

An Invitation to

UBELLE

(Swahili For 'The Future')



How can we create the next generation of community based leaders to help build independence and resilience within African-Caribbean communities in England?



REOS

“African Caribbean communities in the UK, continue to struggle with challenging social realities and negative stereotypes. The only way to build a better future is through strategic and intentional investment in tomorrow’s leaders.”

- Rev Dr Kate Coleman, Next Leadership

Rush flower street sculpture in Windrush Square Brixton



OUR MISSION



“The situation was much worse in the 1960’s and 1970’s and we did not give up. We tried to overcome the challenges and barriers that we faced - the barriers have always been there. However if you are consistent you can achieve things on behalf of and with your community. A lot of negative things are now being said about our youth, we cannot give up on them and we need to keep moving forward together to effect social change.”

Arthur Torrington, CBE, Community Worker and Leader in London, Birmingham and Leicester Insert explanatory footnote here, or refer to p. 5

The Ubele Project will create an innovative model of leadership development and social change for African-Caribbean communities in England. Using the “Change Lab”¹ methodology, a process for multi-stakeholder engagement and social innovation, Ubele offers a transformational experience which, it is expected, will lead to the development of a new cadre of community-based leaders in at least three cities, over a period of three years.

Ubele will support community-based leaders in the design and implementation of new solutions to some of our community’s most challenging social and economic concerns, and help build our resilience as a community.

1. See page 5 for a more detailed explanation of the Change Lab.

THE CASE: THE STATE OF OUR NATION

The African Caribbean community in Britain can trace its history over a period of at least 500 years. Since mass migration in the 1950s, African Caribbeans have settled and transformed key aspects of British life. Yet despite these great strides, available evidence suggests that members of this community still experience higher levels of social exclusion than most groups including those from other ethnic minority communities.

African Caribbean people are increasingly over-represented in statistics concerning the incidence of chronic ill-health, mental health, educational underachievement, dependence on statutory family welfare systems, unemployment and in the criminal justice system, particularly as it pertains to the proliferation of youth gang activities and the growth of knife crime.

If such statistical trends continue to define the African Caribbean community in Britain, our capacity to sustain ourselves as a thriving, vibrant and cohesive community will increasingly come under threat. These trends are produced by a complex mixture of social, economic and political forces, some of which result from the direct impact of racism, others raise deep questions for us to consider and address as a Black community. Ubele challenges us to focus on two important areas for action: the need for cultural continuity and the development of community based leadership.

Why cultural continuity?

Cultural continuity “is essential to people’s understanding of themselves as connected to their own past and critical to them building the future” . It “requires not simply that a group’s own beliefs be explained to the young... but that the validity of and importance of the beliefs be successfully justified to and internalised by those who will eventually be responsible themselves for maintaining the belief system” .

Some markers of cultural continuity are a) self-government including b) the number of women in local services, and the presence of, or control over c) land, d) cultural facilities, e) education, f) health, g) police and fire services and h) the provision of children and family services . Communities that are marginalised and become disconnected from their culture, (the lack of cultural continuity), experience a high prevalence of mental and physical health problems, social pathologies that is social factors like crime and poverty that increase social disorganization, and cultural collapse . All of this is evidenced by the statistics provided.

Why community-based leadership?

The original group of African Caribbean community based leaders worked tirelessly over decades, campaigning and voicing community concerns, pushing for access to community resources and often holding failing systems to account. They fought against social injustice and discrimination and contributed to the integration of the community between the 1960’s, through to the early 1980’s. This first generation of leaders are now aging, retiring, returning to their countries of origin or simply dying.

For many of those leaders who remain today, their knowledge, skills, experience and contribution still need to be acknowledged and key areas of learning transferred to a new generation of emerging leaders before it’s too late.



“Time is neutral and does not change things. With courage and initiative, leaders change things”.

