

INTERACT

SUMMER / AUTUMN 2010



Mission Statement

Interfaith Action's aim is to build understanding and respect between people of all faiths and none. We work towards a cohesive society where all faiths are not only tolerated but where individuals are respected and diversity is valued and celebrated.

We achieve this through facilitating dialogue, joint action and civic participation, as well as raising awareness and understanding. Enabling people of all faith communities to engage with each other and the wider community through projects encouraging shared and responsible citizenship.

Most of our projects are tailored for 14-25 year olds in London. Since 2006, Interact Magazine has been one of Interfaith Action's core projects, written by and for young people from all faith and cultural backgrounds. Interact is the only interfaith, culture and lifestyle magazine produced by and for young people in the UK, distributed free online and to students and young people at universities, college, community centres and youth groups across London.

The magazine is produced quarterly with an editorial team of around 12 students and recent graduates and currently, 2 Magazine Coordinators, who work together for around 10 weeks brainstorming, writing and editing articles, designing the layout, discussing the use of photography, and brainstorming PR and advertising strategies. All this is accomplished whilst working and interacting within a culturally diverse environment. The team also benefit from the experience of working with industry professionals who mentor our writers/editors, graphic designers and PR volunteers. For this issue, we have been privileged to work with 6 in-person and 5 email media mentors who volunteered their time to advise our team. In addition, 'freelance' volunteers contribute ideas, articles, opinion columns, short stories and poems. Since the magazine started there have been 75 freelance contributors.

Interact Magazine allows a diverse group of young people the opportunity to express their opinions openly whilst gaining valuable industry experience. Each magazine is unique to the team which created it, expressing diverse opinions, articles and designs which reflect and celebrate the cultural diversity of the team and the wider London community. This is an opportunity most would not receive in their formal education and volunteers leave with further insights about interfaith and the process of creating a magazine.

Get your voice heard. Get involved.

INTERACT

This project is funded by City Bridge Trust and vinspired.

To get involved or for more information contact Project Manager, Laura Griffiths at laura@interact-uk.org.uk or phone 020 7482 4020

Letter from the Magazine Coordinators

Dear Readers,

Welcome to Interact, an interfaith culture and lifestyle magazine expressing the opinions and creativity of a culturally diverse group of young people from the London area. The theme of this edition is 'change' – why is such a theme important?

Humanity is in constantly changing. We often strive to improve ourselves, our lives and surroundings. We can reflect on the past, striving to do what we think is good and not commit previous mistakes. Humans have the ability to be adaptive, creative, resourceful, reflective and challenge-seeking. But why is such a theme so important to explore in 2010? The articles in this edition reflect change in current affairs, the environment, culture, social policy and the arts. Our editors share their thoughts on the relevancy of **'CHANGE'...**

Not long after we got together to begin working on Interact, a new coalition government had taken centre stage in the United Kingdom. The new government promised to implement change and there was a genuine feeling of transformation and new beginnings. As a team, we explored this very sentiment and made the subject of change our focus for the magazine.

Sarah Feather

It is said that at this moment in the 21st century, one of the fastest phases of change is taking place amongst humans, similar to when mankind first left Africa. We can continue to be part of the volcanic-like problem, or we can be part of the powerful waves of change through education, communication and integration.

Cameka Hayles-Hahn

The word change is a strong one. By no means do we live in a perfect world, use this word, phase, action to make a difference, big or small, positive actions in whatever retrospect is a good move to change the world around us.

Camilla Pandoo

The Summer edition of Interact Magazine started on 22 May with an introductory meeting where the team met each other, learnt about the magazine, listened to 2 guest speakers discuss journalism and interfaith, started brainstorming for this edition, and were introduced to their media mentors. Since then and until the 4 August 2010, the team has had weekly Wednesday meetings to discuss articles, designs, a marketing plan, and the progress of the magazine in general.

As Magazine Coordinators, we interviewed candidates, contacted media mentors, organized and ran all meetings, responded to any queries from team members and media mentors, reinforced deadlines and tried to keep the team motivated to complete their tasks. We were fortunate to have Laura Griffiths, Project Manager at Interfaith Action, guide us throughout the process and we also consulted our media mentors. These mentors provided our editorial team with invaluable industry advice, making the experience with Interact Magazine highly informative and educational. The team looks forward to the publication of this edition and we hope you enjoy reading about change from an interfaith and youth perspective. Many thanks to our media mentors and editorial volunteers who contributed their time and skills to this magazine!

Sincerely,

Sarah Hynek and Romina Rovira, Magazine Coordinators



Romina Rovira
Project Coordinator

Romina recently finished the International Foundation Program at London Metropolitan University and is currently studying Journalism and Creative Writing at Kingston University. She loves reading, writing, horses and the color purple.



Sarah Hynek
Project Coordinator

Sarah is Canadian and has a Bachelor of Arts and Science from McMaster University and a Masters of Studies in Theology (Science and Religion) from the University of Oxford. She enjoys photography, the arts and adventure in the great outdoors.

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SUMMER / AUTUMN TEAM 2010

Writers & Editorial Team



Alexandra Feodor

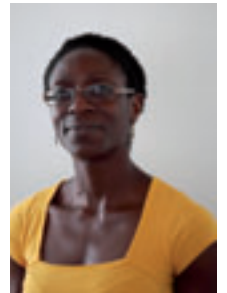
Section Editor

Sarah graduated from Liverpool John Moores University with a degree in Media and Cultural Studies with American Studies. She is a keen writer and editor and enjoys reading and drama.

Cameka Haynes-Hahn

Section Editor

Cameka is 26 years old and married. While working towards dominating the chemical engineering world, she likes to vent her creative side through writing, reading true life biographies and learning languages.



Camilla Pandoo

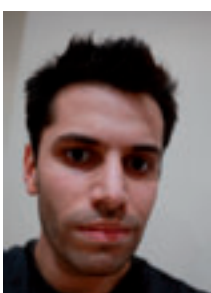
Section Editor

Graduated from Bedfordshire University in 2009 with a Journalism BA (HONS) degree. She is 21, with a passion for writing and currently building up experience and her portfolio. Working for Interact is the opportunity she has been waiting for.

Melanie Scagliarini

Section Editor

Melanie comes from a marketing background within book publishing. She has travelled extensively around various continents, and is keen to write stories that don't often feature in mainstream media.

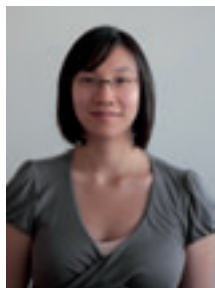


Deven Agrawal

Section Editor / Photographer

Deven works as a freelance photographer and is looking to get more closely involved with the magazines and charities/NGO's

Marketing Team



Stacey Go
Marketing & PR

She is 22 years old and originally from Singapore. Graduated from the University of York in 2009 with a degree in English Literature.

Ching-Chun Chen (Jerry)
Marketing & PR

He is in his first year as a MBA student in the University of Greenwich. He is originally from Taiwan and is staying in the UK for one year.



Graphic Design Team



Sara Sadek
Creative Director

Sara is 23 years old, and originally from Egypt. She is currently doing her Masters in Graphic Design in London Metropolitan University.

Masomeh Faraji
Graphic Designer

Masi has been part of Interact Magazine's design team for two editions. She studied graphic design in Iran.



Eugene Appiah
Graphic Designer

Is a determined individual who is always available to lend a hand. Graduated at the London South Bank University while studying (Bsc) product design. Born in the western African country of Ghana, 28 years old and still going on strong.

Luis Navarro
Graphic Designer

Luis has recently moved to London (since January 2010). Last year he finished studying Advertising and Public Relations in ESIC Business and Marketing School of Valencia. He loves sports, music, cinema and drawing.





Plastic People

24

interact

CONTENT SUMMER / AUTUMN 2010

Current Affairs

- 9 Censorship and New Media**
by Deven Agrawal
- 12 The Human Right to Bear Our Crosses**
by Melanie Scagliarini & Cameka Hayles-Hahn
- 14 An Unexpected Journey**
by Naomi Handa-Williams
- 16 Power of Purchasing**
by Cameka Hayles-Hahn



Environment

- 18 CO₂ Dependence**
by Deven Agrawal
- 19 If it ain't broke don't fix it-The return of the Routemaster** by Alexandra Feodor
- 20 Climate Change in Ghana**
by Gideon-Mensah
- 22 Do we ever really change?**
by Sarah Hynek



Culture

- 24 Plastic People**
by Melanie Scagliarini
- 25 Vox Pop**
by Melanie Scagliarini
- 26 I Do - Mixed Faith**
by Alexandra Feodor
- 28 Change of Family**
by Romina Rovira

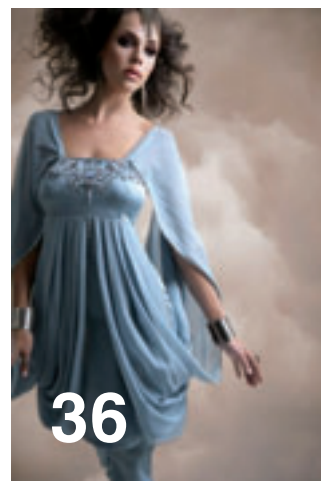


Social Policy

- 30 It's the Climb--Empowering Women in Bangladesh** by Maherunesa Khandaker
- 32 Make A Change**
by Shaazia Sayyad

Arts

- 34 The Art of Henna**
by Camilla Pandoo
- 36 Asian Fusion**
by Camilla Pandoo



INTERACT



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**Interact
Change**

CENSORSHIP AND NEW MEDIA

By Deven Agrawal

You come home after a long day. You go to catch up on Facebook where a bold red warning confronts you: **"SITE PROHIBITED BY GOVERNMENT ORDER"**. Frustrated and angry you post on a blog criticising the government. Your IP address is tracked, your location discovered, your house stormed and you are arrested and imprisoned without charge.

