

Norwegian Museums Association Conference  
Stavanger, Norway

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### **International Keynote Speaker**

#### **Title of Speech:**

**“Cultural Diversity in shaping heritage for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century- the London perspective”**

Good morning colleagues,

First I would like to thank the Norwegian Museums Association and ICOM Norway for inviting me to do this talk: **Cultural Diversity in shaping heritage for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century- the London perspective.**

I would also like you all to know, how pleased I am to be able to share London's experience in managing equalities and cultural diversity in the heritage sector with you during 2008- a year which Norway has dedicated to “cultural diversity”. Before I start the talk, for the record, I would like to state that although the programme has my title as the Chair of the London Mayor's Heritage and Diversity Task Force, I have decided to speak in my personal capacity which gives me the flexibility and freedom to express my personal views which may not be shared by the Mayor's office.

When I was approached to do this talk by Lief, I was quite relaxed about it and therefore agreed to doing it. I thought I could do this standing on my head because I have been engaged with race and culture all my life whether in the community sector, health services , local government , central government or the

private sector. But when I sat down to write this speech, well it was a different matter altogether. The first question was where do I start? After spending some time mulling over the topic – “Cultural diversity in shaping heritage for the 21<sup>st</sup> century in particular in London”, I felt that a talk from a very practical and living experience would be more beneficial to you. I hope I am right in making that assumption. My reasons for taking such an approach are:

1. First there has been so much written and spoken about the theories, ideologies and academic analysis of the politics of race and heritage but much less guidance and help offered to translate the theoretical framework into every day practice;
2. Second the topic is an enormous one therefore I decided to focus on three highly relevant examples of best practice. At least I think they would be relevant;
3. Third, London has a unique history and heritage landscape. It is one of the very few if not the most diverse capital cities in the world. It houses the world's cultures in its museums, and in its wider historical environment, and landscapes as well as having the world's population as residents and citizens and migrants. So what better than to focus on the best practices London can offer as well as share a few of the lessons learned along the way, which would be beneficial for colleagues in other parts of Europe to avoid;
4. And finally this is a personal story as much as a professional one told from a lived and living experience. London has been my home for four decades and I have contributed to race relations as a migrant, an activist, a professional, a Londoner and as a British citizen. In the 40 years, I have worked across the public sector, the health services, local government, central government, independent sector, Non-Departmental Public Body sector. In all these services I have championed race equality.

So how do I plan to tell this story this morning?

The structure of this morning's talk comprises four parts.

**In part one** I will very briefly sketch out the London context, in particular

- The central, regional and local government structures and the voluntary or independent sector responsible for planning and providing cultural services, in particular museum and heritage services across London;
- London's heritage landscape focusing primarily on the museums sector;
- London's population profile: using the 2001 census figures, I will provide some highlights on the patterns of inequalities experienced by the different ethnic minority communities stemming from institutional and other forms of racism and discrimination as well.

**Then, in part two**, I will aim to:

- compare the trends of cultural diversity and racial inequalities set out in part one with international trends and vice versa;
- I will also examine briefly how wider racial inequalities trends are reflected in the heritage sector by examining the patterns of employment and service delivery as well as partnerships with the African and Asian minority communities;
- and the response from the museum and heritage sector, in particular to the key events that have challenged the "institutional racism, and racial inequalities" in museums and archives in London and the UK.

**The third part of the paper** will focus on the barriers and or resistance to change to date and the reasons for them and (possibly what is needed to overcome them).

The London-wide response, in particular the Mayor's Commission on African and Asian Heritage (MCAAH) and its successor the Heritage and Diversity Task Force's (HDTF) work which were established to undertake an assessment of the services for the African and Asian communities in the heritage sector and embed

cultural diversity in the museum and archive sector respectively will form **the fourth section of the paper.**

There will be some overlap between parts three and four as I will draw from the findings from MCAAH inquiry to identify some of the barriers.

**And finally in part five, the concluding section,** I will try and draw comparisons between London and Norway which has half of London's population. I also intend to pose some questions for you, the audience, to mull over for a few minutes before taking questions from the floor.

Throughout the talk, I will try and focus on key examples of policies, processes and practices aimed at improving the delivery of cultural diversity in the areas of governance; work force; service /business delivery or as some might prefer to call it programme development; establishing effective equitable partnerships with the Black and Ethnic Minority communities in London and the development of audience base. I will context these areas in three key case studies. The main case study is the London Mayor's Heritage and Diversity Task Force work which was established to implement the recommendations made by the Mayor's Commission for African and Asian Heritage. I also plan to touch on the Diversify programme, initiated and managed by the UK Museum Association on behalf of the London Hub, to improve the workforce diversity through training bursaries and placements; and finally the Gain project aimed at diversifying governance as examples of responses from the heritage sector in the UK.

**Also as the focus of the Mayors Commission and Task Force work relate to African and Asian heritage only,** my references therefore will be to these two groups but wish to stress and reassure the conference that the issues of inequalities in heritage are shared by other minority groups as well. Therefore, the processes and policies being developed are relevant to all minority groups in London.

Although I was not a member of the MCAAH , the report produced by the Commission states that the reason for the narrow focus specifically on African, Caribbean and Asian heritage was an attempt to put right the common myth and belief among many Londoners and the British nation as a whole that the African, Caribbean and Asian communities of the capital are “recent immigrants and postwar economic migrants” by revealing the hidden history of Asian and African peoples presence in Britain which dates back to 400 or more years and “the contributions of these communities to world history and civilization”. It was also an attempt to reveal that they are the capital’s most long standing communities.

### **So who is responsible for delivering the Capitals museum and galleries services?**

#### **Central, regional and local government structures and the independent sector.**

The Museum libraries Archives (MLA) London, which is a strategic regional development agency for the sector states that there are over 250 museums and galleries in London including the internationally renowned national museums and galleries, local authority run museums and galleries services, museums owned by universities, military and other special interest groups and finally the museums owned by the independent sector: London’s structure is much similar to Norway’s structure.

