

# **TONY CHEESEMAN FOUNDATION**

## Review

2012 / 2015

**“The harmonisation of Afrikans in the Diaspora and continental Afrika is a complex one given the 400 years and more of slavery and colonial exploitation. We have been taught that Afrika is a primitive, backward and uncivilised etc by the Western world and we should have nothing to do with it. While on the continent the Afrikans have been told that we are the sons and daughters of slaves and are less than they are! This divide and rule concept practice has been very effective because it has become institutionalised in the church, government, the judiciary, Militia, the education, social and economic systems of the western so called new world of which we are all victims. The transatlantic slave trade remains man’s greatest inhumanity to man in human history. The disturbed spirits of the ancestors are watching us and assisting us in our restoration and restitution”.**

**Quote from a paper submitted by Tony Cheeseman to a Reparations Conference in Accra Ghana 2006**

# FOREWORD

Tony Cheeseman's passing in 2009 motivated 5 of his friends to create an organisation that would not only celebrate his life and contribution to the African and Caribbean community but celebrate the wider heritage of the Caribbean community in the East End of London and neighbouring Boroughs.

As the Caribbean community structure has significantly changed over the last 50 years and the passing of many of the community's activists who helped promote the resilience of the community; The Foundation has made a commitment to the preservation of the heritage of the community.

The community conferences organised by the Tony Cheeseman Foundation have been a great source of inspiration for those that have attended. It has provided elders with an opportunity to reminisce and share stories of traditions that were a source of support during very difficult times. For the younger generation they provided new insight and knowledge about their heritage and community. Discovering and reminding the community of traditions that helped it overcome difficult times is very important particularly when the community is so often portrayed negatively both within and outside of the community.

Tony Cheeseman recognised the relevance of African and Caribbean traditions and culture as an important context for the development of African and Caribbean communities and an antidote against the devastating impact of racism that the community continues to face.

Most of the centres and institutions that were set up by the community in the 1960's, 1970's and 1980s in Britain, have now disappeared and lost. The Performing Arts Centre founded by Tony Cheeseman is now a McDonald's fast food outlet. There is no reminder or plaque to mark its significance to the heritage of African and Caribbean communities.

'Many studies that explore the African and Caribbean community life in the UK are often littered with negative stories and one where the community is viewed as a community of 'need' rather than one of 'strengths and assets'. These studies have done little to understand how minority ethnic communities utilise their connections, networks and resources for collective and personal benefit.' (Reynolds.2004)

The Tony Cheeseman Foundation is committed to celebrating the communities ability to come together to overcome challenges and tap into its collective strengths. Share stories that aim to inspire community resilience, foster greater intergenerational dialogue and a sense of hope for the future. I salute the Foundation in its mission to promote community resilience through presenting and promoting the rich heritage of the African and Caribbean communities' experiences. Celebrating our rich heritage is an important foundation for a more resilient future.

Sandra Griffiths  
Red Earth Consultancy

# ***Management Committee Members***

***2012 - 2015***



***-Left to right Secretary Harry Cumberbatch, Chair Winston Pinder, Donna Henriques, Ron Reid, Mark Vaughan Chair 2013 /14, Insert Treasurer Pearl Boyce and Public relations officer Joyce Grandison. Rhoda Parker photo not included.***

# Chairperson comments

It's an honour and a great pleasure to serve as Chairperson of the Foundation and be associated with a team of committed and devoted people who formed the Tony Cheeseman Foundation" (TCF) and became the "Corner Stone's".

Every generation is what it is as a result of the subtle and delicate influences of past generations. As a heritage organisation we have the crucial task of helping our future generation to find its bearings; just as the loss of memory in an individual is a psychiatric defect calling for medical treatment, so too any community which has no social memory is suffering from an illness. It is therefore important to remember this when anyone –politician social activist or church reformer – calls for a radical new start, and a complete break with the past.

