



UBUNTU

BULLETIN

Black Perspectives in Community Development Learning and Training

AUTUMN 2003

SOCIAL JUSTICE



Participants at the Ubuntu seminar, Manchester.

In September, Ubuntu hosted its latest seminar: Black perspectives of social justice. Fifty practitioners came together to strengthen their understanding of social justice and explore how, if at all, their knowledge and experience was reflected in current debates.

The seminar gave an overview of the themes and issues underpinning social justice. This provided a

starting point for workshop discussion on social justice from Black perspectives. Participants began by responding to the question: 'What does social justice mean to me?' Responses ranged from equality of access; social, economic and political rights; to working with the effects of internalised oppression with Black and minority ethnic communities.

Welcome to the **UBUNTU Bulletin**, a newsletter on Black perspectives in community development learning and training.

UBUNTU Bulletin is a regular feature of **Federation News** but is also sent to all members of **UBUNTU**, the interest group of the **Federation for Community Development Learning, for Black and Minority Ethnic** community workers and activists.

If you would like more information about joining **UBUNTU** please contact **Carol Jones**, Development Officer **Black Perspectives**, at the **Federation for Community Development Learning** on

0114 273 9391
carol@fcdl.org.uk
www.fcdl.org.uk

This approach recognised the wealth of experience participants were bringing to the debate. It also



acknowledged a key principle of Black perspectives being that of 'starting where people are at' in order to establish theory that draws on practice from the beginning.

Participants then clarified their role in engaging others in the debate and to identify training needs for practitioners around community development from Black perspectives.

WHAT NEXT?

Participants agreed that there was a need to take this work forward and have organised a follow up meeting. The meeting will take place on: **Tuesday 25th November Manchester** (venue to be confirmed)

It will explore opportunities for taking forward ideas and proposals

for training and skills development. If you would like further details of the meeting and/or a conference report, please contact Carol on 0114 273 9391 or carol@fcdl.org.uk





NEW TRAINING

practitioners working in a range of settings, and reaffirmed the values and principles that underpin their practice.

THEORY TO INFORM PRACTICE

The course looked at what is meant by community development from Black perspectives, and the need for a body of theory that can inform community development practice from a black perspective. A key outcome was the opportunity to explore the links between different themes and perspectives within anti-oppressive practice.

BROADENING THE PROGRAMME

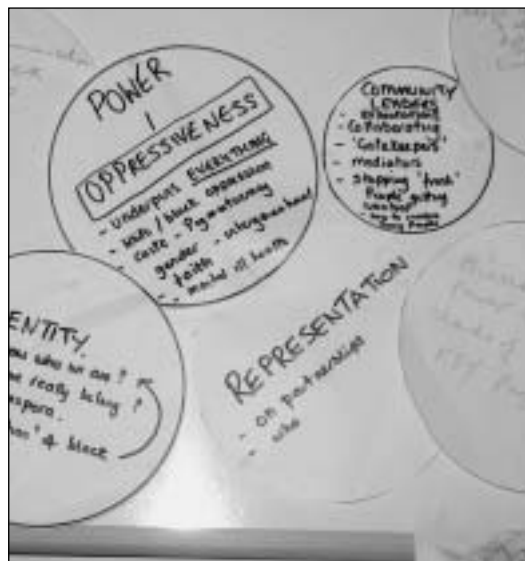
This two day course is part of a broader programme aimed at developing a training the trainers the programme with the aim of

increasing the number of community development trainers from black and minority ethnic communities. A planning meeting has been organised on: **Wednesday 12th November Federation office 12 noon – 4pm starting with lunch.**

For more details contact Susi Miller at the Federation office on 0114 273 9391 or susi@fcdl.org.uk

Black perspectives in community development learning' was a two-day training course, organised as part of the Federation's Skills for Change programme. It was aimed at Black and minority ethnic activists and practitioners who wanted to develop their understanding of community development work, and to identify learning and support needs to develop personal practice.

The course gave participants the opportunity to analyse and reflect on their role as community development





A BLACK PERSPECTIVE

In October 2003, a Black perspective in community and youth work conference was organised by the Centre of Continuing Education Community Work Unit, Manchester University. It aimed to support Black and white practitioners to develop their practice.

UNDERSTANDING

As part of a structured debate, participants discussed and recorded their understanding of Black perspective(s).

A common strand was the notion of Black perspectives which embodies a historical and cultural context that is not backward looking or static. Rather, it reflects a community development approach that promotes the interest of oppressed groups and is rooted in their knowledge and experience. The foundations of which rest on a firm value and principle base that challenges and transcends attitudes and beliefs that combine to discriminate and exclude, from within and across communities, who experience oppression [also] based on skin colour.

'Being Black is not a requirement for working from a Black perspective'.

Conference participant

'The theory of Black perspective is based on a body of knowledge that challenges dominant ideas about equality. In so doing it offers all the opportunity to form meaningful alliances that celebrate the contribution of Black people to world history. Moreover, a Black perspective equips Black people to continue the fight for self-emancipation and creates a body of knowledge. It also develops strategies that contribute to their intellectual freedom and political liberation.'

John Best, 2003, retired Lecturer in Youth and Community Work, Manchester University

The notion of 'Blackness' was also discussed. This refers to the ways in which Blackness, as a political and unifying force, has been subsumed under the concept of diversity (multiculturalism by another name?).

It could be argued that this has left the way open for diversity to further deepen the gulf particularly between and within communities of Asian and African decent.

CHALLENGING

Many at the conference also expressed concern about what they saw as the negative effects of community leaders on attempts to engage all

members of Black communities in the community development process.

Participants also discussed the underlying issue of gender; sexism within communities; patriarchy; the position of Black/Asian men within communities and society as a whole; and notions of power and control wrapped up as religious mysticism and cultural necessity.

Participants recognised the need to identify solutions and ways forward if the control exercised by community leaders is to be constructively challenged.

A conference report will be made available by Manchester University from February 2004.

Postponement

The 'Working with Allies' conference planned for November 4th has been postponed.

It is being re-scheduled for February/March 2004.

Look out for details in the Ubuntu Bulletin or on the Federation's website: www.fcdl.org.uk