The Department of culture media and sports, (or DCMS for short) which is one of the central government departments, funds twenty four museums in London. Fifteen of them are national museums which dominate the sector in terms of size, international profile, collections, resources and visitor numbers.

The capital is also home to 11 of the 62 museums holding designated collections amounting to 20% of the UK’s share. The smaller venues and non-national registered museums also hold exceptional collections.

## **National government**

The DCMS was established in 1992. Its remit covers all aspects of the Government's policies in the areas of the arts, heritage, tourism, media, the creative industries, sport, the National Lottery and gaming/gambling.

It is also responsible for “setting policy on UK film culture and industry issues” which is aimed at creating “a strong film industry that brings cultural and economic benefits to the UK”.

“It is a relatively small body and it mainly works through a large number of Non-departmental Public Bodies (or NDPBs as they are commonly known, such as the Arts Council and the **UK Film Council**”, and National and regional museums “who are responsible for delivering policy in the areas that they serve”. The British Museum, the V&A, the Science Museum, the National Portrait Gallery are examples of NDPBs.

## **Local government**

London is made up of 33 boroughs or local governments including the City Corporation/City of London. These 33 boroughs plan and deliver most of the day to day public services such as education, social services housing and arts and leisure services which includes heritage services, for their local residents. Population for each borough ranges between 5,000 in city of London and 140,000 to 300,000 plus. (The boroughs do not run **police, fire or health services which are London wide services planned and delivered centrally**).

The local authority museum services amount to 46 small to medium scale venues owned by 27 local authorities across London. They tend to concentrate on local social history collections and community heritage. Local authorities are generally recognized for their work in the areas of access to diversification of their interpretation and audience base. Some of the boroughs well known for their work in this respect include the London boroughs of Brent, Hackney, Croydon and Southwark. They have made considerable strides in pioneering culturally sensitive local services.

The 162 museums in the independent sector generally is made up of a mixture of small, medium and larger sized museums and galleries .The majority of the independents are small and hold highly specialized collections including those at historic houses of famous people and companies especially in central, London with some of the larger ones holding some nationally important collections. Many of the smaller independents are reliant on volunteers.

The 9 university museums house specialist collections with an academic slant. Examples include University of London's Petrie museum of Egyptology, Brooking Architectural Collection at the Greenwich University. These museums are now under pressure from Funders, such as the national Heritage Lottery Fund and other funders, to open up their services to a wider audiences then purely academics.

There are 11 Ministry of Defense museums and three Royal collections. London also is the home of a 6 historic houses owned by English Heritage (e.g. Kenwood House in Hampstead) and 7 by the National Trust (e.g. Sutton House).

London also boasts four World Heritage Sites: The Palace of Westminster, Westminster Abbey and St. Margaret's Church; the Tower of London; the historic settlement of Greenwich; and the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. It goes without saying that the city is one of the most popular tourist destinations in the world, and its popularity has and continues to grow due to its economic growth.

I would also like to mention briefly the London Hub set up. The London regional hub is part of the Government's "Renaissance in the Regions" project. They are at the heart of the vision for museums in England. The London Region Museum Hub is made up of the Museum of London, the Horniman museum, The Jeffrey museum and the London Transport museum. The renaissance initiative funded by the central government is aimed at improving museums services to reach a wider audience.

## **Archives**

“The London regional archive strategy identified a total of 366 archives and archives holding institutions in London – comprising 29% or 1/3 of all British Archives and comprises “20,000 cubic feet of local authority records alone”. The archives are owned and managed by a range of owners and organisations. Examples of owners include: professional bodies, educational institutions, museums and galleries, businesses, local government, religious bodies, charities, national organisations, medical, performing arts, films and estate. Almost half of all of UK’s business archives are located in London. The records of the central government and courts are looked after by the National Archives for England and Wales and the UK.

The London’s local authority archives receive an estimated 100, 000 on-site visitors per year. This forms a small part of the total access figures which includes electronic access of diverse users from all over world and the last analysis showed hits from 40 different countries.

## **Regional government**

### **The Mayor of London, the London Assembly and the Greater London Authority**

The UK is made up of 12 English regions, and three devolved administrations: Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. The Greater London Authority is the strategic regional authority for London. Established in 2000 after the first Mayoral election and unlike the 33 boroughs, it does not provide services directly to the public. It is made up of the London Mayor and the 25 members of the London Assembly. The Mayor “sets out strategies which are the Mayor’s vision for London and aimed at improving London”. Key areas that the Mayor is responsible for are Spatial development; Economic development ;Transport ;Air quality ;Biodiversity ;Energy; Noise ; Waste; and “ **Culture**”. The Assembly members are responsible for commenting on the Mayor’s vision and policies and strategies and monitoring his performance.

Four other functional bodies called the Greater London Authority Group comprising the metropolitan Police authority, London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority, Transport for London and the London Development Agency implement the Mayors strategy.

### **The Mayor's Cultural Strategy**

The Mayor has a cultural strategy for London which takes into account three key facts, namely: London is the primary focus of the UK's cultural and creative dynamism; it is one of the most culturally diverse cities in the world; and London's population is set to grow significantly by 2016 from 7.3 million to 8.1 million. The **London Regional Cultural Consortium** appointed by the Mayor is responsible for implementing the strategy and reviewing it periodically to ensure it remains relevant to London's ever changing and emerging diverse needs.

Four key objectives underpin the Mayor's strategy: excellence, creativity, access and value. The principle of diversity is a cross-cutting theme which underpins each of these four objectives.

Except for the Museum of London which recently became a partner of the Greater London Authority, the Mayor has no direct control over the museums and galleries sector, but influences the national and local museums through some of his Mayoral responsibilities in relation to culture in London. Those relevant to today's purpose include the following.