Such a scenario may sound inconceivable to those who've integrated such free-flowing social networks into their everyday lives but it serves as a very possible reality for billions of people worldwide in countries such as Iran and China.

In the 90's the reach and popularity of the internet grew intertwined with the pre-millennial fervour of people that dreamt of a better future. Those that could see past the then mainstream view of the internet as a quirky, misunderstood oddity knew the potential for instant global information exchange to break down the social and cultural divisions that had helped make the 20th century the most violent in human history.

Such aspirations largely gave way to a decade defined by disillusionment, fear and paranoia; sentiments reflected in the approach of numerous countries towards the internet.

IMAN NABAVI

IRANIAN BLOGGER & FOTOGRAPHER

“

OVER TEN YEARS AGO THE INTERNET BECAME PUBLICALLY AVAILABLE IN IRAN. IT STARTED WITH SIMPLE BLOGS AND IT WAS BASICALLY THE ONLY PLACE THE GOVERNMENT COULDN'T FIND YOU. WE HAD A FREEDOM TO COMMUNICATE. THE YOUNGER GENERATION MAINLY USED THE INTERNET FOR SOCIALIZING (YAHOO CHAT WAS VERY POPULAR BACK IN THE DAY) BUT IN THE LAST FIVE YEARS THINGS GOT MORE SERIOUS AS PEOPLE STARTED TO UNDERSTAND THE POWER OF THE INTERNET AND WHAT YOU CAN DO WITH IT.

Iranian people living outside the country would communicate with their families, send the news, send reports, not necessarily about politics as normally the government tries to hide the catastrophe of what's going on about the drug and social problems, so after that bloggers started to write their own opinions from their own perspectives.

The greatest thing about this is you've got this mixture of ideas and points of view from different people of different ages, some of who are more serious about politics while some are more serious about social problems and this comes together and you find this beautiful mixture of the news and when you read them all together you can read the whole country.

In 2009 amazing things happened because we had activists who'd been working with the internet for four or five years, back when

the Iranian government wasn't so aware of it's power. They filtered websites but they did not know about personal blogging. After the election with the rigging and the people coming out to the streets we saw this new generation of independent journalists who started to show what was really going on with both the opposition campaign and the Ahmadinejad campaign.

These two sides tried to hack each others websites before the results of the election, and tried advertising their campaign through the internet understanding that if you want the younger people on your side you have to go through the internet.

One of the things the government couldn't accept at all was that these people, not just one or two but many around the country worked together to get this information out of the country.

After Neda's video was uploaded to Youtube and spread across the net people understood that this could be the way to send news worldwide. In the first two weeks after her death the government tried to block everything in terms of the internet; speed, website filtering, they even used technology provided to them by companies like Siemens and Nokia to find online targets individually and send them to prison for questioning.

In response to this we saw a beautiful helping hand from people in the West who wrote programs to get past the filters and to encrypt messages for emails that the government would use techniques to read. They cannot control all the information sources because if they block one blog, we open another. I believe no matter what has happened and what they do to stop us they are outnumbered. At the end of the day we're still getting the information out of the country.”

ENEMIES OF THE INTERNET:

Burma
China
Cuba
Egypt
Iran
North Korea
Saudi Arabia
Syria
Tunisia
Turkmenistan
Uzbekistan
Vietnam

STEVE BALLINGER

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL UK SPOKESPERSON

How do you get people to imagine being denied access to the free-flowing information they now take for granted?

In a way the ubiquity of the Internet makes it easier for free speech campaigners – instant access to information is no longer seen as a luxury to most people in the developed world, it's taken as given. The idea that a government might dictate to you what information you can and can't see is anathema to most web users. And of course bloggers can immediately sympathise with another blogger in, say, Vietnam or Egypt who's been locked up for what they wrote online.

How do organizations such as Amnesty overcome the difficulty in raising support and awareness for issues relating to internet censorship that would arguably be perceived as less important than more tangible issues such as famine, war displacement and torture?

Freedom of expression issues have always been at the core of what Amnesty International does – the first case that inspired our founder was that of two Portuguese students, locked up for raising a toast to freedom in a café. Silencing web users may not have the same immediate repugnance as torturing prisoners, but people can still see that it's fundamentally wrong. And I think people can associate with it more easily than some other cases – we all

send dozens of emails every day and expect to see uncensored news reports online. The 2009 Iranian protests were described by some as the world's first "internet revolution" or "Twitter Revolution". Do you envision mass action through social networking ending up as a blueprint for movements against repressive governments in the future?

People have always adapted whatever technology was available to help them protest – from the printing press to text messages to Twitter. I spoke to an academic who specialises in Iranian media about the "Twitter Revolution" and she told me that during the Islamic revolution thirty years earlier, people had circulated tape cassettes with subversive messages on, to help mobilise people.

Technological developments can certainly help to disseminate information about human rights abuses and mobilise people to do something about it. Amnesty's constantly finding new ways to harness technology to help us campaign more effectively. But ultimately it still comes down to people standing up for justice – the technology is just a tool to help them do it.

What do you see as the likely course of action for the liberalisation of the Chinese internet and what can people do to encourage that process?

Despite the best efforts of the Chinese authorities to control it,

the Internet is helping people in China to campaign against injustice. Most of the successful protests remain local, mobilising communities to speak out against land grabs and the construction of factories close to villages, for example. Attempts at more nationwide campaigns, like the Charter 08 movement, have been met with severe repression from the authorities, with hundreds of signatories questioned by the police and one of the founders, Liu Xiaobo, sentenced to 11 years in prison.

The Chinese authorities are caught in a bind – with a growing middle class and an ever-increasing number of web users, controlling the Internet is nigh-on impossible. The stand taken by Google over censorship was also very encouraging: it laid down the gauntlet to other companies, like Microsoft and Yahoo!, which continue to talk the talk of free access to information while being complicit in the Chinese government's attempts to censor and control what Chinese people can and can't see online.

The use of high-profile prosecutions is clearly designed to send a chilling message to other human rights activists and web users. People who believe in freedom of expression online need to ensure that these prisoners of conscience aren't forgotten: we can all show solidarity with people who are languishing in prison just for expressing their views online and urge the Chinese authorities to respect the right to free speech.

Faith and Human Rights

by Melanie Scaglierini & Cameka Hayles-Hahn

My builder neighbour waves at me as he drives off in his van. The lady I see each morning smiles as we pass on the pedestrian crossing. The newsagent greets me warmly as he tops up my Oyster card. My world is a friendly place. Should it be any other way? Would it be different if I mentioned that the builder is Christian, the lady at the crossing is Muslim and the newsagent is Hindi? Should I be able to tell? Can they tell my faith, or my lack of one? Do they care...?

Religion is an issue that both unites and divides us. As France moves towards outlawing the public wearing of clothing covering the face - such as the burka and the niqab - the subject of human rights and faith is once again brought to the forefront.

In Belgium, where only around 215 women wear the full-length veil, legislation has already been passed that prohibits the burka – a move that Amnesty condemned as **“AN ATTACK ON RELIGIOUS FREEDOM”**. Introduced by the Flemish far right in a country that associates the burka with Islamic extremism, the law was touted as a way to protect women from inequality and appease the Belgians whom feel intimidated by veil-wearers. Philippe Hensmans, Amnesty Belgium, said that it is **“NOT AT ALL CLEAR THAT IT [THE LEGISLATION] IS IN LINE WITH THE BELGIAN CONSTITUTION AND WITH INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS CONVENTIONS.”**

Created in the wake of the Second World War, Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights outlines the right to manifest one's religion in worship, teaching and observance. This Charter has been ratified into many different countries' legislation, including the UK's.

However, there is widespread scepticism in the broad interpretation of this right to display faith. Some argue that the Bible does not state that wearing a cross is mandatory, nor does the Qu'ran claim that wearing a headscarf is a must. Yet, in the case of the Sikh schoolgirl from Wales who fought to wear the kara, a plain steel bangle (in contravention of her school's policy on jewellery) - the High Court Judge ruled in the girl's favour; claiming it was of **“EXCEPTIONAL IMPORTANCE”** to the girl's belief.

Religious leaders have claimed that their freedoms have been pushed to secondplace in favour of other human rights, such as equality. Anglican think-tank, Theos, argues that “Religious freedom matters as much as, arguably more than, many other nominated human rights.” But when the same religious rights are used to disallow women from becoming ordained or to ignore gay rights, the law that was originally intended to protect religious freedom

“NOT AT ALL CLEAR THAT IT [THE LEGISLATION] IS IN LINE WITH THE BELGIAN CONSTITUTION AND WITH INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS CONVENTIONS.”

Philippe Hensmans, Amnesty Belgium



comes into question. Some argue that there is a space for the law to be used in order to keep religious traditions that in modern day times would be seen as sexist or homophobic.

So what do these recent rulings mean for the future of religious expression? Certainly, in the case of Nadia Eweida - the BA employee who lost her right to visibly wear the cross at work - Human Rights Group, Liberty, claimed a **“DANGEROUS PRECEDENT IN THE CASE LAW”** has been set. According to Human Rights Watch, an individual approach is necessary when dealing with these issues.

THERE IS WIDESPREAD SCEPTICISM IN THE BROAD INTERPRETATION OF THIS RIGHT TO DISPLAY FAITH.

The debate on freedom of religious expression is reaching far-and-wide, with commentators including Barack Obama and Vince Cable raising concerns that some of the recent restrictions have gone too far, calling for clarity on what constitutes as religious dress. However, there are many women's groups - including Muslim groups - that are wholly supportive of the ban on the full-length veil, and believe that it is a step-forward for women's rights.

