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Spice Girl Mel B to-host 13th MOBO Awards in London

The 13th annual MOBO Awards takes place at Wembley Arena in London on Wednesday 15th October. Spice Girl Mel B will co-host the awards for the first time since 1999 alongside Rev Run, founding member of iconic hip hop outfit Run DMC.

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Nigerian artist Nnenna Okore's new Works in her debut London solo show

Exhibition takes place at the October Gallery from 16th October to 6th December 2008

Emerging, young artist Nnenna Okore will be exhibiting new works in her debut London solo show.



Nnenna Okore's "Shield me". Newspaper, acrylic color, starch, yarn and rope

A former student of El Anatsui, whose magnificent bottle-top cloths were the highlight of the 52nd Venice Biennale, Nnenna also transforms discarded materials into cultural objects, forms, and spaces. "My works highlight wastefulness through beautiful and graceful forms we can readily relate to," says Nnenna. Her work often employs ordinary media like magazine and newspaper, which are disposed of in her current home the United States, but are considered usable commodities in her native Nigeria.

By reimagining everyday waste, as well as natural materials, Nnenna's works consistently challenge environmental neglect, consumerism and globalisation. This revitalisation, rehabilitation, and transformation of materials, makes



Nnenna Okore at work

Nnenna one of her generation's most exciting and innovative artists working within the genre of urban recycilia.

Nnenna's work was recently exhibited at Channel 4's headquarters in connection with

the Big 4 Project. In September 2008, her works were featured in the inaugural exhibition *Second Lives: Remixing the Ordinary* at the Museum of Arts and Design in New York.

Exhibition:
Nnenna Okore:
New Works
Exhibition
Dates: 16 October - 6 December 2008
Opening hours: Tuesday - Saturday 12.30 - 5.30pm
Tel: 020 7242 7367

Nearest tubes: Holborn/Russell Square
Buses: 19, 25, 38, 55, 168 & 18

How soon should we teach black history?

A debate about the best approach to tackling the subject of black history in primary schools.

BBC London will be staging this important Black History Month Debate, which is open to the public and will be broadcast live on BBC London 94.9fm. The way Black History Month is celebrated across the capital's primary schools is patchy. Some schools use the month as a reason to concentrate on esteem and celebrate role models. Others take a more traditional historical approach. Some primary schools still ignore BHM altogether. Using recent research on diversity in primaries and drawing on the wealth of experience of teachers, pupils

and parents, this debate will look at the issues and give voice to the latest thinking on when it's appropriate to single out 'difference', and how to tackle it.

The debate will be chaired by Dotun Adebayo and while it is open to the public and free of charge, numbers are limited so admissions will be made on a strictly first come first served basis. The advice is to get there early!

Sunday 12th October
Time: 7.30pm to 10pm
Venue: Rich Mix, 35-47 Bethnal Green Road, London E1 6LA
Travel: Buses 8 and 388, tube Liverpool Street.

Some of the greatest African artists at Barbican

A once in a lifetime opportunity to see some of the greatest African artists perform individual and collaborative performances under one roof. This extraordinary line-up of Africa's greatest music talent will perform both solo and ensemble sets. Featuring Amadou & Mariam, Baaba Maal, Rachid Taha, Sola Akingbola, Muntu Valdo, Daara J Family + many more special guests

to be announced. Hurry, book quickly for what promises to be a thrilling concert experience!

Thursday 23 October 2008
Time: 19:30
Barbican Hall
Box Office & Membership: 020 7638 8891 (9am-8pm daily)
Tickets: £10 / 15 / 20 / 25
http://www.barbican.org.uk/

Celebration of Life presented by the Metropolitan Black Police Association

An evening featuring the best in soca, soul, hip-hop, gospel and R'n'B.

The performance features Queen of Soca Alison Hinds, British soul supremo Roachford, Nicholas Brancker, singer Tawiah and singer, multi-instrumentalist and DJ Bishi and more, hosted by actor and comedian Curtis Walker. The Pearl Of Africa Choir perform uplifting and heart-stirring gospel, and all the acts are backed by the Lifeforce Band. A section of the night's proceedings will be dedicated to marking the 40th anniversary of the death of Dr Martin Luther King. The concert is signed in British Sign Language by Hetty May Bailey. This concert is part of the Metropolitan Black Police Association's Revival Anti-Violence campaign, Revival, focusing on the need to cherish and respect all life.

Friday 17 October 2008,
Time: 7.30pm
Southbank Centre
Box Office: 0871 663 2586
Address: Belvedere Road, London SE1 8XX
Nearest stations: Waterloo, Embankment
www.southbankcentre.co.uk
£15

Freshlyground, Tumi and The Volume

A groove laden night featuring two of South Africa's hottest bands.

Freshlyground are the great party band of young South Africa, featuring the amazing voice of Zohani Mahola, a Mozambican guitarist, and a group that cuts across the divides of race and background in today's South Africa - as Robin Denselow said in *The Guardian* "Freshlyground represent everything that the new South Africa hoped to achieve". They'll be featuring material from their new Wrasse album Ma'Cheri. Tumi

and the Volume have broken out of South Africa's hip hop scene, mixing Tumi Mokelane's conscious lyrics and a powerful blend of funk and afro-jazz that's seen them playing with Talib Kweli, K'Naan and The Roots. Already stars in France, this is their first UK show - watch out for their new album.

Monday 27 October
Barbican, 7.30pm
Tickets: £20, £15, £10 + bkg
www.barbican.org.uk / 020 7638 8891

Afrika Eye 2008

Afrika Eye 2008, takes place from Friday 31st October to Saturday 8th November at The Watershed, Arncliffe & Circomedia.

Afrika Eye is a festival of films, workshops, discussions and live performance which will splash African sunshine and music into a grey autumn. Ten films uncover a continent, from Senegal to Madagascar, Algeria to South Africa and the deep heartlands of Congo and Guinea. Boogie to the fantastic Vieux

from Senegal, who performs live for our opening party and the premiere of Youssou N'dour's great documentary RETURN TO GOREE, and shake yer bootie to the South African choir before the Sundance nominated SON OF MAN from South Africa. With a showcase of local film makers in the EYEFULL evening and some special film guests - we bring you LIFE!

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UK unveils ID cards for foreigners

UK's Home Secretary has unveiled the UK Identity Card. The Government plans to start issuing ID cards to foreign nationals from November 2008.

The new credit-card sized document will show the holder's photograph, name, date of birth, nationality and immigration status. A secure electronic chip will also hold their biometric details, including fingerprints, and a digital facial image.

Home Secretary Jacqui Smith said the unveiling of the ID cards showed their "commitment to introduce the National Identity Scheme in order that we can enjoy its benefits as quickly as possible." She said the "ID cards will help protect against identity fraud, illegal working, reduce the use of multiple identities in organised crime and terrorism, crack down on those trying to abuse positions of trust and make it easier for people to prove they are who they say they are."

"ID cards for foreign nationals will replace old-fashioned paper documents, make it easier for employers and sponsors to check entitlement to work and study, and for the UK Border Agency to verify someone's identity. This will provide identity protection to the many here legally who contribute to the prosperity of the UK, while helping prevent abuse."

Compulsory identity cards for foreign nationals will kick start the National Identity Scheme, with the first applicants having to apply for cards from 25th November. It will cost £30. Within three years all foreign nationals applying for leave to enter or remain in the UK will be required to have a

card, with around 90 per cent of foreign nationals in Britain covered by the scheme by 2014/15.

The UK Border Agency plans to start issuing the cards to categories of immigrants believed to want to abuse the country's immigration system, including students and people seeking leave to remain on the basis of marriage.

The introduction of the first card supports the Government's tough new Australian-style Points Based System for managed migration. To earn and retain their licence as a sponsor businesses and education providers must keep records of the migrants they have sponsored including, in time, a copy of a migrant's identity card. Businesses found employing illegal workers face fines of up to £10,000 per person.

The introduction of cards for foreign nationals will be followed by the first ID cards for British citizens, targeting workers in sensitive roles and locations like airports from 2009. Then from 2010 ID cards will be available to young peo-



Britain's Home Secretary Jacqui Smith displays a specimen ID card at a press conference in London where she unveiled the first UK Identity Card, which will be issued to foreign nationals from Nov. 2008

ple who want them and from 2011/12 cards will be available to the general population. The Government believes that the introduc-

tion of ID cards will provide a convenient and secure means to protect identity by locking it to one person using their fingerprints.

Liberal Democrats: ID cards a 'laminated poll tax'

The unveiling of the design for ID cards has been termed another step towards the Government's creation of a 'laminated poll tax' by Liberal Democrat Shadow Home Secretary, Chris Huhne.

The Liberal Democrats have consistently opposed ID cards, which are being introduced by the Labour Party and were initially supported by the Conservatives.

The Liberal Democrat leader Nick Clegg has already said that he will break the law and refuse to provide his details to the ID Card database rather than sign up for the scheme.

Commenting on the new design, Mr. Huhne said: "It does not matter how fancy the design of ID cards is, they remain a grotesque intrusion on the liberty of the British people."

"The Government is using vulnerable members of our society, like foreign nationals who do not have the vote, as guinea pigs for a deeply unpopular and unworkable policy. When voting adults are forced to carry ID cards, this scheme will prove to be a laminated Poll Tax."

Tom Hadley, Director of External Relations of the Recruitment and Employment Confederation (REC), welcomed the unveiling of the design for ID card saying: "Recruitment professionals in the front-line of the UK labour market play an increasingly pivotal role in checking the identity, background and status of individual job seekers."

"Within this context measures to simplify

the checking requirements can be welcomed and must be backed with an extensive communication programme. Recruiters take their responsibilities to verify an individual's right to work in the UK extremely seriously and support initiatives to enhance safe and ethical recruitment."

The move was also hailed by Julian Gravatt, Association of Colleges' Director of Funding and Development, who said: "Issuing ID cards to overseas students should assist in the reduction of identity fraud. Colleges welcome any measure which facilitates the recruitment of genuine students to study in the UK and the economic benefits this brings."

Tim Cowen, Director of Communications

for NCP Services, said: "This is good news for employers, and a credit to the work the UKBA has done to help make the hiring of migrant workers more streamlined for UK organisations. Employers will, quite rightly, still need to make sure their systems for spotting forgeries are robust, but the biometric cards will cut down on fraud and make it easier for us to do this."

"Crucially, it will also help those who genuinely have the right to work in the UK get employment quickly - since it will be easier to check their identity and get them working."



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EU ministers approve key immigration pact

Pact to create "Blue Card" to attract highly skilled workers

EU ministers have approved the new EU immigration pact that will ease conditions for highly skilled workers to come to Europe through the creation of the so-called "Blue Card". The pact is also aimed at fighting illegal immigration.

If created, the "Blue Card" would allow professionals from third countries to live and work anywhere in the EU. It also discourages member states from granting mass amnesties to illegal immigrants and to enforce removal of illegal immigrants.

Euractiv.com reported that the definition of what skilled labour actually represents was one of the main obstacles to the approval of the Blue Card Directive. French Presidency sources said more work remains to be done on the Blue Card Directive. Previous attempts to draw up lists of professions eligible for a Blue Card were abandoned, the sources added. Instead, consensus is emerging that the sole criterion should be the salary level. And since salaries differ widely across EU countries, it has been agreed that to qualify for a European Blue Card, immigrants must find an employer

"The Council has shown that it excels in making ambitious statements but at the end of the day it all comes down to the transposition of these basic commitments into concrete measures. Too often effective decision-making is hamstrung by the inability of the Member States to really work together on their mutual interests. Political courage is urgently needed."

MEP Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, ALDE spokesperson on migration

which offers a salary at least 1.5 times higher than the average pay in the host country.

According to Euractiv.com reports, some EU countries had proposed a ratio of twice the average salary, while others that are more open to immigration were proposing 1.1 or 1.2. In the end, a compromise figure of 1.5 was agreed, with derogations to lower the pay to 1.2 times the national average for sectors with acute labour shortages.

Some countries such as the UK, Finland and Germany, where legislation does not pro-



vide for fixed minimum salaries, have reportedly been reluctant to agree to the concept. But they have received assurances that the average salary is strictly statistical and that the Blue Card will not require changes to labour legislation, diplomats explained.

The European pact on immigration and asylum will now be submitted for adoption to the European Council of October 2008.

The European Liberals and Democrats have urged the Council, and in particular the French Presidency, "to deal with all aspects

of immigration to avoid a two-speed approach to the implementation of legislation" said ALDE Leader Graham Watson. "While measures targeting illegal immigration are fast-tracked, those designed to attract highly skilled foreigners and manage legal migration should not be put on the back burner. We will push for equal progress on measures like the Blue Card scheme alongside the sanctions against employers of illegally-staying entrants."

