

A N N U A L R E P O R T

2002 - 2003



ACVA

The African and Caribbean Voices Association

Charity Registration no.1098295



L E A R N I N G I S F O R L I F E

Chairperson's Report



I find that 2002-03 has been a year of conflict and uncertainty for many countries worldwide, including Britain. Many of our members who are from African countries such as Liberia, Sierra Leone, Congo, and Nigeria know how uncertain it has been because of the Civil conflicts that have taken place in these countries. Our Caribbean members are not exempt either, they are equally aware of the sharp rise in infectious diseases and the growing poverty in which their brothers and sisters live.

In comparison we have relative peace and stability here and we have many opportunities to grow and to learn, even in our later years. Even myself as Chairperson of ACVA, I have had the chance to acquire new skills, develop my creativity and broaden my outlook on life. I have encouraged my fellow citizens to continue doing the same and become life

long learners. I have found that it can be great fun; no exams, just personal growth. I believe fellow members would wholeheartedly agree with me that this organisation has been pioneering in encouraging senior citizens to continue to learn and to grow. One person, not a member of ACVA but a user of the service stated, "It is rare that any body remembers us old people." I think what she was saying was that although there are Age Well, Respite care provisions, sheltered homes, luncheon clubs and support groups that are specifically set up to cater for those over 60, ACVA is one of the few that offers cultural learning opportunities.

We are unique because we primarily encourage lifelong learning, using cultural and heritage based activities. We do this by organising heritage events, training, workshops and forums. You will see some of the successes of last year by the many projects described in this report.

This is my final year as Chair of ACVA. I have enjoyed the experience and I hope that my presence has influenced change. I look forward to continue serving on the management committee and to an even more successful year of activities.

Chairperson, Flora Manieson.

Project Manager's Report

This is our fourth year of existence and it seems our most successful year to date. We have been fortunate in attracting a number of small, one-off grants from Trusts and other bodies. As a result we have been able to run a number of successful short-term training workshops such as the Fast Forward Freelance story telling workshops held during January - March 2003. We have also been able to attract a small grant from the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund Community Chest that has enabled us to move from our initial office to a new, comfortable and spacious office and to help us purchase furniture and equipment. We can now begin to work towards attracting more sustainable, long-term project grants and core funding.

Project Manager, Angela Brivett.

Our marketing campaign has reaped a wider audience; ACVA is now known in five boroughs in London. We have been able to build up a strong working relationship with 19 senior citizens and voluntary organisations in Newham Waltham Forest, Brent, Lewisham and Tower Hamlets. This is as a result of attracting a two year grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund to run monthly visits for senior citizens to London based museums.

We are in a good position to review the successes of last year and to plan for a more sustainable future for ACVA. I thank the many friends and volunteers who have given unselfishly to this project; without you we would not have achieved as much as we did.

Project Worker's Report

I initially began working on collecting the life stories from four people who had emigrated from Africa and the Caribbean and who now live in London. I decided to collect the life stories of two men and two women: Adelaide Ephraim, Patsy Scott, Kojoe Blackman and Elandy Wilson. The senior citizens enthusiastically agreed to tell their personal stories because they

realised the importance of writing down and passing on their history.

I found the experience both interesting and harrowing. All four candidates had experienced challenges throughout their lives that I had never come across but thankfully all had overcome them. These life stories will be read to an audience during Black History Month this year and

Project Worker's Report contd.

if you wish to read them please contact our offices.

We intend to continue to document the life history of members and users of this organisation and to publish them so that children as well as adults can learn and marvel at our senior citizens experiences.

The main part of my work has been the development and promotion of "A Journey Through The Past". This is a project funded by a the Heritage Lottery Fund and Help a London Child, that sets out to raise the awareness of African and Caribbean senior citizens and children about the presence of black people in Britain over the last three centuries. Many of our members have worked as labourers or in the NHS and have had little or no time to learn about their personal history. Many have never visited any of the established museums in London; many lack confidence to attend these places. A Journey Through The Past provides the means by which our target group can visit museums and can learn about their history. We realised that they would need to be told about the documents and artefacts that are in these museums and so we have invited Steve I. Martin, an African and Caribbean historian, to give guided tours around each of these museums.

