

Ethnic Arts Sub Committee
Ethnic Minorities Committee

Report (8.11.82) by

Principal Race Relations Adviser

Item	
CONFERENCE REPORT: ETHNIC ARTS - MAY 1982	

1 This report brings forward notes on the Conference on Ethnic Minority Arts held at County Hall on 28 May 1982. It is intended that the report would be published and circulated to all participants.

2 At this stage several issues are raised for further consideration by the Sub-Committee and these are summarised as follows:-

A Film and Video:

- (a) Funding for film makers must take into account assistance for scriptwriters, researchers, directors.
- (b) Film makers need a venue where they can meet, show their films and hold regular exhibitions.
- (c) Training is crucial in enabling more black people to get involved in film making. The GLC should consider offering scholarships and setting up training programmes.

B Theatre:

- (a) There is a need for more full time workers both with Asian language and Asian English language theatre.
- (b) Need to establish a permanent Black Theatre Company in London.
- (c) Urgent need for a central arts centre to meet the needs of black theatre and to house other art forms.

C Dance:

- (a) Need for research to identify what dance groups exist.
- (b) Develop specific projects tailored to meeting needs of women, development of Asian dance and improving existing facilities.
- (c) Need for rehearsal space for dance groups and individuals to practice on a regular basis; put on performances and provide information.
- (d) Need for a centre where dancers are able to meet, perform and run workshops. Such a facility should be accessible and centrally located.

D Literature/Publications:

- (a) Encourage the organisation of exhibitions and book fairs.
- (b) Research and publish directory of relevant books that have been published covering the whole field of Black British Literature.
- (c) Research into the History of Black British Literature.

E Music:

- (a) Funding to enable the organisation of concerts and workshops.
- (b) Indian classical music needs to be promoted as an integral part of the mainstream arts programme in concert halls and schools.
- (c) Need for a centre to enable musicians to meet and share ideas.
- (d) Promotion of more black music festivals with black people in control of the organisation of such events.
- (e) The GLC should make available buildings under its control for use by ethnic minority artists and musicians for rehearsals, teaching and holding concerts.
- (f) GLC owned parks should be made available to the community for organising major black music events.
- (g) GLC to subsidise a tour of prisons by black bands.

F Carnivals/Festivals:

- (a) Funding for Carnival is needed in advance of the event.

G Visual Arts:

- (a) Need for a centrally based venue to enable visual artists to display their works and develop a permanent museum to give representation to the historical roots of the black community in this country.
- (b) More black artists could be commissioned to paint murals.

H Education:

- (a) The GLC should be involved in the introduction of ethnic arts material into schools. This could be in the form of films, visual arts and visits by artists.
- (b) The GLC should examine ways of enabling ethnic artists to work in schools.
- (c) The GLC should streamline its organisation and deal quickly with applications.
- (d) Particular attention should be given to the needs of young children.

I Arts Centres:

- (a) The GLC should make available buildings under its control to ethnic minority artists for the purpose of rehearsing and meeting.
- (b) Needs of ethnic minority artists should be the concern of all the departments of the GLC and not just the Ethnic Minorities Committee.

RECOMMENDATION

- 1 To receive this report and consider the issues raised in paragraphs 2 A - I.
- 2 To indicate what further action the Sub-Committee would wish to take in the issues raised in paragraphs 2 A - I and ask officers to prepare and submit appropriate reports as requested.

INTRODUCTION

The GLC Arts and Recreation Committee has accorded a very high priority to the encouragement and development of ethnic arts in London. It has earmarked £300,000 in 1982/83 for ethnic arts recognising that extra support must be given, to redress the balance towards this section of multi-racial London.

The GLC convened a one day conference on ethnic minority arts in London on Friday 28 May 1982. The conference was attended by some 250 people with the majority coming from the Afro-Caribbean and Asian Communities. The main aim of the Conference was to consult with practising ethnic minority artists to identify their specific needs so that the GLC could respond in the best way possible.

It was hoped the Conference would produce ideas on how the GLC's future policies and programmes for ethnic minority arts in London could be shaped and to establish an Ethnic Minority Arts Advisory Board (as it was then called) which would advise the Arts and Recreation for making grants. The Board, it was envisaged would also enable a London-wide strategy for helping ethnic minority arts to achieve greater prominence and improved access to resources and facilities.

The Conference focused on the following specific topics:

- Film/video
- Arts Centres and facilities
- Theatre
- Dance
- Women
- Music
- Literature/Publishing
- Carnivals/Festivals
- Local authorities arts initiatives
- Visual Arts and Crafts
- Education and Arts
- Media
- Youth

OPENING REMARKS BY: HERMAN OUSELEY Principal Race Relations Advisor

Ladies and Gentlemen, Brothers and Sisters, thank you very much for coming. This conference on minority ethnic arts in London is one of many consultative meetings which the GLC will be holding on the particular needs of minority ethnic groups in London. While London is the most ethnically diverse capital city in the world, it is clear that racial discrimination and racial disadvantage actually ensure that black people in particular, and other minority groups as well, remain a disadvantaged community and it is in response to this that the GLC feels that it can make a contribution. Of course, the GLC is not the only body which can alter racism or tackle discrimination in London. However, through the functions and activities for which it has responsibility, the Council can make a contribution and by doing so, it hopes that other agencies, such as central government, local authorities and, in particular, other arts funding bodies, like the Greater London Arts Association and the Arts Council of Great Britain will also make their contributions. In response to the special needs of ethnic minority communities in London the GLC has set up an Ethnic Minorities Committee whose brief is to develop specific policies and assist with the implementation of others to meet the social, welfare, economic and educational needs of such communities. Before I go any further, let me clarify what we mean when we speak of ethnic minorities. The GLC is aware that in London there are a number of community organisations, racial and ethnic groups, who, by and large, have different cultural and religious affiliations and many of them (because of their minority status) have problems and experience difficulties, which need special responses. But, in this city, it is black people in particular, who, because of their colour, experience the greatest difficulties in terms of discrimination, racism both institutionalised and individual, and this has tended to marginalise their position in society. It is in this direction and towards this section of the community that the main thrust and response of the committee will be directed. Having clarified that, I would like to add that this conference should not be regarded simply as a GLC conference, but a conference for the ethnic minority communities in London who are directly involved in the arts. We hope to learn from you about your particular needs in the field of the arts and recreation, and what you think the Arts and Recreation Committee of the GLC can and should do to meet these. We hope that some form of an Ethnic Arts Advisory Board or Sub-Committee will emerge from this conference. The main aims of this Sub-Committee would be to make recommendations to the Arts and Recreation Committee on the sort of strategy which should be evolved for promoting multi-cultural and minority-ethnic arts in London as well as on the resources and facilities which should be made available to make minority ethnic arts in London a reality, and ensure they are adequately represented and catered for. The Sub-Committee will also advise on how ethnic minority groups can have proper access to facilities, an increased and fairer share of the resources in order that such arts flourish and become an equal part of the ethnic diversity that London is. Let me now hand you over to our Chairman, Mike Phillips, who will tell you how we will proceed today.

CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS: Good morning ladies and gentlemen. I would like to say that I think this is in many ways a unique conference. This is the first time that an attempt is being made to consult with groups that are practising ethnic minority arts across the board. Until now we have always been required to react to things that have been laid down for us. But, for the first time, someone is actually asking: what do you want the money spent on, what kind of pattern do you want to obtain for the future? And I welcome the initiative taken by the GLC to consult in this way. The approach we take today could well decide whether we abandon the business of being told what we ought to be doing, having it defined for us what our arts and our practice of them ought to be, and begin to define how far we can actually create an atmosphere where we can bring the energies and the collective kind of knowledge of our different communities to bear on the arts we practice. Having made these general remarks let me now invite the first contribution. This is on films and video and the speaker is Imruh Caesar. Imruh's talk will be followed by Jatinder Verma, Farrukh Dhondy, Glen Noble, Tara Raj Kumar, Prabhu Guplara, Imdad Hussain, Wilf Walker, Ossie Gibbs, Jacques Compton and Errol Lloyd who will each speak on different subjects.

(3) FILM AND VIDEO: IMRUH CAESAR

I will speak basically about film and film making. While all film makers share the problem of raising finance for their films, black film makers have to face double constraints. Partly, this is because nothing that we do as black people, will be in compliance with the status quo. And because our image is not that of film makers, we are not easily accepted for those of us who have got somewhere in the arts, the struggle has been an uphill one. We are talking about films in relation to, Third World people in Britain. Thus we are talking about us attempting to intervene into an enormous mainstream industry, one that affects all our lives, no matter what we do. And we are talking about individuals working within an almost hostile environment in which they are trying to make an impression in terms of their art, in terms of redressing the imbalances within the medium as it affects them and the people to whom they belong. Given all this, I think we must agree that the survival of black film makers is dependent on realistic funding. But this raises another problem. The funding body which supports and gives grants to black film makers must be clear about its conditions for giving that money. For example, will they, as long as the money is accounted for, sanction money to proposals or will they attach strings and demands as to how this money should be used. This is very important and both funding bodies and film makers should be clear on the criteria for funding.

Funding must be realistic in that it is not only film makers, but scriptwriters, researchers, indeed, all the processes and people involved in the making of a film who should be taken into consideration while disbursing funds. Thus for example, a grant of £25,000 may enable a film maker to come up with a script but it will not go far beyond that.

Finally I think that while considering funding some differentiation should be made between community groups making experimental films with super 8 or 8 mm film, and someone who is making a 35 mm film as a commercially viable project.

(4) THEATRE (ASIAN): JATINDER VERMA

I would like to speak mainly on Asian theatre: to suggest some of its main characteristics and what I believe are the priorities for the future. Asian theatre in Britain falls into two categories: theatre in the Asian languages and English language theatre. Of the two, Asian language theatre is older and more communally based. Often the history has been that it has risen as a cultural adjunct to local community or, religious organisations. Asian English language theatre can be termed more metropolitan if only because it is not dependent upon any single language community within the broader Asian community. It is recent in the sense of being essentially a young theatre and it cuts across communal lines. As a result it often tends to lack the strength that strong community connections can give, although it avoids many of the weaknesses which are consequent upon such a strong communal connection. Financially, English language theatre has always been imposed from outwards onto its community, in order to sustain its activity. Broadly speaking, it has had to be more aware of the arts funding structures within this country if only because it did not have at hand a particular section of the community supporting it as in Asian language theatre. However, there are strong signs already that the distinction that I have made between those two strands is actually merging. Asian language theatre is moving out of its communal base and English language theatre is seeking strong community support across communal lines. Both are at present still at the stage of community arts activities and what needs to be done is for both to be established so that they can develop from this. I think the priorities for the future in terms of Asian language theatre are to encourage it to go beyond its communal connections and develop as a theatre form for the whole of the Asian community as well as something that can possibly then be shared by the broader spectrum of society. One way in which it can be done is to support full time workers who are still lacking in Asian language theatre. As far as Asian theatre in English is concerned, given its more precarious existence and the fact that it is not actually based in any particular community within the Asian community, it needs more urgent capital funding to establish its physical presence in a locality. I hope that what I have said albeit in a very general way, will be of some use in the discussions that will follow on Asian theatre, and within the context of black theatre in Britain today.