ALDE spokesperson on migration Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert said: "The European Pact on Asylum and Immigration, setting basic commitments, is to be welcomed. However, I doubt whether it will boost the political willingness of the Member States to swiftly and ambitiously push Europe's forward looking strategy on asylum and migration. The Council has shown that it excels in making ambitious statements but at the end of the day it all comes down to the transposition of these basic commitments into concrete measures. Too often effective decision-making is hamstrung by the inability of the Member States to really work together on their mutual interests. Political courage is urgently needed."

"Develop coherent migration policies", Europe urged

By Stephen Ogongo

European governments have been urged to "develop coherent migration policies that are suited to the social, economic, political as well as demographic and geographical situation" of their respective countries.

Addressing the Council of Europe Conference in Kiev, Ukraine, Mr. Tobias Billström, Swedish Minister for Migration and Asylum Policy said: "We must take a comprehensive approach and maximize syn-

ergies between all interrelated policy areas. As has become increasingly apparent, both receiving countries and countries of origin can benefit from migration. We also need to maintain social cohesion. We must support the integration of migrants and their communities and we also need to support the links

between migrant Diasporas and the communities they have left behind."

Mr. Billström said migration is part and parcel of the interconnected and globalized world we live in. He said the policies to be developed must provide balanced and innovative ways to maximise the benefits of

migration and minimise the difficulties sometimes engendered. "They must at the same time guarantee respect for human rights and give appropriate attention to our undisputed international responsibility towards refugees and asylum seekers in need of protection," he said.



Mr. Tobias Billström, Swedish Minister for Migration and Asylum Policy

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Adelaide Damoah, the eye-opener “I want viewers to make their own interpretation”

By Solange Moffi

For the past two years, self-taught Ghanaian artist Adelaide Damoah has been making waves in and outside of the UK, with her highly engaging work: from the inaugural "Black Brits" in 2006 to her recent series of self-portraits, "Black Lipstick", shown last September. On the eve of her third solo show, "Supermodels", *Africa News* instigated a little chit-chat with the enigmatic artist.

You emerged with your "Black Brits" collection in 2006, but when was your very first show ever?

That was actually my first solo show. Before that I had shown at small fairs and at the Buffalo Film Festival in 2005.

You claim to be inspired by Frida Kahlo? Do you have any other influences?

The greatest living painter is Lucian Freud: his work speaks for itself. I could only dream of producing one single piece like his. He is an amazing talent from a technical perspective. I also admire Tracy Emin and Damien Hirst for the success they've had at such a young age.

Black Lipstick 9 resonates like a darker version of piece by Roy Lichtenstein. Is Pop Art an influence in your work?

Not at all, but it's complimentary to be compared to such an accomplished artist.

Which is your favourite piece of the "Black Lipstick" series, and if you were to give it a name, what would it be?

It would have to be *Black Lipstick 7*, because it would be the most impactful if shown in a big space. I would call it "Relaxation". But let me point out that the reason why I chose to number the pieces, rather than titling them, was to let viewers make their own interpretation instead of imposing a theme or a concept on them.

Would you describe your work as social commentary?

Yes, definitely. "Black Brits" was about analysing the perception of people of colour, by using white iconic celebrities and changing their skin complexions.



Ghanaian artist Adelaide Damoah

The idea of "Supermodels" came following the death of Ana Carolina Reston, the size zero model, who died in November 2006.

The media is a very powerful and sometimes a dangerous tool, and "Supermodels" is about getting people to think and discuss

between themselves, without forcing an opinion on them.

But this said, I believe the size zero debate goes beyond the fashion industry and is a prominent phenomenon in Western society: I myself became very image-conscious and aware of my weight, following my illness (a few years ago, Adelaide was diagnosed with the female condition, Endometriosis)...

You compare your creative process to song writing. Is music a big influence in your life and what are your favourite musicians?

I love listening to music while working, especially classical music as it helps me concentrate and puts me in a certain frame of mind.

But I would mainly identify my creative process with "automatic writing" (the process, or product, of writing material that allegedly does not come from the conscious thoughts of its author), more than anything else.

Your next show, "Supermodels", also denounces the lack of black models in fashion. Which of the few black models around do you admire and what do they represent for you?

I really rate Tyra Banks for achieving a fantastic reconversion, almost walking on Oprah's footsteps, and for distancing herself from modelling and fashion diktats, by piling on a few pounds like any regular woman.

Alek Wek: I love her skin colour and the fact that she has made it in the business without matching fashion criteria.

Naomi Campbell: she is just plain stunning - her body, the strength she oozes..., and is still going despite being a tough cookie.

What will you be working on next?

I will be launching my next show next year in Copenhagen. It is called "Abstract Love" and is very personal. It is a combination of images that have come to me through experiences of life. It will be very figurative....

Adelaide Damoah's "Supermodels" exhibition will be showing from October 2nd to 7th, at Noelia's Gallery, London.

For more information on Adelaide's work, please visit www.damoaharts.com

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Trade Union leaders back campaign to let asylum seekers work

Covey: "It is an outrage that asylum seekers are left to rely on handouts from the state"

Leaders from many of the UK's main trade unions have joined the Trades Union Congress (TUC) and the Refugee Council's campaign to allow asylum seekers to work.

The TUC pledged its full involvement in the campaign by being the first to sign a call for the government to let people seeking asylum in the UK work and support themselves.

Unite, Unison and GMB - as well as others, ranging from the Musicians Union to the Prison Officers Association have joined the campaign. Between them these unions represent literally millions of British workers.

Currently, almost all asylum seekers are barred from working, despite many having no immediate prospect of returning home. This means they are either destitute, or being supported by the taxpayer.

Donna Covey, Chief Executive of the Refugee Council said: "We know asylum seekers want to work. Many are highly qualified and had good jobs in their home countries, and are desperate to contribute to the country that has taken them in. It is an outrage that they are left to rely on handouts from the state when they have so much to offer this country."



Donna Covey and Brendan Barber meet Brighton refugees at the reception

Brendan Barber, General Secretary of the TUC said: "Asylum seekers can wait months and even years before decisions are made on their cases, so the bar on them working is

causing severe economic hardship for their families. Forcing often highly skilled, highly trained individuals to sit idle for considerable periods of time is not only a personal tragedy

for them but is also a huge loss to the UK economy, which is missing out on their many talents. The Government must think again and change the rules so that asylum seekers are allowed to work and are no longer forced to survive on benefits alone."

The Refugee Council, TUC and local group Brighton Voices In Exile hosted a reception at Friends Meeting House in Brighton on the evening of Wednesday 10th September. Brighton Voices in Exile supplied the food, and supported the campaign activity during the day. Many of its members are also not allowed to work.

Tendai from Brighton Voices In Exile, who addressed the reception, said: "I worked as a Chief Cash Controller for a company in Zimbabwe until I began to have problems because of my political opinion. This forced me to flee leaving my one year old son. I arrived in 2001 to seek asylum and it has not been what I expected. I am able and happy to work and contribute to the British economy but I am not allowed, and I am being forced to live on handouts."

Shortage occupation lists for UK & Scotland published

Migration Advisory Committee identifies job opportunities for non-EU workers

The Migration Advisory Committee (MAC), has published the new recommended lists of occupations for which there is a shortage of skilled workers in the UK and Scotland.

Shortage occupation lists will be used in Tier 2 of the new Points Based System which relates to immigration of skilled workers from outside the European Economic Area (EEA). Under Tier 2, as well as having a certificate of sponsorship from a sponsored employer and satisfying English language and maintenance requirements, migrants have to satisfy points criteria based on their expected contribution to the UK economy. Under the shortage occupation route, employers who are licensed sponsors can bring in migrant workers from outside the EEA to fill vacancies in those occupations.

It might be difficult for employers whose jobs are not in this list to bring foreign workers in the UK in the future. MAC's report is a detailed and comprehensive response to the Government's request to provide evidence-based advice on which shortages of skilled labour can sensibly be filled through immigration.

It contains two recommended shortage occupation lists, one for the UK and one just for Scotland. These consist of skilled occupa-

tions and job titles that the Committee has assessed as being both skilled and in shortage and where it has concluded that it is sensible to fill these shortages, at least in the short term, through immigration.

The full recommended UK list includes: consultants and senior nurses in particular healthcare specialisms; some engineering occupations, including civil and chemical engineers; quantity surveyors and project managers for property development and construction; secondary school teachers in the subjects of maths and science; skilled chefs; skilled senior care workers; ship and hovercraft officers; and some animal care occupations, including veterinary surgeons.

The recommended Scotland list includes all of the occupations on the UK list, as well as manual filleters of frozen fish, senior nurses in care of the elderly units, and speech and language therapists. The Committee's lists are recommendations to Government. It will be up to Government whether or not to accept them. The Home Office said it will now pressure test their recommendations carefully before publishing the final list in October. Border and Immigration Minister Liam Byrne said: "Our new Australian-style points system is flexible to meet the needs of British business while ensuring that only those we

want and no more can come here to work. This tough new shortage occupation list supports that. This strict list means 30 per cent fewer jobs are available to migrants via the shortage occupation route. Those that do come will need to work hard, play by the rules and speak English."

MAC Chair Professor David Metcalf said: "This report is a landmark in the provision of evidence-based advice to Government. It breaks new ground in combining detailed data analysis with evidence from employers within a consistent and robust economic framework. This is the most comprehensive such analysis ever undertaken anywhere in the world."

"We have considered a huge amount of data and evidence, performed extensive analysis, visited employers in every country and region of the UK and written at length on our findings. We have done this within the demanding timescale prescribed by the Government. We commend to the Government our recommended shortage lists."

MAC member Dr Diane Coyle said: "There is a straightforward message in our report, even though the analysis is complex and detailed: only those job titles which are skilled, in shortage and for which it is sensi-

ble to use immigrant workers to fill the shortages make it onto our list.

"We believe that our recommendations achieve the right balance between the needs of individual employers and those of the UK labour market and economy in the long term."

The occupations on the recommended list account for approximately 700,000 employees.

RECOMMENDED UK LIST INCLUDES

- consultants & senior nurses in particular healthcare specialisms;
- some engineering occupations, including civil and chemical engineers;
- quantity surveyors and project managers for property development and construction;
- secondary school teachers in the subjects of maths and science;
- skilled chefs;
- skilled senior care workers;
- ship and hovercraft officers; and
- some animal care occupations, including veterinary surgeons.

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Spice Girl Mel B to-host 13th MOBO Awards

One of the most televised black music awards shows in the world takes place in London this month

The 13th annual MOBO (an acronym for Music Of Black Origin) Awards takes place at Wembley Arena in London on Wednesday 15th October.

The MOBO Awards Show holds the distinction of being one of the most televised black music awards shows in the world today - reaching hundreds of millions of viewers. It is held annually in the UK to recognise artists of any race or nationality performing music of black origin.

MOBO is Europe's leading black music brand - celebrating and honouring established as well as up-and-coming MOBO artists. It was founded by Kanya King MBE back in 1996.

Spice Girl Mel B will co-host the awards, for the first time since 1999 alongside Rev Run, founding member of iconic hip hop outfit Run DMC. Mel says: "I am really excited to be returning as host to this year's awards ceremony. I can't wait to return to the MOBO stage at Wembley Arena. I have witnessed the rise of Estelle and Leona Lewis in the US, and 2008 has been an incredible year for Music of Black Origin on both sides of the Atlantic."

In a year that has seen British black music rise to the top of the charts, Dizzee Rascal,



Spice Girl Mel B to co-host the awards

Estelle, Leona Lewis and Wiley are the most nominated at the 2008 MOBO Awards. The undoubted queen of British R&B in the last year, Estelle earns a staggering 5 nominations for Best UK Female, Best Song, Best R&B/Soul, Best Video and Best Album.

Leona Lewis has been nominated in 3 categories this year, after becoming the first British solo artist to go straight to no.1 in the US charts with a debut album.

Last year's Best Male winner, Dizzee Rascal, is the front-runner in the prestigious category, with Best Song and Best Hip Hop rounding up another great year for East London's musical chameleon.

Another prodigiously talented and successful nominee, Wiley, revives his rivalry with Dizzee with 3 nominations. Jay Sean, Taio Cruz and Sway complete the Best Male line-up.

If anything, the ladies can boast an even better record. Along with Estelle, the Best Female category is hotly contested as Brits Adele, Duffy, Leona Lewis and M.I.A. face

up against each other in a line up that has enjoyed incredible domestic and international success in 2008.

