

the agenda

Improving mental health services to African & Caribbean communities

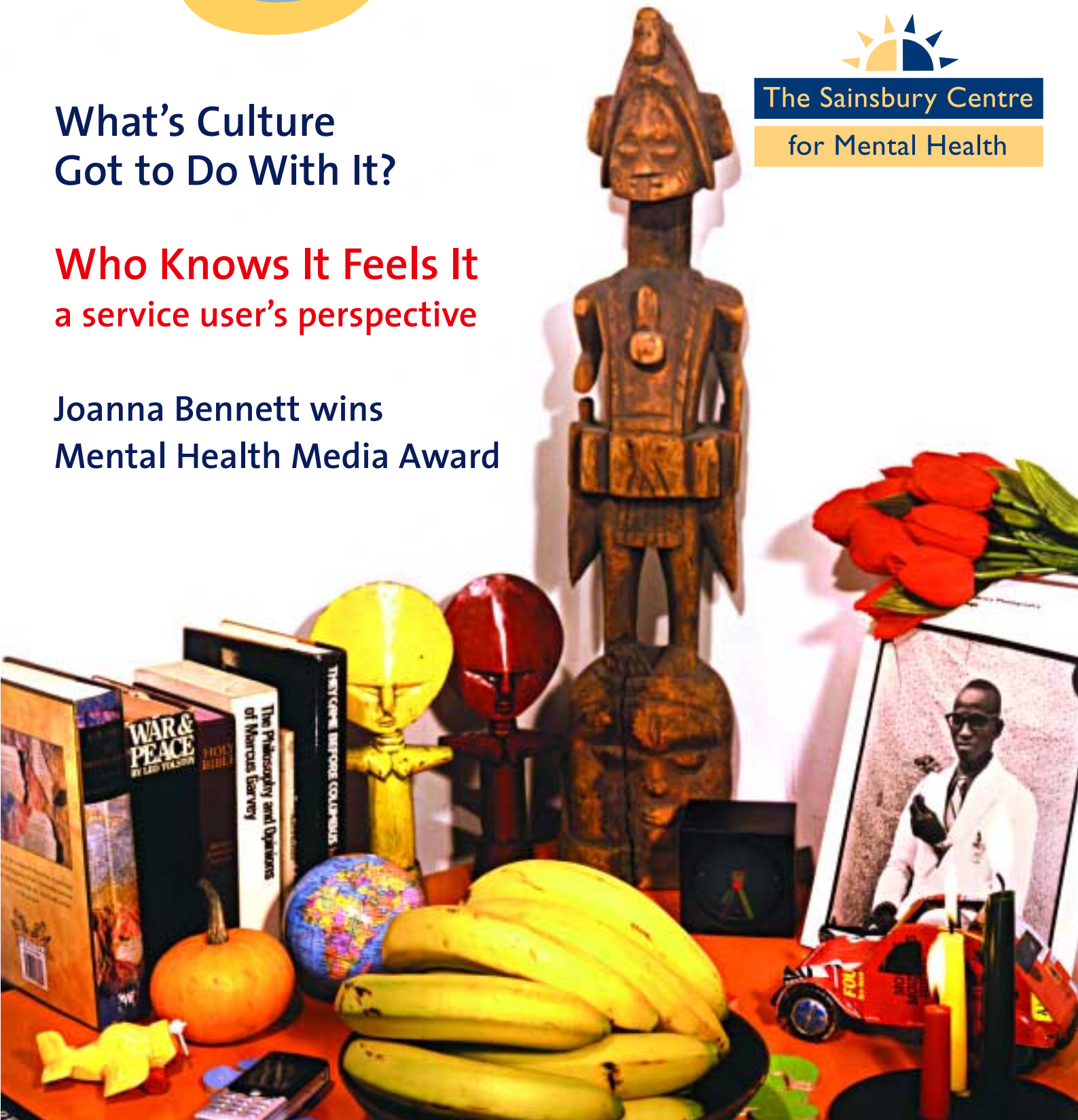


The Sainsbury Centre
for Mental Health

**What's Culture
Got to Do With It?**

Who Knows It Feels It
a service user's perspective

**Joanna Bennett wins
Mental Health Media Award**



Welcome to

the agenda

Welcome to the first edition of The Agenda, the new newsletter for Breaking the Circles of Fear, a national programme that aims to improve mental health services for African and Caribbean communities. The project is based at the national mental health charity, the Sainsbury Centre For Mental Health.

