And then not only will you deal with the eight weeks of what we call infusion or what we so aptly referred to as culture boot camp, you must spend the entire school year at least once a month coming for refresher courses, because you may be dealing with young people who come in without the right type of anti-perspirant or the

clothes fixed just right. They may not have all of their homework done, they may speak with a different dialect. Let there not be a factor that will prevent you teaching our youngsters, so come in early on so that you understand what you are dealing with now. If you want to stay with us after eight weeks we will keep you, but if after eight weeks you realise that this is not for you then leave because failure is not an option.

When we launched that whole approach we saw teachers who did not look like us, who did not have backgrounds like us, begin to take note of what we were doing. When we started inspecting what we expected from everyone, from directors, from principals, from people that are delivering of the pedagogy, that is when we saw growth and instruction.

Believe me when I say that the accountability is strengthened. You will have heard about our President Bush, and the programme No Child Left Behind. That is a law that we call an unfunded mandate. But we have got to make sure it happens for all of our youngsters. When we started putting all these ingredients together, we saw conversations changing. And youngsters that looked like all of us began to achieve. Failure is not an option, and I tell you to go forth and keep that in your memory banks, so that whoever, whatever children you work with on any given day you will have that in mind and be responsible for what you are doing.

If you and I do not keep this conviction driven ethos flowing within our veins then no one else will, and we will continue as I heard our speakers say earlier, to condemn youngsters to decade after decade where we have lost them to the wolves and rage. Thank you.'

## 9 Speaker biographies

### **Diane Abbott MP**

Diane Abbott was elected to Parliament in 1987 as the MP for Hackney North and Stoke Newington. She was the first black woman elected to the House of Commons and is currently in her fourth term as an MP, having increased her majority at each election. Diane organised the first Hackney Schools and the Black Child conference in 1999 and since 2002 has organised the London Schools and the Black Child conferences with the Mayor of London. Formerly a civil servant, Diane has also worked for the National Council for Civil Liberties and for Thames Television. In 2003 the Black Women Mean Business Association, founded by Diane, celebrated its 10th anniversary.

### **Garth Crooks**

Born in Stoke-on-Trent, Garth Crooks began a football career with Stoke City that took him to play for Tottenham Hotspur, Manchester United and West Bromwich Albion before finishing his career with Charlton Athletic. He has since become a successful broadcaster, working for the BBC as a match analyst and reporter. Garth was chairman of the Professional Footballers' Association from 1988-90 and received an OBE for services to football in 1999.

### **Lee Jasper**

Lee is the Mayor of London's Director responsible for Equalities and Policing, where his responsibilities include chairing the Mayor's Equality Policy Team, Refugee and Asylum Forum and the Police and Community Safety Team. He is a former director of the 1990 Trust and previous experience includes positions as Senior Policy Advisor to the Inner London Education Authority and Chair of the Mangrove Community Association, Notting Hill. He is a governor of St. Andrew's School Brixton and Kingsdale School, Dulwich.

### **Kwame Kwei Armah**

An actor, playwright and singer; Kwame has excelled in several disciplines. A star of BBC's *Casualty* and *Fame Academy*, Kwame has made the transition from actor to playwright in 2003 with *Elmina's Kitchen*, a play that won him an Evening Standard Theatre Award for most promising playwright.

### **Ken Livingstone**

Ken Livingstone was re-elected Mayor of London on 10 June 2004, having been elected as London's first Mayor in May 2000. Previously he was Labour MP for Brent East, where he was first elected in 1987, before which

he was leader of the GLC. He has written two books, *If Voting Changed Anything They'd Abolish It* (1987) and *Livingstone's Labour* (1989).

### **Dr Stan Mims**

Dr Mims is the Chief Educational Officer of the Round Lake Area District Schools 116 in East St Louis, Illinois. Formerly a Department of Education Superintendent in New York, Dr Mims has spearheaded programmes designed to raise educational attainment for African-American boys and has been an educationalist for over 30 years in a number of positions across the United States.

