



- Promoting African centred approaches to developing people and communities

ANNUAL REPORT 2007

ANNUAL REPORT 2007 FOR THE GRIOT FOUNDATION TRUST

PHILOSOPHY

'We should go down to the grassroots of our culture, not to remain there, not to be isolated there, but to draw strength and substance there-from, and with whatever additional resources and strength and material we acquire, proceed to set up a new form of society raised to the level of human progress'

Sekou Toure, First President of Guinea



Sankofa afamfa

'A return to the past must be guided by critical examination'

MISSION STATEMENT

Research, develop and promote African centred approaches to developing people, organisations and communities

SOLIDARITY AND PARTNERSHIP

Griot aims to:

- embrace the cultural distinctiveness, spiritualities and differences that reflect people everywhere
- respect and affirm people in the ways in which we develop working alliances, organise and deliver our undertakings with people from a diversity of backgrounds, faiths and cultures

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Chair	Cheryl Bowen
Treasurer	Estella Weston
Secretary	Diana Grant
Trustee:	Avril Augustine

Consultants	Dr Morgan Dalphinis Dr Magna Aidoo
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Volunteers	Noreen Howard, Project Manager Ebony Adinkra, Marketing Manager Eugenie Bowman, Database Manager
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FUNDERS

Esmee Fairbain Trust
Greenwich Arts and Culture Office
Lewisham Arts and Culture Office

REPORT FROM THE CHAIR

This report presents work done from December 2006 to October 2007 by the Griot Institute which is funded by the Griot Foundation Trust. It also reports on our financial accounts, as is usual for Griot, from April 2006 to March 2007.

Griot has worked strategically to develop its infrastructure by reviewing and updating its policy framework. It has responded to concerns from Black-led groups for training in environmental impact issues by working with Middlesex University and will be expanding its programme of work in this area in 2008.

Our continuing research into the needs of Black-led groups is reflected in the theme of our Annual General Meeting. Whilst in 2007 we acknowledge the strong leadership of Africans and non-Africans in the passing of the abolition act, the independence of former colonies in Africa and in the Caribbean and the development of a vibrant Black-led voluntary and community sector today; current community crises challenge the leadership of Black-led organisations. Failing or flourishing?

Does our heritage of inspirational leadership - Queen Nzinga, Nanny of the Maroons, Nkrumah, Cuffey, Professor Wangari Maathai - questions the sufficiency of solidarity, trust and partnership to sustain organisations beyond being funder-driven to being strong, united, well resourced entities able to respond proactively to the needs they have been set up to address?

We look forward to a lively debate on these matters and to take forward to the next year those issues that can make a tangible difference to the leadership and longevity of Black-led groups

Once again, our grateful thanks to Estella Weston, Director of Family Health Isis who has provided organisational mentoring and invaluable resources over the past year, to Patsy Leacock from Voluntary Action Lewisham whose timely intervention in Griot's development enabled the organisation to identify further opportunities for strategic growth and to all of Griot's volunteers.

Cheryl Bowen, Chair

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SUMMARY OF PROJECTS

WOMEN IN PUBLIC LIFE - LEADERSHIP AND DIVERSITY DISCUSSION FORUM

The women in public life in dialogue discussion forums began in 2002, bringing women community workers from a diversity of backgrounds and sectors to openly discuss 'politically taboo' issues.

In our work at the Institute we constantly have to navigate the current climate of 'political correctness' which inhibits and silences the need for exploratory conversations about differences, similarities and the potential for developing strong working alliances between communities of different cultures and faiths.

To address this and to unlock the knowledge and experiences held by women from different perspectives, Griot organised a panel of women from four distinctly different faith and cultural backgrounds to debate how faith and culture influenced their priorities, leadership and connections with other cultural groups.

It was essential that participants viewed the forum as a safe place to speak spontaneously. The plenary invited women to put forward ideas for strengthening our understanding of and working alliances with workers from other cultures.

The focus of discussions explored the extent to which faith, culture and class influenced leadership and could contribute to greater cross cultural networking and partnerships. The forum challenged ideas of political correctness and opened up dialogue on currently taboo subjects to ensure genuine dialogue between women with diverse values and access opportunities and from different backgrounds

The forum

- provided the 18 participants on the day - with a safe place in which to have an uninhibited voice about class, faith, age and cultural diversity to debate, learn and share information
- celebrated the talent, achievements and contributions of women through the presentations of workers from 6 different faith and culture backgrounds
- provided opportunities for gaining knowledge and developing skills to empower women to deliver greater community benefit through growing their

confidence in talking about 'politically' correct issues on their own terms

- evaluation forms were extremely positive about the discussion forum and women have suggested a number of themes for future forums. For most women, this forum was a first and much needed event and a unique opportunity to interact with and learn from women from other faiths, cultures, classes, ages and occupational backgrounds

A selection of evaluation comments stated:

- "the forum met my needs through hearing from other women, about the issues that they are facing and working with within diverse communities.."
- "I hope to meet up with the forum again soon"
- "the forums could be improved through more dialogues, held frequently to create a network of support"
- "I would like to continue to be involved; very enjoyable and informative, I enjoyed it a lot"

There have been constant enquiries for the follow-up forums and the notes from the forum in March from women across England and we are drafting grant applications to employ an organizer to develop a series of forums starting with the themes raised in March 2007

GREEN YOUR OFFICE AND YOUR HOME

A strong recommendation from our social enterprise and partnerships programme was to develop and run workshops on reducing negative environmental impact at work and developing green policies and action plans. This issue was not only current and topical, but increasingly a requirement of funders.