The Agenda aims to share ideas and be a source of inspiration for workers and for Black service users in all fields of mental health. In this first issue of The Agenda we will introduce who we are and what we do. We have also included two articles which we hope will stimulate your thinking. 'Who Knows It Feels It' is a thought-provoking piece from ex-service user Eileen Philip who reminds us that now is the time to pay more than lip service to user involvement in delivering mental health services. In 'What's Culture Got To Do With It?', Errol Francis, one of the Joint Managers of Breaking the Circles of Fear, argues that discussions about culture prevent a real discussion about racism.

We hope that you enjoy our Spring 2005 issue. We appreciate your feedback and hope to make The Agenda representative of the work being done nationally and locally to help improve mental health services for the African and Caribbean communities. If you have any comments about any of the articles you have read in this issue, or if you have any ideas for articles to feature in a future edition of The Agenda, please email or write to us.

Improving the mental health service provided to the African and Caribbean Community is our agenda – we hope that it is on yours too.

Happy reading,
The Breaking the Circles of Fear team

How to get in touch with us:

Breaking the Circles of Fear Team,
The Sainsbury Centre For Mental Health,
134-138 Borough High Street, London SE1 1LB.

Telephone number: 020 7827 8300

Email: Polly.Tidyman@scmh.org.uk

Breaking

In 2002, the Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health published and Caribbean people of UK mental health services. The than average to be diagnosed with schizophrenia, section doses of medication.

Since the publication, the Breaking Circles of Fear team has evolved to implement the report's recommendations.

Our aims include:

- Developing appropriate training for mental health staff and community leaders;
- Building the capacity of community and voluntary organisations;
- Creating regional networks of activists to promote better services.

Introducing the Team



Yvonne Christie and Errol Francis –
Joint Programme Leads

Yvonne and Errol steer the strategy for the team and manage work programmes. They form the public face of Breaking the Circles of Fear by maintaining a media profile for our work and liaising with government, organisations and individuals in the community as well as making contacts with key organisations in the voluntary and statutory sector. Yvonne works to ensure that the stories and needs of Black women are heard in the mental health arena. Errol is also a professional photographer and works in the fine arts to express Black subjectivity and desire which he believes is lacking in the mental health field.

If you would like to find out more about Yvonne and Errol's work, please email them at:

Yvonne.Christie@scmh.org.uk or

Errol.Francis@scmh.org.uk

the Circles of Fear

ed 'Breaking the Circles of Fear', a report on the experiences of Black African report examined the reasons why black people are several times more likely ned under the Mental Health Act and treated in locked wards with high



Dr Joanna Bennett –
Workforce Development
Manager

Joanna's role is to develop training programmes that will help staff in both the voluntary and statutory sector to improve mental health services to African and Caribbean people. She is currently working with a colleague at North East London Mental Health Trust to set up a Black Mental Health Workers Association. This will provide support and advocacy for all Black staff working in the health and social care sector. If you would like to find out more about Joanna's work, please email her at: Joanna.Bennett@scmh.org.uk



David Robertson –
National Organiser - The
Arena Programme

David's role is to organise the Arena Programme, which has set up regional groups across England and Wales. It aims to develop programmes that will encourage member organisations to look at how they can best work with African and Caribbean service users, create partnership working, and reach their local communities. If you would like to find out more about David's work, please email him at: David.Robertson@scmh.org.uk