Jesse Jackson

“It is a historical truth. No man can know where he is going unless he knows exactly where he has been and exactly how he arrived at his present place”.

Maya Angelou

1. M. J. Chandler and C. Lalonde. “Cultural Continuity as a Hedge Against Suicide in Canada’s First Nations”. *Transcultural Psychiatry*, (35) 2, 1998

2. R. G. Kelly, R. G. (1999). *Literature and the historian*. In L. Maddox (Ed.), *Locating American studies: The evolution of a discipline* (pp. 91-109). Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

3. M. J. Chandler and C. Lalonde. “Cultural Continuity as a Hedge Against Suicide in Canada’s First Nations”. *Transcultural Psychiatry*, (35) 2, 1998

Stories emerging from within the African Caribbean community suggest that there is a growing level of concern about the future of and the longer-term sustainability of our group. This was further evidenced at the 6th Huntley Conference, held in February 2011, in London. The conference focused on the campaigns for rights and self-resilience through Black community action between the 1960s and late 1980s; and explored the challenges facing the community today. As Colin Prescod (2010) urges us to consider, The Get Up! Stand Up! conference is asking a question of our “now”. We conference to do more than just reminisce about some glorious past age

- Colin Prescod, 2010, Get Up! Stand Up! Campaigning for Rights, Respect and Self-Reliance. Conference Programme:19th February 2011

OUR RESPONSE: THE UBELE PROJECT

The Ubele Project aims to be a unique and challenging transformational process aimed at creating a multi-stakeholder local and national process that will help create a stronger African Caribbean community. The Ubele Project aims to produce a new cadre of community-based African Caribbean leaders who will be able to create and sustain links in some of the most challenging local communities in England, driving forward innovation and social action.

Ubele will focus on three crucial cornerstones of robust communities: leadership, cultural continuity and resilience. By focusing on these “intangible but essential community building blocks... Ubele will develop “a powerful foundation for the development of leadership and change agency at the level of the individual and the community” .

Grasping the Opportunity

2011 is the year for change! The United Nations has declared 2011 the International Year for People of African Descent and it is in this year that we recognise through acts of remembrance the 30th anniversary of some of the most important actions of social resistance in Black British History: the New Cross Fire, The Black People’s Day of Action and the Brixton Riots. It is also the 100th anniversary of International Women’s Day and the European Year of Volunteering.

The current government’s Big Society Agenda creates new opportunities for local communities, including the African Caribbean community, to take responsibility for securing its own future. This is especially important because of the global economic crisis and a new era of economic austerity in Britain, that has begun to and will result in a considerable reduction in many of the services and infrastructure upon which members of the African Caribbean community, amongst others have traditionally looked to for support.

The Big Society is driven by the idea of increasing decentralisation and localism signalled by “....an end [to] the era of top-down government by giving new powers to local communities, neighbourhoods and individuals”. Community based leaders will need to advocate for and in many instances lead social change initiatives, have the capacity to produce innovative strategies, and have the ability to represent their communities in negotiations with institutions and potential partners across a complex array of systems and processes.

The Ubele Project seeks to equip the African Caribbean community with the tools necessary to survive, prosper and take advantage of opportunities being created through the Big Society – as well as other programmes, initiatives and funding opportunities.



2011 IS THE YEAR FOR CHANGE!

4. Steve Biko Foundation. <http://www.sbf.org.za/>

5. U.N. General Assembly, 64th Session. “65th Plenary Meeting (A/RES/64/169)” 18, December 2010. Available: http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.phpURL_ID=41031&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html [Feb. 18, 2011]

6. Deloitte. “A little local difficulty: the challenges of making localism work”. 2011. Available: http://www.deloitte.com/view/en_GB/uk/industries/government-public-sector/97deff07fd29d210VgnVCM2000001b56fo0aRCRD.htm [Feb. 18, 2011]

OUR APPROACH

In order to accomplish its challenging objective, Ubele will use the Change Lab methodology. A Change Lab is a new organisational form dedicated to incubating and growing initiatives focused on bringing about change in a complex, multi-stakeholder environment. It is a safe creative space where key stakeholders within a given social system, in this case the African Caribbean community, the government, private sector and civil society organisations can build upon their diverse experiences and practical knowledge, and through a process of dialogue and conflict, action-learning and experimentation, “discover and grow the seeds of [a] healthier, more resilient and more just social reality”¹.