- representing the capital's cultural interests at regional, national and international levels and thereby giving London a single voice;
- Development of the creative industries contribution to the London economy;
- Bidding for major events like the Olympics: the winning of the opportunity in Singapore to host the 2012 Games was I believe due largely to the

cultural diversity dimension stressed in the “London Bid” and reinforced by the presence of the multi-racial school children from the east-end of London, where the Games will be held in 2012, at the Singapore event;

- Coordinates and runs a range of arts, culture and heritage programmes and initiatives consistent with national strategies across London. For example the Notting Hill Carnival, the Asian Mela, New Year celebrations, the Chinese New Year and so on;
- Helps to make appointments to key cultural organisations in the capital;
- Promotes London as tourist destination and a gateway to the rest of the UK.

A key policy of the Mayor’s strategy is to ensure the infrastructure of the cultural sector, meaning the workforce and the services, are reflective of the amazing mix of culture in the capital and the creativity and talents of the diverse communities. I will return to this when I talk about the Mayor’s Commission and its successor the Task Force later.

Of course as you all are aware, on May 1<sup>st</sup> this year we had a change of administration and obviously it is still early days to say much about the new direction, but the new Mayor has very kindly agreed that the Heritage and Diversity Task Force will continue under his Mayoralty.

## **Population**

London's population comprises a wide range of peoples, cultures, and religions and over 300 languages are spoken within the city. The total population for London was estimated at 7.5 million at the 2001 census. (A more accurate figure, I believe, might be nearer to 8 million now).

London’s population makes up 14 % of the total of England and Wales population which is estimated at 53.4 million in the 2005 review. **(Office for national statistics).**

According to the 2001 census, London represents 16 ethnic group categories and the capital houses a high proportion of ethnic groups compared to the national average.

Approximately 46 % of **all non white population** in the UK lives in London. Some of the ethnic groups are mainly concentrated in London. For example 79 % of the Africans live in London, 63 % of those classified as other black, 61 % of black Caribbean, 55% of those classified as other Asian and 55 % of all Bangladeshis live in London.

London's ethnic minority population is predominantly a young one: the figure for the white population is under 16% compared to 38% for people of Bangladeshi origin and 35 % for those of Pakistani origin. And 50% for the Mixed Race population which is considered the fastest growing group of people in the UK. .

A significant increase in ethnic minority make up in the population in some of the London boroughs is resulting in an ethnic majority population in particular in boroughs like Brent and Newham. In nine out of the 33 London boroughs, white British population form less than half of the population.

These figures that I have just set out give you a flavour of the challenges that face the museums and the wider heritage sector in planning for and delivering a museum service that is fit for London's residents in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **Inequalities as documented in the Commission for Racial Equality's exit strategy.**

Whilst the population figures give a more pleasant insight into the vibrant nature of the melting pot of London, they also have a less pleasant side to them which I would term as the racial inequalities in London resulting from personal or institutional racism and discrimination.

The Commission for Racial Equality (CRE), one of the predecessors to the current Commission for Human Rights and Equalities (CHER) which as the name

suggests deals with all aspects of equalities and human right issues, and quite similar to Norway's equality and Anti-discriminatory Ombud, launched its final exit strategy report called "A lot done, a lot to do - Our vision for an integrated Britain"- in March 2007, when it was finally wound down to merge with the new CHER. Key findings in the CRE's exit strategy report highlighted that despite three decades of anti –discriminatory policy; Britain has not achieved a truly level playing field between white and black communities in the areas of access and opportunities among young people; in employment, education, housing and social services; and in their participation in the democratic process including governance of organisations. The introduction to the report summarizes the inequalities experienced by non-white minorities as thus:

"An ethnic minority British baby born today is sadly more likely to go on to receive poor quality education, be paid less, live in sub-standard housing, be poor in health and be discriminated against in other ways than his or her white contemporaries. This persistent longstanding inequality is quite simply unfair and unacceptable".

### **Inequalities among Young people**

12 % of the child population in the UK is ethnic minority. Many of these children are more likely to be represented disproportionately among the poorer strata of society. Rates of child poverty are higher among African, Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities.

The report goes on to state that "notions of identity, Britishness and citizenship among ethnic minority children and young people (whether second or third generation British-born or recent migrants) are barely, if ever touched upon in the development of youth services". I would argue even the schools have difficulty in addressing the complex identity issue, let alone museums and the wider heritage sector.

### **Inequalities in employment**

In employment the over the last 20 years there has been a consistent gap between rates of employment among minority ethnic communities which is 60% compared to the 75% overall rate for employment for the whole population. The employment rates for minorities of Bangladeshi or Pakistani origin are even lower: 44% and 45% respectively. And those of African descent it is 57% .Black and Asian women are lagging well behind white women. This situation is impacted upon adversely by the disadvantage in attainments in education, skills and qualifications and experience. For example many young Somalis born and brought up in Britain who have been through the education system and speak fluent English leave school with few qualifications and tend to be unsuccessful in securing employment.

### **Other challenging issues for London and Londoners**

London also has other characteristics and issues which have and continue to impact adversely on cultural diversity and lives of non white communities. We witnessed the 7/7 bombings last July which has kept the London, national and international governments pre-occupied with terrorism and Islam religion which has also led to the questioning of the value of multi-culturalism. We have also seen quite a number of disaffected black young people turning to violent gun and knife crimes. We have communities divided along race and faith lines living parallel lives which have led to the campaign for community cohesion and identity debates at political and academic levels about the need to replace multi-culturalism with Britishness and shared or common values (whatever that may be) because no one seems to have come up with the answer. Statistics show that 90% of white community does not have contact with black and minority people.

These patterns of demography and racial inequalities are not just a London phenomenon but trends experienced internationally. So I would like to spend a few minutes looking at the international trends which reflect the London experience and vice versa before looking at the relevance of all of this for the museum and heritage sector.