Paul Grey –
Associate Consultant

Paul's role is to set up a National Black Service Users' Network called I & I (which stands for Inspire and Influence). Over the last six months he has consulted with former and current service users about plans for a network that will deliver peer support for service users and provide training to mental health professionals. The network will provide a real opportunity to celebrate the talents and skills of Black service users. If you feel that you are able to contribute to this vision then email Paul at: Paul.Grey@scmh.org.uk



Dr Frank Keating – Senior
Research Fellow

Frank's role is to support Black-led organisations and programmes, and to help them evaluate their work, to see how the mental health of their clients has improved and how they have achieved this. Frank has run a number of workshops for managers and staff. He has also developed a method for evaluating the work of Breaking the Circles of Fear which will be finalised later in the year. If you would like to find out more about Frank's work, please email him at: Frank.Keating@scmh.org.uk



Polly Tidyman –
Programme Assistant

Polly's role is to support the project. She is currently working on our website page which will be updated regularly and will have a forum for professionals and the public to tap into and share knowledge. She has also helped produce this issue of The Agenda and will be the lead editor in future editions. Polly's background is in psychology. If you want to know more about what's happening at Breaking the Circles of Fear, or if you are interested in writing an article for the next edition of The Agenda, please email Polly at: Polly.Tidyman@scmh.org.uk



Sandra Griffiths –
Associate Consultant

Sandra's role is to support the team to find creative ways of reaching the Black community so that they can influence our priorities. She helped to produce this issue of The Agenda and has also worked with Paul Grey to recruit current and ex-service users, to organise and deliver a Black service user meeting to establish what it is service users want from our team and how we can help them to bring about change. Sandra is keen to be involved in organising training programmes for both the Black voluntary sector and the Black community in the future. If you would like to find out more about Sandra's work, please email her at: Sandra.Griffiths@scmh.org.uk



Joanna Bennett accepts her
Mental Health Media Award

Awards presented to team members

The Mental Health Media Awards recognise and celebrate the best portrayals of mental distress and reporting of mental health issues in the broadcast media. This year's Awards highlighted the experience of Black and minority ethnic groups of psychiatric care. We were delighted that two members of the Breaking the Circles of Fear team were recognised for their hard work using the media to highlight issues for Black people in the mental health system.

Campaigner and Workforce Development Manager Dr Joanna Bennett was presented with The Chair's Award in recognition of her work with the media to ensure that the death of her brother, David 'Rocky' Bennett, did not pass unnoticed. Joanna accepted her award on behalf of Black men and women struggling to survive in mental health services, all families fighting for justice, and above all in memory of her brother Rocky.

BBC Radio 4's All in the Mind, narrated by Associate Consultant, Paul Grey, won the Raising Public Awareness Award. This programme examined the treatment of Black people in mental health services and Paul gave a frank and honest depiction of his experiences of mental health services.

Congratulations to both Paul and Joanna on their fantastic achievements!

Who Knows it... feels it

Eileen Philip



The Mental Health System continues to be a source of fear for many African and Caribbean people. This fear is not delusional, it's real. As someone who has 'used' mental health services, I want to share some of these feelings of fear.

It was 1993 and I had only five months left before completing my Certificate in Social Work. I had known for some time that all was not well. I had become withdrawn, lost my appetite and everything seemed to get on top of me. I told my tutor, my doctor and even saw my psychiatrist at my local outpatient department. The psychiatrist told me that I was definitely not mad, as a mad person would not see a psychiatrist voluntarily!

Within six weeks of this visit I was admitted into psychiatric hospital. I was on the ward for four horrific months. I felt crushed mentally, physically and, most importantly for me, spiritually. I thought I was going to die. Whilst I was in hospital no one talked to me about the 'real reason' I became ill. I was never offered counselling.

