

Let's Start With...

The child and the brown doll by Leeto Thale

What do we want from this doll
That every child loves to adore
What image do we picture
That would be that friendliest teacher

Inside of this child's imagination
Can she reach that place of loving appreciation
Looking at herself reflected, with love uncaged
Playing with a doll that does not seek, to take her place
That which every child loves to adore

How will the doll we give her, open her doors
When every child tastes the joy of innocence
Will dark and brown, also erupt in that elegance

Just Like Me by Eva Gara and daughter

I want a dolly, mama
Let's go to the shops and see
If we can find a nice one
I want one just like me

I want one with full lips
I want one with dark skin
One with a great big smile
And not be oh so thin

She should have curly hair
I'll give her braids and twists
That fall on her brown face
I'll cover her with kisses

She must be very pretty
And I'll be so happy
If you get me a new dolly
One that looks just like me

Oh dear child I've looked and looked
I don't know what to do
I saw so many dolls
But none that looked like you

Make me a dolly, mama
I don't mind if it takes time
I just want to have a dolly
With a face that looks like mine

All right child, bring me some cloth
I'll do anything for you
Get me some thread and a needle
And I'll make you something new

I'll make a dolly for your sister
And your cousins should have one too
And your aunties and your school mates
Will get a doll that looks like you

Welcome to my dream by Ama Gueye



In life, we declare to the world (family, friends, colleagues, strangers - even into thin air) some of the desires we wish to fulfil. Some of us have the courage to live our lives to the full, and reach our ripe old age satisfied with our achievements, happy and content with our lot!!

A few months ago, I took on a self-development course (at Landmark Education) that promised to transform my life and allow me to create any 'possibility'. So, I decided to go all out and do something that would 'put my money where my mouth is' - hence the decision to organise this event. I did the usual thing and initially asked a group of my peers to help plan the session, but soon realised that it was not fair to always burden those who have consistently given to the community. Many thanks to Abiola Ogunsola, Eva Gara, Nana Ama Amamoo, Mia Morris, Jennifer Tyson and Marva

Rollins - for their support, guidance and enthusiasm!

I also believe in handing over the 'baton' to the generation/s below me. That is to say, pass on the learning to others so they do not have to reinvent the wheel, and to carry on from where I leave off - in terms of community activism. With this in mind, I invited seven younger folk to help bring this idea to life: Natasha Atterbury, Tafara Dodzo, Leeto Thale, Akaliza Gara, Daniel Kwapong, Anthony McIntosh and Kwaku Gueye.

The 60's, 70's, 80's and even the early 1990's saw a great deal of consciousness raising projects that enabled many of us in the Black communities to become aware of the contributions People of African descent have made to world history / science / politics / culture etc. I am a founding member of a Black Women's organisation that set up a Supplementary

Places to find Black & Ethnic Dolls
Toys R Us, Mothercare, Early Learning Centre
Tesco Superstores

KIN Books: Stratford, London E15 (Innshops); Walthamstow Market, London E17; Dalston Market, London E8; Brixton Market, London SW
t: 0208 555 6122

Ebony Eyes: Diane Patten

NubiDollz: www.nubidollz.co.uk
Barbie Dolls: www.mattel.com
Other brand dolls: www.fisher-price.com
Kizala: www.kizala.com
Afro Toys Ltd: www.afrotoys.com
Brownstone Buddies (USA): www.brownstonebuddies.com

School in the East End of London, and as a teacher and parent I witnessed the crucial role culturally appropriate play and learning materials/ resources played in the development of a child's self image and identity. I was always on the lookout for toys and books that reflected our African heritage. Finding a good black doll (having a skin tone and hair that looked like ours) has always been a challenge: Some 'nice' ones came from the United States, but they were sometimes too expensive or difficult to locate. Otherwise, there were handmade rag-dolls!!

