



# BLACK ECHO

September 1995

Newsletter Published by the Resource Unit for Black Volunteering

PART ONE

## Black on Board

Tesse Akpeki

Traditional methods of recruitment to the trustee boards of mainstream voluntary organisations can sometimes be discriminatory, leading to an under-representation of black and ethnic minority people, reveals the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) in its conference report *Black On Board*.

Although *Building on Trust*, a recent survey carried out by NCVO, discovered an increase in black trustees since the publication in 1992 of *On Trust*, the report of a working party set up by NCVO and the Charity Commission, this increase has not been significant.

NCVO's Trustee Service Unit was set up in January 1993 in response to the recommendations in *On Trust* that 'more people, from a wider spectrum of society, should be encouraged to become trustees; subject to any legal bar, anyone concerned with working for the benefit of the public or the community should be encouraged to serve as a charity trustee or member of a voluntary organisation management committee'. But how can organisations encourage people from different social and ethnic backgrounds to become trustees in mainstream voluntary organisations?

Some voluntary organisations even ask why diversity is necessary on trustee boards. The answer is that diversity is essential for proper accountability and participation in a democratic society. Restricted access to trusteeship is a constraint on the active participation and development of individuals. A voluntary sector that claims to help people and support causes in a multicultural society

can only be effective if it understands all the diverse needs of individuals. Access to different perspectives is absolutely crucial to devising a range of different, and sometimes more appropriate, solutions.

For as long as voluntary organisations continue to select their trustees on the basis of professional or managerial expertise, the imbalances in the private sector will be reflected in the voluntary sector. But a wide range of vital skills exists outside the business and professional circles from which trustees have traditionally been recruited. Many trustee boards have found that the best way to shape policy is to mesh all relevant viewpoints into the board's decision-making process. This points to a need to widen the pool from which trustees are drawn.

Stakeholders, including funders and users of services, are increasingly expecting organisations to demonstrate a commitment to equal opportunities in all areas, including the governing body. In other words, there is an awareness that equal opportunities goes beyond the recruitment and selection of employees.

For example, a recent survey by the National Federation of Housing Associations revealed that three-quarters of the black, ethnic minority and disabled committee members are active in the race or disability field respectively.

The trustees of these organisations clearly feel that they can contribute meaningfully to board meetings, that their contribution will be valued, and that they will be adequately supported. Why then do mainstream

organisations find it difficult to attract trustees from minority groups?

Achieving a diversity of trustees will require organisations to take a strategic view of board development, building on the resource of the current members to introduce new people with innovative ideas.

The move towards greater accountability has forced organisations to re-examine their procedures for recruiting new trustees with relevant skills and experience. Voluntary organisations wishing to attract trustees from minority ethnic groups may need to overhaul both their recruitment procedures and their support mechanisms if they are to succeed.

Many trustees are recruited by word of mouth. Although there are obvious advantages to this approach from the organisation's point of view, it does tend to limit the field from which trustees are drawn – and therefore exclude certain sections of the population. In general, it attracts people of the same background, skills and ethnic origin as the existing trustees. It may also lead to difficulties in finding trustees with the appropriate skills and abilities.

Many organisations overcome these problems by adopting well thought-out recruitment strategies and taking advantage of available sources of help. Trustee boards can, for example, look at how diverse their current composition is, and if necessary devise ways of reaching out to under-represented groups, using both formal and informal methods to attract attention.

Rashmi Patel, a trustee, believes that this targeted approach is essential: 'If you intend to

reach the black community and your advertisement for trustees does not mention that applications from black people are welcomed, you cannot hope to attract people from these groups.'

The NCVO Trustee Services Unit's initiative to encourage more ethnic-minority involvement in trusteeship has revealed that the low representation of black people on trustee boards cannot simply be explained away as lack of interest; when *The Voice* mentioned the new initiative, the Trustee Services Unit was inundated with requests for information!

In May, following this coverage in *The Voice*, NCVO hosted 'Committed, Gifted and Black', the first-ever conference aimed at black trustees and potential trustees. There, the need for more information about trusteeship and support for trustees was once again highlighted.