"I felt that my life was over... there was just pain and no hope"

When I was discharged from hospital I felt even more scared. Whilst I was in hospital I was not prepared for my discharge. It seemed as difficult to cope with living in the community as it did with life in hospital. At the time I honestly do not know which was worse – the hospital or the community. I felt that my life was over, that there was just pain and no hope. What really helped me to recover was the opportunity to talk to a counsellor about my bottled up feelings and my fears. My faith in God restored my sense of hope and a belief that I was a valuable human being.

It is now some ten years since I was discharged from mental health services. During this time I set up a personal development programme called 'A better way ahead for Black users and ex-users of the mental health system'. This programme provided talking space for service users to explore their feelings and identify what they would like to do with their lives. We worked with over 50 people and received very positive feedback about the programme, which helped some individuals restore their self-esteem and self-pride.

"Now is the time to take action"

It was extremely hard to keep this programme going, mainly due to lack of funding. The programme is now suspended until I can identify funding and support to run it. There is very limited commitment to support programmes developed and delivered by service users. Our invaluable experiences and talent remain untapped and that leaves us feeling frustrated. This calls into question all those statements about really engaging service users in improving services. We don't just want to be consulted about changes – we want to *create* change in our community. When will this happen? Now is the time to take action.

Eileen Philip
Independent Consultant

David Bennett Group Meet Minister of State for Health



David 'Rocky' Bennett

Over the past year the Breaking the Circles of Fear team has been involved in a lot of work following the publication, in February 2004, of the report of the inquiry into the death of David 'Rocky' Bennett. Rocky Bennett was a patient at the Norvic Clinic in Norwich, who died in October 1998 during a control and restraint procedure. After the publication of this report the Secretary of State for Health indicated that the Government would implement all but three of the twenty-two recommendations. These were: limiting restraint to three minutes; implementing quality standards; and appointing a Black mental health 'czar'.

Breaking the Circles of Fear decided to set up a broad-based campaign group made up of individuals from voluntary and community organisations – the Bennett Inquiry

Implementation Group. Members include the Mental Health Foundation, Rethink, Diverse Minds, the King's Fund and the Afiya Trust. This group was formed to maintain pressure, both on Government and on other bodies, as a way of encouraging an acceptance of the Bennett report's recommendations.

Members of the group met with Rosie Winterton, Minister of State for Health, in November 2004 to raise concerns about the Government's lack of progress on the implementation of the recommendations of the Bennett Report.



Rosie Winterton MP

The meeting was an important first step to bringing about an open and honest dialogue about how together we can put the recommendations of the inquiry into action. Much of the meeting focused on the three-minute limit on restraint, and it was agreed that further discussions would take place on this, and other important issues.

We are planning a series of seminars on key issues, including the use of prone restraint, during 2005. If you would like to attend then drop us an email at polly.tidyman@scmh.org.uk, and ask for more information.

Draft Mental Health Bill

On 8 September 2004, the Government published its second draft Mental Health Bill. The draft Bill proposed sweeping changes to the Mental Health Act, by which people are placed under compulsion for mental health assessment and treatment. It included a broader set of conditions under which a person may be put under compulsion; the introduction of compulsory treatment in the community; and the creation of new safeguards including Tribunals and advocates.

The Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health has expressed serious concern about the proposals. As part of the Mental Health Alliance coalition of charities, professional, carer and service user groups we have made our opposition to much of the draft Bill very clear and put forward our suggestions for a better Bill.

The draft Bill is currently under scrutiny by a committee of MPs and Peers. Our written submission to that committee included evidence on the likely effect of the draft Bill on Black people and set out ways in which race equality could be improved through improved legislation. Our proposals include putting the principle of race equality on the face of the Bill and making the conditions for compulsion less subjective. This issue was raised in oral evidence to the committee by our chief executive, Angela Greatley.

We shall continue to work on the Mental Health Bill as the debate continues and will ensure the concerns of Black people are heard throughout that process.