MOBO are particularly pleased to celebrate British black music this year. Whether it is Number 1 singles from Wiley, Dizzee Rascal, Duffy and Estelle, acclaimed new faces as diverse as Bryn Christopher and grime MC Chipmunk.

International stars are part of it too of course, with Kanye West, Mariah Carey, Chris Brown and Rihanna vying with Jay Z, Mary J Blige, Ne-Yo, Usher, Akon and Alicia Keys in a truly heavyweight category.

But the Brits are fully in the mix in usually American dominated Best R&B/Soul and Best Hip Hop categories like never before.

Kanya King, MOBO CEO says: "Hip Hop and R&B have emerged as popular music, not just genres beloved by a minority and British artists are at the forefront. It's fantastic to see artists like Estelle, who MOBO championed early on, get their due. I'd like to call on the music industry to keep up the good work and capitalise on this. There are still barriers out there. Estelle had to go to America to really break through and be given her big chance. The talent is undoubtedly here, let's get behind them."

Western Union Company, the world's leader in global money transfer Services is a proud sponsor of MOBO Awards.

For further information please check the following links:

MOBO Organisation - www.mobo.com

Wembley Arena -

www.wembleyarena.co.uk

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Shaggy & Jamelia at Mobo Awards 2007

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An interview with Chuka Umunna, Labour's Parliamentary Candidate for Streatham, South London

"I'm a product of modern London"

By Solange Moffi

In September, as part of the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue, the European Commission launched the Love Difference Festival, a festival of arts, debate, and film, touring across three major cities: London, Northampton and Bristol, to celebrate Britain's multiculturalism. The London leg of the festival introduced a political discussion, paneled by British MP Jon Cruddas, Hungarian sociologist Istvan Hegedus, UNISON Manager Susan Cueva and Labour activist and employment lawyer Chuka Umunna. Mr. Umunna, 29, is Labour's Parliamentary Candidate for Streatham, South London. If elected, not only will he be one of the youngest MPs in Britain, but also the only person of African heritage to represent one of the three parliamentary constituencies covering the Brixton area. We caught up with Mr. Umunna to get his overview of the event and the current state of London's cultural diversity.

How did you get involved in the Love Difference Festival?

It was co-organised by the European Commission and Compass Youth, which is a branch of Compass, the management committee of the progressive pressure group I am a member of. They invited me and I thought that was a great initiative.

Were you satisfied with the points touched upon during the discussion?

Yes, coming from an immigrant background, I thought it was very interesting from a personal perspective. Some of the points about assimilation and integration were very pertinent: I thought it was a very timely debate to be had.

Do you think that the festival got the attendance it deserved? I personally thought it was poorly attended...

Could you think of a reason behind this?

Well, there were about sixty people, which I think is not bad given the panel: it is not like any of us are big celebrities. This was more of an intellectual audience and in that respect I think it was well attended. But obviously, this type of event always benefits from more outreach....

What do you make of the BNP's backlash against the event?

The BNP (British National Party) is a big problem. One of the big problems we have is that there's been a lot of immigration over the past ten years, and although this is under control now, the BNP have taken this opportunity to gather crowds their side.

You described yourself as "a product of modern London". What is "modern London"?

Well, if you compare New York, supposedly city of the melting pot, you will find that it is still very segregated and that there is very little



"If you compare New York, supposedly city of the melting pot, you will find that it is still very segregated and that there is very little interracial interaction, whether friendships or romantic relationships. I often use my own background to illustrate this: my dad is Nigerian, my Mum is half-Irish, and we also have Portuguese, Russian, French, Spanish and Brazilian blood running in the family. I really believe that London is the only city in the world to have achieved a true melting pot in that sense."

Mr. Chuka Umunna,
Labour's Parliamentary Candidate for Streatham, South London

interracial interaction, whether friendships or romantic relationships. I often use my own background to illustrate this: my dad is Nigerian, my Mum is half-Irish, and we also have Portuguese, Russian, French, Spanish and Brazilian blood running in the family. I really believe that London is the only city in the world to have achieved a true melting pot in that sense.

Attending the event, I was a bit disappointed by the fact that the Love Difference Festival was solely focused on one part of the minority community, i.e. Eastern Europeans. What's your take on this?

That is a good point, but how do you define a minority? Minorities are usually perceived from an ethnic point of view. If I find a rational behind that, I guess it would be the fact that the Eastern European community has not been discussed much in recent years, and since they have an obvious presence in the country, they should be. I would agree though that one point missing in the discussion was that of the interaction between minorities.

As an employment lawyer, you mentioned that people of colour (Asian and Black) are still more discriminated against than new immigrants such as Eastern Europeans. Is that right?

I'm afraid it is still the case, and neither in my practice nor in the employment law sector, have we encountered many cases involving Eastern Europeans.

You said people can't be forced to socially and culturally integrate. How do you feel about the integration of African communities in London as a whole?

I do feel it is established. All you can do now is encourage them to integrate even more. But things happen over time.

What do you make of all the comparisons with Barack Obama? How does your approach to politics relate to his?

I find him very inspiring, but I won't comment on any similarities, as it just gets me in trouble. But all I will say is that I dearly hope he wins the next election....!

MR. CHUKA UMONNA'S CONTACT

For updates on Mr. Chuka Umunna's campaign, please visit www.streathamlabour.org.uk

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Netherlands renews support for IOM's temporary return of qualified migrants project

The Dutch Government has granted IOM The Hague new financial support for the Temporary Return of Qualified Nationals (TRQN) project.

The successful TRQN project, which ran as a pilot for the past two years, will have a three-year duration and will last until June 2011. The target countries of TRQN II include Sierra Leone, Sudan, Afghanistan, and Bosnia Herzegovina. Georgia is added as new TRQN country.

TRQN is a response to the Dutch policy on Migration & Development which shows an increased need for an integrated and coherent approach.

Engaging Diasporas for capacity building in countries of origin is a key component of the M&D policy. TRQN II is funded by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. The budget is € 2.550.000. The TRQN II project contributes to the development and reconstruction of a number of selected countries by facilitating the temporary return of qualified nationals residing in the Netherlands.

In the countries mentioned there is a great need for skills, expertise and experience, for instance in agriculture, logistics and government assistance. IOM's TRQN project makes the required skills available by creating possibilities for qualified

nationals in the Netherlands to fulfill temporary assignments.

The project's focus is on capacity building in sectors and areas identified by the target countries. IOM in the Netherlands is the coordinating mission and will closely cooperate with the IOM field offices and with government stakeholders in the target countries.

"Dutch society is demonstrating an increased awareness and interest in making use of migrant's potential and developing similar skills transfer activities," says Joost van der Aalst, Chief of Mission of IOM the Netherlands, "The TRQN participants bring in new knowledge, ideas and technologies and through this transfer they also have an added value as catalysts for longer term change. In this way Diaspora engagement can help with an effective capacity building of local organizations".

IOM The Hague builds in particular on its good results gained during the first phase of TRQN which lasted for two years until June 2008. During TRQN I IOM assisted with 160 temporary return assignments. In addition, IOM the Hague also executes other Migration & Development projects such as the MIDA Ghana Health III project and the Diaspora for Development of Cape Verde project.

SACOMA/WES Dinner in preparation for Global Entrepreneurship Week in Kenya



Dr. Rebecca Harding, Founder & Managing Director, WES and Delta Economics, and Ms. Perez Ochieng - CEO SACOMA GROUP

Kenya High commission in London recently hosted a special reception in preparation for Global Entrepreneurship Week.

The reception had the objective of enlisting active and inspirational entrepreneurs from around the world to coach and mentor the next generation of young talented Kenyans.

The Global Entrepreneurship Week will take place in Nairobi, Kenya from 17th to 23rd November 2008. It is being organised by SACOMA World Entrepreneurship Summit (WES). This will be an opportunity for entrepreneurs to help young

Kenyans turn their ideas into reality. They'll inspire millions of young people in Kenya to create jobs and opportunities, unleash their business ideas, think Big, and embrace innovation, imagination and creativity.

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Big African stars grace Pauline Long's Fundraising birthday Party in London



From left: Emmanuel Jal dancing as Pauline Long watches Blanchard Jean Azip aka Deplaizir, Phzcality and Dro entertain guests at her birthday party

By Stephen Ogongo

Pauline Long, founder of Mr and Miss East Africa UK celebrated her birthday on 5th September at the exclusive D'eclipse Restaurant/club in London.

One of the special guests at the party was her close friend top African hiphop/rap star Emmanuel Jal. Among the acts on the night were Congolese star Blanchard Jean Azip aka Deplaizir, Kenyan singer Simba, Ugandan hiphop

stars Dro and Nelly, hiphop/rap artists K-RIS and Paddy Lord.

The mother of two is constantly looking for ways of creating awareness for the plight of the African forgotten child and what better way to celebrate with her friends from the African entertainment and showbiz scene.

There was an exclusive dance performance by top London based hiphop dancers Phzcality and a fashion show by young designer Zaina Reich. The party which dou-

bled as a thank you dinner for Mr and Miss East Africa UK 2008 contestants and team was hosted by award winning comedian Eddi Kadi and raised gifts for children including brand new books written by singer K-RIS and his younger brother Alexander, who is a talented poet. Emmanuel made a generous donation of money to Rafiki Children's Orphanage in Kenya and offered for auction two brand new copies of his latest hit album 'Warchild'. Congolese star Blanchard offered sev-

eral copies of his latest album 'Plaisir Ya Trop!' (Pure Pleasure) to go on action in aid of East African children's charities.

When asked why she used her birthday to fundraise and create awareness for child poverty in Africa, Pauline revealed: "If there is a place I can find more than two people then I will use that opportunity to spread the word. I wanted my birthday to have a meaning and I wanted guests to give back to the children instead of giving me gifts. I would like to urge Africans

to feel inspired and find ways of creating awareness for the plight of the forgotten child. Every single help or donation that is given goes a long way to make a difference. If you are doing your thing with clarity and enthusiasms whilst sharing your vision then the rest will fall in place. You will soon have disciples and I have my fans, friends and family to thank for all the support over the years."

(All pictures by Martin Kuria)



From left: Some of the guests, singer Simba, Pauline Long, Miss EA UK Vicky Njoki Ngari-Wilson and comedian Eddi Kadi

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VISA APPEALS

How to appeal a visa refusal decision

Visas

A visa is a document which is issued by a British High Commission or British Embassy abroad, which allows you to travel abroad to the UK for a fixed period of time. For example, a visitors visa allows you to enter the UK for a maximum period of 6 months. A student visa will allow you to enter the UK either up until the end of your course or for a fixed period of time and then you will need to renew this once in the UK. There are many different types of visas, these include: visitor,



Ms. Raheela Hussain,
a Senior Immigration Accredited Specialist from Greenfields Solicitors

student, marriage, fiancée, dependent, work permit holder visa.

When you apply to the British High Commission or British Embassy for a visa to enter the UK, an Entry Clearance Officer will be responsible for deciding whether you should be granted a visa. It is now common practice for Embassies to obtain an individual's biometrics which are the fingerprints, personal details and photographs in order to reduce Immigration fraud.

An Entry Clearance Officer will look at your visa applications, the documents you have provided to support your application including any representations made by a Solicitor if you have used one. Using these documents the Entry Clearance Officer will decide whether your circumstances are compatible with the Immigration Rules. You may also be asked to attend an interview with an Entry Clearance Officer, in case he wishes to ask you further questions before making a decision on whether to grant you a visa.

Statistics

Research shows that in 2007, out of 785 visa cases, 91% of decisions issued by Entry Clearance Officers were reasonable. However, it is a well known fact that depending on the country, some British Embassies are more favourable than others.

For example the British High Commission in Islamabad (Pakistan) handles applications from residents of Afghanistan and Pakistan. In 2006-07, the refusal rate was 47.1%, rising to 60.2% in 2007.

In Accra (Ghana) during 2007-08, the overall refusal rate was 52%. For 2005-06, the overall refusal rate in Lagos (Nigeria) was 51%. From April to December 2006 the rate rose to 56%. Compare this with New York where the overall refusal rate was 6.7% and in Ottawa, in 2006-07, the overall refusal rate was 5.4%.

The most common reason for an Entry Clearance Officer to refuse a visa application is due to them not being satisfied that the individual has adequate funds to maintain themselves in the UK and also, because he is not convinced that the individual will return to his home country if he is granted a visa to enter the UK.