THEATRE (BLACK): FARRUKH DHONDY

I understand that the GLC has earmarked a sum of £300,000 for ethnic arts. this includes film, dance, visual arts etc. Clearly, this is not enough and we must consider ways of increasing this budget. Since there are so many claiming so few funds, one has to be extremely stringent, especially in the realm of theatre, about who one is talking about, who one wants to fund and why. I am from the black theatre cooperative and could easily say fund just BTC and nothing else. But I think I ought to convince other people of the reasons why particular sorts of theatre groups ought to be funded. To do this we have to delve a little into the history of black theatre in this country. We all know it has been a long, uphill struggle for black people, to establish Asian theatre or West Indian theatre or, more importantly, Black British theatre, the kind of creation that comes out of the soil of this country itself, out of the generations that have come to this country and grown up here. The tradition in Britain is 'to those who have, it shall be given'. In other words, nothing succeeds like success and if you have already established yourself, you can expect others to give you the money so that you can continue

to strengthen your establishment. I believe that this is, to some extent, a correct principle. A company that has struggled without funds, worked with its actors, writers, directors for no wages and that has established an audience for itself and carried out in struggle an existence, is worth funding and supporting. The alternative is to await for somebody to produce a grand plan on paper and the funding body gives it consideration. This does not really work neither in theatre, nor in art, nor in politics. The history of black theatre has been a rough one and there is a particular irony in this history. In the 50s and 60s, black people connected with the theatre complained they weren't given patronage by the established white companies and were kept out of established theatre for a long time. The cry at that time was, let us in, we have no institutions that we can call our own. The paradox in the situation now is that black theatre is beginning to have establishments of its own and patronage is being extended to us, by the white theatre: the Royal Court, the National Theatre, the Royal Shakespeare Company, to name a few. That is the paradox of black theatre and the only way to avoid the bad effects of that paradox is to have established funding for a black theatrical institution itself. Keeping in mind this rather general background to black theatre that I have outlined, I would now like to be more specific. Its easy to say that writers should be funded, that there should be courses and workshops for technicians, actors and so on. But, having thought it over I feel that the funds should be concentrated on one or two projects in London. This might not be very popular, but I feel that the advisory board or the people who are finally going to disburse the funds, ought to narrow their horizons down and see that in a year or two's time, we at least established two theatre companies which are able to cast away this uncertainty of moving from production to production, from one funding begging bowl operation to the next, and are able to operate with some freedom. What I am, in fact, saying is that I believe the GLC should fund two companies in London - for the sake of balance one Asian and one West Indian-based company. What criteria do these companies have to fulfil? Firstly, I believe they ought to be London-based. Secondly, they have to have proved their national importance and one doesn't have to go very far to try and prove that aspects of black arts have a national importance to Britain today. And equally important, these companies should be competent and ought to have cooperative or collective, democratic constitutions and not just be the playthings, or the ego instruments of one or two or three people. And lastly, I feel that these companies must agree to become one, the instrument of training for writers, actors, actresses, technicians, in theatre, and they must agree, as a criteria of getting these funds, to train a certain number of people a year.

DANCE: GLEN NOBLE

I work for the Weekly Gleaner, as a theatre and arts critic, and have recently done some research on dance. The encouragement and development of dance in the black community and in the community as a whole is probably one of the most neglected areas of multi-ethnic arts in London. There are a few organisations like the Weekend Arts College, a North London project that was set up three years ago by the Inter-Action Trust to provide professional training for young people who are seriously thinking about a career in dance, and the performing arts. Weekend Arts College (WAC) runs classes for young people, teaching them the basic skills and techniques necessary to gain further full-time training. During the course of the year students attend technique classes for different disciplines and can participate in creative sessions and professional workshops. Fusion is the performance company of WAC

and has been described by some critics as the youth dance company of the decade. The company has some 27 youngsters who put up about 30 performances all over the country and this provides valuable experience for young performers and choreographers. But for every group like Fusion, there are probably half a dozen more who receive little or nothing in the way of financial help. Rare Earth is another multi-racial dance group, who combine singing and dancing. They are people from North London's Kingsway College, who were discovered by choreographer, Rebecca Wilson about three years ago. They have also appeared in schools and community centres throughout the country. The company, once again, consists of about 17 youngsters, aged between 17 and 20, and they are typical of the plight of the majority of youth dance groups. They have no other sources of finance, save for themselves, and insufficient space for rehearsing. Applications to the Greater London Arts Association and Dance Associations have met with little success. Both organisations seem more concerned with helping professional dance companies, rather than amateur youth dance groups. Rare Earth have already attracted a sizeable following and are having to turn down applications from youngsters who want to join, because they don't have the facilities to expand any further. My third example of a typical dance group and the problems they face can be seen in Black Tulip. This group consists of six black girls from Battersea, who got together three years ago, after dancing at Lavender Hill School. They were able to use the premises at Battersea Arts Centre for rehearsals, but their grant applications were refused by both Lambeth and Wandsworth Councils. They now rehearse two nights a week in a community centre in Battersea and their particular style of Afro-Jazz has been seen at several West End clubs. Many of them would like to make a career in dance but they will have little chance. It is important that the budget earmarked for ethnic arts, by the Arts and Recreation Committee, must be directed to the appropriate areas.

You probably know that the Sports Council launched 'Action Sport', a three-million-pound scheme to recruit and train community sports leaders in London and the West Midlands. The Sports Council will also be recruiting ethnic minorities in these positions, with the intention of appointing them on a three year contract, to give them a specific role during the period. I believe, this is the sort of project which should be adopted to develop community dance groups in London.

The outline of the programme could be the following: first, the compiling of a directory of all ethnic dance groups in London, concentrating not only on the more established companies, but also the smaller, obscurer ones. Details could include the type of groups, size, current activities and special problems. A directory once produced could be distributed to arts centres, who may be unaware of the existence of these dance groups. Secondly, there is a need to establish contact with as many of these groups as possible, preferably by personal visits. In consultation with other major arts agencies and local councils, the new team would draw up a work programme of specific objectives. The team could then select two or three pilot schemes to work for, for example, projects specifically tailored for women, either helping existing groups or starting dance or keep-fit classes at local level, the development of Asian ethnic dances, and improving facilities for dance groups. With the right advice, knowledge, and financial assistance, more facilities, like the Weekend Arts College, could be developed. A long-term initiative would be the development of Black dance companies on a professional scale. One dance company, Masai, (black professional male dancers), is already attempting to do

this. They began last November and their objective is to be a British version of New York's Dance Theatre of Harlem. The next two or three years are going to see a real explosion of black dance groups in London and in the country. So far they have managed to do it without the assistance of funding bodies, but if money can be directed to those groups, then the explosion can be that much greater.