## Part two

### Race, identity, cultural diversity- international trends

I am sure some of you know or heard of Mr. Doudou Diene, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, a philosopher, political scientist, and a renowned promoter of understanding among cultures. Diene identifies three key negative trends that pose a threat to culture, identity, heritage and cultural diversity.

**First**, he cites the increase in racist violence in Europe: on the basis of his work around the world, he states that “there are more and more physical attacks and even racist crimes” against immigrants and minorities. I would argue that in Britain this trend is borne out by our Ministry of Justice statistics on number of attacks on ethnic minority reported in October 2007. Government figures showed a 12 % rise in attacks on people because of their race or religion. The director of the Centre for Crime and Justice Studies in the UK, Richard Garside, commented that “the increase could be tied in with the rise of far-right groups and some of the rhetoric around the war on terror. The police may also, in their attempts to reach out to ethnic minority groups, be recording more incidents.”

**Diene’s second trend** relates to the “political instrumentalisation of racism”. He states, I quote, “we see more and more political parties with openly racist and xenophobic platforms which use the debate on immigration, asylum and terrorism”. He argues that these parties are developing their racist and xenophobic agendas through the literal criminalization of immigrants and foreigners. He goes on to say that “in some European countries many members of such parties are getting into government. By means of governmental alliances they democratically get to the heart of power and that is very serious problem”. Although this is a world wide phenomenon, Diene believes that “it is more developed in some European countries, because western countries are such countries where the issue of identity and multiculturalism is getting into a very

difficult crisis. And some political parties and leaders refuse the cultural diversity and strongly uphold very old national identities which are based on ethnicity or religion.” I think this is for fear of other “immigrant’ cultures” taking over the old national culture. In Britain’s case, I believe the fear is about the loss of “English” culture, whatever that may be given that the Africans and Asians have been part of English society for more than 400 years.

Like Norway and other countries in Western Europe, Britain is one of Western Europe’s democracies, and I can tell you that the British population is at the receiving end of relentless daily rant from the media and a plethora of government policies on multiculturalism, immigration, refugees and “Britishness”.; much of it in negative tone and implications.

Doudou Diene cites the “intellectualisation of racism and discrimination” as the **third trend**. He sees “more and more writings by scholars, philosophers and even by fiction writers where racism is openly advocated or legitimised and this tendency is seen on an international scale”. He cites Samuel P Huntington’s latest book called “Who Are We?” on the national identity of America. In it Huntington claims that the presence and cultural activity of the Latino population pose a threat to the American identity, thus legitimising the discrimination experienced by the Latino community. This Harvard professor is the famous author who also wrote “The Clash of Civilizations”.

I am sure you will agree with me that we have had our own share of this tendency in the UK and Europe. You may recall the outburst from the eminent (DNA) scientist and Noble prize winner, James Watson, in the UK, last October about intellectual differences between ‘Africans’ and ‘us’; meaning others, leading to the Science Museum in London cancelling his sell out meeting on the grounds that his remarks had gone “beyond the point of acceptable debate”. Whilst some politicians and scientists condemned such unscientific assertions, because of their belief that racism was behind the scientific claims in this case, there were others who wanted it to go ahead on the grounds that it would provide the public a chance to challenge Watson and make up their own mind. The Newcastle Centre for Life was one organisation that took the latter view.

Unfortunately for them and fortunately for others, Watson left the country to go home to America.

And of course there is the issue of globalisation which occupies most political, social and ethical agendas these days. Globalisation is often cited as a means to improve cultural understanding, tolerance and sharing of cultures, skills, and economy. In practice, one could argue, developments have been less clear cut. Migrants who have arrived in Britain as part of the globalisation process have rejected the demand for shedding their own identities in order to subscribe to a unified identity; indeed, such demands tend to provoke immigrants into hanging on to their national and cultural identities even more intensely. The movement of economic migrants of various religious and ethnic backgrounds from one continent or country to another, to fill the gap in the labour market in the receiving country, add to the diversity crisis. The presence of so many different migrant and refugee cultures is perceived by some in the dominant culture as a threat to the indigenous culture and identity, argues Diene, thus pushing politicians and intellectuals to hang on to the status quo; it presents conflicts and tensions which can be used by people of ill will to rationalise racism and xenophobia.

I would argue this is the position Britain, and London in particular finds itself in today. **And would leave you to contemplate how Norway fares in this respect.**

### **Part three**

#### **Key issues for museums and the London museums sector's response**

So how the general trends in demography, equalities are and the wider issues of racism, discrimination, identity and Britishness debates have impacted upon the

heritage sector in London. More importantly how has the museum and the wider heritage sector responded to them? The bit you have been waiting for I suspect!

### **Figures for employment in the museum/ heritage sector**

The answer has to be not very well at the best and very poor at the worst, albeit with a number of patchy good practices, some of which are in need of refreshing. I fear the figures for employment and governance in the heritage sector are even bleaker with the under- representation replicated especially at the professional, management and Board levels. **My personal view is that the answer probably lies in recruitment practices which favour direct or indirect cloning of self and therefore 'others' do not get appointed.**

At the last count of minority staff in the museum sector revealed that most of the black and Asian employees were concentrated in the lower echelons of the work force and in particular engaged in the front of house services and administrative posts. Out of the 15,000 staff in the UK museums sector nationally only 7% are from black and ethnic minority communities and only 4.4. % from African, Caribbean, Asian or Chinese decent; and less than 2% of the museum staff working with and presenting collections is from ethnic minority background.

In its defence the heritage sector has put forward a number of reasons for this situation but two have consistently stood out. One is the unattractive pay structure which deters minority candidates and the lack of movement especially at the senior levels, the other is that there aren't enough minority candidates with the right skills knowledge and experience and leadership qualities.