The time has come to find out exactly what 'black dolls' are available, here, in the UK!! The whole purpose of this event is to showcase a range of black dolls from manufacturers, distributors / retailers and collectors. The emphasis is to have 'fun' with the theme on the day, but the underlying message is to seriously show that there is a need / market for a wide range of good black dolls.

I envisage people bringing their dolls in order to share stories about how they obtained them, and what they mean to them. Manufacturers and distributors will have the opportunity to make a presentation as to what products they have available; there will be books, cards and other resources - to look at and to buy. Maybe a questionnaire to find out which of the dolls on display is considered the best, and what are important considerations when making a 'good' black doll. It will be an opportunity for all to share ideas and experiences.

Bernie Grant Arts Centre
Developing culturally diverse artists



Sankofa: There is no shame in going back to fetch what you have left behind, or to return and correct a mistake. Learning from the past, allows you to plan well for the future.

Patricia Davies, DOLL COLLECTOR

My interest into the world of dolls has been since I was a little girl, I used to cut up my mums table cloths to make clothes, as she was not always able to buy me dolls clothes, as I got older my love of dolls never left me, although I don't play with them I become an enthusiastic doll collector, finding out as much as I can about my dolls and making new friends with other doll enthusiasts along the way.

“Who says
you have to
GROW UP!”



Diane Patten, DOLL MAKER

Ebony Eyes started way back in 1994 when my daughter was just one, I tried my best to find a suitable doll for her but couldn't. I wrote to my aunty who lives in America ask if she would send a doll for her but instead of buying one she made one, my daughter adored her new dolly, took her every wear with her. That is how I got the idea and Ebony Eyes was born.



Angie Le Mar, BRITISH COMEDIENNE

“Ama Gueye a woman after my own heart... I have a love for dolls that even I have never understood; I still have my tiny tears and most of my other ones. We need black dolls, who look like us, and speak to us, that are varied, giving us choice.”

Voted 100 Great Black Britons. Top 50 Black Powerful Women, New Nation Newspaper. Pride Magazine and Top 50 UK Talent to look out for.

MARGARET OSHINDELE-SMITH, DOLL COLLECTOR

Margaret Oshindele-Smith is the co-author (with her husband Bobby) of her autobiography: *One Love Two Colours: The unlikely marriage of a Punk Rocker & his African Queen*, published via Matador.

I have had a passion for black dolls for the past seven years or so - a passion that started just after my daughter was born. I noticed, whilst out buying her a doll, that the toy shops tended to be dominated by Barbie type dolls - their long blonde hair flowing in the wind. I found this puzzling; whatever happened to black representation in dolls, what about people who looked like me?

So I delved into the history books and discovered that black dolls, rather than being invisible, have a rich tradition all to themselves. Gradually I found old black dolls, German black dolls, gollies and even tacky black dolls made in 1970s Hong Kong. My collection grew. Nowadays I have around two hundred of the little darlings - their presence felt throughout my house. Sadly, my husband, a punk rocker, does not share my passion for dolls, which is why I am delighted to share my interest with you all at the exhibition today.

Personally, I see these dolls as evidence that we have remained in the consciousness of other races - as proved by the variety of my collection.

So I say to all my dollies, like the t-shirt did in the 1980s: be black and proud!

You can contact Margaret about any dolly matter, and/or order the book at: bobbypunk@talktalk.net



DOLLY ADAMS, DOLL COLLECTOR



“Do they think we can't love or that we have no feelings...”

community declared there was no need to put black dolls in a Nursery school!! That boldness to speak out earned her respect within her community, and many have benefitted from her years working as a Mediator and Project Officer at the 'Stockwell Good Neighbours' voluntary organisation.

Dolly has given so many of her dolls away to those she knows need them - e.g to one of her local churches because they did not have enough black dolls for the children to play with. She continues to be a staunch advocate for resources, such as her black dolls, that help children feel proud of their identity and culture.

