

ELREC Newsletter



Edinburgh & Lothians Racial Equality Council

Promoting Racial Equality and Fighting Racial Discrimination

Please join us at our celebration event to mark **ELREC 35th Anniversary**, on Monday 12 June 2006, 7pm to 11pm, at Main Council Chambers, City Chambers, High Street, Edinburgh. Please contact the office if you wish to attend.

Professor Braj P Sinha, Chair

**Issue 8
June 2006**

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Editorial

Welcome to the eighth issue of ELREC Community Newsletter which aims to bring our readers news and information about our work as well as the latest development in the race equality field.

Changing face of Equalities

The Equalities Review was established to carry out an investigation into the causes of persistent discrimination and inequality in British society. It was initiated by the Prime Minister and announced in February 2005.

The scope of the review includes:

- Investigate the social, economic, cultural and other factors that limit or deny people the opportunity to make the best of their abilities.
- Provide an understanding of the long term and underlying causes of disadvantage that need to be addressed by public policy.
- Make practical recommendations on key policy priorities for the Government and public

sector; employers and trade unions; civic society and the voluntary sector.

- Inform both the modernisation of equality legislation, towards a Single Equality Act; and the development of the new Commission for Equality and Human Rights.

The panel, chaired by Trevor Philips in his personal capacity, has published an Interim Report which is out for consultation. The report sets out the findings on the extent of chronic and persistent inequalities in the UK. The report also introduces some radical changes in how we think and articulate inequalities in the future.

Instead of our traditional analysis of equality strands such as race, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation, and religion/belief etc., the panel is proposing that the measuring factors will be 'vulnerability', 'trigger episodes' and 'field'. They suggest that it is a combination of vulnerability and a trigger episode in a field such as education, employment or health which helps to identify a specific target for action against inequality. The report also

introduces a concept of 'capabilities threshold'. This is a basic minimum set of capabilities which everyone has to possess in order to play a proper, autonomous part in society at all.

The full document is available on

www.theequalitiesreview.org.uk

Final responses are due 5 June 2006. Though you may not be able to submit your comments to the interim report after this date, this will be an ongoing important debate you should participate.

BME Community Safety Working Group

Community Safety Unit is proposing that the working group would expand to cover the other five equality strands. The working group will make up of two representatives from each of the six equality fora. It will identify common strategies in progressing community safety issues. Hate Crime will be part of this agenda. The next meeting will be held on 29 June 2006, 2:00pm at City Chambers.

**By Nina Giles
Director**

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Complainant Aid

Employment Tribunals hear complaints and appeals about matters to do with employment. These matters include race discrimination. After hearing all the evidence from both sides, the tribunal makes a judgement and provides reasons for this. There are limited rights to apply for a review of the judgment, or to lodge an appeal against it to the Employment Appeal Tribunal.

The tribunal generally has three members. The Chairman is legally qualified and the other two members are lay members with experience in dealing with work related problems. Although the three members are appointed by government Ministers, they are independent of and not influenced by the Government. Most tribunal hearings are public and the press are free to attend and report the proceedings.

In this issue of our newsletter Susan Chen candidly shares her experience of the Employment Tribunal process from the perspective of an unrepresented claimant. Her article below provides interesting reading for persons new to the Tribunal system who are perhaps considering bringing a claim.

My personal experience of the employment tribunal (ET) procedure by Susan Chen

When we face racial discrimination we can have totally different reactions. We might be totally intimidated or shocked to do anything about it. We might not be bothered to do anything about it as if we are used to it. However, some of us might choose to stand up and defend our basic human rights and dignity to be treated equally, no matter what our races are.

The race discrimination against me started the second month I started my work. I complained about it verbally and through the company's internal grievance procedure. However, unfortunately because I raised a grievance I was then victimised by my employer. After 14 months of employment, I was dismissed for "serious misconduct".

I decided to stand up against racism through legal means. I was determined to go through the ET procedure which I believe is designed by the people, of the people and for the people like myself. I believe the ET procedure is the sole route to get justice done. Due to many complicated reasons, I ended up with no legal representation. I was forced to act as my own solicitor and my own witness.

Although the ET hearings are informal, we must behave properly and professionally. Sitting in front of the tribunal, I felt relieved in finding the right place to speak out about the racist abuse I was subjected to. The ET hearings are not as daunting and challenging as a real courtroom prevailed with obscure and scary legal terms. However, I did need some legal knowledge. I carried out sufficient researches and preparations through the Internet.

Although the ET process is designed to be simple, it can be manipulated and turned to be complicated, long and slow. The usual card played by the respondent is to drag the process as long as possible so to wear out the claimant's determination.

The amount of paperwork can be scary, drowning, tedious and exhausting. Another usual card played by the respondent is to "drown" the claimant with papers because usually the claimant has the disadvantage of resources shortages.