Useful Tips

The successful way to obtain a visa is to include a large amount of documentation which shows that you have sufficient monetary funds to cover the cost of your trip to the UK. You may also wish to include details of a Sponsor (assuming they are in a good financial position). Another good idea is to include details of where you intend to stay in the UK. If you are staying with friends or family, a letter of invitation from them would be useful. If you are going to stay in a hotel, provide details of the hotel and the cost of your stay in the hotel so that the Entry Clearance Officer knows you have done your research in advance. To show that you intend to return back to your home country if you are granted a visa in the UK, you should include details of your ties in your home country. This may include details of your family, employment, wealth and property ownership there. You may also wish to obtain the advice of a local UK Immigration Specialist who can assess whether your application and the documents

are satisfactory before you submit it to the British High Commission or Embassy.

Providing a thorough and well documented entry clearance application and precise answers during your interview (if you are interviewed) will show the Entry Clearance Officer that you have done your research thoroughly and that you should be granted a visa.

What to do if you are refused a visa

If despite your best efforts, you are still refused a visa by the Entry Clearance Officer then you will be given 28 days to appeal the refusal decision. You will be provided with a refusal notice which will explain why the Entry Clearance Officer refused you a visa as well as details on how to appeal. You should also be given an appeal form which you can complete and return back either to the British Embassy or send to the Court in the UK, which is called the Asylum and Immigration Tribunal.

The Asylum and Immigration Tribunal will then instruct the Entry Clearance Officer (who will then be referred to as the "Respondent") to provide full details of why they refused the visa. The individual (who will then be referred to as the "Appellant") will then have an opportunity to read all the documents pertaining to why the Entry Clearance Officer refused the visa and this will help him prepare his case on why he should be granted a visa. The individual should then obtain legal advice on how to prepare the appeal as this can be quite a com-

plicated procedure. It may be best to instruct a firm of Immigration solicitors at this stage as much of the work will need to be done in the UK.

At the court hearing, the Immigration Judge will listen to both the Respondent and Appellant's cases. The Appellant can provide additional information at the hearing that may be useful to his case as well as calling any witnesses that can help. For example, in a marriage visa appeal, the Appellant's sponsor (husband or wife of the Appellant) will most likely attend the hearing to provide evidence. At the end of the hearing, the Immigration Judge will decide whether the original refusal decision should stand or whether he should overturn it and allow the visa to be granted.

The Immigration Judge usually issues a decision within a few weeks. If the appeal is allowed, the British Embassy will be informed and will then invite the Appellant to attend so that their passport can be endorsed with a visa. If however the appeal is unsuccessful, the Appellant may appeal to a further and higher court, for further reconsideration. In the year 2006/2007, per month, the Asylum and Immigration Tribunal received on average, 4058 appeal applications. As a result of this, the current queuing time for an appeal to be heard is 16 weeks while it may take 18 weeks for the decision to be sent to all parties.

By Raheela Hussain, Senior Immigration Accredited Specialist from Greenfields Solicitors
Tel: (44) 020 8884 1166

Questions & Answers

I'm illegal in England - how can I gain legal status without going back home?

Depending on your circumstances and the facts of your case you may be eligible to regularise your stay through a Concession which may be applicable to you under the Immigration rules or you may even be able to apply for leave to remain in the UK under the basis of long residency, discretionary grounds, or human rights grounds. You should speak to a solicitor to obtain advice in your case if you have overstayed, as you can be removed from the UK by the Immigration Authorities.

There are situations where people may be afraid to return to their home country through fear of persecution on the basis of their race, religion, nationality, membership of a

particular social group or political opinion. If you think this applies to you, you can speak to a solicitor who offers Legal Aid (free government assistance) in Immigration law and who will be able to advise you on how successful your case will be.

I am living in UK with documents and I want to marry a Zimbabwean girl. Do I have to go to Zimbabwe to marry her?

If you have legal residence in the UK and you wish to marry a girl from Zimbabwe, you can go to Zimbabwe, marry her and then make an application for her to join you in the UK, through a marriage visa. There is also the option of her applying for a fiancée visa which means she can come to the UK and marry you here.

You will need to marry within 6 months of her arriving in the UK and during this time, she cannot work. Once you are married, she can apply to the Home Office to change her status from a fiancée to a married person and she will be allowed to work once this has been approved.

By Greenfield Solicitors

Please note that the above article does not relate to nationals of the European Union. The above article is meant to be relied upon as an informative article and in no way constitutes legal advice. For legal advice regarding your case, please contact Greenfields Solicitors for a Consultation with a Solicitor. Tel: (44) 020 8884 1166



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I think my employer may go into liquidation. What are my rights?

If your employer is legally insolvent then you will be able to make a claim for your lost wages, redundancy pay and other payments relating to your work. Your employer will be legally insolvent if:

- It is a company which has gone into administration, liquidation, receivership or has entered into a voluntary arrangement with its creditors. You can check on the Companies House Website <http://www.companieshouse.gov.uk/> to discover the status of your employer, or

- Your employer is an individual then they will be legally insolvent if they have been declared bankrupt or has entered into a voluntary arrangement with his or her creditors. You can check the Individual Insolvency Register www.insolvency.gov.uk for information on individuals declared bankrupt or who have entered into voluntary arrangements with their creditors. (Please note that there are separate rules for Scotland).

Short-time & lay off

If your employer is not yet legally insolvent then they may cut the number of hours you work (sometimes called 'short time') or lay you off, which is usually where your employer asks you not to come into work. If you are laid off then you should normally still be paid unless there are clauses to the contrary in your contract of employment or you have agreed that you won't be paid. If you are laid off then you will be paid the Statutory Guarantee Pay (SGP) minimum, a five day

payment of a maximum of £20.40 per day once in any three month rolling period. You may also be entitled to claim benefits so contact your local job centre if you are laid off. If you are not paid SGP or wages which you are entitled to then you may be entitled to bring a claim against your employer in an Employment Tribunal for deductions from wages. To do this you must apply to the Employment Tribunal within 3 months of the date you failed to receive the payment. However, there is no guarantee that an employer will pay you so you may want to petition them to wind up the business and claim part of your unpaid wages from the Redundancy Payments Office ("RPO") as outlined below.

Transferring or buy out of an insolvent business

Your employer may also try and sell the business even though you have been put on short time or laid off. If you decide to carry on working for your employer and it is transferred to another business then your contract of employment will be protected under the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006. Once the business has been transferred then your new employer will pay your wages.

This article was written by Rachel Blythe, Solicitor - Employment Team Simpson Millar LLP.

What happens to me if my employer goes into liquidation?

Pay

If your employer is declared insolvent then an independent insolvency practitioner or Official Receiver will be appointed to deal with the company's business and assets. Once this has happened employees will be able to apply to the Redundancy Payment

Office (RPO) for:

- A maximum of 8 weeks' unpaid wages prior to the insolvency. Wages include commission, overtime, SGP, statutory payments such as maternity pay and protective awards. You can select the week most beneficial and the weeks chosen do not have to be consecutive.

However, you cannot add unpaid days together to make a whole week

- Up to 6 weeks unpaid/untaken holiday pay you accrued in the 12 month period prior to your employer being declared insolvent

- A total not exceeding 12 weeks' notice pay etc

These payments are all subject to tax (which should be deducted at the basic rate) and will be made from the National Insurance Fund. Keep an eye out for how much tax you have paid as you may be entitled to a refund from the RPO e.g. if you haven't used up your personal allowance. There is no age limit or length of service required to obtain the payment. However, there are limits on the number of weeks you can claim (as set out above) and also on the weekly rate you can claim. The current limit is £330 per week. You can contact your local RPO office and download the appropriate form <http://www.berr.gov.uk/employment/redundancy/red-pay-office/page14404.html>

You should try to limit your losses by claiming all of the benefits you are entitled to (you should check as above with your local job centre) and applying for new jobs. Any money you do receive will be taken into account when calculating the payment you are owed. If you do not do this then the payment you receive from the RPO may be reduced. Any debts after payment owed (e.g. weekly wage above £330) from the RPO can only be paid if there are sufficient funds available from the company's assets.

However, for some debts, such as outstanding holiday pay, wages (up to 4 months' pay or £800, whichever is less) and occupational pension contributions employees will be treated as preferential creditors meaning that when your employer's assets are shared out amongst the creditors the preferential creditors will receive payments ahead of other creditors. There is no qualifying period or age requirement. You should contact the appointed independent insolvency practitioner or Official Receiver to make a claim. It is unlikely that there will be enough money left for you to get paid what you are owed in full but you may recover some money.

If you are entitled to claim certain types of statutory pay, such as sick pay or maternity

pay, beyond the date of insolvency then you may be able to claim these from Her Majesty's Revenue & Customs. Please refer to your job centre for further information.

Pensions

The trustees of the employees' occupational pension scheme may be able to make contributions to the fund from the Secretary of State via the National Insurance Fund subject to certain conditions. In some circumstances the Board of the Pension Protection Fund may take over the running of the scheme and pay compensation.

Redundancy

If you have worked for your employer continuously for over two years then you may be entitled to a statutory redundancy payment. The payment you will receive is based on your weekly wage (capped at £330 but this amount normally increases annually) multiplied by the number of years of service you have and an age factor. Redundancy payments up to £30,000 should be tax free. Click Government's redundancy calculator is available at <http://www.berr.gov.uk/employment/employment-legislation/employment-guidance/page33157.html>. You can claim your redundancy money from the RPO.

How do I claim?

The insolvency practitioner should send you the appropriate form or you can contact your local RPO by clicking on the links above. 92% of all claims are paid within 6 weeks. Tax will be paid on payments arising from your contract such as wages and holiday pay. You can contact your local RPO to see if you are owed a tax refund. You may also be entitled to a tax refund on other payment so you should also contact your local tax office if you think you have paid too much tax. You should contact the independent insolvency practitioner or Official Receiver to claim the preferential debts and remaining money owed but it may take some time before you receive payment.

This article was written by Rachel Blythe, Solicitor - Employment Team Simpson Millar LLP.

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Please send us your legal questions. Our solicitors will answer them in the next issue of *Africa News*. Address all your questions to africanews@etnomedia.org

Road traffic accidents abroad

Statistics show that the chances of being involved in a car accident in mainland Europe doubles, and it almost triples in Greece and Portugal. Adele Farnaby, Litigation Executive from the Road Traffic Accident team at Simpson Millar LLP, gives these tips for those planning to drive abroad:

Before departure

Contact your insurance company and ask for a 'Green Card'. Although the majority of UK insurers provide cover to drive in most European countries it is advisable to check the level of cover in place. Irrespective of valid UK insurance you may be still asked to produce a Green Card.

Remember to pack

Full UK Driving Licence, Vehicle Registration Document or proof of ownership of the vehicle, UK Insurance certificate and/or Green Card. You may be asked to produce these at the scene of an accident.

After an accident

When exchanging details make sure you obtain the name, address and registration plates of both the front and rear of the vehicle (in some countries these differ). If the vehicle is commercial get the name of the company



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the vehicle is owned by. Gathering as much information as possible will help your solicitor deal with your claim on returning to the UK. Remember to take names and addresses of witnesses.

When the Police arrive

Take the name, station and badge number of the officer(s) in attendance. In most coun-

tries it is law for them to attend. They are helpful as they can assist with any language barrier and their attendance will provide a further record of the accident.

If you are asked to sign a 'Constat Amiable'

It is perfectly safe for you to complete and sign this document. It is simply a method of

ensuring that everyone involved in an accident has exchanged the relevant information and if possible agree upon how the accident happened. Make sure you are given a copy and that you understand the information written by the other party.

If you are injured

Seek medical assistance. Keep copies of any documentation provided by the doctor or hospital. Keep receipts for excess payment for medical fees. If your claim is successful you can claim these costs back.

When you get back to the UK

Seek Legal Advice. In the UK victims have 3 years in which to pursue a claim for personal injury and six years for property damage. However in other European countries the time periods are much shorter, for example in Spain you only have one year. It is essential that you get professional advice as soon as possible to ensure your claim is still in date.

This article was written by Adele Farnaby, Road Traffic Accident Team Simpson Millar LLP. Tel: 0844 858 3200

Cyclists at risk from no insurance



© LaPresse

Cycleguard, an independent insurer offering insurance for cyclists, recently issued a warning to cyclists advising of the risks of going without (at least) third party insurance cover on today's roads.

At present less than 2% of Britain's cyclists have any sort of insurance cover. If for instance a cyclist collides with a pedestrian, neither of which has insurance cover, the consequences of legal action concerning personal injury could be significant and costly.

Cycleguard provide policies mainly for children under 15, and

professional cyclists who cycle whilst abroad. However, they have issued this warning to the average cyclists who are increasing in numbers owing in part to the current financial difficulties being experienced in the UK's economy. High rising petrol costs and an increasing conscience in green issues have pushed those keen on a bit of exercise to take the step of commuting to and from work by cycle.