Part II of this article will appear in the next edition of Black Echo.

## Dial Helpline to give a helping hand

There is now a National Volunteering Helpline to help people who seek to volunteer. The Helpline has a single telephone number that anyone in the UK can call to find out about volunteering opportunities in their area. The service, which is funded by the Voluntary Services Unit (VSU) at the Home Office, was launched by Lady Blatch, Home Office Minister, in March 1995. It will make full use of existing information by referring callers to their local volunteering organisations, who will in turn use their local knowledge to place the helpers (volunteers) with local agencies. The aim is to raise the profile of helpers (volunteers) and offer opportunities to people who want to help others.

The Helpline is open Tuesday to Sunday from 10 am to 10 pm; calls are charged at local rate. It is run by Network Scotland in Glasgow, tel. 0345-221133.

# ETHNIC MONITORING

## If you don't check, how do you know who's there!

### David Obaze

Monitoring is vital to developing an effective Equal Opportunities Policy. But although it can be legally enforced, monitoring by itself is not sufficient to create equal opportunities.

Monitoring is, however, vital in controlling racial prejudice and discrimination of all kinds, in assessing the performance of existing Equal Opportunities Policies, and in working out new ones. Monitoring systems can reveal the composition of an organisation's work-force, volunteers as well as paid staff, and the effects of its Equal Opportunities Policy on recruitment and internal promotion.

### Ethnic monitoring: policy and practice

In a multiracial, multicultural and multi-religious society, Equal Opportunities Policies are needed when recruiting helpers (volunteers) of other races. Ethnic monitoring can help this process by:

1. Establishing the number of black volunteers already in the work-force.
2. Checking that the Equal Opportunities Policy is being effectively implemented.
3. Creating awareness of the different races that should be involved in the work of an organisation.
4. Creating an atmosphere that allows all elements of society to be recruited as helpers (volunteers), staff or committee members, to the level of their aspirations and on an equal basis.
5. Providing practical suggestions on how to combat racism and racial discrimination.
6. Determining which groups are being disadvantaged, and by which requirements or practices.
7. Deciding on what special training is necessary to meet the particular needs of the volunteers.
8. Examining the procedures that will enable black people to be selected and promoted on the basis of merit and ability.
9. Informing the policy-making and planning processes.
10. Using the data from monitoring to review progress and procedures, identifying areas that need improvement.
11. Demonstrating a commitment to fair recruitment procedures.
12. Checking the effectiveness of recruitment channels and advertising venues, including the black and ethnic-minority media.
13. Improving the image of the organisation.

### Monitoring strategies

There are two main forms of monitoring:

1. Monitoring the black or ethnic minority composition of the existing work-force.
2. Monitoring the recruitment process.

The level of racial discrimination in this country is still alarmingly high, particularly in the voluntary sector. Although there is much voluntary activity within the black community, there is scarcely any black involvement – either as paid staff or volunteers, and still less as trustees – in the mainstream voluntary sector, especially organisations run by white managers. For example, the 1991 report *Encouraging Signs?* found that only three per cent of volunteers are black, and in 1990 Liverpool University found that a mere 0.9 per cent were black.

The research showed that racism is the main reason for this low involvement of black people in the mainstream voluntary sector: organisations with Equal Opportunities Policies are more likely to involve black people than those without.

In order to involve black people effectively, you must know:

1. The state of the organisation.
2. What services it provides.
3. Who uses those services.
4. Who the helpers (volunteers) are that assist in delivering the services: for example, are they black or white, male or female, disabled or able-bodied? What are the ratios of the different races of groups represented?

## Monitoring an organisation's equal opportunities policy

A voluntary organisation may well have an Equal Opportunities statement, but staff and trustees alike must recognise that the only way to make it work is:

- To set up a mechanism for regularly monitoring and updating that policy.
- Continual monitoring of work practices by means of team reviews.
- Monitoring of the results of black and ethnic minority recruitment and promotion.
- A relevant volunteer training programme.