"Brother Tony" I thank you for the memories.

Winston Pinder

2015

# Activities

The following reflects the work of the Tony Cheeseman Foundation from 2012 to the end of the financial year March 2014/2015. The management committee held regular meetings over the period of this report and leading up to events met more regularly. Below is a timeline of our activities and some evaluation comments. All comments, feedback, registration details, videos and photographs from events are archived.

- On the 19<sup>th</sup> February 2012 the Foundation launched and presented its first public event in association with The Windrush Foundation. This was part of a Heritage Lottery Fund development grant secured by the Windrush Foundation to hold a series of community events in London. Our event was titled 'Our Caribbean Heritage – How African Resistance led to Liberation in 1838'. Over 50 people attended and the distinguished historian Cecil Gutzmore gave the key note speech. It was co-hosted by Joyce Grandison and Sandra Griffiths with a lively panel discussion and question and answers. A photographic exhibition and a DVD of the event is available. We shared the evaluation comments and wrote a letter of support to accompany the Windrush Foundation successful application for a full grant to mark 175 years of the emancipation of enslaved Africans in the British Caribbean.  
**Evaluation comments** – *'Making sure we aim to get our young people present, we also need to hear from them'. – 'Discussion need to be more focused on what we need as a people plus more African history'. – 'Continue to build on the progress that you have already achieved, continue to exist so that hope continues to live for our community and our futures sake'.*
- An away day was held for the management committee members on Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> April 2012 which was jointly facilitated by Sandra Griffiths from Red Earth consultancies and Marie Gabriel consultancies. The aim of the day was to reflect on the Foundation's past and current achievements and challenges – To establish the future direction of the Tony Cheeseman Foundation and how it can be secured – To establish some agreed principles that will inform the working relationship between committee members. It also gave us the opportunity to further develop our charitable objectives and a clear resolve to continue the work of Tony Cheeseman. We agreed to develop the purpose of the Foundation and bring clarity to the difference that the Foundation wishes to make and the guiding principles that will act as a framework for its decision. The report and action plan was agreed at a meeting in May 2012 and it was accepted that it should be our blue print to measure the Foundation outcomes. Priorities and key actions.
- We held a meeting with the Association of Prostate Awareness executive in June 2012 to finalise the finances and any other outstanding matters relating to our work as their subcommittee. The meeting came to an amicable agreement that the subcommittee grant was fully spent and the Foundation committee members thanked the Association for their valuable contribution.

Individuals on the committee have continued to work with the Association of Prostate Awareness by attending their seminars, fundraisers and general meetings. We were invited in May along with a representative from Barbados Overseas Community Association to a planning meeting for a joint Black History month proposal which was presented by their executive member Vasco Stevenson titled 'Project Black Caribbean's'. Unfortunately we were unable to secure funding to take forward the proposal.