In response, Human Rights Watch argues that: **“THE PRIMARY IMPACT OF LEGISLATION OF THIS KIND WOULD BE TO CONFINE THESE WOMEN TO THEIR HOMES, RATHER THAN TO LIBERATE THEM.”**

WHEN THE SAME RELIGIOUS RIGHTS ARE USED TO DISALLOW WOMEN FROM BECOMING ORDAINED OR TO IGNORE GAY RIGHTS, THE LAW THAT WAS ORIGINALLY INTENDED TO PROTECT RELIGIOUS FREEDOM COMES INTO QUESTION

Despite its recent rulings, Europe is still streets ahead in religious freedom. The UK can boast a number of advances over the past 30 years, including the equalities legislation which offers improved protection against religious discrimination and tougher sentencing for faith-based hate crimes. In a worldwide survey on restrictions on religion conducted by US-based Pew Forum last year, the UK was in the top 10 countries with the least amount of limitations. However, with countries such as Italy and Germany considering following in France and Belgium's footsteps, religious liberty is becoming ever more hotly-debated.

UNEXPECTED JOURNEY

MY CAR RIDE THROUGH GAY RIGHTS IN UGANDA By Naomi Handa-Williams

Flying across bumpy roads and swerving to avoid the odd goat and banana-laden bicycle that appear out of nowhere, there is certainly no succumbing to the jet lag which before this ride of death had been threatening to take over. Concentration levels, however, are minimal as I make the obligatory murmurs of assent whilst letting my mind wander. It is my first day in Uganda and my hosts are wasting no time in getting me up to speed with local do's and don'ts. It was a predictable list of lessons which warned of the dangers of showing your knees in public, eating whilst walking, kissing on the street, and occasionally veering off into somewhat more unorthodox territory as I was told no killing your husband's second wife, no using your mouth as a tool for seed planting – in the fashion of northern Ugandans – and I dutifully take it all in.

Just as I feel we've settled into a comfortable mutual transaction of cultural insights from them and compliance from me, I feel an uncomfortable shift in dynamic. My host drops in a warning against **'MIXING WITH THOSE HOMOSEXUALS'**, before continuing seamlessly onto a description of appropriate mealtime etiquette. I found myself in a dilemma; do I really want to raise this topic for debate, or is there no point? Homosexuality has undoubtedly occupied a broad arena within religious debate and is arguably over-discussed. However, the current situation in Uganda which has sparked international outcry and debate as the government toys with an anti-homo

sexuality bill that, in its severest form, would condemn homosexuals to the death penalty, gave the topic a sense of contextual urgency and I felt compelled to question my host further.

As the discussion in the car began to heat up, I wondered what I had got myself into. Things which I held so dear – whether it be love and acceptance, or logic – were taking a battering in the name of the Bible. Surely such a literal reading of the Bible would also rule out polygamy and pre-marital sex, both of which are widely practiced in Uganda? Upon hearing the response 'Yes but those things God accepts – plus they're fun!' I teetered drastically close to losing my cool. I was also confused; here was a group of warm, kind, educated people who had instantly made me feel at home in a strange place. How could that reconcile with their belief that homosexuals had less of a right to life than us?

For a while, I found it difficult to know where to draw the line in terms of cultural understanding. The idea of picking and choosing from the Bible and then imprisoning or killing people for acting against the chosen parts, seems an unbearable marriage of human rights violations and hypocrisy. It gradually dawned on me that the majority of people in the car would most likely find deep-rooted hypocrisies in Western culture that they find offensive, but that we remain blind to. Of course, the small matter of the death penalty makes this situation seem so much more extreme.

But if we are to follow Christian teaching to-the-letter, then perhaps we are all sinners in some way or another.

As Western socially accepted norms change at an increasingly rapid pace, the gulf between progressive Christians and those who dig their heels further into the ground is widening. The discussion is ever growing between various religious groups and denominations within

a society that adopts terms such as 'EQUALITY' and 'JUSTICE', placing pressure on the church to 'GROW UP', to paraphrase actor and gay rights campaigner Sir Ian McKellen.

As I considered this, I felt some of my initial anger dissipate and was able to really listen to what my host was saying. My host's views indicated a group of people attempting to maintain order and strength within whilst resisting all that was threatening to corrode it from outside. After years of colonial rule, the Western reaction to the proposed Ugandan legislation suddenly seemed slightly neo-colonial and premature. Whatever we may think about the need for the church to 'grow up', it seems understandable that the African-Christian community does not want to do so on the West's terms or time-scales. Certainly, human rights and progression are important, but are they for the West to decide upon and impose on others?

Lost in thought, I'm shaken from my reverie as my host tells me we're about to reach our destination village, Ruhiira.

Driving over the crest of the hill, the beauty of the landscape sprawling out from beneath me takes my breath away; miles upon miles of rolling hills, dusted in a subtle carpet of matooke banana trees. After an hour of wading through a dust cloud, this seemed akin to paradise. Jumping out of the truck at long last I immediately feel at home,

my initial dilemma in the car piling into insignificance as I am engulfed by the warmth of the locals. Introduced to the community chairman, he shakes my hand, beaming, and gives me the ubiquitous Uganda greeting: 'You are welcome! How is there?' By 'there', I learned, he meant my home - that permanent 'there' over the horizon which incites the thirsty curiosity of every Ugandan I was to meet. Of course, 'there' is a transitory place, which shifts colours and character depending on the teller and the circumstance. But this is the beauty of it; none of us are tied to any one view or doctrine, rather we are constantly shifting and questioning as human beings. The simple question "HOW IS THERE?" opens up doors towards understanding. Most importantly, I realised the importance of that phrase: "YOU'RE WELCOME" to precede any discussion between 'HERE' and 'THERE'. As we walked into the chairman's house, my niggling need to fight my corner had evaporated. Once we attain that human closeness which derives from a relationship based on welcome and trust, we can listen to each other, and maybe, both eventually find ourselves in an unexpectedly different place, having opened ourselves to the possibility of change.

MADE

IN

GERMANY



By Cameka Hayles- Hahn

Is the UK really only Buckingham Palace, Shortbread and Oxbridge? The Germans are known for their efficiency, ingenuity and innovation. Whether they make cars, trains or washing machines, their products are renowned worldwide for a standard of quality; similar to France for its wine, or Argentina for its beef.

After living in Germany for nearly 2 years, one of the main things noticed, similarly to the French, is that they are nationalist consumers. They will actively purchase an item or product solely because it was made in Deutschland, even if the other foreign product is better. Many products and items have **“MADE IN GERMANY”** stamped across the packaging (in English), and TV adverts quote the same. Germany is the export powerhouse of Europe:

- It exports 8 times more to the EU and 3 times more to non-EU countries than any other country in Europe. Impressive isn't it?
- In 2008 its combined exports were \$1.53 trillion (USD) in comparison to the UK's \$468.7 billion (USD).

They believe in quality over quantity and struggle with our pound havens that we Brits devour with a passion. The majority of the products in these pound havens are from non-UK, non- EU and non-European countries. It is a case of recognising the elephant in the room: China exports equally as passionately as the UK shoppers revel in the low prices. I do too; if I can pay £1 for something in one of those pound havens rather than £ 3 in an established shop I will. If you are saving for a mortgage while paying a student loan every penny counts. But I do feel equally disappointed when I hear of another British

household company going under. Many Brits were all devastated with the sale of Cadbury's. I was furious actually, and for a while refused to buy Cadbury's goods for a dislike of the new owners. But I am partially responsible for the sale; each time that I purchased their confectionary for £1 rather than at the recommended retail price, I denied them their economic strength to refuse the buy-out (please accept the apology dear Cadbury's). But when it comes to non essential items like paper plates and cups, or batteries, should I actively seek out UK brands?

‘THEY WILL ACTIVELY PURCHASE AN ITEM OR PRODUCT SOLELY BECAUSE IT WAS MADE IN DEUTSCHLAND EVEN IF THE OTHER FOREIGN PRODUCT IS BETTER.’

Why do we not purchase as patriotically as our European counterparts? If you were to buy a car tomorrow, the likelihood of that car being British made or furthermore British company owned is very slim. A German will most likely buy BMW or Mercedes-Benz. A washing machine? The German will buy a Miele.

The excuse of a tight budget is not always justifiable for the demise of the British manufacturing industry. One excuse is that the Brits are the largest European landowners, i.e. we have mortgages. Our European counterparts tend not to buy their properties, but rather rent well into their pension years. Also many of us have to payback steep student loans, so the cheaper products work well for our purses. The general held view is that we Brits are selling ourselves out cheaply: we are becoming accustomed to overseas goods and thus are buying ourselves out of the manufacturing industry.

There are at least 250 pound havens in the UK. Their easy access and location usually within town centres or high streets, wins one pound in every £7 that the British shopper spends; but would they still get such revenue if they only sold British made products? Due to the effects of the recession, tightened purses led to these pound shops experiencing increasing numbers of middle-class earners arriving in their droves and stocking up on well known household products. There are warnings that the fast recovery of many countries from

the financial crisis could threaten our beloved pound shops and their longevity.

So how can we put the UK back on a par with Germany and export our produce so that it is known, loved and sought for by name? First suggestion: let's start aiming to work for these companies in engineering, manufacturing and production and no longer just for the banking industry with their money games. Secondly, let's advertise our own produce with pride for the homeland; and thirdly, let's export like crazy!

‘IF YOU WERE TO BUY A CAR TOMORROW, THE LIKELIHOOD OF THAT CAR BEING BRITISH MADE OR FURTHERMORE BRITISH COMPANY OWNED IS VERY SLIM. A GERMAN WILL MOST LIKELY BUY BMW OR MERCEDES-BENZ.’

SO HOW CAN WE PUT THE UK BACK ON A PAR WITH GERMANY AND EXPORT OUR PRODUCE SO THAT IT IS KNOWN, LOVED AND SOUGHT FOR BY NAME?