DANCE (INDIAN CLASSICAL): TARA RAJ KUMAR

Several years ago I formed the Academy of Indian dance to establish Indian classical dancing: to teach the different styles and to present works of professional standards. The academy was established with little funding or assistance. However, what I would like to stress here is that while the problems faced by Indian classical dancers are, in many ways, the same as those faced by others, they are also different. Unlike other black companies, we tend to perform solo: in Indian dance there's usually one dancer and several musicians. Our basic problem is having a place to rehearse in. We also need proper administrative backup and, of course, adequate funding. The GLC needs to look at ways of adequately funding dance groups and organisations: assist in funding rehearsal spaces and enable the groups to do forward planning. At present most organisations do a lot of work for institutions such as ILEA, but all this is expected to be done free.

LITERATURE: PRABHU GUPTARA

In the field of ethnic minority literature all sections need encouragement - writers, publishers, distributors.

However, where there is only a limited amount of money available, one has to choose where that money is going to be put. One choice is to spread it thinly over the whole field. This may appear to be fair, but may in the end not achieve very much in any of these areas, and so be self-defeating.

And there is the brute fact that black writers have managed to write and do manage to write, and even win grants to do so. Their books are also published, and have been published for at least two centuries in Britain. Where the chain seems to me to break is in the distribution and sale of these books. One or two excellent initiatives have been taken recently, such as the International Radical and Third World Book Fair, which I certainly hope will become an annual event. Money therefore needs to be put into all attempts to make more widely known what is already available, and book exhibitions of all sorts should be encouraged precisely because they offer a forum for all writers whose work is in print, and for all publishers with suitable books - whether "mainline" or those who concentrate on ethnic minority books.

A second way of encouraging a similarly broad range of writers and publishers would be the preparation and publication of a list of all relevant books that have been published, together with publication details such as names of publishers. Incredibly, only one such list has ever been published, and that is a very poor and disorganised one. What we need is a properly done bibliography covering the whole field of Black British literature.

The biggest problem is that many of the books have been self-published or have come from small publishers. And the bulk of eighteenth and nineteenth century Black British writing and literature seems to have disappeared, because it was never systematically reviewed or included in bibliographies. This needs to be researched and discovered if the whole heritage of Black British writing is to be known - as it should be!

Briefly, then, there are three areas, in my judgement, that deserve priority (for the first couple of years anyway) so far as literature is concerned:

- 1 attempts to improve distribution (exhibitions and other, more imaginative projects),
- 2 the preparation and publication of a bibliography, and
- 3 research into the history of Black British literature.

Unlike all other arts, literature is cheap and more or less always accessible - a play exists only as long as it is on stage, though of course it may be revived; a film can only be seen if one goes to the trouble of elaborately setting up expensive equipment; a sculpture or painting exists only in one copy; and so on.

It appears also that literature is the oldest of the art forms practised by black Britons. It is a means of exploring our past as well as our present. More than any other art form it deserves support, so that it can both create and develop the unique consciousness of black people in Britain.

MUSIC (INDIAN CLASSICAL): IMDAD HUSSAIN

Indian and Pakistani music are vital for the mainstream of British music, just as reggae was vital for mainstream British popular music. The contact between the mainstream and people like us works two ways and can be mutually beneficial. Generally funds are disbursed inefficiently from a promoters point of view. The money is usually given long after the concert has taken place. Funding bodies need to recognise that money is needed in advance of concerts, workshops etc. Apart from this, music of ethnic minority communities needs to be promoted in schools and concert halls. Musicians need a greater London music centre from where these things can emanate outwards rather than having hundreds of little workshops or little concerts all over the place.

BLACK MUSIC: WILF WALKER

The music arena is littered with black people who have tried to promote and who, in fact, some have lost their homes, and lost lots and lots of money just trying to pull together concerts with bands and international acts from around the world. I am involved in promoting music at a number of levels - Nottingham Gate using Aklam Hall and Tabernacle (both community based venues), as well as promoting reggae groups from this country in the more established venues. However it is not enough to work only on a local level and I have started to work with bands from America like Richie Havens, Taj Mahal and will hopefully bring Gil Scott Heron over. I am also working on a number of commercial festivals, for example I was involved in putting some of the bands together for the Glastonbury CND festival where there were about

40,000 people and this is the sort of festival that we as black people, could be and should be putting together. Black music festivals can be commercially viable and it is just a question of who is prepared to take the financial risk initially. There is a need for black people to get more involved in the business side of the music to see the organising and running of a black music festival as a serious business operation, requiring proper management and administration, rather than just as mere fun or recreation. In addition we, as black people could move together in terms of putting black music festivals into parks and into other open venues which will make them more widely accessible to our brothers and sisters.

CARNIVALS AND FESTIVALS: OSSIE GIBBS

Notting Hill Carnival has been going on for close on twenty years. Unfortunately, it has had a history of disturbances and riots and this has made the Press and a lot of other people see it only in this light. In fact one of our problems has been that people from the indegious community have felt that Carnival should be taken off the streets and put into a stadium or a park. However, the predominant opinion is and the one we support as well: that Carnival is bascially a street event and that is the only way in which it can capture the spirit of gaiety and festivity that it is meant to reflect. In spite of this, however, Notting Hill Carnival has become something of an institution in London and it attracts over a million people every year: so much so that the London Tourist Board is seriously considering putting it on the calendar of events for tourists. So we are here to stay. Where do we go from here, how do we continue to make that cultural input into this diverse society which is London? We have attempted, in recent months, to establish the committee on a permanent basis. We have acquired a premises from which to operate, and which we use as an administrative base. Clearly there is a long-term future for the Carnival Committee. What we are hoping to do is to secure funding and support from agencies like the GLC, whom I understand from our discussions with them, are prepared this year to make a more positive contribution. The other point is the timing of funding. Quite a number of organisations fund only once, and because funding is always in arrears this creates probelms. In planning some of the events it is necessary to have part of the funds in advance and I hope that the GLC will take this on board when considering what contribution they can make to minority arts.