- On the 1<sup>st</sup> August 2012 we were invited to an African Remembrance Day Committee Emancipation Day ceremony held at Highgate Park North London. It was a day of Prayers, poems, talks, drumming and a three minute silence in memory of enslaved Africans. Our Chair was one of the guest speakers and spoke about the life of Tony Cheeseman including his Pan African work and also the work of the Foundation. Members of many African Caribbean organisations took part including representatives from the Trinidad embassy and the Jamaican High Commission who addressed the gathering.
- The Foundation was delighted to have the opportunity to learn a bit more on African history through attending the Newham African Caribbean Resource Centre oral history research project titled 'Echoes of Benin Kingdom British Conflict, 1897'. Accepting this invitation allowed us not only to become aware of Benin History, Arts and Culture but to improve our relationship with their community. We attended three events the first was a visit to the British Museum in June which included a tour of the African Galleries and the world famous Benin collection. Curators from the Museum held a workshop on their historical perspective of the Benin collection and gave practical demonstrations on handling 'Archives & Historical Objects'. The second event was held in July at Durning Hall Community Centre in Newham and was a day of celebrating and experiencing Benin cultural history. There was an interesting exhibition on Benin history, artefacts, traditions and heritage, speakers and a special representative from the Oba (King) of Benin. The third was held at the Newham African Resource Centre Barking Road and also showcased Benin culture during Black History Month and included a wider African and African Caribbean contribution. We were pleased to receive a booklet and DVD of the project which is stored in our archives.
- The secretary attended the Waltham Forest African Heritage educational centre launch of their exhibition 'Preserving the heritage of Caribbean, Nigerian and Jamaican people in East London'. This event was held in June at Leyton Town hall where he met Sandra Shakespeare and Sara Griffiths from the National Archives 'Caribbean through a Lens Project' who showed an interest in the work of our Foundation. A meeting was arranged with Sandra Shakespeare the Outreach officer who explained her project brief and how they can support community organisations like us to further our heritage work. We were given access to the thousands of images taken from a photographic collection of Foreign and Commonwealth spanning over 100 years of Caribbean colonial history. After viewing the images, the committee showed an interest and successfully applied for a small grant to make the exhibition 'From Discovery to Independence – Highlighting a journey of Sugar from the Caribbean to the borough of Newham'

- We held our inaugural annual lecture at the Newham African Caribbean Resource Centre on Remembrance Day Sunday 11th November 2012 from 5pm to 9 pm. The occasion was also appropriate to launch our exhibition and remember Africans who served in the British West Indian Regiments.

The theme for the lecture came from an evaluation request suggesting that the committee explore the African Caribbean community contributions in the UK. We agreed with the idea and the lecture was titled 'Remembering the Caribbean Community's Contributions - Perspectives from the Youth, Women and the Elders'. The vice chair and secretary was invited to the Newham based station Africa Radio on the show Africa Speaks presented by Alkebulan to publicise the event.

Donna Henriques talk on African Caribbean Women looked at the historical role and some of the challenges that they still face within their community and the wider society. Sam Springer MBE shared his personal journey of arriving in North London in the 1950s. He looked at housing, employment, race relations and his community involvement including some of the work he did as the Mayor of the London borough of Hackney. Both speakers commented that they allotted time was insufficient and their topics need a conference to start addressing the many approaches. Unfortunately we were unable to get the young Mayor of Newham to talk about their role but welcomed Colin Carter who gave us an enlightening historical insight on the Carolinas where he recently visited. He spoke of the African Gullah community who are known for preserving their African language and cultural heritage as descendants of African slaves. He also shared the Barbados connection with the Carolinas when many British planters went to the Carolinas with their enslaved property to develop new plantations. These African Americans have maintained many cultural characteristics and they are some similarities with present day Barbados life.

Our funders and major contributor to the event The National Archives 'Caribbean through a lens' project had a stall where they shared information on the work of the Archives and their project, they also handed out post cards of some of their popular images from the Caribbean and other promotional materials. Sarah Griffiths joined the guest speakers for a panel discussion which was chaired by Winston Pinder.

Sam King MBE our special guest spoke of his experiences in the RAF as a veteran of the 1939/45 war. He was repatriated after the war only to return to the UK as a passenger on the MV Windrush in 1948. He became the first Black Mayor of Southwark 1983-84 and a community activist over the years. Mr King was presented with a trophy on behalf of the Foundation for his outstanding contributions to the community. He signed and sold copies of his book 'Sam King Climbing up the rough side of the Mountain'. A minute silence was held in remembrance of the Black soldiers who served.

We were pleased to have some young people who did an excellent job at registration. The event was chaired by Ron Reid and the caterers provided tasty refreshment and from evaluation forms feedback of the event was very positive.

Evaluation comments – *‘I would hope that the history of Black people is being written in books so people can go to the library and read about Black History’*. – *‘Lovely to see Caribbean people coming together to share its experiences, to all that organised the event have done a tremendous job. God bless them’*. – *‘I think this should be advertised much more places and not when it is Black History Month. There should be workshops set up in other communities around London’*.