These aims can be achieved by setting up an Equal Opportunities subgroup or an Outreach Team (see below). The team should include board members, staff representatives, the volunteer co-ordinator, and appropriate co-optees, and should:

- Meet at regular intervals – at least twice yearly.
- Be responsible for implementing the EOP.
- Present an annual report and progress reports.
- Appoint an outreach worker to ensure the policy is effectively implemented and to provide training.

Section 71 of the Race Relations Act 1976, which applies to all organisations providing services to the public, states that the organisation should 'work towards the elimination of discrimination and... promote equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different racial groups generally.'

## Ethnic Monitoring systems

You should develop a system for the detailed monitoring of how members of ethnic minorities are involved. This will be the 'ethnic record-keeping' of the organisation's work-force, recording:

- (a) The number of applicants for employment in each category.
- (b) The number short-listed in each category.
- (c) The number employed in each category of employment (i.e. department, job, grade and location).
- (d) The number leaving each category, with length of service.
- (e) The number participating in training and staff development.
- (f) The number promoted.

There should be an initial review of this monitoring, and annual reviews thereafter. A sub-committee should be set up to ensure that

the Equal Opportunities Policy is implemented, and that recruitment, promotion, training and allied decisions are observed. The long-term aim of this policy is that the organisation's work-force should broadly reflect the make-up of the population.

If an anomaly arises, it must be immediately investigated. The policy's ultimate objective is to achieve an employment or recruitment level of X% from black and ethnic minority groups. This will require a measure of positive action (PA).

The number of applications from black and ethnic minority groups should be compared with the number from white applicants over the same period.

The means of disseminating information should be investigated, for example:

- Radio: national, regional or local
- National newspapers
- Local newspapers
- Newsletters, magazines etc
- Network organisations (solely white organisations)
- Word of mouth
- Leaflets, pamphlets
- Public places:
  - markets, shops, stores etc
  - post offices, libraries
  - hospitals, surgeries
  - schools, local councils

You should also implement the 1976 Race Relations Act, which allows voluntary organisations to discriminate positively in favour of black people under certain circumstances – for example, when providing training and when encouraging the take-up of training opportunities – to help fit them for work with that organisation if black people have been under-represented during the previous twelve months in a particular area of work or department.

## Outreach service

The main aim of an outreach person or service is:

- (a) To recruit black or ethnic minority people as helpers (volunteers)
- (b) To provide an open-ended and flexible support service that may include:
  - Induction
  - Training
  - Support
  - Advice
  - Counselling

The objectives of the Outreach Service are:

1. To publicise the work of the organisation.
2. To target black and ethnic minority people as potential recruits.
3. To develop working relationships with the black community, for example in churches, schools and public institutions,

and with black individuals, both employed and unemployed.

4. To disseminate information about the organisation: what it does, the services it provides, by who and to whom.
5. To advise on how black people can get involved.
6. To describe the benefits for volunteering and for helpers (volunteers).
7. To develop working relationships with paid staff, other volunteers and committee members.
8. To provide volunteers with the organisation's Equal Opportunities Policy.

## Measuring performance

At the end of a set period – one year, say – you should measure how many black and ethnic minority volunteers were recruited, how many of them stayed, and for how long.

### Success

Was the exercise successful?

If so, why? If not, why not?

### Reasons for failure

Was it due to:

- (a) Lack of good practice to serve as a guide?
- (b) Lack of good working policies?
- (c) Inappropriate methods of recruitment (for example, a formal interview instead of an informal chat)?
- (d) Information did not penetrate to all sections of the black and ethnic minority communities?
- (e) Lack of confidence?
- (f) Unrealistic requirement for qualifications?
- (g) Lack of time?
- (h) Difficulties with language and terminology?
- (i) Lack of job description?
- (j) Lack of a policy for reimbursing expenses?
- (k) Problems with transport and the distances that helpers (volunteers) have to travel?
- (l) Cultural differences?

In any case, can the process be improved upon?

## Relevant legislation

The Race Relations Act 1976 states that it is illegal – except in the few circumstances where 'positive action' (PA) is allowed – to discriminate against any person directly or indirectly on the grounds of their race, in recruitment, promotion, conditions of employment, or dismissal.