What's Culture

'Errol Francis, Joint Programme Lead at Breaking the Circles of Fear, challenges the way cultural difference is used as an excuse for bad practice, and even racism in mental health services'

Whenever there is a problem with delivering services to Black and ethnic minority communities, people end up talking about culture. Whether it's education, criminal justice, social services or health, the response is the same – if the issue of racism or poor service is raised then the issue is talked about in terms of the culture of clients and the difficulty that the professionals have in understanding them. One may say this is a bit like blaming the victim because it appears to be the fault of the service user that they have a culture which is supposed to be 'difficult to understand' rather than the fault of the service itself which is difficult to engage.

On the face of it, the cultural response may seem quite reasonable because we can all think of cases where professionals or services have failed to acknowledge a service user's cultural background – with disastrous consequences. For example, I can remember one occasion where a Rastafarian man was deemed to be schizophrenic simply because of his reference to 'I and I' which was taken by an ignorant clinician to mean that he had a classic split or 'schizoid' disorder! We can all think of a case of an Asian person or an asylum seeker who has been diagnosed and even treated despite the fact that none of the professionals who dealt with them were able to speak their language. Of course this is cultural ignorance, if not arrogance.

However, in the case of the present generation of African Caribbean people – and other ethnic minority communities – who have now settled in this country and who are



passing through the mental health system, the cultural excuse is becoming harder and harder to sustain. Even though some of us may understandably be reticent to use the name 'British' or 'English' to describe ourselves, many of us have absorbed elements of British culture – if only at the level of language. Therefore when we find ourselves in a clinical or official situation we can usually explain ourselves using the same tongue as the other professionals. Whilst many of us have retained elements of our parents' or grandparents' culture, we are also successful at negotiating the British-European one as well. Yet people continue to reach for the cultural excuse as a way of explaining away bad practice or just plain racism. The cultural excuse also means that we are always fixed in the role of 'the Other'. It cannot get more tragic than when a person is killed in the course of receiving health care. Many people can never accept that anyone should die in a hospital in circumstances of neglect. Yet this has happened to too many Black people – especially men. This is what happened to David 'Rocky' Bennett at the Norvic Clinic in Norwich in October 1998. Rocky was of Jamaican origin, was brought up in England and he was a Rastafarian. Yet it was claimed that it was cultural reasons that led

Got To Do With It?

nurses to violently restrain him in a manner that obstructed his breathing. They then failed to resuscitate him and he died. The judge who led the inquiry into his treatment declared that his death was both 'avoidable' and 'negligent'. Yet the response of the Strategic Health Authority who are responsible for the unit in which he died have stated that cultural awareness training is one of the responses that they are considering. Indeed the Government itself in its latest policy statement about tackling racism in the mental health services has yet again proposed that 'cultural awareness' or 'cultural competence' training will form part of its main response to both the Blofeld Inquiry and the recent strategic review of its services entitled 'Delivering Race Equality'.

'The gradual replacement of the word 'race' by 'culture' is one of the great political conceits of our time'

Why do people continue to have faith in the corrective potential of cultural awareness training for professionals when the millions lavished on it so far have not demonstrated any service improvements? There has now been a long line of corrective training with various types of cultural emphasis. Starting with racism awareness training in the 1970s – a type of confrontational confession in which white people were encouraged to 'own' their racism – there have been an infinite numbers of variations on this theme. After equal opportunities, we have had 'cultural

awareness', 'cultural competence' and now 'cultural sensitivity'. At the same time the language has shifted from notions of 'equality' to 'diversity'. Yet within these shifting brand names, the basic underlying concept has remained the same: the problems in delivering services, from the point of view of service managers and politicians, are mainly due to the cultural difference of the client. In other words, the cultural difference of service users does not fit with established western methods of assessment, diagnosis and so on. So professionals must receive special training to deal with these exotic people.