- The Foundation was recommended by the National Archives Exhibition to present their Sugar exhibition and give a talk at the Community Archives and Heritage Group AGM and conference 2013. The conference theme ‘Our industrial heritage’ was used by the secretary to highlight how Sugar contributed to the industrial development of Great Britain. The conference was aimed at anyone with an interest in community archives and heritage from professional archivist, librarians, and heritage workers to small community independent community groups.
- A fund raising sponsorship walk was held in West Ham Park on Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> July 2014 from 11am to 1pm which raised over £1000.00. The event was well supported with members, family and friends getting involved. It was a fun occasion and there were calls to make it an annual event.
- On the 9<sup>th</sup> September we held our first Annual General Meeting. The newly elected Chair Mark Vaughan thanked Winston the outgoing Chair for his work in leading the Foundation and on behalf of the committee wished him well.
- The Foundation accepted an invitation by the Tower Hamlets African Caribbean Mental Health Organisation (THACMHO) to participate in their Black History Month event on the 30/10/13. We ran a workshop titled heritage and mental health keeping with the event theme (THE ART OF WELL BEING). The workshop looked at THACMHO Health through History initiatives; shared how the Tony Cheeseman Foundation is working to preserve the heritage of post war British African & Caribbean settlement in East London. We had two group discussions and feedback. What came out of it was that it showed our resilience as a people and how we have maintained our wellbeing. Our exhibition From Discovery to Independence was also on display and was well received.
- An Away Day for the newly elected management committee was held on Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> January 2014 at St Matthews Church Hall. It was attended by all members and provided the opportunity for the committee to bond. The programme looked at what brought us together, our achievements, feedback forms, partnership working, progress to date, future work plan, membership and training needs.

- The Tony Cheeseman Foundation 2014 annual lecture was held at the Newham African Caribbean Centre on Mothering Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> March 2014 from 5pm to 8.30 pm. It was led by the sisters and supported by the brothers, originally titled Black Women in Society but due to an oversight was printed Black Women in History (A snapshot of Black Women in Newham). Libation was performed by Anum Abeng and our special guest speakers were Marva Rollins a Head Teacher and Ama Gauye a founder member of East London Black Women Organisation who spoke of the African and Caribbean experience in Newham.
- After a panel discussion question and answers Ronald Reid and Rhoda Parker presented the speakers with bouquets. Our guest of Honour was Donna Keizer a retired midwife and founding member of the Newham Hibiscus Elderly Caribbean Association was presented a trophy and a bouquet. W.E .B Dubois 1868-1968 quote was chosen to reflect Black women in Society 'But what of Black Women?...I most sincerely doubt if any other race of women could have brought its fineness up through so devilish a fire.  
*Evaluation comments –'I really enjoyed the few hours thank you. Please continue to carry on because it is very interesting'. - I invite members to attend meetings to discuss what is lacking and gaps concerning health in Newham for the Black community.*
- We received a small 'Let's get the Party Started' grant from Newham Council to launch our exhibition and hold a reminiscence event on sugar. The launch was held at the Stratford library on the 14<sup>th</sup> April 2014 from 6pm to 8pm. After opening remarks by the manager of the Library Colin Ahearne, our Chair Mark welcome everyone and spoke of the work of the Foundation, Councillor Richard Crawford spoke in the absence of the Mayor Sir Robin Wales who was invited and congratulated the Foundation and their exhibition, he introduced his fellow Stratford Ward Councillors Charlene Mclean and Terrence Paul who said that he was pleased that the exhibition is now on display after having difficulties of it being displayed in the Stratford library, it is a valuable asset to the community and offered his continuing support. Sarah Griffiths and Sandra Shakespeare from the National Archives spoke about the Caribbean through the lens project and how they worked with the foundation to produce the exhibition. The National Archives also produced many 8 x 5 post cards of the images from the exhibition and the 'Caribbean through a Lens' Archive Learning Resource Pack to be given away. Sam King MBE a Windrush survivor spoke on his life since returning to the UK in 1948 after serving in World War 2 and Arthur Torrington also from the Windrush Foundation spoke of their touring exhibition titled 'Making freedom commemorating 175 years of freedom of enslaved Africans'. Evaluation comments - *'Thanks very much for a lovely evening, listening to the various speakers'. 'It was great hearing the wonderful work that the organisation does and I am glad to hear it will be passed down to the youngsters of tomorrow'.*