'Racial grounds' covers race, colour, ethnic origin, nationality, citizenship and national origin. Groups defined by reference to these grounds are referred to as 'racial groups'. Race, colour, ethnic origin and national origin are often put together and referred to as 'race'

or 'ethnicity', but each is quite distinct, even though they often overlap. The Race Relations Act applies to all racial groups: it is just as illegal to discriminate on racial grounds against a white person as it is against a black person.

### Positive Action

In this country, positive action (PA) is also known as 'affirmative action'; it is not 'positive discrimination'. PA is not compulsory, even in situations where racial discrimination has been proved to exist to the satisfaction of a tribunal. The Race Relations Act 1976 relies entirely on voluntary action to achieve change, provided only that employers avoid actual racial discrimination.

Because positive action is not positive discrimination, a tribunal cannot order employers to carry out the measures it believes necessary to avoid further racial discrimination or to achieve equality of opportunity. Where the Commission carries

out a formal investigation and finds racial discrimination did occur, it can generally issue a non-discrimination notice, but even this notice cannot prescribe particular changes in practice.

An increasing number of voluntary organisations committed to an Equal Recruitment Opportunity Policy are recognising that they need to use these positive action provisions of the Race Relations Act 1976. The provisions permit – but as we have seen, do not require – organisations (including training organisations) to take positive measures to redress any identified under-representation of particular ethnic groups within their work-force or within specific fields of employment or recruitment. The Act does not allow the imposition of quotas or the use of discrimination in selection. (See the booklet *Why Positive Action?*, available free from the CRE.)

Measures taken by employers and organisations under the positive action provisions of the Act have included:

1. Job advertisements specifically targeted at members of the ethnic minority groups under-represented in the work-force, and designed to encourage applicants from such groups.
2. Recruitment and training schemes designed to reach members of under-represented groups and to meet any special training needs.
3. The encouragement of employees and volunteers from such groups to apply for promotion (and training for promotion).
4. The provision of skills training for employees who lack experience but show potential.

Measures such as these can play an important role in redressing past racial discrimination and its cumulative effects, and ensuring equal opportunity.

People who volunteer their services free of charge, without any form of contract, are not generally protected by the Act – although an advertisement that called for volunteers in a discriminatory way would fall foul of Section 29.

## Whoopee!!

**At last, the government has decided that unemployed people can help (volunteer) full-time and still be eligible for unemployment benefit.**

Full-time helpers (volunteers) will be able to claim the New Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA), due to replace Income Support and Unemployment Benefit from October 1996, provided they remain available for, and actively seek, employment.

Andrea Kelmanson, Director of The Volunteer Centre UK, one of the key organisations that lobbied the Government on this issue, welcomed the decision, stating that 'each year, 50 per cent of unemployed people benefit their local communities and develop their own skills through volunteering. Up to now, they have done so with the fear of loss of benefit hanging over their heads, particularly where they have made a major time-commitment to their voluntary work. This change goes a long way towards eliminating that fear, and opens the way up for an even greater participation by unemployed people in volunteering'.

RUBV supports the idea of unemployed people helping (volunteering) without the fear that their benefits will be stopped.

## A VIP killing two birds with one stone



*Baroness Blatch, the Minister, with D.ER. Obaze, the Manager of RUBV.*

*Photo by Howard Webber (Home Office)*

Figuratively speaking, Baroness Blatch, the Minister of State at the Home Office 'killed two birds' with one stone on 3 August 1995, when she came to Carriage Row for a visit and a chat with the VC and RUBV. She met and had lunch with the out-going Chair of The Volunteer Centre UK, Lady Esme Scott, the Director Andrea Kelmanson, and the staff and volunteers of the Centre. She extended her visit to RUBV and had a good hearty chat – see picture. What do you do when your core funder comes to see you in your working environment; do you take it as a visit or just nosing about? Seriously though, the Minister was well informed about the unique service RUBV provides and she showed much enthusiasm about Black Volunteering. It was very nice to see you Madam. Please come again soon.