LOCAL AUTHORITIES ACTIVITIES: JACQUES COMPTON

What I mainly want to say is that in general, local authorities very rarely initiate arts activities of benefit to the black community. We have to be seen to be doing things ourselves before they come in and capitalise on them. This process of artistic racism has to be reversed and black people allowed direct access to adequate resources to give meaningful expression to the desirable sentiments referred to as equal opportunities.

VISUAL ARTS AND CRAFTS: ERROL LLOYD

I think the first thing that we have to do is to acknowledge why we are here today. It is the struggles and the sacrifices of people in areas like Brixton, St. Pauls, Southall and in Toxteth, that has made it possible for us to be here and has made it possible as well for funding to be made available. Once we acknowledge that, we then have to ask ourselves how we are going to influence the way in which funds that have been made available are utilised.

This is a question that should be uppermost in our minds in order to avoid middle class or middle-minded or even middle-aged group of people hiving off the available funds, thus not helping to solve some of the problems which existed in those areas. Another point I think we have to acknowledge is that we are not here simply because, out of the kindness of its heart the GLC has made funds available. But that this is a result of struggles within the GLC and that for those funds to be available, it is not just simply a question of some people at the top being kind and generous. We have to recognise the struggles these people are involved in and support them in whatever ways we can.

When we are dealing with the visual arts and visual artists, we find that we are in basically a different position from most other performing artists and people who are involved in the arts. If we look at actors or musicians, even people who write, they have more immediate feedback from their audience. Visual artists tend to be isolated: we don't work in conjunction with each other and for that reason it makes it more difficult for us to move forward in any kind of collective group. One of the main tasks I think of the visual artists, (as also other artists) is to recognise the mood, I think, which exists among us as black people, whether we be from the Asian community or the African community or the Caribbean community. I think to a lesser or greater extent we all have reached a certain point, which is very close to that which those youths in those areas I have mentioned have reached. Where we feel, collectively, that we have really had enough and we are now prepared to express ourselves with no compromises, regardless of whether the Arts Council or even the GLC, for that matter, is in a position to fund us. We need to be aware that the present GLC funding is so closely aligned to the political situation so that if there is a change within the structure of the GLC, in say the next three or four years, then there is a serious possibility that there won't be any funds available for minority artists. We need to be ware of this and to sieze the time now, and take advantage of those funds that are available. We also have, I think, at the same time, to gird our loins so that if these funds suddenly disappear, that the art forms that we represent don't also die out. This is not at all an easy task, because it means that we have to keep some kind of overall perspective of what we are about. Having made the general points I would like to address myself to some of the problems which the visual arts and artists face. For a start, while we are in a position of isolation, it means invariably that when we do get together, it is primarily because of various negative reasons. For instance, we might be brought together because of an absence of funding. That in a way is a negative response. And although its a necessary one, its also one which has to be dealt with. And I think that if we can determine to have a collective move towards some kind of new aesthetic appraisal of our position, so that we can, through our arts, express the new mood that exists in this country, then we can begin to make some very giant strides forward. But that first and foremost, I believe that we have to have a very creative repsonse to the situation in which we find ourselves today. Now there are many visual artists, who I know have not been able to benefit from the kinds of structures which the Arts Councils have set up simply because they are not in a position to get to that stage where they can actually have the benefit of a bursary. One of the reasons for this, of course, is that in order to make yourself eligible for such a bursary, you then have to go through the system, the various galleries and so on, and if, as artists these galleries are closed to you, then how can you actually benefit from the existence of a bursary. Thus, one of the real contributions that the GLC can make in this area, as indeed in

the other areas that we are dealing with, is to have a serious look at the position of the visual artists and of the arts generally and then come up with solutions which actually match those conditions. And that, I think, not only demands flexibility, but it also demands a certain creativity and a new approach. If we are to benefit from the new possibilities available, I think we have to look around and see the ways, for instance, in which white artists have benefitted and see what we can learn from them. And also to look at our own background, and cultures and to see ways in which we can actually make strides to reach our own people. I would just like to briefly give you one example. For instance, in relation to, say, the visual arts. If you go to the Arts Council bookshop, you can find postcards, prints, films, you can find all kinds of materials on these arts, and I think we as visual artists can also produce and market our own products in this way and help solve some of our problems.

This was followed by an open discussion in which many of the points made by the speakers on specific topics, were reiterated.

For the afternoon session the Conference divided itself into the various sub-groups to enable a more indepth discussion to take place. This was followed by a plenary session with each sub-group reporting back on the main issues that emerged from the discussions.

Reports from Working Groups as Presented by rapporters are summarised below:

EDUCATION:

Several points emerged from the discussion on education. It was suggested that the GLC should be involved in the introduction of ethnic arts material into the schools, whether by means of visual material or films or visits etc. We think that there ought to be a machinery to grant aid groups that are working in schools. Also there ought to be help for the community and for voluntary organizations. Groups that are funded should have some additional funding to enable them to work in community education. The group also made a specific plea that, as a matter of policy, the GLC should streamline its organization to deal quickly with applications, because this in itself can cause a great deal of distress, particularly with groups who do not have ready access to cash. We'd also like to draw attention to the needs of younger children in the community and to say that, specifically, funds ought to be committed to this area, since it is not an area that can in fact generate its own income and will be perpetually in need of funds. And finally, GLC policy should be sensitive to the needs of all London's minorities, not mainly those that are numerically large.

ARTS CENTRES: Ms Helen Denniston

Before I summarise the group discussion, I would like to say that I have been very disappointed at the lack of input from women in this meeting and the total ignoring of the fact that women also constitute the groups among whom arts should be encouraged. We must not forget them when we talk about arts provision for ethnic minorities. I would just like to say very quickly that, perhaps as an indication of that, what the GLC might like to take note of is that when people are actually planning applications for arts projects and arts activities, something as fundamental as creche facilities where children are taken care of is not regarded as an extra. This is essential if we are going to consider women being seriously involved in the arts. Let me now sum up own group discussion.