On the 10<sup>th</sup> May 2014 we held a reminiscence event in connection with the exhibition titled 'Reminiscing on Sugar from the Caribbean to East London' at the Stratford library from 1 to 5 pm. They were over 30 present with information tables on prostate cancer, National Archives resources packs and promotional booklets. Hansib press gave us a cross section of books from their catalogue which we displayed. The programme included a Newham local archives presentation of early images of Black people in Newham and a newsreel on sugar presented by Jenni Munro Collins the archivist. Arthur Torrington gave a talk on the plantation system in the British Caribbean after emancipation and the Windrush Making Freedom exhibition

commemorating 175 years of freedom. The UK premiere of the Barbadian film maker Claude Graham DVD documentary 'Home from the Sea' – Barbadian seamen talking about their sea life and their trips to the West India docks with cargoes of sugar. One workshop was held instead of two which explored the possibility for an oral history project with former sugar employees in Newham

Workshop feedback – Someone shared his childhood memories of having a sweet tooth and it being linked to his mother eating sweet things when she was pregnant with him and finding later that his father worked in the sugar industry in Barbados.

His mother who was present shared her memories of working at the Trebor sweet factory prior to her employment at Tate and Lyle sugar refineries. She started as a packer in the 1970's before being promoted to a supervisor who checked the weights of the sugar. She trained the younger members how to produce the sachets of sugar. When the overseas managers came to visit Tate and Lyle she was chosen to serve them for her welcoming and pleasant manner. She worked at the Tate and Lyle factories at Thames Wharf, Plaistow and Canary Wharf.

Another elder shared her memories of her mother, who worked as a seamstress for the sugar plantation owners-making clothes. Her mother would arrive early around 8.30 and spend all day in a room, making clothes for the plantation owners to wear in Barbados but also for their trips off the island. For these long days of labour she was paid cents and the elder recalled her feelings of anger at this; but came to understand that her mother would be fed at the house thereby allowing the family resources to be spread further. The family were also able to be dressed from the 'cast off' clothes-which she spent many hours unpicking for her mother to re-sew as clothes for the family. She recalled as child also 'working' in the sugar industry pulling the trash from the cane.

Other elders related their direct experience-having uncles, mothers and fathers working on the sugar plantation and how after the sugar was 'cropped' there was no income for the family.

Another elder remembered her uncle who worked as a plantation bookkeeper; these jobs were usually taken by the light-skinned or brown skinned.

Other memories were shared by elders who as children worked tying and loading bundles of cane or had parents who like many plantation workers planted cane on their own lands. This provided extra income for the family and they were affected when the price of sugar dropped.

A Jamaican elder spoke of her grandmother who refined her own sugar for the family from the cane that they grew.

The final thread discussed was about another sugar by product –rum and its place in the social fabric of the Caribbean.

This represents just a selection of the rich reminiscences of the elders present about sugar both in the Caribbean and in Newham at Tate and Lyle. The discussion wove together the many threads related to sugar – historical, social, economic and cultural. TCF and the Stratford archive will continue to work together to document the experiences and memories of those elders present.