As she says, with a show of such indignant exasperation, “Do they think we can't love or that we have no feelings to show (each other)? Why are there not products that allow us to express ourselves the way we are?”

Dolly Adams started collecting Dolls 40 years ago, when her (Step) son, sent his two nieces 2 black dolls from the United States of America; and as people got to know about her passion, they brought her presents (of black dolls) from wherever they came. Dolly's wonderful brood of children, grandchildren and great - grandchildren, have all benefitted from her wholesome hobby.

She used to be so troubled by the fact that she could not buy books, greetings cards (postcards/ birthday cards/ Christmas cards) or toys for her children, family members and friends that reflected who she is. She remembers being absolutely incensed at a huge GLC (Greater London Council) meeting, where a 'leader' in the

What I have seen by DR. ABIOLA OGUNSOLA

“I am trying to be the change I want to see in the world, please lend a hand.”

In primary school in Nigeria, I learned from envying white girls their blue eyes and blond hair (these were the privileged children of, so called, ‘expatriates’... ‘migrants’ in our language)... that if somebody else is having an experience, whilst they share that experience I don’t need to be having it too. That is where I started to work out that I did not need to envy anybody. I would like to share that with the wii players hopefully it will also reassure their parents as well ... perhaps through playing at being ‘white’ with the will, they will work through the issues and be better able to resist being whited out through these experiences ... even though it may be difficult for us to watch the process.

When I was making dolls, as soon as I saw the Ebony Eyes dolls made by Diane, I knew I did not need to make dolls anymore. Fortunately I have got pictures of the different types of dolls that I have made which I will share with you so you can see why.

Your project is the development of an important resource and will be doing exactly what we need to be doing now... passing on what we have learned from surviving and growing stronger here in the UK in order to strengthen our next generations... To add more grease to their elbows as they take our passion for justice and peace forward.

I would argue that dolls... Particularly the black dolls that we have had and learned to love, have been part of learning to be comfortable in our African identity... They have been an expression of our resistance to being ‘whited out’.... so our role as ‘senior sistah’s’ must be what you have suggested... Sharing our learning with our younger sisters and daughters... Since I have no girls myself, I can only be a social mother to the next generation and what you suggest is an exciting opportunity to ‘mother’ / mentor / work with ‘girls’.



KIZALA

Kizala is one of the foremost retailers of black cards and gifts in the UK, and is based in Croydon and on-line at www.kizala.com.

Kizala was founded to meet the need of an increasingly diverse and multicultural community across the UK, and stocks a culturally diverse and expansive range of products that include:

Black dolls - the range varies and generally includes fashion dolls, bridal dolls and Ugandan rag dolls in traditional dress.

Children’s books, puzzles and toys; Educational books and toys

Black greeting cards for every occasion; and Black wedding invitations, cake tops and accessories.

Visit Kizala

Opening hours:
11.30 am to 5.30pm
Tuesday - Saturday
16 St George’s Walk,
Croydon CRO 1YG

Mail order service available or shop on-line;
t: 020 8688 2601
e: sales@kizala.com
w: www.kizala.com

AFROTOYS

Hello welcome to the world of AFROTOYS!! and we are very pleased to meet you!

I would like to introduce you to the products I wished were available YEARS ago when I was a little girl!! They are not old fashioned toys, they are new products that have just recently come onto the market, that will appeal to our strong minded and fashion conscious kids that are growing up in the society we live in today. All of them are enjoyed by kids and will keep them busy.

Firstly, we welcome the Princess and the frog range to our site. Tiana is the Princess who kissed the frog and there are many different products in the range from glitter gift sets to Barbies. We also have the new Barbie ‘SO IN STYLE’ range of dolls created by Mattel for the more fashion conscious Barbie girl who cares about doing hair!! She comes with her own tongs, styling chair and spritz bottle and there are three different dolls in that range.

