



- Promoting African centred approaches to developing people and communities

ANNUAL REPORT 2005

SUMMARY OF PROJECTS

FIBROIDS MEETINGS

Fibroids are hard overgrowths of muscle tissue found mostly in and around the womb. One in two Black women is thought to have fibroids [although 25% of women have no symptoms] and fibroids are the main reason for most hysterectomies.

Griot has continued for the third year running to provide information and support for women with fibroids through monthly meetings at which an invited surgeon, healthcare worker, therapist, healer will explain fibroid treatment choices. Most popular meetings are those where women speak about their experiences of natural, self-help, medical, spiritual or surgical treatments and remedies.

Since July 2004 topics covered have included healing properties of herbs and African herbal remedies, aloe vera, menopause, hormones and toxins, a woman's experiences of getting rid of her fibroids through eating wholly vegetarian Ital foods [veganism] and attending to her spirituality. And because stress is thought to be a factor, we ran a life coaching session to help women to determine how to refocus their lives into more congruent directions

We also organized a meeting with the Director of Public Health to give women with fibroids an opportunity to discuss changes they wanted to see in Lewisham's Health Service. Griot's experience of running the fibroids meetings was that women were wanting information leaflets, counseling, complementary remedies, better training for doctors on fibroids diagnosis and the obligatory provision of treatment options instead of the more routine offer of hysterectomy many women reported. Although in the latter scenario, Lewisham Hospital's Mrs Cochrane is highly rated as a surgeon giving choice, time and options. Griot has been invited to give a presentation at the Lewisham Hospital expert patient panel

The location of the fibroids meetings was moved to Catford in partnership with Family Health Isis and in response to women's interests in looking at some of the deeper emotional causes of fibroids and to fit in with the availability of an experienced psychotherapist and wellbeing counselor experienced in this area. These Black women's health and wellbeing meetings took place on Wednesday evenings and provided valuable time and space for women that attended. Although these meetings attracted fewer women, they attracted many new women, but were too far away from the good transport links in Lewisham Way to sustain the

involvement of women who came from East London, Lambeth, Southwark, the north of the Lewisham Borough and beyond. Fibroids meetings will resume at Lewisham Way Centre, and the Black women's health and wellbeing discussion forums will meet at Isis in Deptford where transport links are so much better.

In addition and more importantly, the partnership with Family Health Isis has led to a rethink about the future of the fibroids project. A decision has been made to reposition the work on fibroids within a wider definition of health and wellbeing, as part of the overall work of Isis. We are grateful for the generous support from Estella Weston, Director of Isis which will ensure the sustainability of community-based self-help support for women with fibroids in Lewisham. Griot will provide a three month handover and consultancy for as long as required.

Griot, in partnership with Isis will be convening an consultation and planning meeting with community and health workers and past participants at fibroids meetings in January 2006 to consult on what women want from a fibroid support project over the next year and further on in the future. This meeting will also feed into a health partnership planned as described below.

AFRICAN CENTRED DIGITAL ART

This event was a conversation with the sculptor and visual artist Fowokan George Kelly about new developments in his creativity that fuse digital applications with existing pieces of sculpted art.

Fowokan delivered a beautifully illustrated slide show of his sculptures and his recent digital creations and discussed the impressions and messages his images represented. Very vibrant discussions included whether 'hand-made art' encapsulated more of the spirit of the artist and their intention than digital art, could original 3D pieces translate well to digital images without losing their essence, would traditional art forms decline with the advent of digital applications?

There were no conclusions to discussions but a strong consensus that art in the life of African peoples is an essential means for deep forms of self expression, communication with our spirit and self realisation. Further, that we should not be constrained by the tools we use to express our creativity.

Over forty people attended this very successful and inspiring event which has become somewhat of an annual Black History Month tradition for Fowokan, Griot, Steven Lawrence Gallery and followers of African centred art.

DINNER AND DISCUSSION FORUMS

Since the debate on African Centred Digital Art, we have received a large number of enquiries and requests to resume the series of Dinner and Discussion Forums that Griot used to run.

We have also had a proposal from Kubara Zamani from Afrikan Quest an educational charity broadcasting African centred programmes on radio, producing Nubiart Diary, a weekly email newsletter on arts and media events. Afrikan Quest is also developing products for broadcast on TV.

