

Minutes of meeting of Ethnic Minority Artists held at the Commonwealth Institute on 28 May 1981 at 6.30.

Present:	Tadek Jarski	(Polish Centre)
	Firdous Aly	(NAAAY)
	Parminder Vir	(Commonwealth Institute)
	Fay Rodrigues	(MAAS)
	Don Kinch	(Staunch)
	James Lammy	(MAAS Movers)

We, the undersigned representatives of ethnic minorities arts in UK, wish to express our disappointment with the existing system of funding of ethnic minorities arts. We find that the present panel system of ACGB and GLAA is unable to meet the needs of ethnic minorities for the following reasons:-

- a) Panel members and officers are ignorant of the historical background of the diverse ethnic minorities cultures, their arts, their needs, aspirations and problems and are thus incapable of judging the relative significance of various arts projects to given ethnic minorities. Yardsticks used are often totally inappropriate.
- b) Attempts at "educating" panel members are generally futile and at best lead to a dangerous level of the proverbial "little knowledge". Brief site visits and potted case histories provide at best but a cursory glance for the panel members and experience shows that panel members have neither the time nor the inclination to concern themselves with in-depth studies of ethnic minorities.
- c) "Ethnic" representation on panels serves little purpose since it is erroneously assumed that any ethnic member on a panel will represent all the knowledge and all the interest which the remaining members (and officers) of the panel are lacking. Thus an Indian is regarded as an adequate authority on all forms of African, Caribbean, Polish and Ukrainian arts and a Greek is expected to be a spokesman on Chinese calligraphy and Indian classical dance!! Subsequently several self-styled "Experts on Ethnic Minorities Arts" are called upon to pronounce on a vast range of related subjects with little regard for the facts. This absurdity is further compounded by the practice of barring minority representatives when their native minority is discussed on the grounds of "subjectivity".
- d) Ethnic minorities arts are generally, if silently, regarded by most panel members as alien intruders illegitimately competing with legitimate claimants for scarce funding. The GLAA/ACGB Community Arts Panel's distribution of funds in the current financial year is an ample practical demonstration of this attitude belying whatever declarations of racial justice etc may have been made by that panel.
- e) Though the public funds designated for the furthering of the arts are created proportionally by all the inhabitants of this country, the distribution of those funds is grossly disproportionate at the expense of the ethnic minorities. Attempts are being made to justify this disproportionate distribution on the grounds that the ethnic minorities are also served by the arts and the arts institutions of the indigenous population and hence ethnic minorities arts

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qualify for a considerably lower proportion of funding.

This argument is both arrogant and false.

It is arrogant because it presumes that cultural influence is in the form of one-way traffic while in fact it can be proven with no effort that ethnic minorities' artistic output is consumed by large indigenous readership, audiences, etc. It would be pointless to quantify in order to show a cultural "balance of payment" but anyone can easily make a long list of arts manifestations where ethnic minorities are the producers and the indigenous public the predominant consumers. We do not know of instances though where these roles are reversed. In the circumstances, to talk of ethnic minorities benefiting unilaterally through "indirect funding" is false.

The present system of funding of ethnic minorities' arts, or rather the lack of it, amounts to misappropriation of funds by the public bodies and an abuse of the power exercised by the majority.

This dissatisfaction is not only directed at the practice of the GLAA Community Arts Panel in its treatment of ethnic minority arts application but is also a general criticism of the ACGB studies.

In conclusion it is proposed that:-

1. All public funds designated for the furtherance of the arts in UK i.e. those awarded to ACGB, Regional Arts Associations, local authorities, etc should be divided to provide separate funds for ethnic minorities arts.
2. Those separate funds should be directly proportional to the percentage proportion of the ethnic minorities in this country based on the 1971 population census.
3. Since the census shows only persons born overseas and does not allow for the children born in the UK the figures shown by the census to be initially increased by 50%. Thus calculated proportion of ethnic minorities would initially be deemed to be 8.58% of the total population.
4. The 8.58% constitutes national proportion of the population and such proportion of centrally held funds, e.g. ACGB should annually set aside funds for ethnic minorities arts proportional to the ethnic minority communities.
5. Regional funds such as local authorities arts funds should be divided and set aside by those regional authorities in proportion to the overseas born population (increased by 50% to allow for the children born in the UK) resident in the given region.
6. The Ethnic Minority Arts fund to be governed and dispensed by an authority appointed by ethnic minorities. This authority to be opened to public and legal scrutiny.