The Change Lab will be professionally managed by the three convening organisations, Reos Partners, School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) and the Women’s Resource Centre. We envisage other co-convenors joining us as we roll out this initiative.

Building a Change Lab in collaboration with the community

The convenors will initiate a number of consultative dialogues with potential Change Lab participants about their role and contribution to Ubele. We expect that Ubele participants will be individuals and organisations committed to innovation and social change from across the voluntary and community sector, civil society organisations including faith groups, local, regional and national government and the business sector.

In addition to general Change Lab participants, Ubele will recruit 3-4 high-profile national champions to ensure the project can lever high-level support and has the desired national and local profile. Locally-based champions in business and/or civic leadership roles will also be recruited to support the initiative. They will act as mentors/buddies to the new and emerging local leaders, facilitating co-learning through the transfer of skills, local knowledge and experience and collaborating with them to create a vehicle for communicating about emerging community-based issues.

The Change Lab will continue over a two year period during which participants will engage in the three phases of the U-Process: Observation, Reflection and Co-creating.

Phase One: Observation

Participants will gather information and take stock to create shared, in-depth understanding of the issues at hand. This will be done through a series of dialogue interviews with previous, existing, as well as emerging leaders and through insight journeys to cities in England and countries with strong links to Africans in the Diaspora to observe examples of local leadership and social change initiatives

Phase Two: Reflection

This phase is designed to stimulate deeper thinking leading to paradigm-shifts and new models through a series of residential sessions which will include, among others, workshops and nature retreats.

Phase Three: Co-creating

Co-creating involves generating ideas and creating initiatives that will be prototyped and piloted with the intention of addressing some of the more stuck social problems being experienced within Black communities. As time progresses projects will be assessed, reflected on, redesigned and refined during group coaching sessions and other support initiatives to ensure that they continue to meet the needs of the community.

OBSERVATION



REFLECTION



CO-CREATING



¹. Z. Hassan.
Laboratories for Social Change Seminar Notes.
Reos Partners Publications, 2009

RESULTS

Although Ubele offers a framework for social innovation, it also aims to deliver measureable impact over a three year period.

Ubele will design and deliver an innovative model of leadership development and social change for African-Caribbean communities in at least 3 cities in England. Ubele will reach at least 300 members of the African Caribbean community in (London – 2/3 boroughs, and possibly Birmingham, Leeds, Manchester or Bristol). At least 20% of all Ubele participants will be young people under the age of 30 years and at least 50% of this group would be young women.

Ubele will complete at least 25 Dialogue Interviews with current leaders from African Caribbean communities across England – from high profile leaders through to grass roots community activists. We would produce a report of interview outcomes to inform key questions, identify emerging trends / current models of black leadership in England, identify potential stakeholders/ participants and help inform overall project development

Ubele will recruit and develop at least 60 new community based leaders from the African Caribbean community across England. At least 50 per cent of this group will be women

Ubele will recruit and train at least 15 facilitators from the African-Caribbean communities in the use of the “U Process”, effective group facilitation skills and in coaching skills. These recruits will be utilised in the design and delivery of the Ubele Project. At least 50% of this group will be women.

We aim for at least 10 percent of Ubele participants to be full-time volunteers.

At least 90 participants will embark on overnight insight journeys to English cities with established African Caribbean communities to observe best practice examples of community based responses to some of our most stuck problems.

A number of participants will travel on Insight Journeys to either European cities with settled black communities, Gambia, Ghana, South Africa and/or the USA (Atlanta) to observe traditional and innovative responses to cultural continuity and community based leadership development.