Griot approached the Centre for Environment and Safety Management in Business in Middlesex University and Lewisham Council and organized a pilot workshop.

Participants were people actively involved in community development work with an interest in increasing their knowledge of green issues, in understanding the impact

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of some key environmental issues, in reviewing their practice and in leaving with a simple action plan.

And, as a number of community development workers also operate from home, some of the office ideas would be immediately relevant for their home-office locations.

The Deputy Mayor of the London Borough of Lewisham attended to give an outline of the commitment and delivery of Lewisham Council's environment policies. There was a robust question and answer with the Deputy Mayor who has already made good on her promise to keep organizations informed on her work to explore how the council can financially support the requirement on voluntary organizations to pay for the collection of recycled rubbish - which for many is experienced as a penalty for ethical behaviour given that the environmental initiative originated from the voluntary sector .

Feedback from the Deputy Mayor on the Green Your Office and Your Home Workshop. "This event was a really great idea - our thanks to the Griot Institute for organising it. As a council, Lewisham supports individuals and families who want to make environmental changes at home and we also encourage our staff to make positive environmental choices, something we help with wherever possible. It's only right that we support community organisations in the same way - they are often the people with the greatest enthusiasm for the green agenda, but they have the least time or resources to devote to it. Events such as "Greening Your Office and Your Home" hopefully help them to realise how a few, simple steps can make a really big difference."

ORGANISATIONAL MENTORING

Griot is often approached for support by newly formed groups or individuals with an idea for community development. We have previously signposted people to other second tier organisations given our past experience of providing organisational mentoring without the resources to sustain this for the term required by the individual or group. Our experience is

that two years are required for a group to develop its community development competence. However, this need is increasing and we have been approached by five individuals this summer wanting to set up provision for young people in the community. This concern reflects the current crisis with meeting the needs of young people in smaller more human scale group settings that enable them to form appropriate intergenerational relationships with adults as potential mentors and with a diversity of other young people to help them to develop their social skills, confidence and broaden their aspirations and perspectives of the world around them.

We are offering organisational mentoring to Aspect, a new initiative trialling a project for Lewisham. Griot's initial offer will be a short term time limited contract, during their 6 month funded project. We will network them with other individuals who have approached us for support with developing youth provision. We will evaluate this and explore the resources required to offer this support more widely

HEALTH PARTNERSHIP CO-ORDINATION

Griot has delivered a series of self-help programmes for women with abdominal fibroids seeking alternatives to surgery and clinical interventions for 4 years. Fibroids are rock-hard growths of tissues in and around the womb, disproportionately affect Black women many of whom suffer a range of disabling effects.

As a result of our very effective programme an independent group has started in Crystal Palace which is well located to serve the needs of south London. We know of no other support groups for women with this common condition in England. Griot is therefore co-ordinating a regional programme in partnership with women's groups to support the wider sharing of knowledge, information and contacts we have gathered to support women in their search for natural alternatives or well informed choices about managing their condition. We are also exploring what the expert patient programme run by the Primary Care Trust can offer to women with the fibroid condition.

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INFRASTRUCTURE

We have worked with our local council for voluntary service in Lewisham to update our modest initial policies to develop more complex policies in line with current legislation and have adopted equality and diversity, health and safety and volunteering policies. There are fourteen good practice areas of legislation to date which charities have to prove compliance.

We will also be giving new trustees induction training into our policies and their roles and responsibilities as charity trustees as an essential requirement for joining the Griot Foundation Trust Board of Trustees.

FUNDRAISING AND BUSINESS PLAN

We have updated our workplan and have identified funding sources for the projects planned for 2008. A number of applications are being drafted.

TRAINING AND CONSULTANCY CONTRACTS

Griot will be seeking commissions for training and consultancy to generate much needed unrestricted funds for our running costs. This area of fundraising is critical and we are seeking support from an advisory panel constituted from people who value our work and can contribute time and expertise to helping our fundraising efforts.

CALL FOR TRUSTEES

Griot's priority is to fundraise for work it has piloted. We are looking for people with management experience and time to work in an unpaid capacity to develop the Trust.

So, if over the next year you can contribute:

- three hours work at home each month
- three Saturdays
- three evenings
- management experience in planning, finance, staff or policy development
- an interest / understanding of project management and evaluation, social enterprise, community development, business and strategic planning

It is a requirement in Griot that trustees receive a basic understanding of their roles, responsibilities and good practice policies and free training will be provided on dates agreed with trustees

You will gain valuable skills in organisational management that you can add to your CV.

INTERESTED?

Contact the Chair via griotonline@hotmail.com or the Project Manager on 020 8691 7201

IN MEMORIAM

Estella Deterville, who worked at InPrint in Lewisham Council, joined the ancestors on 26th May 2007. Estella was 45 years old. Her passing was sudden and her absence deeply felt.

Estella's substantial contribution to the work of the Griot Foundation Trust was invaluable. Her considerable problem solving skills, her vision and her positive attitude to challenges made her a great asset to the development of work of the Trust. We are privileged to have had her involvement.

May her soul rest in peace.