Ours was a fairly diverse group but we agreed in general that whilst money was important the GLC should perhaps assist in other ways and something that was high on our list was access to some of the GLC resources in terms of buildings. We wondered whether, for example, if a particular building was coming to the end of its lease, it could be made available for ethnic minority arts. Among the other things that we urgently require are facilities for rehearsal. We are sure that the GLC can actually assist here. In addition, we'd like to see liaison and access to the resources of other departments of the GLC. We are not satisfied with just being hived off as ethnic minority artists. We know that there are very important resources within the GLC which is rightly ours as we have contributed to this.

The group also expressed frustration with getting embroiled in the politics of the funding agencies who say, we'll give you 50% if so and so gives you 50%. This can create enormous problems, especially when the event or project is very close at hand and one has to pay bills and there is no money. We wondered whether the GLC could exert greater pressure on local authorities to help in terms of resources or money because frequently the audiences of arts centres do not come from one borough. In fact there was a unanimous feeling that this pressure should be very strong and I hope there will be support from this conference for that. There was a final plea from representatives of the 'minority ethnic minority', that is east European, (and I know there are some Latin American representatives here), to be considered and taken as seriously as black ethnic minorities; the fact that they are numerically in the minority doesn't necessarily mean they don't have as much to offer in culture and education terms.

VISUAL ARTS: Errol Lloyd

The visual arts group had a fairly constructive meeting and we all felt that we have to meet again to look in more detail at some of the proposals we have in mind. I will give you a broad outline of some of the thoughts which emerged from our discussion.

The group felt, first and foremost, that we should not have a selfish, individual approach to the whole problem of visual arts, but that we should have a collective group approach and to go for options which will benefit not simply those artists who might be present here, but artists generally. In relation to this it was felt that one of the overriding needs was for a centrally located building or place which would provide an outlet for the work of artists, where the work could be seen easily by people who wouldn't have to travel too far and that this space shouldn't simply be an exhibition gallery but that it should to some extent, take into account the needs for us as a community to develop some kind of historical perspective. This means that it should also act as a museum of sorts where work could perhaps be purchased for permanent exhibitions and where our historical roots in this country could be given ample representation. In addition, the group felt that there are existing galleries and outlets which, at the moment, are not usually available to black artists and we thought that, since a lot of these buildings come under the jurisdiction of the GLC, perhaps there could be some kind of pressure from the GLC to make these spaces more democratically available, so that it wouldn't be a question simply of the work of black artists, and we would then be able to move more generally into the society. In addition to galleries and museums, libraries and other institutions could also play a part in making their space available. It was felt that in the whole business of town planning and the environment, there should be more regard for the work of minority artists and that murals perhaps could be commissioned in appropriate areas. I know that there are certain institutions who have already commissioned black artists to put up works in public. But obviously that is one area in which a big contribution could be made from the GLC and from other institutions. It was also felt that the media had a very important role to play.

This isn't under the direct control of the GLC, but whatever pressure could be placed on it would be appreciated, so that newspapers or TV and so on could take more account of our presence. We agreed that this would take a little time and that, in the interim period some firm action has to be taken to help artists who at present are either preparing for exhibitions or who have to face general exhibition expenses, so that there could be some consideration for individual applications, where appropriate. I have outlined in brief some of the main proposals that emerged. In the time available, we couldn't, of course, go into all the possibilities but generally speaking we felt that one big contribution that we as artists could make is to get together and as far as possible to show to people in London the wealth of talent that exists within our communities and that, to this end, perhaps one of the most practical things that could be done in the short-term is if we were to have a large-scale exhibition, say, for 1983, which would be something similar for instances to the Summer Exhibition launched by the Royal Academy. This could be a good starting point, so that we would underscore the existence of a wide variety of artists, and a great depth of talent within the ethnic minority communities.

FILMS AND VIDEO: Imruh Caesar

The film and video group considered the limits within which we are operating and came up with a list of priorities. And those priorities which, I am sure, would be the same as in other areas of the arts boil down to a venue and training. Basically they relate to the concerns of the people involved in the group. Ours was a diverse group and included people interested in video, film makers, a teacher and an actress, and others, and we agreed on these two priorities.

Firstly, a venue. If you want people to see your work, then you must have somewhere to show it and show it systematically. I think the Black Film Festival which took place in January - February illustrated the potential for an audience of films of a non-European character. A venue will also allow film makers to continue a debate about their work and exchange ideas as well as show their work to an audience. And, of course, make some money.

Apart from that, we agreed that if you are going to produce work, it has to be produced with a certain competence and therefore you need people who are trained and know what they are doing. And they must include women, because that came up in the discussion and we think it is very important. Training will enable us to produce professional material which can reflect the rich character of the communities and the people we are dealing with. In talking about training we also discussed what kind of training there should be. We agreed that serious thought should go into this and training should be for people who can utilise the facilities of film making for creative and meaningful purposes. This is very important. Is the GLC going to sponsor scholarships to film schools, film institutions or are they going to set up special training programmes for people who can benefit from them and then go on to work professionally? We think this latter is very important. And it was suggested that any such initiative should be in conjunction with unions, Channel 4 and all bodies that are interested, or should come from the professional involvement of black people in film making.

DANCE: Glen Noble

Our group looked at the GLC's proposals under three main headings: funding, the arts policy and the general strategy. On funding we felt the most crucial requirement was the need to set up a centre for professional dancers. This would incorporate all ethnic influences - Asian, African, contemporary and classic. Such a venue could act as a focal point where dancers could rehearse, put on performances and provide information. The disused Charing Cross Theatre was suggested as a possibility. We also discussed creche facilities. At the community level we felt that the GLC should continue supporting groups that are working at the grassroots. The GLC should make sure its employees make personal visits to these groups and find out what their exact needs are and how best cater for them. As far as the arts policy we felt that the minority arts service which was supposed to disseminate information on all arts groups had failed miserably. This needed total revision failing that, or in addition, a new directory of black dance groups should be compiled and made available to arts centres for information. Another point that emerged from our discussion was that information regarding scholarships, grants, bursaries that the GLC offers should be made more readily available. On the general strategy of the Council, and looking at it in the long term, we felt that ethnic dance should be introduced at colleges and put on the curriculum of schools. There are already some dance courses at 'O' level standard and higher, but they take no account of the fact that this is a multi-racial society. This brings me back to our initial point: if there was a school for dancers, you would get a cross section of different influences and dances and the dancers could also go into schools etc. and speak about the different forms of dance.