Yet I found it ironical to hear some very able young and middle aged African and Asian participants at the International Leadership and Diversity Symposium, at the Greater London Authority, last year, say that they had left the cultural,

education and heritage sectors because of the isolation, marginalisation and institutional racism which they had experienced within those sectors.

Obviously there appears to be a wide gap in perception and experience between the employers and employees. And the complacent attitude to this kind of institutional racism in the sector is as if it somehow belonged to the institution i.e. the brick and mortar of the building rather than the people, policies, and processes within it. Individuals need to take responsibility and be accountable for their own contribution to the institutional racism. You cannot distance self from the institution. You and I form the institutions.

The sector also appears to have difficulty in hanging on to the few minority staff it has. This has resulted in the haemorrhaging of black and Asian staff from the cultural and heritage sector.

I am not going to apologise for stating the obvious here today, I strongly believe that unless the heritage sector is reminded of these inequalities constantly in the UK and Europe, there is a danger that it will not move from its hand wringing position, which we have witnessed for a long time, to serious actions.

The marginalisation of cultural diversity still remains quite wide spread mainly because it does not get embedded in the corporate strategic plan and direction. It remains an appendix brought to life from time to time or when it is time to tick the box to say “yes we have a policy”, in the annual report or in response to monitoring by the CHER; (and in your case here in Norway, the monitoring of the government departments that has been undertaken by your Ombud for the first time this year). Or it is mainstreamed into a single equality scheme which comprises all of the inequalities categories. Whilst the principle of mainstreaming may be a good one, in practice the race equality issues do not get mainstreamed. Instead they get pushed down to the bottom of the pile, well below all other equality strands, partly because the people around the table usually do not have the right level of understanding or awareness of the issues and because, more importantly, it presents the kind of discomfort that gender or disability issues do not,.

Last year I attended the MLA / UNESCO Collaborative Partnership Conference in London organised to aid mutual sharing of best practice in relation to the management of the legacies of the Abolition of the Slave Trade between Africa, Caribbean and the UK. All projects presented by the UK delegates as models of good practice of cultural diversity at that event were supported by Lottery funding and for a time limited period only, thus rendering them unsustainable once the funding ended. When asked why that was the case, the simple answer was “we do not have a mainstream budget for race equality”. In other words, minority communities did not merit a share of the mainstream money. This demonstrates my previous point about how the principle of mainstreaming of race equality does not actually get translated into practice. This brings me on to the issue of funding of black and ethnic minority heritage.

The Lottery funding in the UK has transformed the heritage sector through an injection of £4billion to date, however only £50 million out of the £4 billion lottery money allocated to the funding of the nation's heritage has been spent on projects relating to the black and ethnic minority communities: a drop or less in the ocean. Further more much of this money has been spent on small scale time-limited projects which usually have difficulty in leaving a legacy and have been criticised as promoting stereotypes, othering and exotica. The £50 million includes funding of a few large scale museum projects dedicated to cultural diversity. Many of the museums do not hide the fact that without the lottery money or other sources of funding, their commitment to cultural diversity wouldn't be translated into practice. Such inequitable distribution begs the question of the government as to how serious is the lottery sector in ensuring that the “National” heritage includes minority heritage as well.

### **Some challenges that have stimulated museums into action**

That's enough of what the heritage has not achieved as yet. I came here to share with you not only the deficiencies in the heritage sector in London but some of the good work that has been going on for more than a decade or so.

It appears that the implementation of the requirements of the Race Relation legislation, debates about anti-racism and the implementation of equal opportunities policies and practices during the 70s's, 80's in the UK had somehow by passed the national mainstream heritage sector, whilst the rest of the public services were getting on with the business of managing a major cultural shift in terms of anti racist and anti- discriminatory practices in recruitment and service delivery and thereby meeting the duties placed on local government and public services in general by 1976 Race Relations Act. This may explain as to why the local authority museum sector is in some cases miles ahead of the national museum sector in reflecting the needs of local communities in their day to day services.

Also one would have thought that the national museums and heritage sector like the English Heritage and National Trust would have been more acutely aware of the need to reflect the multi-cultural history and heritage in Britain. After all organisations like the National Trust, for example, are the custodians of properties built from the money made from the slave trade, for example. Yet such acknowledgement did not take place until last year in 2007 when Britain commemorated the bicentenary of the abolition of the slave trade and enslavement of African people. Even then it was a fairly low profile and muted affair probably for fear of upsetting its large followers who are still predominantly white and middle class.

It is only in the last 10 -15 years that the museum and wider heritage sector per se have been trying hard to engage in the embedding of cultural diversity in policies, practices and processes. This response, in my view, was brought about by a number of challenges to the sector from the Black and minority communities and academics, the media, leaders in the heritage sector as well as policy

guidance from the government. I would like to set out a few of the challenges which I feel contributed to a cultural shift in the sector.

The examination of symbols of Englishness by television programmes in particular on English migration called the “Mongrel Nation” by Eddie Izzard, a white Comedian, and the “White Tribe” by Darcus Howe, a black writer, broadcaster and social commentator, taking a look at Anglo Saxon Britain; and exhibitions in museums located in areas with large concentration of migrant population focusing on minority cultural heritage, for example the Sikh art at the Bradford Art Galleries and Museum and the Moghul Gardens at Cartwright Hall in Bradford, home for a large Asian community, have been cited by many activists, academics and social commentators as contributing to a review of Englishness and in particular who and what counted as British heritage, and why. Stuart Hall, the cultural theorist and sociologist, describes these examinations as the “slow – motion revolution”. The academics and commentators are of the view that these television programmes and exhibition events have undoubtedly contributed to the unsettling of the definition of British heritage which have until then have been portrayed by symbols of upper and middle class images like “afternoon teas” and “stately homes”, and the Saint George’s cross portraying English nationalism and argue that these “provocative” developments brought about a turning point in British heritage and an identity crisis.