FIRST SUGGESTION: LET'S START AIMING TO WORK FOR THESE COMPANIES IN ENGINEERING, MANUFACTURING AND PRODUCTION AND NO LONGER JUST FOR THE BANKING INDUSTRY WITH THEIR MONEY GAMES.

CO-DEPENDENCE₂

Launched at St Ethelberga's Centre for Reconciliation and Peace in June.

**"CLIMATE CHANGE IS BIG-TOGETHER WE
CAN BE BIGGER"**



The Co-Dependence photographic exhibition is the culmination of a faith, community and environment project tasked with enabling twelve young adults to engage in environmental discourse through photography.

With the support of the Earth Charter UK, Groundwork London, UK Youth Climate Coalition, Global Tolerance and photographic mentors, the group gained the skills not only to exhibit their own work but inspire other young people to express themselves similarly, encouraging the forms of collective action and awareness needed if the issues facing our planet are to be tackled.

For more information and to get involved visit
www.codependence.tumblr.com

To enquire about exhibiting the project please contact Lucy at
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A REJUVENATED ROUTEMASTER

FIT FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

By Sarah Feather

If you thought you'd seen the last of the iconic red bus gliding through the streets of London, think again!

Plans have been hatched to introduce a new Routemaster fit for the 21st century.

In May 2010 the final design of the new Routemaster was unveiled by Mayor Boris Johnson and London's Transport Commissioner Peter Hendry. The new bus is due to enter service in 2012, just in time for the London 2012 Olympics. Sharing its distinctive hop-on-hop off design with the old Routemaster, which was phased out in 2005; approximately 50 years after its launch, the bus promises to use the latest green technology and according to Mayor Boris Johnson, **"WILL CUT EMISSIONS, AND GIVE LONDONERS A BUS THEY CAN BE PROUD OF, COMPLETE WITH CUTTING EDGE DESIGN, AND THE FREEDOM OF AN OPEN PLATFORM."**

BUT HOW EXACTLY DOES THE NEW ROUTEMASTER COMPARE WITH THE ONE FROM DAYS GONE BY?

-MEASURING 11.2 METRES, THE NEW ROUTEMASTER IS APPROXIMATELY 3 METRES LONGER THAN THE OLD ONE.

-IT WILL BE 15 PER CENT MORE FUEL EFFICIENT THAN HYBRID MODELS AND 40 PER CENT MORE EFFICIENT THAN DIESEL DOUBLE DECKER BUSES- ECLIPSING THE FUEL EFFICIENCY OF THE OLD MODEL. EXAMPLE DURING THE NIGHT- THE OLD VERSION HAD NO SUCH OPTION.

-THE NEW BUS HAS TWO STAIRCASES AND THREE DOORS AS COMPARED WITH THE OLD BUS WHICH HAD ONLY ONE STAIRCASE, AND ONE HOP-ON-HOP-OFF DOORWAY.

-THERE WILL BE AN OPTION TO CLOSE THE REAR PLATFORM OF THE BUS DURING CALMER INTERVALS, FOR THE NEW BUS WILL HAVE A CAPACITY OF 87. THERE WILL BE 22 SEATS ON THE LOWER DECK AND 40 SEATS ON THE UPPER DECK WITH SPACE FOR 25 STANDEES ON THE LOWER DECK. THE OLD MODEL ROUTEMASTER COULD HOLD 69 PASSENGERS, 64 SEATED AND 5 STANDEES.

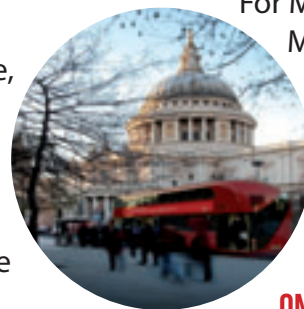
The facts look impressive, but it is important to know exactly how the new Routemaster will benefit members of the general public and tackle the issue of overcrowding. Transport for London quoted the following...

"THE NEW BUS WILL HAVE THREE ENTRANCES TO ALLOW FOR QUICK AND EASY BOARDING/ALIGHTING, WITH ALL ENTRANCES FITTED WITH OYSTER CARD READERS. THE TWO STAIRCASES WILL ALSO ASSIST WITH PASSENGER FLOW, ALLOWING PASSENGERS MORE OPTIONS. THE STAIRCASES WILL ENABLE EASIER AND QUICKER ACCESS TO AND FROM THE UPPER DECK AND THE REAR STAIRCASE WILL HAVE A MID LANDING SECTION; WHICH WILL ALLOW PASSENGERS TO PASS IF NECESSARY."

The design and manufacture of the bus is being carried out by Northern Irish manufacturer Wrightbus, who are working together with Heatherwick Studio to create a light and spacious bus that utilises lightweight materials and glass to highlight key features. This includes a 'glass swoop' at the rear and offside of the bus to emphasise the two staircases, thus creating an impressive visual effect. The bus also features an asymmetric design for the front-end, giving it a more modern look.

For Mark Nodder, Group Managing Director of Wrightbus, the **"DESIGN IS GENUINELY GROUND-BREAKING, PEOPLE ARE REALLY GOING TO STOP AND NOTICE THESE BUSES ON THE STREETS OF LONDON."**

Whilst the overall design and manufacture of the new Routemaster is being refined to confront 21st century issues such as pollution, climate change and accessibility, it is worth noting that visually, the new Routemaster bus is reminiscent of a bygone age and represents a true symbol of London just like Big Ben or the red telephone box. Perhaps this reaffirms the idea that starting from scratch isn't always the answer, and that we can borrow and re-mould successful ideas from our past for the benefit of our future.



CLIMATE CHANGE IN GHANA

By Gedeon-Mensah

Climate change in Ghana is a serious problem. Current trends in weather patterns raise questions about whether the country is prepared enough to deal with the implication and adverse effects of climate change which range from concerns associated with public health to the negative effects on agriculture and food security. Though it's a naked truth that Ghana is far from dealing with the problem using contemporary scientific and technological approaches, it should also be noted that resources and attention should be mobilised and directed respectively towards vulnerable areas of the economy which might suffer the most.

In recent times effects of climate change in Ghana, have been drastic. The weather is extremely hot, with places in the north and upper regions of Ghana reaching temperatures of up to 45 degrees celcius. In addition, harmattan weather (dry and dusty winds), notably marked by a cool and dry atmosphere was not really experienced this season as compared to previous years.



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These current weather patterns have led to the recent detection by Ghana health services of a new strain of cerebrospinal meningitis, which has claimed 17 lives and led to the hospitalisation of 78 people in upper west region of Ghana as of february 2010.

Another area of primary concern is the gradual rise in sea levels detected in various parts of Ghana.

In Keta, a coastal town in the Volta region of Ghana, the sea took over the settlements of the locals and left thousands homeless. This situation resulted in the construction of the keta sea defence to guard against further damage to property. Keta is currently experiencing annual coastal erosion at a rate of three meters per year due to climate change. Also the rise in sea levels could destroy communities and infrastructure such as the two harbours in Ghana, the Takoradi and Tema harbours, in the next few decades.

Three of the country's major water bodies, the river pra, the river tano and lake basumtwi, are reported to be drying up at a faster rate due to recent changes in climate. Already this year, the country has reported dozens of degerous rain storms that have caused the deaths of people and rendered others homeless as well as destroying classroom blocks and strutures in some parts of

Ghana. As we expect the rainy season from many onwards, the attention will be on how communities will deal with food, which in its worst form can lead to the loss of lives and destruction

of properties worth billions of Ghana cedis. Climate change in Ghana cannot be underestimated, the sooner measures are taken to prevent the situation the better. Otherwise it can lead to

severe cases of prolonged starvation, destruction of lives and infrastructure, as well as posing serious public health threats.

WHAT IS BEING DONE?

The academy of young writers-Ghana (AYW-G), in collaboration with one young world, Ghana and the nutrition and food science students society (NFSSS) hosted a climate change event dubbed 'The Climate Reality' at the university of Ghana, legon, on monday 22nd march, 2010. The climate reality brought together several young people from the University of Ghana, most of them coming from the faculty of science to discuss and share ideas on what Ghanaian young people can do to fight climate change in their communities and nation as a whole. For example, the nutrition and food science students promised to find time to embark on a mass sensitization and education in the university community on adverse effects of climate change on food security.



EXCEPT FROM A REPORT ON CLIMATE REALITY, HOSTED BY THE ACADEMY OF YOUNG WRITERS-GHANA IN MARCH 2010 AT UNIVERSITY OF GHANA

Dr. W. B Owusu, a lecturer in the department of nutrition and food science, and one of the finest scientific researchers in Ghana witnessed the event, and opined that the department will provide information to the government to make policies that will deal with issues such as food security and agriculture within the context of climate change. He also emphasized that alongside these efforts, scientists must develop epidemiologic methods and models to facilitate our understanding of both the usual and unusual scales and complexity of health risks of climate change and to engage in scenario-based modelling of likely future health risks of climate change.



Taking Action Beyond Profit the Gulf Oil Catastrophe

By Sarah Hynek

America's largest offshore oil spill and worst environmental disaster began in the Gulf of Mexico on 20th April 2010 when the Deepwater Horizon drilling rig exploded. Within three months 184.3 million gallons of oil had poured into the Gulf. On 30th May President Obama issued a six-month offshore deepwater drilling moratorium, an act which questioned the current system's technological capabilities and provided hope for some that energy priorities would be re-examined. This move continues to face opposition from US oil companies and state governments more concerned with the prospect of losing some of the 124 billion dollars contributed each year to Gulf Coast economies through oil and gas ventures.