MUSIC: Mr Laxshmipathy

We had a fairly good meeting and following are some of the recommendations which have been made. The first one is for the GLC to support a comprehensive music festival of all communities to make an impact on society. The second is fairly inexpensive for the GLC, namely to make available as many of the rehearsal spaces under their control as possible, for rehearsals, for teaching and also for holding concerts, because music halls are very expensive and people who try to promote a musical programme generally go bust. This sort of help will be of immense value and it will not cost much. The GLC can also make available public parks during the summer months for holding major concerts. The third recommendation was that it was important that school children and the general public be exposed to the music of overseas countries. The Inner London Education Authority, regional Arts Councils, Arts Association and various other bodies which are concerned should be involved in this. We have the example of the Jeunesse Musicale, as was mentioned earlier, in Belgium and France, where practically every city had a branch and there are hosts and committees who organize morning or afternoon meetings of the musicians in schools, and in the evenings there are programmes at the municipal hall, which are practically free. The Ministry of Education and the local council (which is similar to the GLC) support this kind of venture with the result that children receive a good education grounding. Since I am involved in getting the universities to listen to Indian music and have an interchange of ideas among people I would strongly recommend this.

The fourth point related to the increasing numbers of people in prisons in this country. It could be a worthwhile idea for the GLC to send some of the bands to these prisons to entertain the people. The bands should be subsidised by the GLC.

CARNIVALS AND FESTIVALS: Lawrence Noel

The carnivals and festivals group stressed the importance and necessity of involving young people, and in making them feel involved in and proud of their culture. Our group felt that Carnival is important for its cultural, educational and artistic values and that it is under-funded. Carnival must be funded adequately or not at all. Because Carnival is a street event, and not a festival we felt that there were minor irritations over funding by the different authorities. We felt that standardized forms should be made with criteria for all different funds and bodies and with no strings attached. I don't know how best we are going to do this. And finally, we would also like to stress that there the Indian folk arts festival should be positively regarded by the GLC as an area for development.

LOCAL AUTHORITIES: Jacques Compton

We had a very lively discussion but in the end we all felt we resented our art being categorised as minority art, and we want to stress that the art forms we are speaking of are African and Asian arts and that these art forms come from long established tradition of classical culture in their own right. We reject any attempt by the media to 'ghettoize' our culture. We also felt that young people needed to be listened to, because they are now involved in forming a new cultural perspective of themselves within a metropolitan country. We recommended that the grant-giving committees should co-opt representative members of the black and Asian peoples, men, women and young people onto their committees. And that the grant-giving and above all the policy-making bodies should actually go to the communities and hold open meetings with people in the communities to discuss how they want the money allocated. The group also felt that GLC officers should also go into the communities and assess the needs and report back on what the community actually needs.

LITERATURE AND PUBLISHING: Prabhu Gupta

The first point that emerged from our discussion is: the general expression of concern about the lack of opportunities for the development of writers and the publication of their works. Also, for the lack of facilities and materials in education and creative works, and other such matters. In education we looked at the question of languages other than English. We felt there was a need for research into the cultures of the various ethnic groups and that it was important that younger people be involved in this sort of research. We felt the need for access to GLC facilities, printing and other such facilities that groups at present find difficult to obtain elsewhere. The group felt there was a great need for writers in residence and workshops to be created to facilitate, encourage and to add an additional dimension to our consciousness as people who have settled in another land and who must perforce live together and recognise that though we are one community, our diversity is our richness. And that is what we want. It was felt that there is a great need for language texts for women and children. One of our colleagues spoke of the lack of such literature which could help Asian communities in this particular field. We know that the GLC, as well as the 32 boroughs in this city are aware of this but we felt that it needed to be stressed again. In conclusion, several of us felt that there was need for the establishment of a representative board which could reflect the views and needs of the community to the GLC.

Our group came up with two unanimous suggestions. One, that there should be a central arts centre or a venue. It was suggested that the GLC be asked for this but that this be kept separate from any question of what to do with the £300,000 or the proportion of that £300,000 that would come to theatre. So this is over and above the question of the allocation of funds. The second suggestion was that the future advisory panel, or Sub-Committee, as well as the Arts and Recreation Committee, should operate a strict equal opportunities policy as regards applications from black women and from working class groups. And that these should form the criteria of assessment of projects. The groups spent a lot of time on one issue, and that was basically the question of funding either two projects with the amount of money available, or, on the other hand, to make these funds available to the community. The argument for the latter was that the creation of some sort of a 'black national theatre', would kill the arts of the community. On the other hand, it was argued, (in support of the two projects proposed) that we are tired of the exercise of dispersing funds to numerous groups as this often leads to no established art or work that can positively reflect the community's aspirations.

OPEN DISCUSSION

In addition to the working group reports, several points were made by different speakers in the open discussions. The points, in general, supported the recommendations of the working groups. The major areas of concern were:

- (1) the importance of art for ethnic minorities must be recognised;
- (2) children and young people in schools and universities should be involved at every stage;
- (3) the need for wider-based ethnic media, if possible, of a national nature;
- (4) the need for the GLC to pressurize companies/organizations to advertise in the ethnic press;
- (5) the need for a place or venue that ethnic minority arts groups, or individuals, can use to practice, meet, socialize and share their experiences;
- (6) the need to ensure that money was spent on artists and not on administration as is so often done;
- (7) one speaker pointed out the need for a liaison worker between the GLC and the minority community, who could identify the kinds of groups that are trying to apply for grants and funds;
- (8) one speaker from the Ukrainian Group, said that the Ukrainians would like to be involved in any minority arts festivals that were held as they felt they would like to make their contribution;

- (9) that the minority community should not only look outwards at financial resources but also look to itself to develop the human resources it had in order to become strong.
- (10) a strong plea was made for the GLC to set up a London Crafts Market so that grassroots black creative visual artists can be assisted to make a living while revealing their artistic talents for the benefit of the whole community.