Ubele will design and prototype a minimum of five new projects (one in each location - city and/or borough), delivered over a period of at least 1 year. Models of sustainability will be actively explored/ pursued, including the establishment of some of the projects as social enterprises and the transfer of local assets such as libraries and other buildings for use by the African Caribbean community.

Ubele will offer a model of leadership development that, once piloted and its effectiveness assessed, could be mainstreamed by the Women’s Resource Centre and African Caribbean and other Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic and Refugee organisations (BAMER) in the future.



**UBELE
WILL REACH
AT LEAST
3000
PEOPLE
IN LOCAL
COMMUNITIES**

**“The future belongs to those
who prepare for it today.”.**

Malcolm X

TIMELINE

Ubele will be co designed and delivered between April 2011 – March 2014.

PHASE

1

Dialogue Interviews and Report
May – Sept 2011

Strategy / Convening Phase
Feb – October 2011

2

Recruitment and engagement of Ubele Stakeholders
October – December 2011

Ubele Launch during Black History Month. Four open sessions in different cities to learn about the Ubele initiative and how to participate
October 2011

3

Overnight Insight journeys
Jan- March 2012

Advertising, recruitment and selection of participants
Nov – December 2011

4

Design Workshop and Innovation Retreat
April 2012 - before Easter
3 days (to include overnight retreat)

5

Design Coaching
May 2012 – March 2014
Continuing throughout Phases 6 and 7

6

International Insight Journeys For up to 30 stakeholders. Potential Continents /Countries: Europe, Gambia, Ghana, South Africa, USA
Sept 2012 – December 2012

7

Prototyping of Projects
Sept 2012 – March 2014

8

Next Steps for Ubele
How to sustain (and possibly mainstream) the journey started.

PARTICIPATING IN UBELE

Participant Selection and Time Commitment

All Ubele participants will be selected through an open and transparent process to ensure that all participants have relevant experience (paid or unpaid), and to assess commitment, capacity, capability and motivation.

Ubele participants will be expected to commit for the duration of the project, which would be approximately 24 months of direct delivery. Time commitment during the first 12 months would be the equivalent of at least day per week for group and individual activities. Participation in certain phases such as overnight and international Insight Journeys would involve a greater degree of time commitment. Individual and group time commitment thereafter would depend on the nature of the prototype project.

Funding

Funding to co-design and deliver Ubele is currently being sought by the co-convenors from a wide range of sources including national and local government, the business sector including corporates, charities, trusts and foundations.

We are keen to create relationships with agencies, organisations and companies who are interested in supporting the project.

Participant Contributions

The cost to participants will be determined by the level of funding secured by the co-convenors.

We would like to make the Ubele project accessible to both individuals and organisations.

“I’ve learned that you shouldn’t go through life with a catcher’s mitt on both hands; you need to be able to throw something back”

Maya Angelou

LEAD FACILITATOR

Ubele will be led by Reos Partner Yvonne Field, who has more than 30 years experience as a change agent, facilitator and community educator with a wide range of communities, particularly Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities.

She has worked in the UK, the Caribbean region and in South Africa with international, national, regional and local governments in children's services, youth services, primary and acute health services (including mental health), and multi-agency / partnership programmes, as well as with numerous third sector / civil society organisations.

Yvonne has more than 25 years experience in the design and facilitation of learning and development programmes including leadership development, coaching and mentoring for women and black and minority ethnic communities. She also has 15 years experience in business and enterprise development, 10 of which were spent as the Managing Director of her own award winning organisational consultancy and training company which designed and delivered change agency interventions and learning and development solutions (including accredited training programmes), to over 4000 staff members employed across a wide range of public and third sector organisations. She has been on several national and local boards and is currently a Trustee for a number of charitable organisations.