The type of insurance available from Cycleguard is specialist and goes above and beyond that which may be provided by the average legal expense cover in for instance, a home and contents policy. Often such policies exclude road traffic accidents or have other exclusions which may result in the cyclist being directly responsible for compensation bills.

Cyclist insurance is offered by some of the larger insurers also, including Saga, Endsleigh,

Norwich Union and Insure and Go. Insurance can be bought in varying degrees such as third party or public liability, accidental damage to your own bicycle, hiring a replacement bicycle and roadside recovery. Drawbacks of the compensation criteria are deductions for wear and tear for bicycles over 3 years old and invalid insurance due to failure to secure your bicycle from theft or damage.

Simpson Millar LLP has experience in dealing with compensation claims involving cyclists. As such claimants often suffer fairly severe injuries because of their vulnerability on the roads, we know how crucial it is to obtain medical opinions quickly and efficiently to ensure a safe recovery, as well as securing a fair compensation settlement. If you have had an accident or require some advice and/or assistance please do not hesitate to contact our dedicated Road Traffic Accident Team on 0800 634 1625.

This article was written by Jo Milne of the RTA Team Simpson Millar LLP.

Are you covered for driving outside of the UK?

Recent research suggests that one in ten UK residents assume that their usual car insurance will cover them for any eventualities whilst driving on holiday or business outside of the UK.

In fact, under EU law, car insurers are only required to cover you for third party claims which of course leaves drivers open to risk of theft, accidental damage and personal injury for which they would have no recourse to their insurance provider.

The advice to all drivers is to check the small print - some insurers provide a number of (usually consecutive) days for which a car can be driven outside of the UK, but in most cases this can be as little as three days (although some companies are the exception and offer 365 days a year cover). Typically insurers offer further cover for a fee, but this can be costly, for instance some companies offer 180 days as a maximum for a fee of up to £500.00. Other insurers have a more reasonable offer of 90 days for a fee in the region of £22.00.

If your policy makes no men-

tion of "foreign use" you would be well advised to contact them to confirm the level of cover before your travel. You can specify this additional feature when taking out a new insurance policy which will enable you to compare policies and their fees.

As 3 million Brits make their way to Europe and beyond annually, either travelling by vehicle or hiring upon arrival, it is time well spent checking your policy and ensuring that you are covered for any risks you may be exposed to, to ensure you have a stress-free trip!

In the unfortunate event of an accident abroad, any claim would be governed by the EU Fourth Directive which allows a Claimant to pursue a claim from their own country and in their own language although the applicable law will remain that of the country in which the accident occurred.

This article was written by Susan Vanden of the RTA Team Simpson Millar LLP. Tel: 0844 858 3200

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Meet artist Harry Asmah

African art should represent African culture & environment

By Solange Moffi

Let it be said that Harry Asmah is one to watch. With shows at the Saatchi Gallery in London and admirers such as the Duke of Edinburgh, this Fine Arts graduate will go a long way. Following his recent show at Croydon Central Shopping centre with the collective Kreative Krafts in July, I caught up with him to find out his inspirations, motivations and ambitions.

At the tender age of 29, Harry has been an artist for half his life. When asked why and what drew him to it, he says "because of my sheer love of art... I didn't have any financial interest. I was encouraged by friends and family, as well as by my teachers." This led him to explore several forms of visual art including painting, sculpture and photography.

About his painting, Harry says "I don't have a conventional technique of painting. My work has a 3D quality to it, so that each time you look at it, you will see something

different." Harry mainly specialises in portraiture, ranging from Erika Badu to Haile Selassie, Lauryn Hill to Mumia Abdul-Jamal, among others.

Technique aside, Harry also has a spiritual approach to his work and is therefore very influenced by ancient African and Ghanaian (Ghana is his native country) civilisation and culture.

When asked how portraits of Lauryn Hill or Erika Badu relate to it, Harry specifies: "I choose to paint iconic artists who have a positive influence on society, especially when it comes to African and Black culture."

So, would he call himself an Afrocentrist artist? "When I was younger my models were Rembrandt, Picasso and Michelangelo, but growing up, I realised that you never find African imagery or visual art, in a way that is real: it's always abstract or symbolic stuff, or tribal art (scaring or primal drawing), which I think is great, but I see African art as being contemporary, in the sense that it should represent one's culture and current environment."

"I choose to paint iconic artists who have a positive influence on society, especially when it comes to African and Black culture."

Artist Harry Asmah



This painting shows Artist Harry Asmah's family members in costume during a traditional procession. The piece is entitled "Role Call"

resent one's culture and current environment."

This might explain his decision to paint members of his family in costume during a traditional procession, a piece entitled "Role Call", and which like most of his other ones shown at the Kreative Krafts exhibition last July, has found a buyer. Kreative Krafts is a collective of South London-based young Black artists who specialise in various disciplines, including product, fashion, jewellery and candle design. He and Koreen Sinclair (candle designer) are the founding members of the collective, which in spite of being a fairly new enterprise (it only launched in March this year), already seems to generate public interest, telling by the high attendance

at the exhibition in Croydon. Harry is also highly involved in the Brixton African Hub, an interdisciplinary collective of artists, poets and musicians, and has got a few projects in the pipeline.

Harry says: "I never do work that is personal; I do work that is collective."

But is art work? "Yes, as an artist myself, I see the artist as someone who documents society, external and internal experiences."

Well, much is awaited from this promising artist, whose "work" deserves a greater visibility than it already has. Harry is planning a few shows within next year. Until then, please visit his website: www.myspace.com/kwamenaarts

Global Xchange looking for accommodation for Nigerian & UK volunteers in Newham

In early December 2008, Global Xchange in Newham will be bringing nine young people from Nigeria together with nine UK youngsters to give 6,000 hours of voluntary service to the local community.

The young people are now searching for hospitable families who'll be able to lend them a room for 2-10 weeks.

They will live in cross-cultural pairs in host families and work for up to four days a week as volunteers with community organisations. The volunteers will also be organising Community Action Days, where they will

help to support or develop events in the community.

They will live and volunteer in different types of host homes and volunteer placements to enhance their learning experience. This may include volunteering in schools, youth clubs, working with the mentally disabled or even taking part in manual labour.

By the time they reach Newham the team will have already completed the first phase of the programme which takes place in Akure (Nigeria), with a focus on climate change and access to education. Akure is a city in the southwestern region of

Nigeria, and is the largest city and capital of Ondo State. There they will be volunteering in various Non Governmental Organisations and living in counterpart pairs with host homes.

This will be the second



time Newham has taken part in the exchange run by VSO and the British Council which will bring together young people from the UK and Nigeria. This follows on from the success of the previous Global Xchange programme in Newham, which saw young people from the UK and Philippines live and work in the borough.

Keisha Briggs, Global Xchange programme supervisor, said: "Hosts are offered a weekly allowance to contribute towards accommodation and food costs and will be supported by two programme supervisors. It's a chance to learn a little bit about Nigeria, and take part in a successful and innovative community programme."

The last programme proved extremely popular among community hosts. Hosts were provided the opportunity to have first hand experience of living with someone from a different culture. Strong bonds were formed and lots of experiences exchanged. Previous hosts, Robb and Lindy Wainwright thoroughly enjoyed the experience. "It was not about hosting strangers. We found in them the daughters we never had," said Robb.

If you are able to support the programme, or would like more information about Global Xchange, contact Keisha Briggs, programme supervisor on 07866 754 121 or Email keisha.briggs@vso.org.uk

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Do you have a story to share with our readers? Are you planning for a community function (wedding, naming ceremony, graduation, cultural festival, independence celebration, seminar, demo, anti-deportation campaign, etc)? Please send us reports and announcements of these activities and we will publish them for free in *Africa News*.

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The Editor, *Africa News*, Via Maroso, 50, CAP 00142 Rome, Italy.

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East African Beauties to storm Ghana's Face of Universe beauty festival

By Pauline Long

The 5th annual Face of Universe is set to take place in Ghana with a long list of beau-

ties from as far as India, Venezuela, Kenya, Nigeria, Malaysia, USA, Morocco, United Kingdom and other countries. Four stunning Miss East Africa UK contestants including

the current Miss East Africa UK/Miss Kenya UK Vicky Ngari have been short-listed for the finals of Face of Universe in Ghana.

In a relaxed environment under the ambi-

ence of warm lights at the exclusive upmarket D'eclipse Restaurant/club in London I caught with all four beauties and this is what they revealed to me.

Freweniy Tekle: Representing Eritrea



© Martin Kuria photography

You are a beauty queen in your own rights, you look amazing, what would you do if you were crowned Face of Universe in Ghana?

I have many dreams and ambitions that as a beauty Queen I would achieve if I were to be crowned Face of Universe 2008 in Ghana. I

would use this opportunity to help and try to alleviate certain issues in my community. Helping children who are disadvantaged is one of my major passions in life and I believe that it is imperative to build connections with the young in today's society. Another goal of mine if I were to gain the Face of Universe title is, I

would invest the money allocated to me in a group or charity which me and a few others are setting up in the very near future in order to help disadvantaged families in Eritrea. This money can help as a start up capital for hopefully many successful and interesting events.

have for winning?

My main tip is to be you, be real, honest and speak from the heart. There's no point of being fake in front of the judges, I am sure that they can spot someone who is being untrue a mile away.

When were you last in Africa?

The last time I visited Africa, was when I travelled to my home country Eritrea in the year 2004. That was an uplifting experience for myself as I hadn't been there for a number of years and the very fact that I was surrounded by my own people and to see what sort of a great and success of a country we had become after many years of struggle during a war to gain our independence, made me even more proud to say that I was from this beautiful country.

Are there any tips you

Vicky Njoki Ngari-Wilson: Representing Kenya

You are still fresh out of the catwalk after winning two coveted titles of Miss East Africa UK and Miss Kenya UK, both titles are demanding. Do you think you can handle a third title?

Wow a Third Title! I would have to play 'Super woman' by Alicia Keys every morning to motivate myself and fulfil those roles. That's Major Work but God doesn't give you anything you can't handle and I believe that to the fullest.

What in your opinion are the qualities of a beauty Queen?

The qualities of a beauty Queen to me are: Respectable, Graceful, Warm and Strong.

Ghana is a historic destination which a lot of people would love to visit. What does it mean to you being given an opportunity to visit this beautiful part of Africa?

I have a lot of books on Black History and anyone who is close to me knows how passionate I am about this subject. So visiting a land that was most prominent in witnessing the bloodshed and beginning of Slavery is an honour that will be life changing. I feel like a winner already for that reason. I know my Spirit will connect with Ghana's historical essence. I Admire Ghanaian women's Strong, cultured poise, I would like to be like that.

What make up and style tips are you taking with you to Face of Universe to help you bag the prize?

My Style and Beauty tips: Lots of Water, Lots of Lip Gloss and cleansing every night. For Style, my plans are to be original and Classy I can't say too much!



© Martin Kuria photography

Lydia Okiya: Representing Uganda



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What do you most look forward to in Ghana?

I'm looking forward to visiting a beautiful country and meeting the people of Ghana. When I looked at the timetable for my time in Ghana I couldn't believe the opportunity I'd have to really explore the country. It is not just about the pageant but we will have the privilege of meeting important people such as chiefs and people of Kyebi, Osagyefo Amoatia Ofori Panin and Ministries

How did you feel when you were selected to compete at this prestigious contest, Face of the Universe?

I can honestly say I felt delightfully shocked and very blessed to have such an opportunity. I cannot thank Pauline Long and the Mr and Miss East Africa team enough for this and other opportunities they have given me. Honoured is a word that springs to mind because it meant that they trust me as well as the other three girls picked to go Ghana, to represent the Mr

of Tourism, Women Affairs and Foreign Affairs and above all a Presidential visit. These are all people and organizations I'd love to meet and are not only inspirational but can also make a real difference and this is a great opportunity to spread the 'SHOUT! Campaign'.

What special things are you going to pack in your bag?

This is a difficult question. My bag will be full; one can never be too prepared. As an aspiring model I love fashion so there will definitely be a lot of clothes. I also love to sing so I will make sure I have my mp3 player and of course my camera, as it is an experience I want to remember and I want the memories captured. But the one thing I am looking forward to packing for Ghana is a gift from Uganda. Let me explain; when we were asked to do the competition we were each given an opportunity to present a gift which will then be given/auctioned for charity. I cannot say what my gift is as I want it to be a surprise but it is one of the first things I will be packing and I am hopping it will raise money for a good cause.

Maria Namiro: Representing Tanzania

You have been in so many contests from the recent Miss East Africa UK to Miss England, Miss Great Britain Intercontinental amongst others, what inspires you to enter beauty contests?

