



NORTHAMPTONSHIRE
Black History
P R O J E C T

Newsletter

September 2003 Volume 1, Issue 3

Jobs and volunteering opportunities

During September and October we are recruiting more sessional workers and volunteers to work with us on this exciting community initiative.

To date we have 20 sessional workers and 10 volunteers from across the county involved in historical research and interviewing people about their experiences of living in Northamptonshire (see pages 3-4).

However, we still need more of you to assist us, especially in the north and west of the county such as in Daventry, Kettering, Corby and the surrounding villages.

We are holding Open Days during October so why not come along and find out more (see page 2) ?

On pages 6-7 you will find the adverts for sessional workers. To volunteer contact us on 01604 590 967.

So what's it like to work on the project?

Piso Freemantle, originally from Liberia and now living in Northampton, says that since graduating from University and working on the project she has

been able to enhance her research skills further. Piso also feels that it has enabled her to discover more about "the rich and interesting history of Northamptonshire as a whole, not just the Black people who lived here."

Meanwhile, Ravi Sharma, who lives in Kettering feels "It is really important that we capture the stories of our communities before they are lost. I first got involved when the project team visited the Sikh temple in February this year. I was really pleased that they made the effort to come and see us on a winter Sunday morning."

Our volunteers and sessional workers are from a range of backgrounds, ages and experiences. You can get involved whether you have lived here for a long or a short time.

Our newest volunteer Simone Yolarin, who has just moved up from London, says she hopes to find out more about the area and the history of Black communities here. Simone wants to gain a better sense of the place she has chosen to be her home.

"Black" is defined in the context of this project as "any individual or group who defines their identity by reference to visibility vis-à-vis the effects of racism. It includes people and groups from visible minority communities, especially those with African and/ or Asian origins."

Forthcoming events

Museum morning for the Over 60s on 11 September 2003

Julia Drake, Oral History Officer, will be speaking at Northampton Museum and Art Gallery from 10.30am –12pm about the oral history interviews that have been recorded so far.

Contact the Museum (01604 838111) or Julia (01604 590 967) to find out more.

Open Days in Kettering and Daventry

During Black History Month, we shall be holding two Open Days (see dates below) to promote the employment and volunteering opportunities with our project. This will coincide with our third recruitment round for sessional workers (see front page and pages 6-7).

Northampton College and the Council for Ethnic Minority Communities have kindly agreed to provide professional support to anyone requiring assistance with the completion of their application forms. It is very important that applicants complete the forms fully to ensure that they are short listed for interview. This is your chance to make sure that you have done so.

So why not come along to our Open Days and find out about the project and how you can get involved with the work of this unique venture.

Open Day at Kettering Library

11-4pm Saturday 4 October 2003

Kettering Library
Sheep Street
Kettering NN16 0AY.
Tel. 01536 512315
Contact: Dennis Renney

Open Day at Daventry Library

11- 4pm Saturday 11 October 2003

Daventry Library
North Street
Daventry N11 5PN.
Tel. 01327 703130
Contact: Sally Jenkins

Other Black History Month events

You will also be able to find out more about the project at Black History Month events arranged by other organisations and venues. At the time of press, we will have a stall on:

Friday 24 October - Cultural Awareness Day at Northampton African Caribbean Resource Centre, 117-121 Kettering Road, Northampton. Tel. 01604 250881.

To find out about other dates contact us on tel. 01604 590 967. Alternatively, if you would like us to attend an event you are organising please give us ring.

Oral History Sub-project Update

These people are just some of those who have been interviewed since June:

- **Ismail Ali**, Northampton interviewed by Esmahan Abdalla
- **Sarwat Kakhar**, Wellingborough interviewed by Julia Bush
- **Austin Madu**, Northampton interviewed by Esmahan Abdalla
- **Michael Opoku**, Wellingborough interviewed by Leticia Narh

- **Dipana Patel**, Northampton interviewed by Paul Bracey
- **Ravi Sharma**, Kettering interviewed by Julia Drake
- **Morcea Walker**, Northampton interviewed by Julia Drake

If you would like to be interviewed or nominate someone, please contact Julia on 01604 590967.

Extracts from an interview with Meharban and Mahinda Plahay

In January this year, Meharban and Mahinda Plahay were interviewed as part of the project. Meharban is the Secretary of Sri Guru Singh Sabha in Kettering, while Mahinda organises the cooking for their Sunday gatherings at the Temple.