Such sentiments towards the oil industry echo worldwide. Oil companies have spilt 1.5 million tons of oil in Nigeria over the last fifty years yet their activities continue unabated due to the profitable relationship between Nigeria's government and the oil giants, particularly Shell. Unlike those affected by the recent Gulf catastrophe, Nigerians are not compensated for their loss of livelihood and 'black gold' continues to fuel the vicious cycle of armed conflict in the

Niger Delta habitually under-reported in Western media. Beyond Nigeria's oil issues, placing profit above human and environmental concerns has strongly contributed to disasters such as Exxon Valdez, the Bhopal Disaster and the Pacific Gas and Electric litigation, to name just a few.

BP CEO, Tony Hayward, used the term 'change' when questioned by US Congress in his statement outlining that BP had made 'systematic changes over the past three years.' This must throw into question the very definition of change given the current situation in the Gulf and BP's track record of safety violations in its refineries in Texas City and Toledo, Ohio. It is not only those in positions of power who should examine the nature of a term they so frequently and purposefully use in their slogans and catch-phrases but also citizens demanding change. Do we throw around the term too freely without considering what change is or where it comes from? If change implies progression then why don't we question more fully why it is associated with an ideology which puts profit above the environment?

Being conscious of one's ecological footprint and seeking to reduce it is a step in the right direction, but footprint counting doesn't bring about the kind of change that is transformative. When I count my own ecological footprint I tend to justify the amount I fly by reassuring myself that I can continue this behaviour because I don't own a car and frequently use public transport. The problem with such cognitive dissonance is that carbon reduction becomes more about making myself feel better and less about genuine transformation. This is not the type of change that will radically alter our mindsets so that old habits never creep back.

The trend in companies going "green" can potentially be viewed as real change so long as carbon reduction does not end up as a faddish attempt to placate growing environmental concerns. Like my footprint counting, companies moving towards green energy whilst still motivated by selfish pursuits

and profit are not changing but merely exchanging one profit-driven model for another. It is possible to bring about real change; the type of change that is not only spoken but has implications for human action. It would involve re-considering the ideologies currently dominating the developed world and not only proposing, but acting out something new on a daily basis. Perhaps it is a form of awakened Capitalism with an enlightened social awareness. What would this type of action look like? Muhammad Yunus, a recent Noble Peace Prize laureate has created this type of radical change with his microfinance model based on reducing poverty rather than profit. His organization has forged joint efforts with a number of companies, including Danone, which now makes fortified yogurt to nourish low income Bangladeshi children at an affordable price. The environment is also a priority in this venture, shown by their use of biodegradable



packaging and use of renewable energy in production plants. Profit is measured in health, development and environmental sustainability.

Lifestyles driven by profit and ego must be questioned to the core, heightening humanity's sensitivity to the critical issues impacting our planet. Any changes made from this new awareness will be lasting because they have roots that stretch beyond merely jumping on the bandwagon of carbon reduction. Real change comes about when one dares to think creatively, question everything and act out one's convictions, and one must be aware that change is possible despite past and present examples of the misuse of the term.

" IF CHANGE IMPLIES PROGRESSION THEN WHY DON'T WE QUESTION MORE FULLY WHY IT IS ASSOCIATED WITH AN IDEOLOGY WHICH PUTS PROFIT ABOVE THE ENVIRONMENT?"

Plastic People

By Melanie Scagliarini

O h my! Have you seen Aunt Gina's front room? It's entirely covered in plastic? Why would anyone cover their front room with clear cellophane?! How on earth can I press the TV remote control buttons when it's totally wrapped in it!?

These exclamations I heard regularly from my mother and my sisters, but not my Father. Both my Father and my Aunt are Italian and the love of plastic coverings is a common trait among that generation.

I thought that this was just an Italian trait, but I swiftly realised that I was wrong. During a conversation with a Pakistani friend where I recounted the moment my Father proudly unveiled his new pink and green flowery plastic tablecloth, which left me debating out how I could look at it without being driven to a level of psycho-ness that would make Nigel Bateman seem like the Easter bunny, she laughingly confessed to me that her mother had something similar, as did her aunt, her uncle, her grandma, her other grandma ...

As I spoke with more friends of different cultures the idiosyncratic similarities came thick and fast. The parents sending food parcels, as they were convinced that we **"DON'T EAT PROPERLY"** (even after we turned 25 years-old). The repeated questions of **"WHY AREN'T YOU MARRIED YET?"** and reminders of **"YOU'LL NEVER GET MARRIED IF YOU LEAVE IT TOO LONG"**. The aunt who insists on feeding anyone who rings the door bell. And, let's not forget the parents who don't like us to help in the kitchen as we never **"DO THINGS PROPERLY"**.

Recently, my Pakistani friend and I found ourselves in a shop doorway admiring a lovely cream plastic tablecloth with red flowers. Whatever our culture, our future is set - and its plastic covered.



Photographed & Designed by Sara Sadek

VOX POP

EVERYONE HAS A REASON FOR BEING WHERE THEY ARE, SOMETIMES AS A RESULT OF AN EXTERNAL CIRCUMSTANCE, SUCH AS A LACK OF JOBS OR WAR - AND THIS VOX POP WOULD ASK SET QUESTIONS DESIGNED TO GIVE A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THAT PERSON'S BACKGROUND.

What is your name? Arif.
Age? 35.
Where do you live? Tooting.
What is your occupation? I don't have a job at the moment.
Where are you from? Afghanistan.
What brought you to the UK? Friends were here, and I wanted to join them and look for work.
How long have you lived in the UK? 10 years.
Do you intend to remain? Yes.



What is your name? Toufak.
Age? 35.
Where do you live? Brixton.
What is your occupation? Plumber, but I am unemployed at the moment.
Where are you from? Tunisia.
What brought you to the UK? I was travelling when I was 20 and liked it here so stayed.
How long have you lived in the UK? 15 years.

What is your name? Chris.
Age? 68.
Where do you live? Mitcham.
What is your occupation? Retired – I was a barber.
Where are you from? Cyprus.
What brought you to the UK? I never thought about it really. Cyprus was a British colony and you could come over if you were engaged to an English girl, so I came and I started my own business.
How long have you lived in the UK? 50 years.
Do you intend to remain? Yes. I've been here longer than Cyprus!



What is your name? Ali.
Age? 25.
Where do you live? Mitcham.
What is your occupation? I work in a kebab shop.
Where are you from? Uzbekistan.
What brought you to the UK? It was political so I can never go back. Life is hard over there. I wanted a better life here, but it is very hard and I don't have an education. I had my own business in Uzbekistan, but I had to leave it.
How long have you lived in the UK? 5 years.
Do you intend to remain? I can't go back, so yes.

MIXED FAITH MARRIAGE SET TO RISE

By Alexandra Feodor

“I HAVE MET A BOY”.

“OHH, A NICE, YOUNG, JEWISH BOY?”

MY MOTHER’S WORDS RESONATE SHARPLY.

“YOUNG, YES, NICE, OH, VERY NICE, JEWISH, NOT SO MUCH”!

This ‘not so’ Jewish boy is now my fiancé and we marry next May. Once a fervent atheist, after copious amounts of chopped liver, chicken soup, challah and fish balls I believe I can now cast my fiancé for the role of an agnostic/honorary Jew!

My fiancé grew up in a Christian household, aligning himself closer to the philosophy of atheism in recent years. He and I have very different backgrounds in terms of religious observance, and despite the fact that I have been brought up within the reform community, both my parents are heavily involved in the synagogue and have instilled in me a desire to keep alive my heritage and celebrate my culture. For this reason, I plan to incorporate some aspects of Jewish culture into our wedding celebrations. At the same time, I do not want to exclude my ‘new family’, and make this a wholly Jewish affair with smoked salmon bagels and Israeli dancing till the sun comes up! **(THERE WILL HOW-EVER BE SOME OF THIS-GRANDMA,**

DON’T WORRY!) It’s important that we therefore celebrate our diversity, and find ways to make our religious and cultural backgrounds mutually compatible.

Whilst it seems that the number of mixed faith marriages are increasing, and that there is a greater tolerance among

communities and religious leaders towards this issue, there is actually little information on the subject in terms of accurate statistics. What is evident however is that there are an increasing number of discussion forums and websites dedicated to providing advice to couples from mixed faith backgrounds in their pursuit of happiness, such as the Inter-faith Marriage Network, ([HTTP://WWW.INTERFAITHMARRIAGE.ORG.UK/](http://www.interfaithmarriage.org.uk/)). There are also a number of dedicated events planners, who are turning their attentions to catering for mixed faith couples.

Rabbi Helen Freeman of West London Synagogue (WLS) maintains that she has seen a rise in mixed faith marriages within the community in the last five years. When asked why she thought this was, she suggested that the reason for this rise was because people now mix freely with individuals from all different backgrounds; at college or work and can’t help who they fall in love with!

This welcome integration of cultures and faiths is particularly noticeable in London, where there is a plethora of people from varying backgrounds. In fact, you are likely to hear several dialects and see many forms of cultural dress on your train ride to work alone.

Rabbi Freeman continued, **“YEARS AGO PEOPLE MIGHT HAVE DROPPED A NON-JEWISH PARTNER BECAUSE IT WAS FELT TO BE ‘WRONG’ OR THAT ‘THE FAMILY WOULD DISAPPROVE’, BUT THAT HAS MUCH LESS INFLUENCE NOWADAYS”.** Rabbi Helen Freeman told me that WLS rabbis are allowed by law to marry one Jew to another Jew, nothing else. So if a mixed faith couple wishes to marry, it can only happen within the community if the non-Jewish person goes through a process of conversion. However, she went on to explain that if a mixed faith couple are having a secular marriage, **“WE ARE REALLY HAPPY TO GIVE THEM ADVICE ABOUT JEWISH PRAYERS, MUSIC OR OTHER INPUT INTO THE CEREMONY. IT MUST BE CLEAR THOUGH THAT THIS IS A WAY OF SHOWING RESPECT TO THEIR JEWISH HERITAGE AND NOT IN ANY WAY A JEWISH MARRIAGE.”**

Anne, who went through the process of conversion at WLS believes that **“AS WE ARE BECOMING INCREASINGLY MULTICULTURAL, MARRYING INTO YOUR OWN RELIGION IS NOT SO IMPORTANT ANYMORE, AND THERE IS LESS OF A STIGMA THAN THERE WAS IN THE PAST TO MARRY PEOPLE OF OTHER FAITHS.”**



I spoke openly to my father whilst writing this piece, and he told me that the Anglican Church is obliged to marry anyone, regardless of their religious faith; even if neither partner is Christian. I was particularly interested in knowing how long this had been the case, so sought further insight from Father Morrow, a King's College London chaplain and Associate Priest at St Matthew's Church, Camberwell.