The thing that inspires me to enter beauty contests first and for most is the good cause that it is for. The other reasons are: I am a people's person; I get along with anybody who is anybody. I love meeting and interacting with people, I have been brought up to love who you are and be proud of it. When I was a little girl people kept telling you two should put your daughter in pageants, so as I got older and mature I thought to give it a go. I fell in love with it straight away. The glitz and glam of strutting what your mum gave you, being on the catwalk. I love being in front of an audience and not to forget that speaking in front of a crowd gives me such a boost and confidence.

How much do you know

about Ghana and what experience are you looking forward to most while in Ghana?

Ghana is a country rich in tradition, history and some of the friendliest people on earth. As superman is weak from kryptonite I am weak from chocolate. Ghana is known for its gorgeous cocoa. They make the most scrumptious chocolate.

This is going to be the first time I am setting foot in the wonderful Ghana. I have many Ghanaian friends, their culture and everything captivates me. My experience while in Ghana will be an experience to remember from the food, scenery, people, lifestyle, culture and the fashion. I love their clothing because you can mix and match their material to come out with something beautiful. I know for sure I will come back to London with a whole load of

clothes.

Do you think you have what it takes to be crowned the Face of Universe?

I know I am the Face of Universe, I am beautiful externally and internally. I am kind person, rich in culture and disciplined, able to cope with any situation whether good or bad, always prepared to give, bubbly, regal, poised, embracing what life brings and intelligent.



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Interview with Mr. Sonwabo Eddie Funde, the new Ambassador of South Africa in Germany

Preparations in full swing to make South Africa ready to host World Cup

By Eric Singh

Mr Sonwabo Eddie Funde is the new Ambassador of South Africa in Germany. He presented his credentials to the German President Horst Köhler on 27th August 2008. In this exclusive interview with Eric Singh, Mr. Eddie Funde talks about the strong economic ties between South Africa and Germany. He comments on the recent attack against foreigners and the efforts being made to curb crime in South Africa. The Ambassador affirms that preparations for hosting the FIFA World Cup Finals in 2010 are in full swing.

Ambassador Funde, Germany is not a stranger to you. Your previous trips were on behalf of the liberation movement, the African National Congress (ANC) of South Africa in a divided Germany. Now you have come to Germany as the Ambassador of your country. Please explain your feelings?

I agree with you that my previous visits here have been under different circumstances. At that time I was head of the Youth Section of my organisation, the ANC, and visited both East and West Germany to consult with our students who were studying there. That also afforded me the opportunity to make contacts with youth organisations in both parts of the divided country. Now Germany is united and I am convinced that it will be quite an exciting experience to see the unity of a people who were divided. I am looking forward to a fruitful time where I can interact with all sections of the German community, both at governmental and non-governmental levels and strengthen the relationships that already exist. Germany hosted the FIFA World Cup Finals in 2006 and I attended the last match in my capacity as Chairperson of the SABC (South African Broadcasting Corporation). That was a tremendous experience for us as the hosts of the next FIFA Finals in 2010. South Africa is still a developing country unlike Germany and therefore, the challenges are bound to be greater than those faced by Germany. We have benefited a great deal from the German experience.

Germany has very strong trading ties with South Africa. How does this reflect on the economic conditions in South Africa?

In terms of imports from South Africa by Germany, we rank around number 30 and vice versa the number is 22. This is quite significant for a developing country like ours to have such links with the third largest economic power in the world. It is important that the focus with respect to our future cooperation should be largely in the area of development of capacity. This will enable South Africa to consolidate its economy and

strengthen our democracy; especially in the public service and on the political level. Attention must be paid to the advancement of small business in order to supplant the high rate of unemployment which in turn contributes to the maladies that our country is undergoing. Experience from other countries have clearly indicated that small businesses have played and still play a very important role in confronting these ills of society. We will not hesitate to use the experience and expertise of Germany in the area of social development. Another area of concentration will be in the area of culture. It will be very important to bring home to the German people the richness of our culture. We are very familiar with European culture, and such exchanges will benefit all of us - German and Africans.

South Africa has been facing a brain drain? What is the South African Government doing to stem this flow?

A number of South Africans decided to leave the country. There are numerous reasons for this. That is why the South African Administration is taking steps to create better working conditions for professionals so that they do not have to look for lucrative pastures elsewhere. On the other hand, many of those who left are now returning largely because some of them had fears that the country will collapse after 1994 when we established a non-racial democracy. They have realised that we have a political stability, and reconciliation is working. This is thanks to our leaders such as Nelson Mandela who made this point the main thrust of his Presidency. A large number of South Africans who have acquired qualification and experience abroad are coming back to make their contribution for the promotion of society in our country especially in the medical field.

There are two points that are constantly making the rounds in the media when reporting on South Africa. Firstly, it is the crime factor and this is now added to by the recent attack against foreigners. Would you please comment on this.

Let me begin with the latter question. I must say that this is not portrayed correctly by the media. There is no mass attack against foreigners. There is a phenomenon in South Africa that even as we are developing, we are

still a developing country. But, our economy is doing much better than the countries in the region. Therefore, there is a lot of inflow of migrants coming and looking for better opportunities. Many of these people are undocumented. It is not always easy to document these people. Large numbers are not refugees in the proper sense of the word. They are economic migrants seeking better opportunities for themselves. In other words they are illegally in the country.

This in turn clashes with what the local population are trying to do and hence this conflict. It is must be borne in mind that this

tion. Under colonialism and apartheid, black people were denied the right to learn skills. There was no economic activity or development in black areas so the level of poverty is very high and a major contributor to crime. The gap between rich and poor in our country is too huge. The problem is being met with various programmes being put into effect such as higher education and technical skills. The entire nation is being roped in to fight crime in their local communities. There is a noticeable drop in serious offences, a trend which I am sure will continue as time goes on.

"Some of the venues for the various matches will be complete by the end of this year, others by July 2009, and the rest most definitely by the end of 2009. Those grounds that will be used for the Confederation Cup in June 2009 will be ready for action early next year. Preparations are in full swing to make sure that transport, accommodation, culture and all other aspects pertaining to the World Cup are in place by the time the visitors "raid" our country in 2010."

Mr Sonwabo Eddie Funde,
South Africa's Ambassador to
Germany



question of migrants to South Africa for economic purposes has been going on for a very long time. The fact that it happened the way it did was a great shock to all of us. This incident has alerted the country that if we don't deal with the issue of immigrants in an organised and constructive manner, it could lead to further upheavals with the local people. Thankfully the conflict is over now and unfortunately, it happened largely in the most poor areas mainly among people who are struggling for resources and survival. Migrants who also come from poor countries and live in these impoverished communities are then looked upon as competitors for the meagre resources that are available. This allows criminal elements to take advantage of the situation in order to enrich themselves. It is mostly migrants who have been living in these shanty towns together with the local people. The South African government and local authorities have undertaken to take measures whereby migrants are absorbed into the local community. This is quite a challenge and an undertaking that meets with the approval of the South African people.

It is true that crime is a worrying factor, but South Africa is not the only country facing this problem. There are many reasons for this, the main one being the economic situa-

There is speculation in Germany that FIFA is thinking seriously of adopting the B Plan because South Africa will fail to deliver the Finals in 2010. How true is this?

There is always such rumours when mega events are being organised. I recall the same was said about Athens not being able to meet the deadline for the Olympic Games in 2004. Who will deny that the Games in Athens were a great success? There were also some doubting Thomases about Germany and the FIFA Finals. Yet Germany presented a great and successful show. Unfortunately, some mischievous elements in the media use these rumours in their columns to mislead people.

Preparations for 2010 are in full swing. For instance some of the venues for the various matches will be complete by the end of this year, others by July 2009, and the rest most definitely by the end of 2009. Those grounds that will be used for the Confederation Cup in June 2009 will be ready for action early next year. Preparations are in full swing to make sure that transport, accommodation, culture and all other aspects pertaining to the World Cup are in place by the time the visitors "raid" our country in 2010.

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Interview with Mr. Jomo Gbomo, Spokesperson of the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND)

Nigeria must adopt fiscal federalism

By Sunny Ofehe

This is an online interview carried out by Comrade Sunny Ofehe and Mr. Jomo Gbomo, the spokesperson of the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND). Here is an extract of the interview.

Can you briefly take us through the history of MEND formation?

MEND, an acronym for the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta was established at the end of 2005. After a few men we can not mention reviewed the injustice in the region and discussed why the methods of other groups failed. They decided to come up with a name that can be easily remembered by its acronym and that will be a constant reminder of the things to focus on. MEND carried out its first attack at the end of that year.

You appear to be a very organized group with camps and commandants all around the Niger Delta. Can you take us through your command structure and how you recruit people?

We can not reveal our command structure and the method fighters are recruited.

What has given you the edge over the military since you declared Operation Hurricane Barbarossa? Is it superior firepower or better knowledge of the terrain?

The edge we have over the military has always been that they are doing what they do for a salary and we are doing what we do voluntarily. Secondly, our knowledge and adaptation of the terrain has been crucial because we can launch attacks at night in pitch darkness and move at top speed of 200 Km per hour. These nocturnal operations which we refer to as mosquito raids have been very effective.

How sophisticated is your weaponry? Is it capable of sustaining the onslaught from the military for as long as it lasts?

This is a guerrilla war targeting the oil infrastructure. You do not need a large army or sophisticated weaponry to execute it. In just five days we have shut-in a total of 600,000 bpd according to the NNPC, but the amount is much more than the government wants the public to know.

Precisely, how many flow stations and pipelines belonging to



the oil majors have been sabotaged so far and what are some of your next targets?

Please do your research. It is all out there by reading coverage from AP etc. Future targets are classified as we want to have the advantage of surprise.

What role has the Ijaw gods such as Egbesu, Osupele or Benikrukru played in ensuring victory for the MEND fighters?

Those who believe in the gods believe it has shielded them from bullets and the generality of the fighters go for a mission fearless, and this factor ensures victory.

How many fighters have you lost so far? Also what has the military lost in men and weapons, to put a lie to their claims?

We have lost about nine gallant fighters. The army has lost over 30.

You have been involved in many kidnappings of foreign nationals; do you have an accurate record of how many foreign nationals you have kidnapped until now?

We do not keep a record because this practice will be a continuous affair until we get the change we are clamoring for.

A few Dutch nationals have been kidnapped in the past; can you tell us how many Dutch nationals have been kidnapped by your movement?

We do not keep a tab on the nationalities as well.

Why is your movement involved in kidnappings and blowing up of Oil Installations?

It portrays to the government and oil companies that we are serious.

According to the Nigerian Government and Oil expert reports; your activities in the Niger Delta region has cut short Oil production by as much as 25%, this has affected global oil price. Don't you think it has also brought untold hardship to the already impoverished people that you claim to fight for?

How can it affect the people who do not even benefit from the sales and windfall in the first place? They have nothing to loose and are not affected.

You claimed responsibility for the attack on Bonga Oil field in June 2008, which is a deepwater facility (120km offshore) and the largest oil field (225,000 barrels per day), how did you beat government security to get that far?

There was no security to beat

because they were not around.

Some of your critics have placarded your group as criminals who are involved in Oil bunkering thereby making huge money from sabotaging oil pipelines?

That label does not bother us at all. Even Ken Saro Wiwa who was preaching non-violence was also labeled a criminal and even killed. His crime was speaking out against the oil companies, notably Shell for damaging the environment.

They also say that the primary purpose of your kidnapping of foreign nationals is to collect ransom. Once a ransom is paid, you immediately release the hostages. How do you respond to this?

If we sustained ourselves through kidnappings, the number of hostages would have tripled. Who pays the ransom, is it the oil companies or the Nigerian government? It is simply not true. Oil theft is carried out by the military and government officials.

How significant is Henry Okah to MEND? What is MEND doing to secure his release?

Henry Okah is a Niger Delta activist that is respected by MEND and other armed groups. We are not doing anything special because he has a good legal team to handle just that

You have just recently declared an Oil war and have asked all Oil companies to vacate the Niger Delta. How do you intend to carry out this threat?

We are doing just that. After five days we have cut the oil output by over 600,000 barrels per day

Your critics say you are being financed by corrupt politicians in the Niger Delta who use you to achieve their greedy political ambition. How do you respond to this?

The politicians may fund local

political thugs who those people must be referring to. We do not involve ourselves with local politics.

How do you get the funding to run a well organized movement as yours?

That is our own secret.

How do you sum up former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo's eight year rule?

A dismal failure.

The new President Yar'Adua's government has made the Niger Delta one of his 7-point agenda and has also created a new Ministry of Niger Delta.....Do you see this as a sign of new things to come?