# NETWORKING

## an indispensable web of information!

Simon Woolley, Charter 88

30 March 1995, Business Design Centre: As a black volunteer representing Charter 88, it gave me great pleasure to attend the Ujima Pookar awards for community development, organised by the 1990 Trust for those tireless workers in the black community.\*

It was a prestigious evening that not only celebrated our normally-unsung heroes and heroines but also, for networking purposes, brought together a rich diversity of black community workers and campaigners.

### The importance of networking

The need for black groups to have a network through which resources can be pooled and ideas shared is as important today as it has ever been.

Sadly, although racial discrimination has now been illegal for 25 years, its ugliest features still permeate many areas of our day-to-day lives – housing, employment, education, health, and the criminal justice system, to name but a few.

The necessity for collaboration between groups as diverse as Black Women for Wages for Housework and the Asian Chamber of Commerce becomes clear when we realise that our campaigns are not isolated initiatives but aspects of one overall struggle.

### Cultural benefits

Networking is not solely about working together to fight racial injustice. By bringing together artists and performers from our kaleidoscope of cultures, it can demonstrate the wealth of talent within the black community. For example, the black rap group Fun-da-Mental, which has created a fusion of African, Caribbean and Asian music and culture, sets out not simply to entertain but also to carry out the important function of articulating and consolidating black identity.

### Spreading the net still further

But networking comes into its own not only when we share our resources to tackle racial

discrimination, but also when we become part of a national and international network that has as its common agenda the outlawing of all social injustice. Is it a Utopian fantasy to hope that a wide range of religious, cultural, and political groups can come together and work side-by-side on a common theme? Of course it isn't. The simple fact is that we must empower ourselves, so that we can improve everyone's perception of our value to society in the widest cultural context.

If we expand the network as far afield as possible, if we listen and collaborate, issues affecting the black community will readily cross over to many other sectors of the general public. A clear example of this is the Criminal Justice Act: a draconian piece of legislation that abolishes the right to silence, bans the freedom to protest, and gives an often-discredited police force *carte blanche* to stop and search.

Like many other groups, Charter 88 has begun to utilise the great potential of networking on a national scale. A non-party political organisation that campaigns for constitutional reform, Charter 88 has launched The Citizens' Enquiry, a bold and exciting project that will provide a national platform for individuals, small groups and large organisations to debate every aspect of our democracy.

Charter 88 proposes that the issue of how we are 'governed' – by local government, the judiciary, the civil service, quangos – should

form the basis of the enquiry. For example, had we had a Bill of Rights, would it have been possible for the present government to impose legislation like the Criminal Justice Act?

The aim is to influence general elections and the constitutional conventions by presenting the findings of this national debate to politicians, political candidates and opinion-formers.

Through networking, the Citizens' Enquiry will reach participants from all walks of life, irrespective of class, ethnic origin, economic status, sexual orientation, religion, health, age or political affiliation. This does not mean, however, that specifically black and ethnic minority issues will be lost in some broad generalisation. On the contrary, bringing together the experiences of different sectors of the public will demonstrate that their problems are often symptoms of the same overall malaise.

**So how can you get involved?** The Citizens' Enquiry wants to enlist the help of those in the black community who work in – or are interested in – education, youth work, transport, business, religion; in fact, almost every aspect of our society. And what would we like you to do? Well, within your community you might want to organise a public debate, shoot a video, write an article, conduct a survey, mount a campaign in the local press, or simply write us with your personal view. Charter 88 will give its fullest support to any of these proposals, or to any others you might have.

By utilising a national network that brings the black community and other communities under one umbrella, The Citizens' Enquiry becomes a truly democratic enquiry of the people, for the people, by the people.

**For more information on Charter 88 and the Citizens' Enquiry, contact Simon Woolley, Charter 88, Exmouth House, 3-11 Pine Street, London EC1R 0JR (tel. 0171-833 1988).**

\* In this instance, I use David Obaze's definition: 'The black community includes all people who are non-white – Africans, Afro-Caribbeans and Asians.' Note that this is a political definition.

ADVERTISEMENT

## THE ANTHONY NOLAN BONE MARROW TRUST

## BLACK DONORS WANTED

The Anthony Nolan Bone Marrow Trust wants to recruit more bone-marrow donors from the black community, specifically to help save the lives of black leukaemia sufferers. At the moment, the chances of identifying a match for black patients is extremely remote, as the Trust has very few black donors.