While Father Morrow maintained that this is not an area he has researched, he did think that this had always been the case within the Church of England, i.e. since the Reformation. This is because the Church of England has always been the established church, and has a parochial (parish) system. Everyone resident within the parish has certain rights connected to the parish church, such as attending the annual church council meeting, and the right to marry within its walls. This is because the building is held to be for all, not just for active worshippers. To marry, one of the couple has to live in the parish. You lose this right if one of you has been married before. Despite this rule, Father Morrow maintained that you

may still be able to marry, at the discretion of the priest and the church council, **"WHICH IS INCREASINGLY LIKELY, UNLESS ONE OF THE PARTIES WAS INSTRUMENTAL TO THE BREAK-UP OF THE OTHER'S MARRIAGE."**

Whilst further questioning revealed that the partner/s own religious rituals or traditions could not be incorporated into this type of marriage ceremony, and that the ceremony must take the form according to the rites and ceremonies of the Church of England, Father Morrow did reveal that when it comes to the **"NON-ESSENTIAL MATTERS, SUCH AS HYMNS, MUSICAL INTERLUDES, READINGS OTHER THAN FROM THE BIBLE, ETC, THERE IS SCOPE, AT THE PRIEST'S DISCRETION; FOR TEXTS WHICH ARE NOT CHRISTIAN."**

As a result of our diverse and postmodern culture, Father Morrow predicts a rise in mixed faith marriages for the future, but does not see much scope for "Actual wedding rites - vows etc - which incorporate elements from different religions, not least because lawyers from state and church would not allow any such flexibility".

He did however maintain that **"WHAT IS UNDOUBTEDLY HAPPENING IS THAT TRUE INTERFAITH COUPLES ARE MARRYING AT THE REGISTER OFFICE, AND THEN HAVING DIVERSE BLESSING SERVICES AFTERWARDS."**

This is indeed my intention and so too was for Priya and her husband, who after having a formal registry wedding, incorporated a Hindu ceremony and Jewish blessing into their marriage celebrations. Priya told me that it was particularly important to honour and reflect both, her own and her husband's cultural traditions, while at the same time respecting the wishes of both sets of parents.

It seems to be the case that mixed faith marriages are set to rise, and that there are many options nowadays available to couples wishing to incorporate their own religious rituals and customs into their marriage celebrations, **(GOOD NEWS FOR ME AND THE CHICKEN SOUP BRIGADE!)** While this is currently not permitted within the formal ceremony, perhaps in time this too will change and mixed faith marriage ceremonies will take a different form, whereby the faiths of both partners can be represented and embraced.

The Changing Face of Family

by Romina Rovira

More often than not, we think of family in terms of 'mum', 'dad', and their 'children'; however, we have come to see that there are other types of families out there. A few decades back it would have been impossible to think in terms of 'two moms' or 'two dads', even a single parent was seen as unusual.

We spoke to Julia Voss, xxx of Out For Our Children, a charity founded in 2004 that teaches children about families 'different' from the norm. Beside given confidence to those children that have 'two mummies' or 'two daddies', they endeavor to make children who come from a more conventional background understand that not everyone is the same and to grow up with attitudes of tolerance and respect towards others.



What is 'Out for Our Children' and what kind of work do you do?

The initial aim was to produce books and resources which reflect the realities of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered (LGBT) parented households. Our first workshops revolved around creative writing and illustrations. Members had the opportunity to produce their own materials such as bedtime stories for about same sex parents and families.

The workshops were a success, as three of our books were published. We also produced a teacher pack, posters, postcards and website resources. We are now branching out into training for early years teaching professionals. We've realized that the only way to change things is by bringing these resources into nurseries and schools, to positively help staff understand how they can address this equality issue.

Why did you start the project?

It was thanks to a couple of our members that had young children who were just starting nursery. They found that all the systems were set up for heterosexual parents and that some staff couldn't

get their head around the idea of two mummies and (despite being told) persisted in calling the second parent 'the nanny'.

Things like family trees or mother's day also presents a problem because people only think in terms of 'mum and dad'. This approach excludes a lot of kids - single parent families, children in care or others whose families are unconventional. Our kinds of families were not portrayed in any of the materials being used at nursery and classrooms. We were invisible, in the same way that a couple of decades ago you never saw any black families in picture books. **OUR CHILDREN ARE CONSTANTLY TOLD 'YOU CAN'T HAVE TWO MUMMIES; THAT'S NOT POSSIBLE'** and not just by other children.

Why is it important for children to know about different types of families?

It's important for children to see representations of themselves and their type of family. Silence and pretending we don't exist will mean they automatically grow up with the idea that there is something 'wrong' with their family background. They can suffer low self esteem so it's important for all children to feel accepted, no matter what their family background.

What sort of reception do you get when you describe your work?

On the whole people are very supportive; however there are always a few individuals who equate sexual identity issues with 'sex' and assume that we will be going into great detail about what gay people do in bed. When they discover what we're trying to do - promote tolerance and respect for diversity- they are less frightened by it.

A lot of damage was done by the previous Tory Government's Section 28 which banned the promotion of same sex relationships in schools. There is still a climate of fear out there and some people do not realize the law was repealed by the previous Labour administration. It left behind a shocking legacy by effectively sanctioning homophobia, hatred and intolerance. The people with those views are fewer in number now but they haven't gone away entirely and we do encounter them from time to time.

Do you find people are less tolerant about gay issues when it comes to children?

We have had plenty of press coverage - some of it not terribly supportive. People seem happy to accept openly gay people in the media these days but yes, some people do have a problem when it comes to children. They seem worried that we are somehow going to turn their children into homosexuals just by talking about it in an open and honest way.

The fact is that increasingly gay people are parenting and you are not going to make them go away by opposing the idea. It's already here and now there is some measure of equality under the law as gay people can also foster and adopt as well as being able to put both parents (including the non-biological one) on a child's birth certificate in certain circumstances.

Children are not born with prejudices and when they see one of our posters they recognize that it reflects the world as they find it. Many children either have a diverse family or have friends with complicated or unusual families. However, two mums or two dads is still relatively unusual but their most common response when they are very young is 'how come you've got two mums?' rather than making a judgment about it. It is only older children who have been influenced by their parents or society who may react in a negative

way. This is why we believe it is crucial to start educating about this issue as early as possible.

What would need to happen for you to feel that your work is done?

We'd like teaching about family diversity to be embedded into the curriculum alongside everything currently taught about family and identity. We want children to develop attitudes of acceptance towards gay people - and this would include the elimination of homophobic language in the playground, as well as homophobia being given the same priority as racism when it comes to pupil behavior in schools.

We believe prevention is better than cure and that if tolerant and informed attitudes are ingrained from a very young age, these issues would not arise later on to the extent that they currently do. We are optimistic that this can be achieved before very long.



With technology opening a new world of possibilities, the idea of a nuclear family cannot be considered the norm. Test tube babies (or IVF), surrogacy, and gender selection; all procedures that were unthinkable for previous generations and still controversial to different degree, are now more prevalent and becoming part of our culture. Projects like Out for Our Children are helping to make this transaction is easier for new generations. Now that the doors for these 'new families' have been opened, it is up to us to adapt and to help create an accepting society for children to grow into.



It's the Climb-Empowering women in Bangladesh

After visiting Bangladesh for the first time in 15 years, Maherunesa was struck by the sheer poverty and destitution that its residents face. Maherunesa is determined to make a change and has co-founded 'Arohon' (which means 'climb' in Bengali), a charitable organisation that aims to empower poor people by providing them with the basic means required to climb out of poverty.

Aware that she needs to tackle numerous issues, such as sanitation, hunger and disease one step at a time, Maherunesa's first objective is to improve education and promote women's empowerment in Noluta- a small village in Tangail, Bangladesh. With the assistance of her father, local workmen and her family-who are helping to oversee the project,

"OUR AIM IS TO EMPOWER WOMEN IN AN ENVIRONMENT WHERE CULTURAL GENDER BARRIERS PREVENT WOMEN FROM REACHING THEIR FULL POTENTIAL."

"I BELIEVE THAT WOMEN CAN DO SO MUCH; IT'S JUST THAT IN THIS VILLAGE MANY OF THE WOMEN FACE CULTURAL BARRIERS AND LACK THE RESOURCES TO LIVE OUT THEIR DREAMS."

Maherunesa is working hard to build an education centre for women, and provide them with the skills and know how to fulfil their true potentials.

I spoke to Maherunesa about the project...

1. How did you go about setting up this project? (It seems like a huge task for you and your sister to take on.)

My sister and I visited the village in Bangladesh and were identifying what changes are needed in the area. After talking to many locals and observing what projects or buildings already exist in the village, we realised that nothing much was being done about women's education. Many

women we met were forced out of education in order to get married, or they could not run their own businesses because they had to look after their children. As it is a small village its residents found out about our plans very quickly. We have made arrangements with workmen out in Bangladesh to start building the projects and we have family helping us to oversee it.