List of Participants

A. Abma

Ethnic Minorities Liaison Unit L.B.
Waltham Forest

Oscar Abrams

Conscious Arts

Chris Abuk

Elizabeth Adare

Ethnic Minorities Liaison Officer

S.I. Agha

K. Albari

Dennis Alexander

R. Araeen

Black Phoenix

Day, Abdulpha

O. Augustine

D. Barbour

Dr. W. Baker

Community Relations Unit, LSE

J. Bahula

Tabula Music

Simi Bedford

London Weekend Television

Robert Birmingham

Black Writers & Performance Theatre

Michael Blythe

J.A. Image Bank

Claudine Boothe

K. Bose

A. Bose

Black Drummer Group

A. Bosquat

Joan Boyce

W. Branch

K. Brewbere

Moving Parts Theatre Company

Mrs. L. Brown

Brixton Neighbourhood Community Association

Mrs. Z. Buksh

Bangla Education Centre

Wendy Buonaventura

Chili Kumari Burman

Keith Bennett

Meanwhile Gardens Community Association

Lynda Brennan

N. Charles

Nadia Cattouse

Dance Company Seven

Carl Campbell

Imruh Caesar

L'Ouverture Theatre Trust

M. Caules

M.A. Chowdhury

Mrs. R. Choudhury

Sebastian Clarke

Felix Cobson

African Heritage Village

Jacques Compton

Imruh Caesar

Mrs. M. Dale

L.B. of Bromley

P. Das

D.K. Dass

St. Michael's School

Shakka Dedi

Olive Desnoes

Helen Denniston
Nirveen Din
Cllr. R. Dheer
Simon Dove
Farrukh Dhondy

Asian Community Action Group
Academy of Punjabi Letters
Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan

David Fisher
Pennie Fairburn
A. Francis

Brixton College
SEED Publications

H. Ganguly
L.A. Garrison
The Rt. Hon Baroness
Achilleos Georgiou
Oswald Gibbs
Sunita Golvala
Jemia Graman
Jenny Grant
Richard Gray
Prabhu Guptara

Balalaika Singing Group
African Arts in Education Project
Bookplace

S.S. Hammond
Steve Hammond
W. Harman
A. Hussain
B. Harris

London Borough of Ealing
Theatre in Education

Viram Jasani
Mahmood Jamal
Alby James
Samatha James
Maria Joackhim
Mrs. S. Jolvadi
Rosa Jones
Emmanuel Josiah
A. Johan

Multi Cultural Curriculum Support Group
Indian Dance Company

The Factory
African Arts in Education

Naseem Khan
Michael Kaye
Donna Lee Keow
Jude Kelly
Don Kinch
Bharat Kotak
Nancy Kuo
Alton Kumalo
A. K~~er~~im
Alton Koraltan
I. Kapustynskyj

Royal Festival Hall

Chinese Arts Association

V. Lakshmipathy
Elizabeth Kozmian Ledward
R.F. Lee
George Lascelles
Errol Lloyd
Selina Lois

D. F.S. McField
Althea McNeish
Joseph Mancell
R. Martin
Joanne Mludzinska
Bimon Mullick
D. Murray
I. Munsell
Dr. Frank McField

K. Nagda
J. Nandi
L. N'Gukane
Alastair Niven
Lawrence Noel
Terry Noel
Lloyd Nelson

B. Osborne
Johney Ohene
J.O. Oke
Adam Ostaszewski

T. Phillips
L. Palmer
M. Phillips
Devi Prasad
A. Price
Bernard Pulle
Anoton Phillips
Malcolm Phillips

A.J.M. Rahman
Mrs. B. Rahman
Khalilur Rahman
V. Ramlal
Jimi Rand
Fay Rodrigues
Tara Rajkumar
K. Rahonan
R. P. Rasiah
J. Ross

Moonstone Productions

Carib Theatre Group
Minority Arts Advisory Service
Carnival Industries

Goan Association

Visual Arts Group

Anglo India Art Centre

African Centre
Trinbago Carnival Club
British Airways Groovers Steel Orchestra

Camden Black Parents Group
Polish Centre

Brent Black Music Co-op

Vince Hines Foundation

Factory

New Citizens Dramatic Art

Tower Hamlets Council for Racial Equality

Lambeth Ensemble Theatre

R.M. Saha
Krishnan Dev Saggiar
Jorge Salgado
Valerie May Samuels
Graciela Sanchez
Patricia Lee Sang
Marian Shah
R. Shamim
Anwar Sharif
Frances Shepherd
Durlabh Singh
Miss H. Suraiya
Owen Sylvester
Pat Lee Sang
Ralph Straker

Wayne Tenyue

Suresh Vedak
Jatinder Verma

Ibrahim Wagh
Keith Waite
Tim Westgate
Wilf Walker
Adu Seray Wurie

M. Zakir

Parminder Vir
John Maxwell
Terry Jervis
Bev Provest
Di Abbott
Julian Henriques
Ravi Randawa
Y. Brewster
Richard Pulford

GLC Members

Tony Banks
Baroness Gardner
Andy Harris
Peter Pitt

Tooting Project

Indo-Pak Theatre Association
Asian Artists Association

East African Asian Association
Melting Pot Foundation

Bexley Council for Racial Equality

The Pan African Organisation.

Arts Council Great Britain

GLC officers in attendance

Lord Birkett
Herman Ouseley
Alan Deighton
Janet Brinkley
Carl Atkinson
Keith Bennett
Ian Goodacre
B. Harris
Celia Holmes
Gwen Tudge
Joyce Epstein
Michael Kaye