I believe the controversy around the celebration of the Black history month is another development which posed a challenge to the British heritage sector. On the one hand, the annual event provided an opportunity for the black community to reflect on their heritage and celebrate their contributions to Britain and the world and in doing so challenge the museums and heritage providers at national and local authority level for their share of the funding cake to produce projects and stage events. On the other hand it provided the black activists, academics and commentators an opportunity to challenge the heritage sector for the ghettoisation of black heritage into the black history month and the waste of the

meager resources deployed to the black communities on events and projects deemed to be popular culture , shallow and verging on the exotica, in nature. Both groups served to highlight the complacency in the sector and thereby challenge the museums and heritage services to take on the need to integrate black heritage into the main stream more seriously and not shoehorn all black events into a single month in the year.

The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 has made its contribution too. The Act has its origins in the MacPherson report on the murder of Stephen Lawrence, a black teenager murdered by some white youths in South East London in 1993. The new law, which came into effect from April 2001, extends the 1976 Race Relations Act to cover public authorities and bodies and thereby bringing into the legal frame work the national museums. The Act is aimed at tackling institutional racism in the public sector. Compliance with the requirements of the act came into effect in May 2002. The act places a duty on major central and local government bodies, the police and educational establishments to ensure their workforce reflects their communities, and that policies and practices do not indirectly discriminate.

The aim of the general duty is to “mainstream” the elimination of discrimination and promotion of equality of opportunity and good race relations by making these an integral part of the way public functions are carried out. The public bodies and authorities are therefore required to assess where, and how, racial equality is relevant to the way they carry out their various activities, to take action where their policies and procedures are likely to have a discriminatory effect and to promote equality of opportunity.

In employment, the duty on all public authorities is to ethnically monitor all staff and applicants for jobs, promotion and training. When a public body employs more than 150 people, the duty will be to also monitor grievances, disciplinary action, performance and dismissals and reasons for leaving.

The Commission for Human Rights and Equalities have the right to monitor, investigate and legally challenge any organisation that fails to comply with the act and the guidelines issued by the Commission.

Clearly the requirement of this legislation has put some pressure on the heritage sector, but the even then the response has been slow.

But for me, the key landmark event that that harnessed the activism of the black community including black heritage practitioners demanding for an equal status in the national narrative, as well as the white heritage professionals looking for ammunition to integrate Black and Asian heritage into the nations story was the “Whose Heritage” conference organized by the Arts Council of England in 1999. At the event, Stuart Hall identified three key challenges for the sector. First that heritage is not “an immutable entity” but a discursive and evolving practice influenced by on going informal discussions and formal debates of the differing interpretations of histories, political events, interests, and interactions of

cultures. Second, that the heritage of minorities cannot be tacked on to the margins of the official national story instead they need to be brought into the centre of the British narrative to make the British story a more accurate and complete story. The island story needs to include “the African presence since the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Asian since the 17<sup>th</sup> century and Chinese, Jewish and Irish in the 19<sup>th</sup> century” and the 50s migration of Asian and African people. Third the integration of heritage should not be restricted to the demonstration of popular culture, academia or just a range of heritage institutions, but embedded into policies, processes and practices as well. The “Whose Heritage” conference provided a benchmark in terms of challenges for a review of the nation’s heritage. May be I am biased because I was present at that event and witnessed the empowerment that the conference unleashed among the black, Asian and white participants. There was a buzz long after the event and even today the speeches, in particular that of Stuart Hall, is quoted from that conference. The conference became an iconic event.

## **Part four**

### **So what good practices have been stimulated by these and other challenges?**

Measures resorted to by the museum sector to embed cultural diversity in the sector include: a range of workshops and conferences on diversification of workforces, inclusive programming and audience participation; exhibitions, albeit the majority of which have been temporary; the production of tool-kits, education and outreach initiatives; attempts to forge partnerships with the black and minority communities with the aim of broadening the audience base ; debates on multi-culturalism, shared values, identity and Britishness and publications produced by think tanks on the same ; and equality statements to meet legal requirements. Additionally a number of government policy and guidance, including performance targets for the museums, have been issued to diversify the workforce, governance and programming. Other tangible evidence includes a range of short-term projects, specifically aimed at accessing black and minority communities to museums sector.

Two projects with longer term aims to diversify the workforce and the governance of the museums and heritage sector respectively are worthy of note. They are the Diversify initiative; a positive action programme initiated and managed by the Museums Association in partnership with the London Museum's Hub and grounded in legislation. And the GAIN project aimed at diversifying governance or Board membership in cultural institutions. But before I move on to explain a little more about these two programmes, I am sure it would be helpful to explain to you what positive action programmes are within the British context.

The UK's 1976 Race Relations Act which I described earlier on makes provisions for positive action recruitment and training programmes targeted at minority communities to achieve a fairer use of the country's human resources. It enables organisations to take steps to help minorities to compete on an equal basis for opportunities without guaranteeing them success. The positive action recruitment is facilitated through the placements of advertisements in minority

press and or places which are accessible to minorities and the operation of a fair selection criteria and procedures for recruitment applied equally between white and minority candidates. The legislation also makes provision to recruit a minority person if the job requires a person of particular cultural background. It also enables training bodies, employers and trade unions and employers associations to encourage applications for jobs or memberships from people of a particular racial or ethnic group if they have been underrepresented in the previous 12 months. The provision of training for minority individuals, in particular training development in areas where they have been underrepresented

in the previous 12 months and help develop skills and build confidence to seek positions within a particular sector are also allowed under the legislation. Often positive action programmes are perceived or wrongly interpreted as positive discrimination, aimed at giving black and ethnic minorities' preferential treatment over white applicants, which they are not. Applicants or candidates at the end of the day will be selected on merits and ability regardless of their skin colour or ethnicity.