2. What inspired you to start up this project?

I was always brought up to believe everyone should be entitled to equal opportunities in life, and I suppose what inspired me to finally take action and start a project in Bangladesh were the many people I've met since being a volunteer with Platform 2 in December. This has opened up many doors in terms, of introducing me to other



BY MAHERUNESA KHANDAKER

young activists who have also set up their own projects to help others, which made me realise that anyone can start a project; if they truly are ready to put the work in.

3. Why did you think it was important to make a change in the community and empower women?

I got to know many young girls and women when I went to Bangladesh. Many were made to leave their education or businesses because they were forced into marriages, and I could see how upset they were with the way they were treated. I also met many very young girls who were very bold and intelligent, and I would want them to reach their full potential, not to fall into the same life that many women before them have had to face in the village. I believe that women can do so much; it's just that in this village many of the women face cultural barriers and lack the resources to live out their dreams.

"EVEN HOPELESS SITUATIONS CAN BE TURNED AROUND"

4. What is your hope or wish for the outcome of this project?

Overall, our aim is to empower women in an environment where cultural gender barriers prevent women from reaching their full potential. Through establishing a women's centre, not only to we aim to provide women with basic materials and training to climb out of poverty, but we hope to achieve a cultural shift in which women can be independent and confident in their abilities. We strive for women to be offered the same opportunities as men and to be viewed as equal citizens.

5. How far have you got in achieving your aims? Is there still a lot to do?

We only started planning the project in December 2009 and are currently in the construction phase. We aim to finish building the community and education centre by November 2010. In December 2010 we officially open the centre, and will start

running basic literacy and numeracy classes for the women of the village. Eventually we will implement a women's council to oversee the day to day running of the centre.

6. What have you learnt through setting up this project?

In a personal sense this project has had a great impact on me. Other than gaining new skills required to set up such a project, it has brought me closer to my own background, which I long felt very detached from. It's given me a realistic view on life for women in Bangladesh. Nevertheless, through the necessary research I had to conduct as co-founder I came across many case studies which proved that even hopeless situations can be turned around. So in a sense, it has made me more optimistic about how things work in the world.

YOU CAN FIND MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROJECT AT [HTTP://ITSTHECLIMB.CO.UK/](http://ITSTHECLIMB.CO.UK/)

Make a Change

Small actions make a big difference, but how many of us think about transforming our lifestyles in order to bring about a better change?

This is one question I had to ask myself on many occasions as I spent 10 hard working weeks in Ghana. As a gap year student, I wanted to travel and explore certain parts of the world however as an unemployed student, finance was an issue. Therefore it was hard to believe when I was a successful

candidate to travel to West Africa for voluntary work, all expenses paid by Platform 2. A global volunteering scheme funded by UKaid from the department of International development. Started in 2008 this is the final year for platform2 projects in developing countries which makes me one of the lucky applicants who was fortunate enough to travel. Platform 2 were looking for a candidate who wanted to make a difference in a part of the world they may have never had the chance to go to, as well as a person who would be able to cope with a diverse range of situations and difficult circumstances. My enthusiasm and passion to help enabled me to be a successful candidate for this incredible trip.

I was eager to help underprivileged people in this developing country. The aim of the project was to build a market for the local community so that they would not have to trade on the sides of the road which can be both un-hygiene. Beginning work at 7:00am was difficult. Even more of a challenge was working in temperatures of 30 to 40 degrees Celsius, shovelling and digging and using the pickaxe. Few days into the project I realised the intensity of the work, also how the local people in Nkaseim village gave up their

time on several days in order to help us. It was easy to see that the people of Ghana were genuinely friendly and warm hearted.

Simple aspects of the Ghanaian life made me appreciate so many things about the western world in which we live. Simple things such as how lucky we are to live in a safe, secure and comforting

A DIFFICULT CYCLE EVERYDAY FOR THE LOCAL PEOPLE, YET THEY DO NOT WHINE AND WISH THINGS WERE DIFFERENT

environment. I know at times I have taken so many things for granted.

Simple things such as water. Having to pump my own bucket of water for bathing, washing clothes and flushing toilets was not easy and then to carry it made me realise how easy I have it. Just turn on the tap and there you go. A difficult cycle everyday for the local people, yet they do not whine and wish things were different.

Inspiring people like Sarah who would wake up 5:00am in the morning to clean our accommodation and make sure breakfast was ready for 6:00am. Help us if we struggled to sweep the floor, clean the showers and



Make a Difference

By Shaazia Sayyad

cook outside in the hot, baking sun. All for 1Cedi 80 Pesewa a day (£1.50). Individuals such as Sarah made me appreciate the intense hard work people have to do in order to survive.

Appreciation is something that I learnt day in day out throughout my experience. Seeing children sell sachets of water by the road sides, near fast moving cars made me open my eyes to the ways in which every family member helps each other in order to get by. Children from the ages of eight onwards miss school on certain days to help sell produce and support their families. Seeing a six year child old looking after her one year old sister whilst their mother travelled to their farm shows the way in which children have to grow up fast. They have an immense amount of responsibilities due to family circumstances.

My experience in Ghana has taught me that I should value everything that I have and

INSPIRING PEOPLE LIKE SARAH WHO WOULD WAKE UP 5:00 AM IN THE MORNING TO CLEAN OUR ACCOMMODATION AND MAKE SURE BREAKFAST .WAS READY FOR 6:00 AM

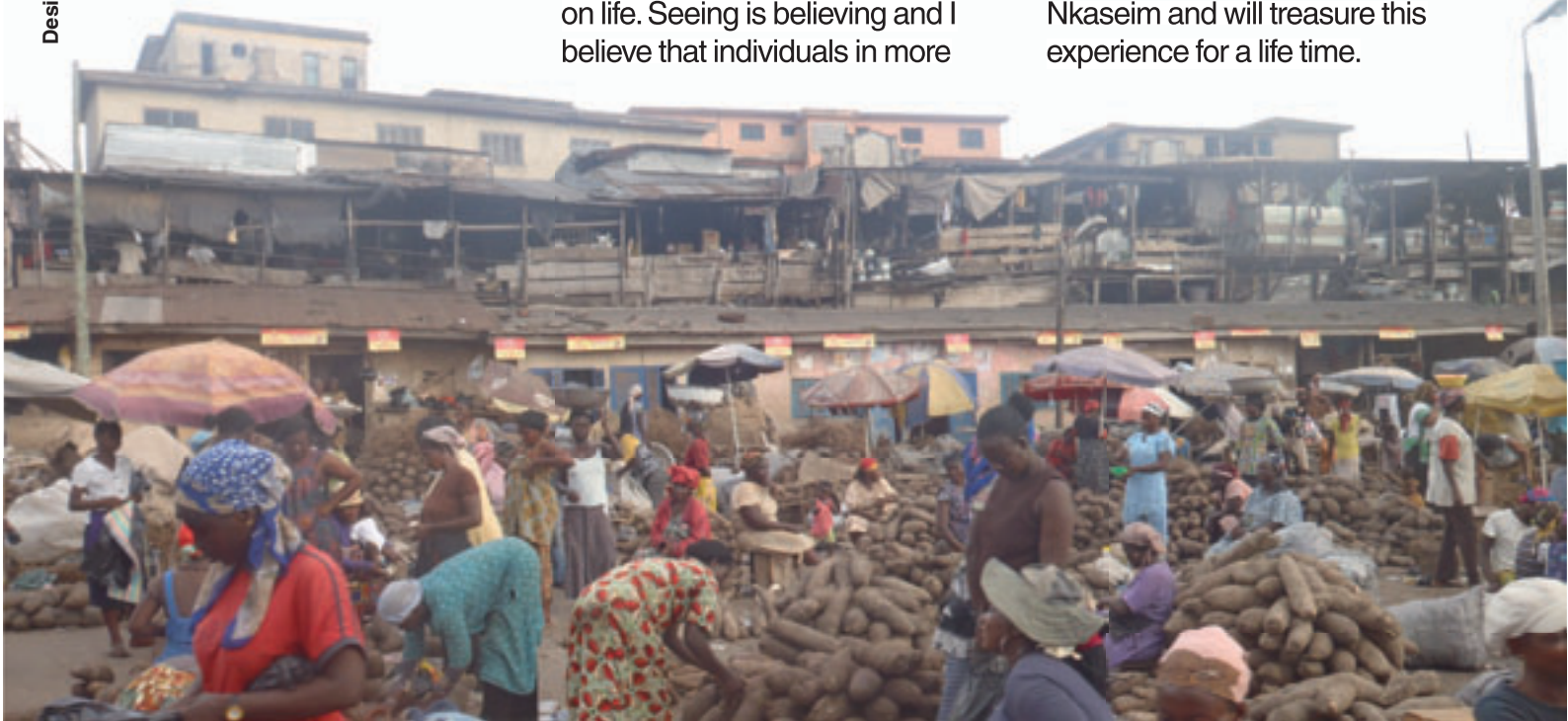
reminded me of a famous quote by John F Kennedy - 'The world is very different now. For man holds in his mortal hands the power to abolish all forms of poverty, and all forms of human life'. This highlights the power a person has to achieve anything they intend to.

I would say that this experience has given me a better outlook on life. Seeing is believing and I believe that individuals in more

economically developed countries such as our own, should reflect on their fortunate lifestyles when compared to that of others in poorer nations. Giving up time to possibly volunteer for charity organisations can be one way of getting involved in order to help. Others way to help can be through donations, sponsoring a child or a simple change in choice of goods such as purchasing fair trade products which will make a difference to others.

Changing our lifestyles in a small way, will make a big difference to others in ways we cannot imagine. When I look back on the determination of many Ghanaians I am reminded that their drive is based upon where they are coming from and where it is that they wish to go.

I know I have learnt many things from the kind natured people of Nkaseim and will treasure this experience for a life time.