We know that this project is a rare and innovative one and we hope it grows from strength to strength.

I have dealt with people in a hospital environment for 40 years and I thought I had experienced everything but working as a Project Worker was completely different, especially for a 64 year old.

The experience has been hard but enjoyable; it has taught me to listen and to be open-minded. I work in a positive environment where I meet with all sorts of people. I have come to project worker late in my years but experience has taught me never to give up even though it might be hard, to always ask people's opinion, to believe in yourself and to do service with a smile.

Project Worker, Maria Kamara.

A Volunteer's Experience

A friend called Hugh Dwyer who is also a member of my other association, Hibiscus Afro - Caribbean Elderly Association, introduced me to ACVA. Since I have been a member my eyes have been opened to many things which otherwise would not have been known to me. I am interested in all the projects ACVA has been involved in such as the various workshops and visits to theatres and museums. I am particularly delighted that through the auspices of ACVA I had the

opportunity of taking part in a two weeks intensive training course about website design, writing and development organised by Skillset and the BBC. I thoroughly enjoyed it, although it was a tiring two week period. Albeit I still cannot sit down and write a website on my own at the moment, but the time I spent with the BBC has given me an insight into the creation of websites. Well done ACVA, I hope our voices get louder and louder.

Clement A. Adejayan, Volunteer

1963 Revived

What can I say about this project except that it was marvellous? I am not a trained actress but looking back on my performance in September 2002 I thought the whole cast and I did tremendously well, we were even professional.

"1963 Revived" gave us a whole stage plus an audience to tell our stories; our hidden and unrecognised life stories. We were also given acting trainers to help us polish and sweeten up our delivery and a costume designer to make our presence on the stage shine. We are very grateful to Odira of Ewreni Productions, Moji Sorunke and Rafaela Henry.

We even had it video taped so that we can remember the experience and learn from it. I really loved the song written and sung by Marcia Escoffery especially for this project. I thank the funding bodies and ACVA for helping us to believe in ourselves and to live a dream.

Myrtle Laing, Volunteer



The cast of 1963 Revived

Staff Members

Angela Brivett - **Project Manager**

Maria Kamara - **Project Worker**

Management Committee Members

Chairperson Flora Manieson

Vice-Chair Hugh Dwyer

Treasurer Emmanuel Nkwo

Secretary Mrytle Laing

Members: Julie Gooden

Flora Ocran

Kojoe Blackman

Marlene Walker

Clement Adejayan

Volunteers

Franklyn Georges

Cecil Etienne

Dorothy James

Funding Bodies

Esmee Fairbairn Foundation

Charity Aid Foundation

Neighbourhood Renewal Fund

Community Chest

Association of London Government

London Arts

Bridge House Trust

Help a London Child

London ESF Global Grants Programme

Heritage Lottery Fund

Treasurer's Report

Overall this has been a successful year for attracting small medium-term grants. We were fortunate to secure a two year grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund that has allowed us some continuity with our projects. We have also attracted a further amount from the Esmee Fairbairn Foundations that has helped us to develop and widen the types of services we offer.

We are at last a registered charity, having recently received our charity registration number, and so are in a good position to look for more sustainable funding.

Initially ACVA was established with a national remit. We were to cater for the needs of African and Caribbean senior citizens in London and other major cities England- wide. To date we have not been able to fulfil this aim but we are now beginning to formulate strategies for taking our services to a wider, national-based audience. This strategy will be built into ACVA's fundraising strategy and doing this will ensure that we actively create opportunities that will maintain and build on our current services.

Emmanuel Nkwo, **Treasurer**