Yvonne has a M.Sc. in Change Agent Skills & Strategies and an M.A. in Social & Community Work. She is qualified in Social Work, Community Work and Youth Work and in Teaching in the Life Long Learning Sector and is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts (FRSA).

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ABOUT REOS PARTNERS



Reos

Reos Partners is an international organisation dedicated to supporting and building capacity for innovative collective action in complex social systems. We organise, design and facilitate results-oriented multi-stakeholder change processes with business, government and civil society organisations.

Reos Partners has offices in Cambridge (MA), The Hague, Johannesburg, Melbourne, Oxford-London, San Francisco, and Sao Paulo.

Reos Partners Ltd. is based in Oxford-London. It is a not for profit organisation and has recently applied for Community Interest Company (CIC) status.

See www.reospartners.com for more information.

Image 1: Change Lab participants in Auckland, New Zealand interview each other in order to see their social system from new and different perspectives.

Image 2: 3-day Effective Group Facilitation course, 2010, Oxford, UK.

APPENDIX A: STATISTICAL FACT SHEET

Self Government

68.8% of local councillors are male, only 3.9% are BAME
30.9% of local councillors are female, only 0.8% are BAME.

Government Equalities Office, Fact Sheet. "Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Women in Political and Public Life in the United Kingdom". Feb. 2009

Police and Fire Services

Only 3% of the 138,000 police officers in England and Wales are BAME.

Only 10.5% of fire officers in the London area are BAME.

M. Sutton, B. Perry, C. John-Baptiste, and G. Williams, "Black and Asian Police Officers and Support Staff: Prejudice, Identity, Agency and Social Cohesion", *International Journal of Criminology*, 2006.

Local Government Improvement and Development. "Smart grads wanted: London Fire Brigade's fast track schemes". Nov. 2008

Crime

African and African Caribbean people form the majority of those involved in gang violence in London as both victims and offenders and from 2007-2008, African Caribbean youth constituted 50% of London's grievous bodily harm and murder victims compared to 29% of white European youth.

Mayor of London. "Time for Action: Equipping Young People for the Future and Preventing Violence- The Mayor's Proposals and call to partners". Greater London Authority. Nov. 2008

Education

African Caribbean boys are among the worst performing groups in terms of attainment of good GCSE passes and are three times more likely to be excluded from the educational system than other BAME and white groups.

Health

Hypertension is three times higher and diabetes two times higher in the African-Caribbean community than in the general population. African-Caribbean people are 3 to 12 times more likely to be diagnosed with schizophrenia than their white counterparts and suffer higher rates of involuntary detention in secure psychiatric settings.

C. MacClean, C. Campbell and F. Cornish. "African-Caribbean interactions with mental health services: experiences and expectations of exclusion as (re)productive of health inequalities", *Social Science and Medicine* (56) 3. pp. 657-669, 2003

Housing

African Caribbean people are less likely to be homeowners and more likely to be homeless than the general population.

BAME people are under-represented on partnership boards for their population in the catchment areas. Those who are board members are less likely to be chair or vice chair and are less influential than their white counterparts.

Key Facts on race equality in England, 2010

Children and Family Provision

The BAME community is in dire need of parenting skills and confidence, improved counselling support arrangements, information, advice and guidance and opportunities for young boys to engage in inspirational activities.

K. Murray. "Research into understanding the support needs of BAME families with vulnerable young boys: Key findings and conclusion".

BTEG. Sept. 2010

Cultural Facilities

Only 2.3% of accredited library professionals, 4.4% of middle managers in national and hub museums and 5.5% of those running independent creative and cultural businesses are BAME. Cultural Leadership Programme and Arts Council England decibel.

"Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority Leadership in the Creative and Cultural Sector". 2009

To find out more please contact
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Adinkra symbol of cooperation and interdependence
BOA ME NA ME MMOA WO (translates as 'help me and let me help you')

Source: Cloth As Metaphor, G.F. Kojo Arthur



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