THE ART OF HENNA

By Camilla Pandoo

From star signs to full body decoration, permanent tattoos have long been considered a form of art. If you're not ready to get an ink tattoo, or still debating what to get, why not try Henna. It's a totally natural product for those who'd prefer something less permanent.

Like ink tattoos the art of Henna or Mendi design has entered the realm of modern decorative self-expression.

CELEBRITIES SUCH AS MADONNA, PINK AND PRINCE HAVE ALL USED HENNA.

It's a temporary design that can be used on any part of your body which then fades away after a couple of weeks.

So what is it and how is it done? You may think Henna is a manmade chemical. However Henna dyes are derived from a plant called lawsonia Inermia found in North Africa, India and the Middle East. The leaves are dried ground and mixed with water to make a paste and put into a cone ready to be carefully squeezed onto the skin. The Ancient Egyptians were amongst the first to embrace the art of staining their skin in different designs for beauty, where hair, hands and nails were decorated.


Mostly associated with the Asian community it is however not just limited to Indians, Pakistanis and Bengalis. Due to programmes such as the reality show Four Weddings and the Asian network, the beautification of one's skin for that special day has become more popular than ever with any culture.

Kiran Sahib, a professional 'Mendi Artist' travels all over the UK specialising in wedding Henna design.

What was your first experience with Henna?

"IT WAS ABOUT EIGHT YEARS AGO, I HAD A WEDDING TO GO TO, I COULDN'T FIND A GOOD MENDI ARTIST ANYWHERE. SO I WENT AND BOUGHT A CONE AND DID THE DESIGN MYSELF. I WAS HOOKED FROM THE FIRST TIME I STARTED"





How do you come up with your patterns and designs?

"I GET MY DESIGNS FROM THINGS SUCH AS FABRICS, NET CURTAINS AND CARPETS!"

Do you just cater for the Asian bride or is there a demand from other cultures?

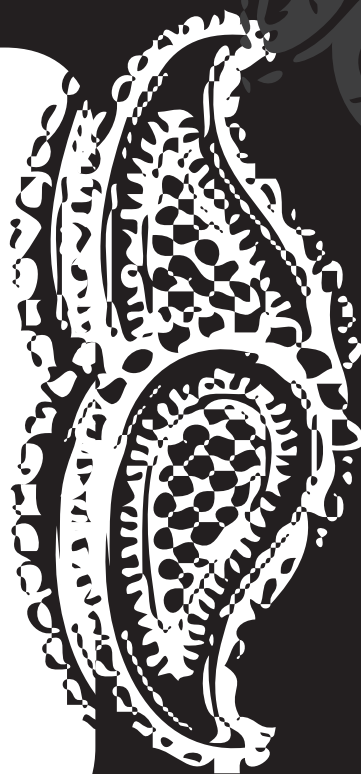
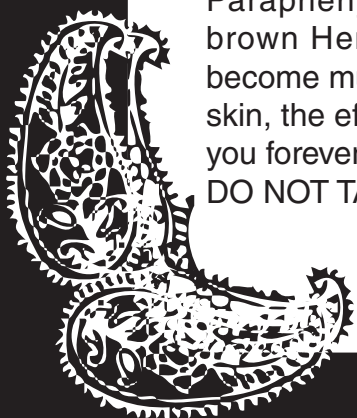
"I'VE JUST BEEN TO A SPANISH HEN PARTY. THE BRIDE SAW THE PROGRAMME FOUR WEDDINGS AND LOVED THE IDEA OF HENNA, SO SHE CONTACTED ME AND I WENT TO HER HEN PARTY. SHE AND HER FRIENDS ALL REALLY ENJOYED IT."

The cross-cultural popularity of Henna is growing rapidly. It is a beautiful way to decorate your body in whatever you wish, and if you don't like it? Just be patient, in a couple weeks it vanishes.

You can buy ready to use Henna in a cone for a very cheap price from many Asian market stalls, shops and even some corner shops and news agents. But for some big Asian hot spots around London where you can find professional Henna artists head to; Green Street in east London, Walthamstow market in northeast London or Apelson market in northwest London. Have some fun with Henna, gather all your friends and get creative.

Black Henna

In July 2008, it was reported a 10 year old boy had been badly scarred by a henna tattoo he got on holiday. Henna in its natural form (brown/red paste) can very rarely cause an allergic reaction. However Black Henna is seriously dangerous. To make the paste stain black a chemical dye is added called Paraphenylenediamine, (or PPD) to the natural brown Henna. This is what makes the Henna become much more unpredictable when applied to the skin, the effect is swelling and a scare of the design on you forever. Please when offered a black Henna tattoo **DO NOT TAKE IT!**





Asian

An invitation gets hand delivered. It's a perfect excuse to get dressed up, see all the family and hear the gossip. Then it hits you, 'What do I wear?'

Wait it's an Asian wedding, **'AHH I HAVE NOTHING TO WEAR!'**

Here we go again. Another day of the same catwalk routine up and down the high street finding absolutely nothing. When shopping for a night out the British high street has never let me down, but when it comes to Asian style it becomes so much hassle that I end up going to the wedding in a dress from Primark. The one chance I get to dress up and I miss the opportunity.

Asian hot spots like Green Street show off the latest fashion from India, but what about the latest Asian fashion from Britain? The British fashion scene has been heavily influenced by Asian clothes. The popularity of Harham pants, gladiator sandals, sequins and jewellery galore is partly credit to the role of Bollywood in bringing a glimpse of India to the Brits.

Asian body types are different; we have bigger chests, bigger hips and are generally quite short. If you have ever put on Asian costume such as a Kameez or Sari the first thing you see and feel are the dazzling shimmer of sequins and the weight of the garment. Indian outfits are mostly made and imported from India. Although produced from everyday materials and in a wide range of colours that would compare to the Dulux



paint range, they are skilfully arranged by professional workers. Unfortunately they're not fashioned in UK sizes but only in small and medium. But do we all fit into the conventional medium or small?

It turns out I wasn't alone in my quest to find better fitting and fashionable Asian clothes. Designer Neetam Bhachu has

n Fusion

By Camilla Pandoo

ALTHOUGH PRODUCED FROM EVERYDAY MATERIALS AND IN A WIDE RANGE OF COLOURS THAT WOULD COMPARE TO THE DULUX PAINT RANGE

successfully developed her own fashion label. Her unique designs draw inspiration from the tradition 'SALWAR KAMEEZ', a long tunic top over loose fitting trousers, wide at the top, narrow at the bottom. Her marriage of contemporary British fashion and traditional clothes has given me faith that now I can truly embrace my heritage, while also looking damn good!

I spoke to Neetam about her journey to becoming a designer of Asian attire.

What made you want to recreate Asian costume?

"I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN FRUSTRATED WITH ASIAN CLOTHES, THE SHEER AMOUNT OF BEADING AND SEQUINS, THE POOR FIT AND POOR FINISHING. I KNEW THERE WAS DEFINITELY SOMETHING FUNDAMENTALLY WRONG WITH THE DESIGN OF ASIAN CLOTHES".

It must have been daunting to start a business from scratch. How did you foresee your work standing out?

"I DON'T BELIEVE IN ADDING SEQUINS TO AN OUTFIT JUST FOR THE SAKE OF IT, IT SHOULD BE USED CLEVERLY AND ONLY TO BRING ATTENTION TO A CERTAIN PART OF THE DRESS. I STRIVE TO BE LIKE THE BRITISH HIGH STREET, I CONSTANTLY DO MY RESEARCH ON NEW FASHION CUTS AND STYLES."

How would you describe your collection?

"MY COLLECTION IS MADE IN UK SIZES AND THEY ARE INTER-CHANGEABLE. THEY CAN BE WORN WITH LEGGINGS, JEANS OR THE FULL OUTFIT. TO WEAR MY STUFF YOU CAN'T BE SHY, YOU WILL STAND OUT FROM THE CROWD, AND HEADS WILL TURN."

Asian fashion is now available to you as you walk past the dairy section of your local store.

Asda has become a strong promoter of ethnic products; this includes clothes as well as food.

Asda's fashion label George has introduced an Asian line, taking inspiration from

the Kameez. Made from Indian fabrics the range was introduced as a direct result of consumer demand for ethnic clothes at affordable prices.

While these designs aren't breaking boundaries with fashion it is a step forward for the second or third generation British Asian to have an easier time shopping for stylish attire.



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SUMMER / AUTUMN Calendar 2010

JUNE

3rd Christian

Corpus christian (Roman catholic celebrating the real presence of christ)

6th Christian

Corpus christi (Catholic church)

16th Sirkh

Martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev

JULY

5th Sirkh

Birthday of Guru Hargobind (Nanaksha calender, the Sixth of the Sirkh Gurus.)

15th Christian

St swithin's Day (Myths say that the weather on St swithin's feast day, determines the wetaer for the next 40 days.)

20th Jewish

Tisha B'av (Remembers a number of tragic coincidental events in jewish history)
Zoroatrian- Jamshedi Noruz (Qadimi calender, new year)

23rd Sirkh

Birthday of Guru Hargobind (Nanashashi calender, eighth of the sixth of the Sikh Gurus.)

25th Zoroastrian

Khordad Sal (Qadini Calender, birthday of Zoroaster)

26th BUDDIST

Asal, Dharma Day
(Celebrates the beginning the Buddha's teachings after overcoming the 'wheel of truth' prior to his enlightenment

AUGUST

6th Christian

Transfiguration (orthodox christian)

11th/ 12th Muslim

Ramadan (start of the month of fasting. Subject to moon sigthing)

15th Christian

Dormition of the theotokos (Orthodox Christians remember the death, resurrection and glorification of Christ's mother.) Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Catholic festival celebrating the mother of jesus being taken into heaven in body and soul.)

19th Zoroastrian

Jamshedi Noruz (Shenshai Calender, New year.)

24th Hindu

Raksha Bandhan (Hindu celebration of brother and love.)

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