However, the biggest issue that is hidden by the cultural excuse is the question of racism. The gradual replacement of the word 'race' by 'culture' is one of the great political conceits of our time. By avoiding the issue of race, the proponents of cultural awareness can divert attention away from racism and power – especially deliberate acts of abuse – and transpose them as simple misunderstanding or a problem of the technical competence of practitioners that can be corrected by training. Above all, the sense in which the new concept is being used is often identical to the old biological concept of race – i.e. that there are immutable and fixed differences between human groups.

'How much cultural awareness training do medical staff need to realise that sitting on someone's windpipe will cause them to die?'

The time is over when Black communities can be satisfied with the tired excuse that cultural awareness training will be provided for professionals who fail Black clients. Millions of pounds have been wasted on providing training for professionals whose practice has not changed as a result. How much cultural awareness training do medical staff need to realise that sitting on someone's windpipe will cause them to die? Training needs to tackle the crucial issues about which service users and mental health campaigners have been concerned for many years: over-diagnosis of schizophrenia; inappropriate admissions under the Mental Health Act, the excessive use of psychoactive drugs; and catastrophic examples of control and restraint.

Breaking the Circles of Fear is undertaking a major new project, in collaboration with the National Institute for Mental Health, to review all cultural awareness training for NHS staff. We plan to pilot a new approach that tackles the crucial issues around poor service delivery and then monitors the practice of professionals and service units after the training has been provided. This represents a major change from current practice where authorities tend to tick the moral box on cultural awareness, and then continue to deliver bad services for the same groups who are the subject of the training. If it is decided that there should be a training response to a particular problem, then the impact and usefulness of the training should be assessed against the performance of health care providers and individual staff. The cultural excuse has run out of time.

Errol Francis

Breaking the Circles of Fear Joint Programme Lead



Front Cover image by Errol Francis:

Still life with bananas, books and statue

‘ This photograph uses the idea of the still life to explore issues of personal and cultural identity in the contemporary world. The photograph plays with some of the conventions of seventeenth and eighteenth century European ‘vanitas’ paintings. Vanitas paintings served as a reminder of the transience and meaninglessness of many of the things to which we attach importance in our lives: power, wealth, beauty. Continuing the tradition of vanitas paintings, I tried to arrange a number of personal objects, deliberately chosen to raise issues about Black (particularly male) identity in the Western world. ’

It's Now Time

It's now time to change the wrong to right,
It's now time to open your eyes and receive your sight.
Time to recognise that you've done wrong,
And caused many of us to sing a lullaby song.

It's time to move forward and not to look back,
No longer be shackled to this spiritual attack.
Time to admit that we've all made mistakes,
Time to administer LOVE, no Time now to hate.

Time for forgiveness, yes we forgive you,
You did not always understand the things you did do.
Time to move on, No Time to delay,
Not another Soul must fall by the way.

So now that you've heard me, Now what will you do?
Just in case you are struggling, I'll make it plain to you.
You have heard all the voices; To you they have made it clear,
They have spoken and they've told you, that there is a real fear.

Too long they have been shackled, enslaved in this domain,
Do that which they are asking, and they'll be free again.
They too are my people; I commission you to set them free,
The voice, which you are hearing, is the one that comes from me.

© Eileen Philip 15th July 2004



The report 'Breaking the Circles of Fear' can be obtained from the Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health, by phone on 020 7827 8352, over the website at www.scmh.org.uk or by post from The Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health, 134-138 Borough High Street, London SE1 1LB. It retails at £15 plus 10% P&P (£7.50 plus 10% P&P for service users and small voluntary organisations). A briefing paper on the publication is also available free of charge from the website, or by calling the number above.

If you would like to receive a copy of The Agenda's future editions please contact Polly on 020 7827 8300



The Sainsbury Centre
for Mental Health

Removing Barriers. Achieving Change.

134-138 Borough High Street, London SE1 1LB
www.scmh.org.uk