The Diversify programme was launched in 1998 to encourage people of African Caribbean, Asian and Chinese decent a career in the museum sector and has been running for the last 10 years. The programme comprises a bursary scheme for one-year full-time postgraduate course in Museum Studies and a three month work experience placement at a specified museum ; an entry-level traineeship scheme for a two-year programme of part-time supervised work experience at a host museum combined with a part-time study programme for a postgraduate museum qualification. The objective is to equip African, Caribbean and Asian trainees with basic entry-level qualification and work experience to place them on equal footing with other applicants when applying for jobs in the sector.

To-date a total number of 82 people have taken part in the programme. 42 of them have completed the training; and 24 partner organisations, namely museums have taken part in the programme. 80 % of the trainees have found

jobs and the other 20 are continuing with further studies or research. An evaluation was undertaken in 2004. The MA is currently considering the future of the programme in particular whether they should continue with it is one of the options being considered.

The Grange Museum in the London Borough of Brent does a similar training programme. Except unlike the diversify programme which is funded from various sources, the funding for the programme at this particular museum comes from its core budget thus promoting a sustainable approach which helps to sustain the traineeship at the same organisation.

GAIN is another positive action training programme. This initiative was developed by the Arts Council of England in partnership with the Mayor of London, Arts and Business and Sporting Equals with the aim to diversifying boards in cultural organisations. The programme was designed to equip individuals from Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority groups with the skills and knowledge to serve as board members of a London based arts, heritage or sports organization. The acronym GAIN stands for Governance, Access, Inclusion, and Networking. The Three key objectives of the programme are to: (a) help diversify boards in cultural institutions; (b) support and enhance the skills of existing trustees to promote diversity in all aspects of the organisation's business; (c) and to identify a framework for producing a comprehensive diversity programme embracing age, gender, disability and sexuality.

Forty five prospective trustees and 19 cultural organisations participated in the pilot programme which was launched in March 2004. The second phase started in October 2006 for a year. New partners have joined and The Independent Theatre Council which is also a partner is currently responsible for managing the programme. So far 22 participants of the programme been appointed to boards of sports and arts organisations in London

Despite the many attempts being made by the cultural leadership in London the sector workforce remains predominantly which led to the previous culture

minister, David Lammy, responsible for culture, and heritage remarking that the boards of most national museums and libraries were "pale, male and stale" and that there was a "whiff of institutional racism" in the country's 1,400 museums and galleries because ethnic minorities were badly under-represented in top-level jobs in those museums and galleries .

In 2004 the then London Mayor ( Ken Livingstone) set up the Mayor's Commission on African and Asian Heritage (MCAAH) with a remit "to provide an overall strategy for supporting the preservation of African and Asian history and heritage as well as increasing its accessibility to all sections of society". This was a ground breaking Mayoral initiative, unique and one of its kind and aimed at investigating how London's heritage sector (museum archives and historic environment) could inclusively reflect and represent London's African and Asian hidden histories and cultural heritage. The MCAAH won the "Euro-City awards" for its innovative approach to the promotion of community cohesion.

The Commission used an intensive inquiry process to assess: the service provision to the African and Asian communities from the mainstream heritage sector and the infrastructure needs of these two communities heritage- focused organisations; and effective partnerships between the main stream providers and recipients and the fundamentals required for a more inclusive education. The inquiry also aimed to provide a framework for an action plan capable of making practical interventions and policy recommendations that would support the development a of more inclusive heritage practice; and encourage initiatives that would value and promote London's multi-cultural heritage as a fundamental aspect of a modern world city.

### **The MCAAH's inquiry process**

The Commission established a partner group comprising 20 representatives from major heritage institutions to inform the evidence gathering, along with consultation with community organisations and black and ethnic minority practitioners. The Commission held around 15 sessions which facilitated a

dialogue between the key stakeholders comprising leaders and practitioners from the heritage sector in particular museums and archives; representatives from funding bodies, professional organisations, government bodies and community based organisations. The sessions focused on key issues that impacted on inclusion and cultural diversity in the sector as the primary aim of the Commission was to respond to marginalization and under representation of African and Asian heritage in the sector, thereby addressing the legacy of inequality resulting from elitism and institutional racism.

### **Themes explored**

Five key themes were explored as part of the MCAAH's process. They were:

1. Representation and accountability (collections and governance);
2. Workforce development and training;
3. Community based heritage infrastructure;
4. Effective and equitable partnerships and outreach;
5. Education and life long learning;

### **Findings – highlights**

The Commission produced a report called "Shared Heritage" which set out some very interesting findings. I am not going to attempt to go through the findings in detail but rather give you some highlights, in particular the following.

- The fundamental need for strategic and proactive leadership to embed cultural diversity in practices relating to collection as much as the governance or work force needed to come from the top, and not a treated as one off

activity/project , with sufficient financial resources in particular, attached to the verbal and paper commitment;

- A long and over due programme of capacity building for the black and Asian community heritage sector which has long suffered from lack of long term strategic vision due to the lack of adequate funding and capacity;
- Removal of gate-keeping and gate-keepers through mechanisms which keep ethnic minorities excluded from the workforce and governance;
- The need for the museums to replace ineffective and shallow partnerships with community based organisations, leading to communities being used for the benefit of the museums, with equitable partnerships which treated the communities as an equal player and which promoted skills sharing as a two way process and remunerated the community groups for their services. However, community partnerships should not be used to offset the lack of black and Asian professionals in the sector.

A key recommendation from the Commission was to establish a “Heritage and Diversity Task Force (HDTF)” to implement the recommendations in the report and an ongoing “Monitoring Group” which will monitor progress in the sector long after the HDTF is gone.

### **The Heritage Diversity Task Force**

The Task Force was established by the Mayor in November 2006 and comprises 20 key and strategic leaders from the national, local and independent museum, libraries and archives sectors, the African, Caribbean and Asian communities, heritage funders and trade union and central government (DCMS) representatives. The local authority is represented by the MLA London. Six sub-

committees have been set up to review best practice across the sector in six specific areas namely:

- Diversifying collection;
- Diversifying archives;
- Diversifying workforce;
- Effective and equitable partnerships;
- Diversifying governance;
- And equality strategies.