Meharban grew up and was educated in Dar es Salem, Tanzania and undertook his teacher training in Nairobi, Kenya. Mahinda was born and grew up in Tanzania. In 1960, Meharban won a Commonwealth Bursary to do a one year course in England, after which he got a place at the teacher training college at Sheffield. Meharban recalls at the time "I was the only Sikh in the whole campus."

Before leaving Tanzania however, Meharban and Mahinda were married, and she joined him in Sheffield 3 months later. Meharban recalls the difficulties they faced trying to find accommodation. One woman "just walked into the house and slammed the door shut and didn't say a word." Fortunately they did find rooms with an elderly woman who became, as Mahinda recalls, like "a mother to me" and who "was in tears" when they returned to Tanzania ten months later.

Meharban and Mahinda returned to Britain 5 years later in 1967, after changes in the employment rules made it difficult to stay in Tanzania. In January 1968, Meharban started as a teacher at a junior school in Corby where he remained for the next 27 years. The rest of the family joined him a month later and their children went to Kingswood Junior School, while Mahinda found a job as a machinist in Corby. Five years later the family moved to Kettering.

At first Mahinda and Meharban were "missing the temple life" and used to go to London to take part in the big festivals. As the Sikh community in Kettering grew however, they rented the Manor House and Corn Market Hall and then when they outgrew these spaces, they worked together to raise the funds to buy the unused Co-operative Bank building in King Street in 1980. Volunteers laboured to repair, construct and paint the building and "within two months" it was ready. Twenty years later the Temple continues to be a place where "everybody is welcome."

Research Sub-project Update

Below, just some of the evidence of Black people living in Northamptonshire. If you have more to add or other references please contact Nikki 01604 590967.

Noticeboard - Black history discoveries

Posted by Julia Moss (Local Historian)

- Baptism of Sidney Hammond a black, *Parish Records of Oundle*, 9.4.1705
- Mary Hammond, a black woman formerly servant to Elizabeth Creed née Pickering, *Barnwell All Saints Burial Register*, 13.11.1737

Posted by Julia Bush (Historian/ Lecturer/ Volunteer)

Referring to Charles of Boughton, *Boughton House Household Accounts*, 1727-28

- To Mr Crockley for black boy schooling &c. - pr. Bill £3. 1/-
- Jemima Price fr. Nursing Charles yr. Black in full as pr. Bill £1. 4/-4
- To Rose Carn fr. A black velvet cap for Charles, as pr. Bill £14/-
- To Charles, footman, last years wages, to yr. 8th of Ditto £4.00
- To yr, black of Her Grace to yr 27th instant £4.06

Posted by Kate Earnshaw (Sessional Worker)

- Moses son of William (the black), Ann Carter bapt., 24.3.1788, *Parish Register, Towcester Baptism c.1777-1812*
- William Carter a negroe, 26.10.1807, *Parish Register, Towcester Burials 1725-1812*

Posted by Paul Bingham (Sessional Worker)

- Details of the Parsees visit and match at the County Cricket Ground in July 1886, *Daily Reporter*, 31.7.1886
- Details of the first Indian professional cricketer, M. Famji. The team visited Northampton in 1886. *Cricket Wallah, Sayld Berry*, 1982
- Black Butcher Johnson, a coloured man of the West Indies tries to separate a fight between 2 wrestlers outside the ring at the Fanciers Club, Wood Street, Northampton. *Northampton Mercury and Herald*, 8.9.1933

Posted by Nikki Taylor (Community Research Officer)

- "Should we welcome team that bars coloured players?" Article about the prospect of visiting South African team, when Northamptonshire County Cricket Club was captained by a man of Indian origin. *Northants Independent*, 29.4.1960

Posted by Marjorie Morgan (Sessional Worker)

- Photographs taken by Ralph Meakins of guests at the Northampton College of Technology annual student dance. Includes: Mr LB Awodulima, Miss Mary Jagassar, Mr T Aderyeri & Miss S Amnelise, *Northampton Independent*, April 1962

Archive Sub-project Update

The records of Ghana Union, Northamptonshire

One of our sessional workers, Michael Opoku, has been closely working with the long established Ghana Union to deposit their records at the County Record Office. In particular, Michael has been working with Mark Addo, Secretary of the Union, who will be shortly returning to Ghana.

Once the records have been organised, this material will be transferred to the Record Office where they will be kept safe for future generations. Ghana Union will still retain ownership of their records and have access to them. It will mean, however, that other people will be able to discover more about the history of this organisation and the range of community and educational projects they have run in almost 30 years. Confidential records will only be accessible to the Ghana Union.

Have you ever thought about what you are going to do with those dusty old boxes of paperwork relating to your organisation or your personal life? They are an invaluable record of the activities of Black communities and people living and working in Northamptonshire. So why not contact Nikki today and find out how you can put your mark on the historical record!