### **Grace Ononiwu**

Grace qualified as a solicitor in 1990. Within a year she was working for the Crown Prosecution Service as a Crown Prosecutor. Moving through the ranks of the CPS, Grace became District Crown Prosecutor in 2003, responsible for all the prosecutions in Hammersmith, Kensington, Fulham and Notting Hill. Grace is also currently Vice Chair of the National Black Crown Prosecutors Association.

### **Trevor Phillips**

Born in London in 1953 and educated in Guyana and London, Trevor Phillips is currently Chair of the Commission for Racial Equality, having previously chaired the London Assembly and the Runnymede Trust. A former president of the National Union of Students, he joined London Weekend Television in 1982. He is now Managing Director of Pepper productions, and has written two books, *Windrush: The Irresistible Rise of Multiracial Britain* (1998) and *Britain's Slave Trade* (1999).

### **Sashi Sivaloganathan**

Sashi is an advanced skills teacher who works in a special school in Enfield, north London. She has been teaching for 12 years in London in mainstream and special schools. Appointed to the General Teaching Council for England in September 2000, she has led pastoral and curriculum teams and has had whole school roles in School Data, Examinations, Personal and Social Education and Equal Opportunities.

### **Stephen Twigg MP**

Since 2002 Stephen Twigg has been Parliamentary Under Secretary of State in the Department for Education and Skills, having previously been Deputy Leader of the House of Commons, and currently has responsibility for London schools. Stephen is a former president of the National Union of Students and has also worked for Amnesty International.

## 10 Exhibitors

### Exhibitors at London Schools and the Black Child 2004

100 Black Men of London; Black Boys Can; Black Londoners Forum; Black Police Association; Caribbean Volunteers Readers and Performance Project; Centerprise; The Container Project; Department for Education and Skills; Ebony Saturday Schools; Ethos Training and Development; Greater London Authority; Hakiki Publishing; Hampstead School; London Development Agency; Lydiard Group; London Borough of Tower Hamlets; Mary Kay Cosmetics; Medical Research Council; Phoenix; Promoting Our Heritage; Tamarind Books; The Teaching Awards Trust; Windsor Fellowship; Zawadi Enterprises.









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### Greek

Αν θέλετε να αποκτήσετε αντίγραφο του παρόντος εγγράφου στη δική σας γλώσσα, παρακαλείστε να επικοινωνήσετε τηλεφωνικά στον αριθμό αυτό ή ταχυδρομικά στην παρακάτω διεύθυνση.

### Turkish

Bu belgenin kendi dilinizde hazırlanmış bir nüshasını edinmek için, lütfen aşağıdaki telefon numarasını arayınız veya adrese başvurunuz.

### Punjabi

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇਸ ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼ ਦੀ ਕਾਪੀ ਤੁਹਾਡੀ ਆਪਣੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੀਦੀ ਹੈ, ਤਾਂ ਹੇਠ ਲਿਖੇ ਨੰਬਰ 'ਤੇ ਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ ਜਾਂ ਹੇਠ ਲਿਖੇ ਪਤੇ 'ਤੇ ਰਾਖਤਾ ਕਰੋ:

### Hindi

यदि आप इस दस्तावेज की प्रति अपनी भाषा में चाहते हैं, तो कृपया निम्नलिखित नंबर पर फोन करें अथवा नीचे दिये गये पते पर संपर्क करें

### Bengali

আপনি যদি আপনার ভাষায় এই বলিলের প্রতিলিপি (কপি) চান, তা হলে নীচের ফোন নম্বরে বা ঠিকানায় অনুগ্রহ করে যোগাযোগ করুন।

### Urdu

اگر آپ اس دستاویز کی نقل اپنی زبان میں چاہتے ہیں، تو براہ کرم نیچے دئے گئے نمبر پر فون کریں یا دیئے گئے پتے پر رابطہ کریں

### Arabic

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