African Quest wants to work in partnership with Griot and to discuss how best to use new technologies in the fast moving world of communications to make the discussion forums accessible in more diverse ways and in different formats

A proposal has been drafted that would provide the basis for a funding application

SOCIAL ENTERPRISE, BUSINESS PLANNING AND PARTNERSHIPS

This project aims to up-skill 'BME' [Black and Minority Ethnic] groups in Lewisham to understand the opportunities for applying business concepts to community development projects and to exploit the benefits from joint work that can be gained from partnership projects.

Six seminars in social enterprise, four in business planning and a series of 4 workshops in partnership development have been run since the project started in 2003. Griot has also supported emerging social enterprises [see below] from this initiative.

Griot is exploring a number of different avenues to set up a partnership on health. A small consortium of groups undertaking the social enterprise, business planning and partnerships training expressed interest in becoming a partnership, but were not ready to take the initiative forward.

However, recent discussions with community and health workers and therapists suggest that our work on fibroids may well form the basis of a partnership in the future. In January 2006, Griot is organising a consultation meeting to find out from women what they perceive as the elements of a comprehensive service for the treatment and management of fibroids.

Black women in health, community development, healers, therapists and healthcare workers and past participants will be invited. Health, food and fitness

companies have also expressed an interest in contributing to the consultation meeting.

SUPPORT TO EMERGING SOCIAL ENTERPRISES

Griot has been giving support to Sourcing potential [working name] for a new enterprise developing arts workshops for people to explore their creativity. Support has been to help the initiator to identify the unique selling point of the enterprise and to outline a viable feasibility project to apply for a small grant.

Griot has also written a business plan, facilitated a consultation meeting and produced a strategy report for a new educational company based in Greenwich. Big Lifestyles will be providing a research, information and campaigning resource on obesity issues to encourage public services and private companies to address issues of size, image, stereotypes, prejudice and making adjustments for the specific service delivery needs of people who are defined by themselves or others as big or obese.

Griot will be supporting both enterprises to apply for feasibility funds to trial initial ideas to provide an evidence base for developing programmes for the companies.

COMPUTERS IN THE COMMUNITY - NARROWING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

As increasing areas of communication move on to the internet and ever increasing discounts are given for people able to conduct business over the net, the digital divide between the IT literate and those without access and literacy in IT is becoming ever more vast.

The Computers in the community project aimed to narrow the digital divide by refurbishing old computers and distributing these to low income families for study and job search uses. We then followed up families to find out how computers were performing, what use they were making of computers and what their training or other computer related needs were.

This project was undertaken in partnership with Brixton Bizness Café who refurbished computers, sourced monitors, mice and keyboards and distributed to low income families. Publicity done locally in Lewisham through news letters and flyers were not successful in promoting the project.

It was not until Gbade Ogunsanya, proprietor of Brixton Bizness Café had organised a press release in the South London Press that an incredibly massive and unrelenting demand from people in and around Brixton

descended on Brixton Bizness Café. There are 300 people on the waiting list for the next initiative.

The administration required to respond to enquiries, communicate formally with prospective recipients and distribute to families who successfully demonstrate that they qualify as low income families was enormous and very time consuming. Recipients of computers have appreciated the additional IT skills they have learnt and one woman told us that 'having the computer has changed my life. Thank you so much.'

Griot also very grateful to Gbade Ogunsanya who donated ten fully functioning computers to the initiative when it became apparent that one third of our stock of old computers were defunct. He also donated considerable amounts of time to co-ordinate the project over seven months. In total 31 computers were refurbished and distributed. We still receive enquiries for the next computers in the community initiative for which we will need to seek sufficient funding to cover admin and co-ordination costs as well as those for refurbishing, storage and delivery.

FUNDING AND WORK PLAN FOR NEXT YEAR

Griot is in an exciting phase of development with a number of strong partnerships and some that are underway.

The need for core funding for Griot's projects has never been more critical. Griot hopes that experienced managers at our AGM will come forward and become trustees

Priorities for trustees to consider will be presented to their first meeting as described in the leaflet for new trustees.

We have been fortunate to recruit two very dedicated and competent volunteers. Marcia Garwood who has brought Griot into the 21st century with the setting up of our first project databases. Sharon Hamilton, who has helped with administration at the Brixton Bizness Café during the computers in the community project.

We would like to thank Marcia and Sharon for their hard work and dedication.