Each sub-committee is remitted to review best practice in one of the six areas and develop new innovative projects and report to the HDTF with prioritized recommendations of exemplar projects for implementation.

So far four sub- committees have reported back. The HDTF is time limited and will launch its final report in September 2009. In the mean time it will try and implement some of the exemplar projects through the sector between now and next autumn. As I mentioned earlier, the new Mayor of London who took up office in May 2008 has agreed for the project to continue until September 2009, under the new administration.

## **Part five**

## **Conclusion**

In concluding this talk I would like to return to the title of my paper:

**“Cultural Diversity in shaping heritage for the 21 century- the London perspective”**

and would like to briefly examine the similarities between Norway and the London experience in trying to embed cultural diversity in museums to meet the 21<sup>st</sup> century multi-cultural populations’ needs.

Despite the fact that Norway’s population is only half of London’s total population, and that I have no intimate knowledge of your heritage landscape, population profile or racial inequalities, I am of the view that many of the trends in London are replicated across Europe, including Norway, and vice versa. I would argue that the legacies of Norway’s policy on the assimilation of the Sami and Kven peoples until the 1970’s and the recent “Ali Farah ambulance case”, provide some proof of this which sometimes could be described as “dark” but more commonly a “shared culture”.

There is a great deal of commitment from the museums colleagues here, in Norway, and I sense a heart warming willingness to address inequalities. But this enthusiasm and commitment need to be translated into practical actions which benefit the museums and the communities and the nation as a whole. You have heard me set out how London is trying to forge ahead with the implementation of both tried and tested methods and innovative ideas. On that basis I would like you to consider the following points and then discuss how you personally, professionally and as an organisation going to take forward your plans for Norway.

That’s right I am not going to do all the work here today, I would like you to engage with me and between yourselves to identify some solutions. The points I want you to consider in your deliberations here today are:

- How can issues for example like race, racism, discrimination, immigration, living with asylum or refugee status, racial intolerance leading to violence, which impact directly on the day to day life of minority communities, their human rights, values and beliefs be ignored when dealing with heritage and diversity and museums services.?

- Whose sensitivities are being protected? How can museums ensure that they take a holistic approach to embedding cultural diversity which includes the full experiences of the minority communities?
- How can museums discuss race equality and cultural diversity which is governed by legislation, and increasingly by tougher legislation, without engagement with political processes and their impact on the minority community's identity?
- Given the low level of partnership and trust between the Heritage sector and minority communities, how could the minority population trust the museums to do a good job of debating issues that affect their fundamental human rights, including their heritage and identity?
- Who sets the heritage agenda: the community, the professionals, or the politicians? Or all jointly? Who wins if there is a disagreement?
- How do you handle backlash from politicians, extremist groups, interest groups and think tanks?
- How do you make sure that their staff are robust and knowledgeable enough about minority heritage and interpret that heritage accurately through the collections?
- And finally how can museums help create a safe space in which people can define, debate, and contest their identities, their living circumstances, their beliefs and values, and ultimately their social order? What are the key ingredients needed for a successful outcome?

Finally, heritage institutions are part of civil society, and are the crucible in which citizenship is forged. As such heritage institutions cannot be ignored in the formation of heritage and identity in London and the UK or Norway or the rest of Europe. They have the task of ensuring the provision of culturally diverse and sensitive museum services and diverse foot soldiers and leaders fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. They must not be gate keepers and self-serving guardians but connect actively with the changing shape of the communities that surround them.

Museums must provide a safe platform on which diverse values are asserted , contested, and discovered; central or peripheral , essential or marginal to

identity, they must become sites of contestation available to all the people they serve.

Before I leave the podium I want to leave you with this positive picture. I recently had two young visitors to my home aged seven and eight. I was about to serve lunch when they dashed into the kitchen and started washing their hands. When asked what they were up to, I was told that they were getting ready to eat with their fingers even though I had supplied them with knife, fork and spoon. I asked what they did at school lunches, to which they responded very calmly and confidently “we are Hindus and therefore we eat with our fingers at home and at school we use knife and fork like all other children”. These two children are able to juggle their multiple identities without any problems. So politicians who dismiss the multiculturalism take note.

Thank you.

**CLARA AROKIASAMY**  
MSc in Public Service Management

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Clara is the chair of the Mayor's Heritage and Diversity Task Force which is responsible for embedding equalities and cultural diversity in the Museum, Libraries and Archives sectors in London .

She is the Founder and Director of **Kalai, Clara Arokiasamy Associates**, an **independent international consultancy** with a focus on advocacy, change-making, and organisational development across public sector services and developing international skills development and knowledge sharing/exchange partnerships.

Throughout her senior management career in the public sector, Clara has been responsible for the development and delivery of a range of public services - in the leisure, tourism, arts and heritage sectors, health service, local government, the not for profit sector and NDPBs. Her experience includes management of operational development and change, strategic planning, regeneration, consumer representation, community capacity building and diversity.



Clara was the Deputy Director of Operations at the Heritage Lottery Fund for seven years until June 2007. She was a trustee of SHAPE , national organisation for accessing disabled people to employment and services in the arts, between 1997-2002. From 2002-06, Clara was a National Council Member of Postwatch, the National Consumer Council for Postal Services, where she was a member of the remuneration, research and finance committees.

Until end December 2007 Clara was a member of the Bar Standards Board (the regulator of barristers called to the Bar in England and Wales ). She is also a member of ICOMOSUK's Special Committee on World Heritage Sites and a board member of ICOM UK .

Clara comments on race equality and cultural diversity and human rights issues regularly through speaking engagements and articles. She also advises government, third sector/NGOs and community stakeholders here and abroad.

Clara is a fellow of the Royal Society of Arts.

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