Donors must be aged between 18-40 years, be in good health, weigh at least 8

stones and very importantly, be committed to staying on the register and donating the bone marrow if ever required to do so.

All our testing is done on blood samples; donors will have to go through at least four stages of testing before we know if they are suitable. We always ensure the safety of our donors and all expenses are covered.

# Parentline requires volunteers throughout UK

PARENTLINE offers a unique, nationwide network of telephone help-lines for parents under stress. We are expanding to cope with the increased demand on our services.

WE NEED help-line volunteers, and trustees with financial, legal, public relations or fund-raising experience. WE OFFER training and ongoing support. We particularly encourage applications from black and ethnic minority groups, who are currently under-represented in PARENTLINE.

Call for information pack and application form on 01702 - 5544782 or 554924.  
Charity Registration No. 1043139.

## Newham Baby Bank lends a helping hand

Do you have a baby or toddler?

Do you need any of the following at low cost?

Buggies, prams, carrycots, high chairs, play pens, cots, stair gates, pouches and back packs, sterilisers, bouncers, baby chairs, baths, bath mats, changing mats and bags, toilet stands, adaptor seats, cooker and kettle guards, plug covers, cupboard safety locks, intercom/alarms.

Why not call and see what we have in stock at:

FOREST GATE METHODIST CHURCH,  
WOODGRANGE ROAD,  
LONDON E7 0QH  
Tel. 0181 - 221 1231

We open from 10 am - 2 pm Tuesdays  
and Thursdays.

This service is intended for parents who are on low income (eg income support, housing benefit or family credit) so please bring your benefit book, a DSS letter or some other proof with you.

WE WOULD WELCOME DONATIONS OF EQUIPMENT IN GOOD CONDITION AND OF CASH.

## WHAT THE PAPERS SAY

### **Black people are still at the bottom of the pile, warn experts**

The Joseph Rowntree Commission's report indicates a growing divide between rich and poor in the UK, a time-bomb that is ticking towards an eruption of social unrest. Inquiry chairman Sir Peter Barclay said: 'We believe the problems of a growing minority who have no stake in our future prosperity will rebound on the comfortable majority, with heavy economic as well as social costs.'

The report concludes: 'It is in the interest of all to remove the factors which foster the social diseases of drugs, crime, political extremism, and social unrest.'

Since 1979, black and Asian people have been wedged firmly at the bottom of the poverty trap. They make up at least 30 per cent of Britain's poor, according to the report. At the other end of the scale, only 10 per cent of black and Asian people are in the richest 20 per cent of the population.

### **Why not join the Community Support Group?**

A network of African-Caribbean designers, pattern-cutters and dressmakers are running training courses in business development, employment and training. We also organise fundraising initiatives to help our local community, and we have a lot of ongoing projects such as sports day, cake-baking day, fashion shows, dances, kids' fun day, positive training and self-empowerment day. Come and join our self-help group. We look forward to meeting you.

Contact the Community Support Group on **0181-740 7496**, and ask for Pat or Liz.

*This is dedicated to Kevin BAGGO.*

## DIARY OF EVENTS

### **VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR EXCITING SUMMER PROJECTS**

Do you have any spare time in the summer? Not quite sure of what to do? Why not try something different - come and join our international team of volunteers and help out in one of our community projects. Learn new skills, meet new people you would not otherwise have met, and have fun!

- Projects last 2-3 weeks
- You live and work together in a group of 7-15 volunteers
- Food and accommodation are free
- Applications for travel subsidy considered for unemployed volunteers
- All ages from 18-118 years! (16-19 years for designated Youth Projects)

For more information and full project details write to:

Marlis Haase, Quaker International Social Projects (QISP), Friends House, Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ  
or call 0171 -387 3601 ext. 2255.

### **IMPORTANT NOTICE!**

Please note that this will be the last issue of *Black Echo* to be distributed free. To receive future issues, please complete this form and send it to RUBV with your annual subscription of £10 (£15 for overseas subscribers) for three issues.

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