We see it as all talk and no action. There is nothing new that has not been offered since 1958

What are the demands that can make you stop this arm struggle?

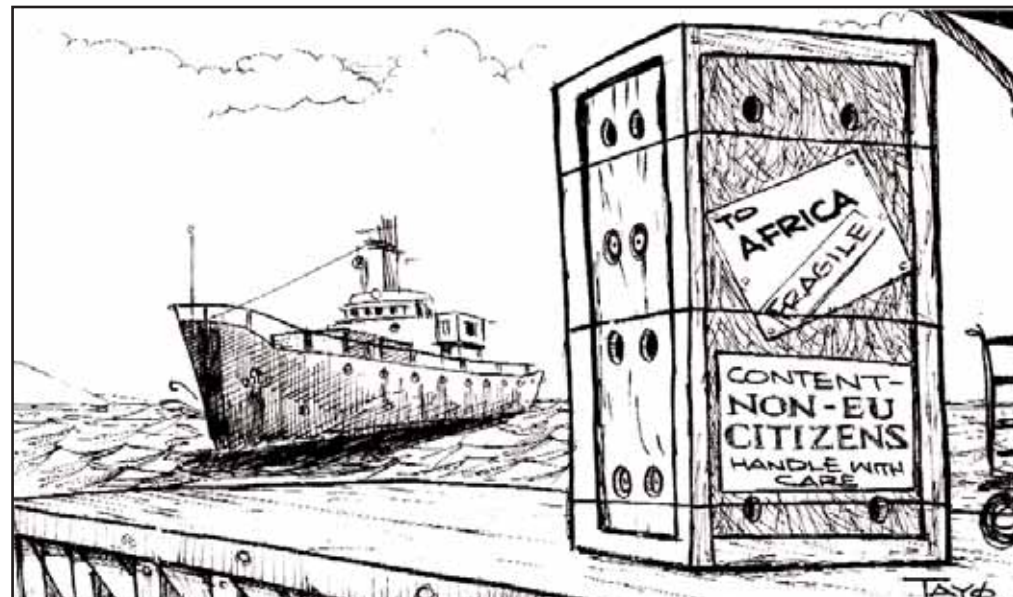
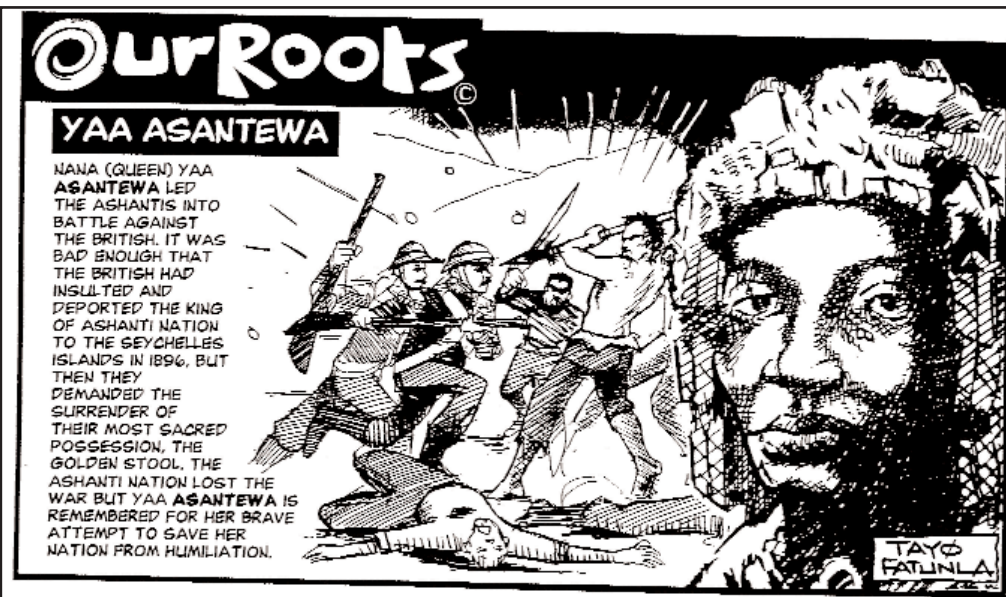
Nigeria must adopt true federalism which includes fiscal federalism.

Will MEND soft-pedal if the case against Henry Okah is dropped or you will continue to insist on resource control and fiscal federalism?

We will halt hostilities the second Henry Okah is released. We have said this before. That will begin the next phase of dialogue towards the country practicing true federalism

Is there any message to the government of the international Community since this interview will be published by the Western media?

Let them send exchange students to live among the people in a typical oil bearing community for three months then return home and write a report. Anything they say in that report is the truth.



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MYOWNCALLS

Motlanthe sworn in as President of South Africa

South Africa has a new president. The deputy leader of the ruling party African National Congress (ANC), Kgalema Motlanthe was sworn in on 25th September as caretaker president, replacing Mr. Thabo Mbeki who resigned after being recalled by the ANC.

Mr. Motlanthe, who was elected by a majority vote of MPs in the National Assembly earlier in the day, was officially sworn in by Chief Justice Pius Langa at Tuynhuys, adjacent to Parliament.

The swearing in ceremony was attended by Ministers, Deputy Ministers, MPs, ANC members, including ANC President Jacob Zuma, and members of the diplomatic community.

Mr. Motlanthe will be president until next year when elections will be held. Mr Zuma is widely expected to become president in the future.

"I am deeply humbled and honoured by the faith and confidence that the Members of this Assembly have in me," he told the National Assembly accepting his election as President-elect of South Africa.

He said he undertakes the responsibility of President elect "cognisant of the duties and responsibilities that are attached to this high office and the expectations the people of this nation rightly have of the head of state."



South Africa's President-elect Kgalema Motlanthe takes an oath at the Tuynhuis in Cape Town, South Africa. Motlanthe becomes South Africa's president in an atmosphere tense with fears of political and economic crisis precipitated by the rude ouster of his predecessor

All political parties in the National Assembly congratulated Mr Motlanthe, and were unanimous in their hope that he would accelerate service delivery to millions of poor South Africans, BuaNews reported.

"We hope you will put the lives ordinary of South Africans first ahead of party politics," said Independent Democrats President Patricia de Lille.

"We need a leader that will give all South African's hope and lead us to a better life," she said.

The Democratic Alliance said it would hold him to statements made earlier committing himself to the independence of the judiciary should

he be elected president.

IFP leader Mangosuthu Buthelezi said he had no doubt Mr Motlanthe would meet the requirements of his job.

"I have no doubt that President elect Mr Motlanthe is more than equal to this task possessing, as his does, integrity, an instinctive sense of the common good and fair society, and an abiding respect for the institutions of the Republic," Mr Buthelezi told parliamentarians.

"We will not allow the stability of our democratic order to be compromised. And we will not allow the confidence that our people have in the ability of the state to respond to their needs to be undermined"

South Africa's President-elect Kgalema Motlanthe

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Actress Benita Nzeribe: "I do not believe in love at first sight"

By Azuka Mordy*

Pretty Benita Nzeribe is a head turner any day. Ten years ago, when she made her unannounced entrant into the Nigerian movie industry; Nollywood, as a teenager, one thing held out to her advantage. Her courage and unmistakable good looks. No wonder men then, knocked their heads together to identify with her. Ten years down the line, she has not only grown to be a full fledged woman, but also has been able to maintain her image, beauty with a lot of income from over one hundred movies done. This interview was specifically tailored to deal with issues as they affect her love life. She spoke to Azuka Mordy. Enjoy.

Let's start this chat on a lighter mood. Tell us the secret of this infectious glow I see in your face?

(Chuckles...Laughs) Well... I am happy because I am alive. Things are going well with me. I am healthy, why would I not radiate beauty? Why would I not glow? I thank God Almighty who has given me life and good health. In my own way as a human being, I do things

moderately in order to keep fit and look good.

We take it that the lull in Nollywood presently does not affect you?

Life is a stage. It would not always be rosy. You are bound to encounter a storm somehow. Even our Lord Jesus Christ was once confronted by a storm, but he calmed it. We have to be patient with the storm raging in Nollywood presently. I have decided not to carry it on my head, lest it weighs me down. The lull in the movie industry is a passing phase.

Would it be correct to say that you are selective, or that men become blind when they meet you being the reason why they have not noticed that you are very eligible for marriage?

(Prolonged laughter) No they are not blind and I am not selective either. But you don't expect me to jump at any body that comes prophesying love for me. Maybe because he has a fat bank account. Marriage to me goes beyond material things. It is an understanding. It is a chemistry at its highest peak that must evolve on its own. I lack words to fully explain what marriage should be, unfortunately it is not how most people take it. I would not jump into marriage with any man because he is rich.

What do you look out for in a man?

I go for the heart. A man is his heart. If a man loves you, he will respect you. If a man loves you he will take care of you and he will not hurt you. So I look at the man's heart.

How do you discern a man's heart to know the kind of person he is?



You will be shocked if I tell you.

Try me.

I am very prayerful. I love God passionately. That's me, no apologies. That is what works for me. God might take time to answer, but eventually he will answer. I am also a very patient person.

Would it not be more accurate to size up a man by his words?

I would not go by everybody's style. I am being real. This is my method.

What kind of man appeals to you? Physically speaking.

I don't look for looks, because looks are deceptive. Beauty is in the mind of the beholder. My feelings come from how you treat me. It does not just hit me once I see the man. Like people say, they see a man from a distance and they are just loving him. No, it does not work for Benita that way. What works for me is the way we relate. I

do not believe in love at first sight.

What do you think is best way to start a relationship once you find someone you love?

Let me put it this way. If a man finds the love of his life he knows. But it is wrong for him to introduce himself and make his intentions known immediately. He should keep his feelings to himself and try to find out the kind of person the girl is. The lady on her part needs to take

more time to find out the kind of man proposing to her.. Unfortunately, we womenfolk we are very funny.

In what sense?

We have this complex thing. In one moment, you could win a woman's heart and she would be so loving, but in the next minute something goes wrong, she switches off. She would even wish you go to hell. The men have more strength to absorb pressure. That is why when relationships broke up, a man gets over it quicker than the woman.

I want you to react to this. I once recommended a book to a lady because it contained a passage that encouraged ladies not to waste their time looking for Mr. Right, but rather spend time preparing herself to be Miss Right, as the right approach to getting a life partner.

I share that sentiment. On my own part, I have shelved a lot of

things. If you would be honest, you will admit that the Benita you used to know then is not the same person sitting here with you now.

Describe your relationship with your family. How do they relate to you as a star?

My parents love me dearly and they've always been there for me. It has not always been easy, as a lady and in the acting industry, with the whole sex talks about Nollywood. But I try to live a straight life so that I don't bring shame to them.

Describe the ideal African housewife?

The typical African housewife is a cultured person. When you think Africa. You think tradition, you think culture and respect. We have rules and regulations we live by. I also believe that the African housewife ought to listen and respect her husband, especially when he is making sense on issues.

What if he becomes unapproachable?

She has to find a way to approach him. In finding a way, you shouldn't tamper with a man's ego. No matter how small a man is, he has his ego and you do not touch it. You have to find a way to get him to see your point whenever he proves to be unapproachable.

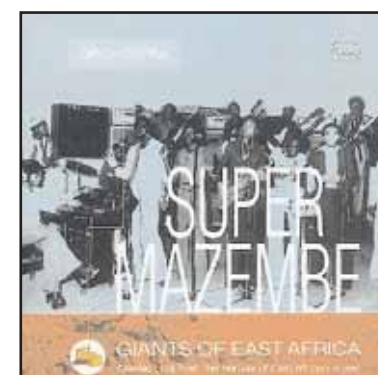
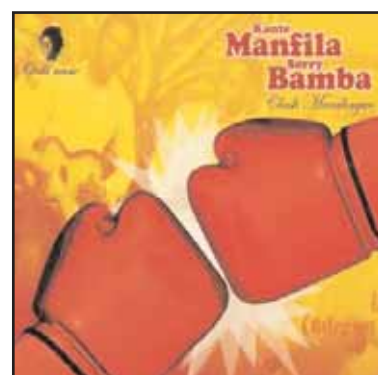
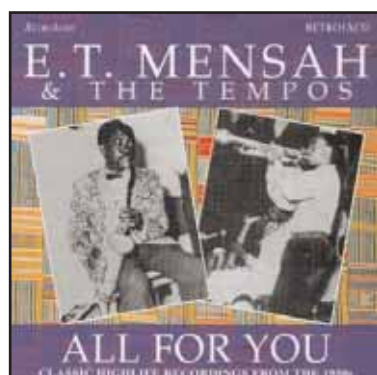
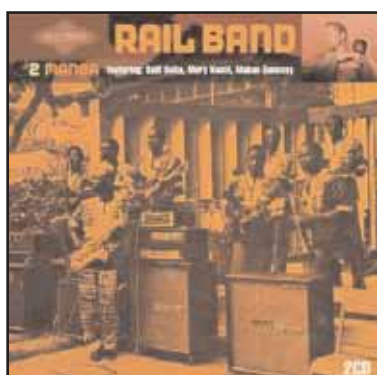
What would you do if the husband you marry ask you to quit acting?