## Some comments from the Exhibition Library Tour

1. Nice to know a little bit of our history: Thought provoking exhibition.
2. I found the display both interesting and informative. It explained where the sugar came from and all the hard work involved in its production. A Phillips
3. This exhibition is very informative for the British Public and also the descendants of the West Indian people living in the borough. Most of the emphasis is on the African slaves when they were taken there. However, a big chunk of this story is -----!! Slaves from India were also taken there – the majority! Being in Trinidad. The sugar industry was the main source of the “The Trinidad Rum Industry”. PLEASE DONT FORGET US.
4. A great work put together very informative exhibition I gained new information regarding sugar production and issues link with it. Amazing journey of Caribbean peoples and countries. Cheers,
5. The exhibition is well documented and the presentation is interesting and gives a good flow of the history of sugar in the Caribbean and its impact on the society and background to emancipation. A worthwhile exhibition that deserves to be seen all over London and should be at the GLA.
6. An excellent exhibition which shows some important connections between the sugar industry, slavery, and colonial history, to the emergence of our local community and in particular the Caribbean section of it. I will make sure our friends – the community are aware of what you are doing. Some interesting photos here and fragments of an important arrival history which needs to be reserved and developed. Thanks Phil Edwards 15/4/14.
7. Thank you very much for taking time, effort and money to re-educate and inspire the people on the matter. I have learnt something which I will not forget especially about Tate and Lyle. I remember them as house hold name many years ago. I am now 53 years of age. Yvonne!
8. Congratulations, very interesting. For example I did not know that the British Armed Services bought so many slaves to serve Britain. Thank you for all you do. Love Christine
9. An excellent exhibition and very well presented.
10. A very informative and impressive display of the Caribbean during the sugar cane era. I particularly like how the exhibition brought all the islands together in their endeavour to form a Federation. Well done.

# Future plans

1. Organisational Development – Continue to ensure that the Foundation has a range of policies and procedures to guide its work. (To work on capturing the expected outcomes of the Foundation's work and how this can be measured. Hold future facilitated sessions to agree outcomes and their measurement.)
2. To build connections with young people and identify potential partners and agree the nature of working links with schools, e.g. year group, relevance to curriculum and engagement strategy.
3. Beneficiaries – To expand and build on our membership base including developing mechanisms for members to become more involved in the work of the Foundation.
4. Resources – Secure resources by making applications to Funding bodies.
5. To celebrate Tony Cheeseman musical legacy.
6. To create a website to promote the work of Tony Cheeseman and the Foundation, also to encourage community participation and involvement
7. Continue working with Newham Heritage Services, the National Archives, and other Heritage organisations.
8. Continue promoting the Banner exhibition 'From Discovery to Independence - Highlighting the journey of Sugar from the Caribbean to the London Borough of Newham.'

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS special thanks to**

Sandra Griffiths Red Earth Consultancy

Marie Gabriel Consultancy

The Windrush Foundation Sam King MBE and Arthur Torrington CBE

National Archives - 'Caribbean through a lens' Sara Griffiths, Sandra Shakespeare and Michael Mahoney)

Forest Gate St Matthews Church.

Melvina Caterers

Newham Heritage Services - Jenni Munro Collins and Richard Durack

Coral Maynard (photographer)

Nailah Cumberbatch (friend of the Foundation)

Loleta Cumberbatch (friend of the Foundation)

Nylee & Melvin Sinclair (Public address system & music)

Events Guest speakers - Cecil Gutzmore, Sam Springer, Marva Rollins and Ama Geuye

NUSHO. Kelley Webb Martin & Cynthia Appiah

Dona Keiser and family

Arif Ali & Hansib Press

Our achievements over the period of this report would not have been possible without the committee positively working together and having the support of the community, friends, and colleagues and of course our funders. We again thank our Away Day Facilitators who provided us with a solid foundation to take us forward.

***'One of the most difficult tasks of a Black person is to analyse or understand the influence of racism and its effects on Black behaviour, attitudes and general condition'.***

*Tony Cheeseman 1983*