Britain's first Asian Member of Parliament visited Northampton, 1888

In 1888, Dadabhai Naoroji came to Northampton to address a public meeting. With him were Charles Bradlaugh, Member of Parliament (MP), and Womesh Chandra Bonnerjee, President of the First Indian National Congress.

At the time Dr Naoroji was the newly selected Liberal and Radical Union candidate for Central Finsbury. In 1892 Naoroji was elected MP for Central Finsbury and was the first Asian Member of Parliament in Britain. He lost his seat in 1895.

The public meeting held on Tuesday 21st August 1888 at Northampton Town Hall was well attended by people from around the County. The meeting, entitled 'India and England - Indian Grievances and English Remedies', centred on a debate about Britain's obligations to all British subjects, including those in India, as pledged by Queen Victoria in 1858.

As an elected MP, Mr Naoroji represented both his local constituents and the people of India. Throughout his political career Mr Naoroji campaigned against the financial drain on India caused by British Taxation. He also wrote 'Poverty and Un-British Rule in India' published in 1901, and 'The Rights of Labour' in 1906. He died on 2nd July 1917.

Northampton South MP, Tony Clarke, has informed us that a portrait of Dadabhai Naoroji hangs in the tea room at the House of Commons.

WANTED: Sessional Workers

(£8.50 per hour + expenses and training provided)

For professional help completing application forms come to Kettering Library on Saturday 4 October or Daventry Library on Saturday 11 October between 11 am and 4pm (see page 2).

We are seeking to recruit a pool of people from across the County with a range of skills and experiences keen to help us record and promote the history of Northamptonshire's Black communities (see page 7 opposite for criteria).

'Black' includes people of Asian, African, Caribbean, Chinese, and Vietnamese origin, for example.

The Project involves (1) collecting and preserving the archives of Black community organisations in the County (2) oral history work with people of all ages (3) original research into the history of the Black communities in Northamptonshire over the past 500 years.

The project is based in Northampton but has a countywide remit.

For an application form specify send an A4 SAE (Self Addressed Envelope) with a 43p stamp to:

**Northamptonshire Black History Project, Doddridge Centre,
109 St James Road, Northampton, NN5 5LD** or collect from the Enquiries Desk at Kettering and Daventry Libraries or drop into our office.

For further information contact Carolyn Abel, Julia Drake or Nikki Taylor on tel. 01604 590 967

Closing date for applications: FRIDAY 31ST OCTOBER 2003

WANTED: Sessional Workers

**Do you have any of these skills or would like to learn more?
Why not contact us to find out how you too can get involved.**

Research Sessional Workers & Volunteers

We are looking for people willing to:

- Assist with original research into the history of the Black presence in Northamptonshire and/ or
- Help collect and record the archives of Black organisations and individuals

Applicants need to:

- Be willing to undertake relevant training
- Possess good people and communication skills
- Be able to work in a team
- Desirable but not essential - possess good knowledge of languages other than English eg Bengali, Vietnamese, Somali

Oral History Sessional Workers & Volunteers

We are looking for people willing to:

- Conduct oral history interviews with a range of Black people and communities and/ or
- Work with young people and school groups

Applicants need to:

- Be willing to undertake relevant training
 - Possess good people and communication skills
 - Be able to work in a team
 - Desirable but not essential - possess good knowledge of languages other than English eg Bengali, Vietnamese, Somali
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Interested in getting involved in the Management Committee?

Our community representatives on the Management Committee include the following groups:

- African Association
- Council for Ethnic Minority Communities
- Bethel United Church
- Dostiyo Asian Women and Girls Centre
- Ghana Union
- Islamic Pakistani Community Centre
- Northamptonshire Somali Community
- Sri Guru Singh Sabha

- Wellingborough African Caribbean Association (WACA)
- Wellingborough Black Consortium
- West Indian Parents Association

This is your opportunity to get involved.

Membership is open to anyone prepared to get involved. We are particularly keen to hear from people outside Northampton and Wellingborough, particularly in rural areas.

If you, or your organisation, are interested in participating please contact Carolyn Abel, Director, on telephone 01604 590967.

And finally, where can you find us?

The Project team are based at:

Northamptonshire Black History Project
Doddridge Centre
109 St James Road
Northampton NN5 5LD

The main project team includes:

Carolyn Abel - Director
Julia Drake - Oral History Officer
Nikki Taylor - Community Research Officer

You can contact us on:

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Comments, feedback or contributions welcome