I love what I do passionately, but if my man says he wants me to stop acting. If he gives me good reasons for suggesting that. As an African housewife, it is my duty to listen to him first. Then we do the argument later. I will pamper him and try to get him to know that I love what I do. I get him involved in my job.

*Nigeriafilms.com



TOP CHARTS



Play African music to succeed, Professor Adam Solomon advices young musicians

By Stephen Ogongo

As more and more African musicians turn to Rap or Hip Hop, there is one veteran Kenyan musician who is worried of this trend. While he appreciates the way young Africans try to adapt Rap and Hip Hop to give them a local touch, Professor Adam Solomon Ndaro reminds them that they should not forget traditional African music.

Adam is a multitalented musician who has won so many awards. He is currently based in Toronto, Canada. He holds that it is much easier for a young African musician to succeed in the music industry by playing African music than by trying to play Western music.

"Even if you decide to play Rap or Hip Hop, make sure the base of your music remains African. Play African instruments and Western instruments in an African way," he says.

Adam says that African music is so rich and has served as a point of departure for many types of music played in different parts of the world. "Blues, for instance, got its roots from African music," Adam points out.

"A young African musician who wants to be successful must carefully study traditional African music, including Rumba, Benga, Chakacha, Twist, Highlife, and work out on something new from there. You can transform it, but keep it African because that's your true identity. You are an African and you have to make an African contribution to the world music. The moment you lose your African

identity, you become nobody," Adam says.

He affirms that Africa is highly respected all over the world. "People in Western countries appreciate African music. They know that some of the best musicians have come from Africa. We have the rhythm in our blood, we have the beat, and we have styles unheard of before."

Adam plays different types of African music, a combination that he terms "Afro-rock". He was influenced by Kenyan traditional rumba music, Tanzanian and Ugandan traditional music.

The effortless manner with which he controls the guitar so that it sings with him and the way he finds it easy to teach guitar playing skills earned him the title "Professor".

Adam considers himself very lucky to have had a chance to play with one of his musical heroes, the late Ochieng' Kabaselleh. He in fact played bass in Kabaselleh's famous hits "Omondi Jimmy" and lead guitar in "Mbuta Mombasa" released in the early 1980s.

Other musicians who have greatly influenced Adam's style of music are Mbaraka Mwinshehe, Dr. Nico wa Kasanda, Lipua Lipua, Simba Wanyika and Franco Luambo Luanzo Makiadi. Adam has so far released five LPs: "Safari" (1997), "African renaissance blues rocket express II" (2003), "African guitar summit" (2004), "African guitar summit II" & "Mti wa Maisha/Tree of Life" (2006) and "Roots Rhythms (Magoma Asili)" (2007). Adam says that "Roots Rhythms (Magoma Asili)", is a homage to the traditional rhythms of the Mijikenda (Nine Tribes) people of coastal Kenya.

He is currently working on a solo and band album to be released in 2009. The solo album is almost ready.

Adam co-founded the "Afronubians Band" in Canada in the early 1990s.



Veteran musician Professor Adam Solomon Ndaro

The band soon became one of the most famous African bands in the country. In mid 1990s he formed Tikisa Band.

Adam has so far won several musical awards. He won two awards at the Toronto Africa Music Awards (1997). His "Safari" LP won the Best Release Award while his band scooped the Best Performers Award. He won Juno Award in 2005 and Juno Nomination in 2007.

Adam teaches music in schools, and holds music workshops throughout Canada. He also regularly thrills fans at major festivals, theatres, and clubs.

Nancy Barrett & Opiyo Oloya say that "to honor Black History Month celebrations, Adam has become a valuable contributor to cultural education through music and storytelling, presenting interactive programs at universities, schools, and libraries. Retaining his roots in traditional music, Adam's compositions embrace a wide variety of African rhythms, from traditional soukous, highlife and reggae to samba, bossanova and rumba. On his latest 'African Renaissance Blues' album, Adam brings the blues back to the African continent where they originated with African slaves. Adam's style of guitar playing is renaissance because it carefully fuses the Mississippi Delta blues style of BB King and Muddy Waters while highlighting the African blues style."

Adam looks forward to travelling back to Kenya for a national musical tour that will take him to different parts of the country. His dream is to finally return to Kenya to support upcoming musicians. Adam would like the Kenyan government to invest in grooming young musicians. He says he is ready to return to Kenya to work fulltime as a trainer if the government can open a serious college for training professional musicians.

"I would like to go back home and become a keeper of Kenyan traditional music. I would like the government to open a music department that I'll manage and direct, to do more research in our national music, and preserve our Kenyan traditional music. I'd like to see more funds allocated to supporting local and traditional musicians in our country. I'd like to ask the government to take a serious step in funding music programs that will help upcoming musicians in our country. The Kenyan government must also take serious steps to end music piracy in the country," Adam says.

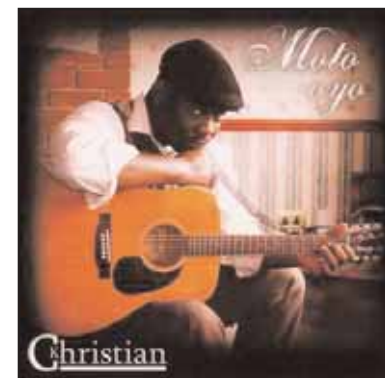
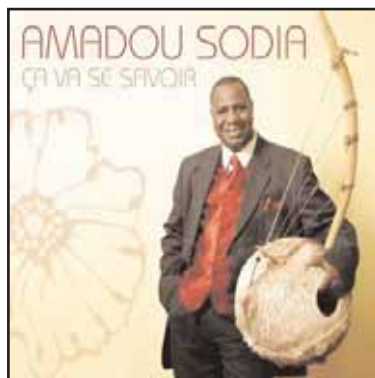
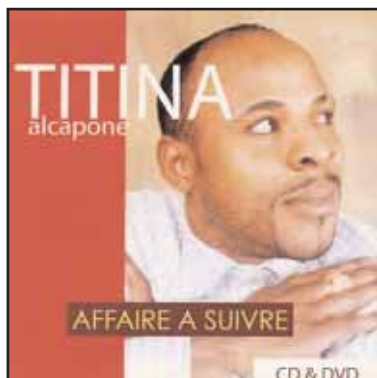
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Professor Adam Solomon Ndaro doing his thing on stage with a member of his band

NEW RELEASES



Hospital patients to be assessed for risk of blood clots

The condition is responsible for some 25,000 deaths in England each year

It is now recommended that patients admitted to hospital in England be assessed for risk of blood clots (Venous thromboembolism).

Venous thromboembolism in hospitalised patients is responsible for around 25,000 deaths in England each year. The risk assessment will be provided to hospitals along with guidance to help them identify patients at risk of developing venous thromboembolism.

Venous thromboembolism includes the conditions of deep vein thrombosis - when a clot forms in a vein, usually in the leg - and pulmonary embolism, which occurs when a blood clot that has formed in a vein breaks off and lodges in the lung. Deep vein thrombosis is more common in those who are ill and those who are immobile; patients in hospital are more vulnerable because they meet both these criteria. Deep vein thrombosis may lead to pulmonary embolism, which can be fatal.

Sir Liam Donaldson, Chief Medical

"The dangers of venous thromboembolism in hospitalised patients have long been recognised, but our challenge was to find a systematic approach to identify patients most at risk. "Creating a standardised national preventive strategy on this scale is a world first. We anticipate that, by hospitals implementing risk assessment for all patients admitted to hospital, we can make the goal of reducing death from venous thromboembolism more attainable. This simple step has the potential to save thousands of lives each year."

**Sir Liam Donaldson,
Chief Medical Officer**

Officer who announced the publication of the risk assessment for venous thromboembolism said: "The dangers of venous thromboembolism in hospitalised patients have long been recognised, but our challenge was to find a systematic approach to identify patients most at risk.



"Creating a standardised national preventive strategy on this scale is a world first. We anticipate that, by hospitals implementing risk assessment for all patients admitted to hospital, we can make the goal of reducing death from venous thromboembolism more attainable. This simple step has the potential

to save thousands of lives each year."

In 2005 Sir Liam established an independent expert working group to look at how current best practice and guidance on venous thromboembolism could be promoted and implemented. Following publication of the group's report and recommendations, an implementation working group was established to develop a risk assessment and raise awareness of venous thromboembolism throughout the National Health Service (NHS).

The risk assessment will be available for use by all hospitals and has the potential to prevent many avoidable deaths. It was developed with key stakeholders, including the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE). NICE's supporting guidelines for all hospitalised patients are scheduled to be published in autumn 2009.

Recipe

LAMB WATSE

Watse is a meal consisting of rice and beans, served with a meat (chicken, fish or lamb) stew. It will take between 45 minutes and 1.5 hours, including preparation time and depending on how fast beans and rice cook.

It can also be served with fried plantain.

This recipe will serve 3 to 4 people.

Ingredients

250g red beans
400g brown rice
1 kilo of lamb
1 medium onion
½ teaspoon green cardamom seeds, ground
½ teaspoon black pepper
½ teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon garlic, peeled and grated
½ teaspoon ginger, peeled and grated
2 tablespoons sunflower oil
3 chopped tomatoes + 2 tablespoons of tomato purée

Method

Chop lamb in small dices.
Chop and grind the green cardamom seeds,



black pepper, salt, onion, ginger, and garlic. Mix them all together and add sunflower oil.

Add to the lamb and let marinate for 30 minutes.

Boil red beans for about 45 minutes.

Boil brown rice.

Mix Beans and rice together.

Chop 3 tomatoes.

Fry the marinated meat on full hob for about 10 minutes.

Add the chopped tomatoes and the tomato purée. For better texture, add water if necessary.

Serve hot and fresh with rice and beans.

Recipe by Gifty Naa D.K, chef in residence at Charlie Wrights International Bar, in Old Street, London.

The pill ... no risk to fertility!

Hard to believe but true ... there are some men who think that if their wife uses oral contraception methods such as the pill for example, it is likely to reduce her fertility. However, even though this idea may be quite widespread, it is totally false. It's true that the pill alters a woman's natural reproductive cycle, but once she stops taking it, she can very quickly become pregnant again.

So what exactly is the pill? It's simply a tablet that a woman takes each day for three weeks. In the fourth week she stops taking it and this leads to bleeding, similar to that of a normal period. These tablets are composed of hormones similar to those naturally secreted by a woman's ovaries. They are oestrogen and progesterone derivatives. By taking these hormones, a woman alters her natural cycle as the

oestrogens inhibit ovulation. This makes pregnancy impossible. The progestative effect is to thicken the mucous at the entrance to the uterus. This acts like a plug, preventing sperm from crossing the neck of the uterus.

If taken regularly every day, the pill is 100% effective. It enables couples to space out when they have children and avoid resorting to clandestine abortions which can be very dangerous. On the other hand, it's important to remember that taking the pill does not protect against the AIDS virus or against other sexually transmitted diseases.

By Destinationsante.com



Fasting In Season And Out Of Season

By **Simon Weston**

Fasting is defined, 'to abstain from food' and teaches us self-discipline.

Fasting can be beneficial spiritually and physically, but at its best it helps only the person doing it. God says he wants our service to go beyond our own personal growth to acts of kindness, charity, justice and generosity. Pleading God is more than what we don't eat or don't do. It is what we do for him and for others.

My prayer returned into 'mine bosom' means my prayer went unanswered. When our deliverance is delayed it is easy to assume God hasn't answered our prayer. God hears our every prayer, but he answers according to his wisdom. Don't let the absence of an immediate answer make you to doubt or resent God instead let it be an occasion to deepen your faith.

If you are facing a challenge, you have to

"...I humbled myself with fasting; and my prayer would return to my own bosom"

Psalms 35 v 13

turn your eyes from the problem and look to Christ for more faith. Only then will your work be accomplished. Jesus taught that some work for God is more difficult than others, and requires a greater than usual dependence on God. 'However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting' (Matthew 17 v 21). Prayer and fasting alone, sometimes does not accomplish the miracle. As believers we also need to apply faith, discipline, righteousness and humility before God constantly, without which there can be no hope of success.

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