We also have a whole section of products devoted to our first black President Barack Obama including books, action figures, t-shirts and hoodies. I hope that your kids will love them as much as mine do.

CROWN WEARING

In loving ourselves, valuing our image is a crucial part of our cultural ID.

Hair seems to take on gigantic social & political significance. Its ok for a man to have a baldhead, but a woman with no hair is making a challenging statement. Hair is an important symbol of our identity.

The nurturing image of women grooming hair seems to me a spiritual activity as well as a bonding experience. ‘Getting your hair done’, leaves you with the feeling of royalty. Terms like having ‘good hair’ or ‘bad hair’ become meaningless when thought through, for we are all born with different genes. For me celebrating natural hair is my suggestion that we all wear, ‘The Crown’. With this series of paintings I enjoy the opportunity to highlight our nobility.

To view images from this series & more from the artist Ken Yahw McCalla, log on to www.yahwarts.co.uk



the team behind the dream

AMA GUEYE is a Pan-Africanist, Mother, Educator, Storyteller, Feminist / Womanist and indefatigable community activist. Has lived and worked in Ghana, Sénégal, USA and UK. I believe in helping Young People to understand who they are and where they come from - identity and culture. I am in awe of this 'Operation Sankofa Dolls' Team. It is amazing what can be done with no budget, a stand for the vision and a willingness to be creative!! Ayekoooooo!!

AKALIZA GARA is a young Multimedia Consultant who lives and works in Kigali, Rwanda. Her work mainly involves website design for Government institutions as well as local businesses. As a child she was very fortunate to have variety of black dolls and African children's books which her mother made a great effort to find for her. She is passionate about seeing a steady increase in the toys, books and films created with a multi-ethnic background in mind.

LEETO THALE is a spoken word artist, a writer and a musician. Published as a poet, he has also been credited for writing songs for other artists. He frequently combines music with poetry. Leeto's work as a freelance writer has been published in numerous publications, where he has covered a range of issues, with greater emphasis on art and culture.

KWAKU GUEYE is a qualified engineer, but comes from a pan-african family background. Raised in a household understanding the need for children to recognise their African cultural heritage. Including supplementary education and opportunities to live in other countries. Major interests include music and sports.

TAFARA DODZO is a mother, student, sociologist, Nuwaubian (upliftment of the Black community).

Currently studying a degree in Sociology, my aim is to use my existing and newly learnt skills to help as many people as possible. However, my overall aim is to help our Black community to elevate back to the great nation that we once were. I believe that one of the ways that this can be achieved is through us re-embracing our true culture in order to free us from the state of mental slavery that some of us are in during crucial times.

Therefore, 'Operation Sankofa Dolls' means a whole lot to me due to the nature of the event, as our children are our future... UNITED WE STAND, DIVIDED WE FALL!

DANIEL ANIM-KWAPONG ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Nullam in sem nisl, at adipiscing justo.

NATASHA ATTERBURY

Mother, CEO NubiDollz, Software Analyst

When my daughter asked me for a pretty black doll I decided that she was going to have exactly what she wanted and so began a search that started the creation of NubiDollz. Children of colour need positive images that look like them, pretty dolls that look like them, books that tell stories about them and at NubiDollz we celebrate exactly that.

Operation Sankofa Dolls is an exhibition that celebrates our identity, our culture and also allows our children to see that we are proud of us and we are proud to celebrate black dolls.

I am glad to be a part of this historical event.

ANTHONY MCINTOSH is currently a mathematics teacher in an east London secondary school. He graduated in 2006 with his Bachelor of Sciences in psychology. After studying he worked in the fitness industry for a while before undertaking his teacher training course. Anthony's motivation to become a teacher came from his degree, when he learnt about the significant impact that teachers have, in a young person's development. Anthony has also worked as a behavioural therapist, with young people who have been involved with the legal system. Anthony's aim is to raise the self-belief of young people and to deconstruct any stereotypes and misconceptions of young black men.