I know legal disputes are daunting and stressful, even for professionals who earn a living by practicing law. When I decided to start the ET process, I chose to take on the stress and pressure. The pursuit for justice not only needs a sound-mind of determination, good judgement, knowledge, intelligence, faith, confidence, patience but also a sound-body to cope with the guilt of subjecting the entire family and relatives to stresses and difficulties, let alone my own sleepless nights, distress, depression, frustration,

confusion and biting awareness of foreseeable or unpredictable adversities along my pursuit of justice through the ET process.

My personal experience tells me, it is a blessing that there are the ET procedures for us to pursue justice. Although these procedures are not perfect, it is better than nothing. Most importantly, the ET procedures do work, not merely for respondents like multinational companies but also vulnerable victims like me. If we are not scared away from these procedures, these procedures will be practiced more, tested more and they will have better chance to be amended and improved.

Race Discrimination and Harassment Practitioner's Forum

The next meeting of the forum for case workers dealing with race discrimination and harassment cases in Edinburgh and the Lothians will take place on **Tuesday 20 June 2006, 10:00 am till 11:30 am at ELREC offices.**

Amanda Jones, who is a partner within the Employment, Pensions and Benefits division of Maclay Murray and Spens will do a presentation on "**Preparing harassment cases**". Amanda appears regularly in Employment Tribunals as well as in the Employment Appeal Tribunal. She is also a panel solicitor for the Joint Equalities Commission. Following Amanda's presentation there will be an opportunity for discussion and networking.

For more information on the forum or to confirm your attendance at this meeting please contact Christine Maitland-Francis, Complainant Aid Officer.

*By Christine Maitland-Francis
Complainant Aid Officer*

Community Development

Well to start with an update on the community development projects. Maurice and Anjam, our two outreach workers have been working extremely hard locating and speaking to BME communities in Restalrig/Lochend and Leith areas. As mentioned in our last newsletter, we are conducting research in these areas to find out the needs and wants of BME communities. We want to help get your views heard so that services can be tailored to your needs and your views are taken forward.

The outreach workers will be in your area carrying out street work, visiting local community projects, local businesses and carrying out door to door work. Get in touch if you want to get involved!!!!

We have started a Multicultural open space at ELREC every Tuesday mornings 10-12. BME people should come along and raise issues that you are concerned about or talk about racism in a comfortable and safe environment. We are planning to arrange a speaker to come to the group at least once a month so if you would like more information on a particular topic then let us know e.g. health, jobs, benefits etc!! Or do you just want a place to meet new people? A place to relax? *All Welcome.*

On a community development approach, ELREC is keen to work with all minority groups. We are especially keen to work with Polish and Eastern European communities that are residing in and around Edinburgh and Lothians. We want to hear from your experiences so get in touch.

Normally my articles tend to focus on how prevalent racism is and all the communities that are affected by it emotionally, physically and psychologically but I would like to bring everyone's attention to positive action. There are a lot of people out there who are committed to combating racism. These people are from all walks of life and not

necessarily just from BME communities. I commend these people who are passionate in making a difference and work within this field whether it be paid or on a voluntary basis. Unfortunately for those who have been working tirelessly in the race equality field for many years are probably not seeing the change fast enough. I often hear from the elders of the community that, "I've been in this field for the past 20 years....we are saying the same things now as we were back then but with new faces..."

I'm pleased to say that I do see change, albeit may be painstakingly slow but it certainly is a lot easier for people from my generation than it was for people in my parent's generation. Key point: We have more CHOICES. We still have challenges and barriers placed in front of us, we definitely still struggle with our cultural/religious identity but the fundamental point is that we do have more choices and support mechanisms available. And no we're not saying that Racism doesn't exist....it does and we have stats to show that but there are certainly more positive initiatives in place to help and support (we'll not go into the funding struggles these places have to go through to set up these wonderful projects...). On this note I would like to say thanks to all the BME people that have attended the Lothian & Borders diversity training because they are actively trying to make a difference. We all have a collective responsibility to bring positive change about and influence legislation, policies and practices. Currently there is a lot of good practice out there but there is still so much more to be done BUT we can't just rely on others to do this. In order to see change we all have to work together and with others.... I just don't fancy sitting in 20 years and saying the same thing....

ELREC Community Development Projects that you could join in

RESTALRIG COMMUNITY RELATIONS PROJECT

A comprehensive programme in engaging all communities in Restalrig and Lochend to tackle racial harassment and disadvantages.

LEITH FACT FINDER

A needs analysis project to gather views from BME individuals living and working in Leith, with the purpose to present findings to local community planning structure.

SPEAKING OUT AGAINST RACISM

ELREC recruits individuals who is able to devote their free time to speak about their experiences of racism at the Lothian & Borders Police Diversity Training. This takes place every Wednesday. £10 will be given for traveling costs.

MULTICULTURAL ZONE FOR ADULTS (FEMALE & MALE)

A space for adults to meet and share concerns and issues on a variety of topics.

Venue: ELREC OFFICE

When: Every Tuesday morning

Time: 10.00 – 12.00

Cost: Free

*****DIARY DATE: 20th June*****

Communities Scotland will be at the Multicultural Zone speaking about the Community Voices Network which is designed to find ways to involve local community members in the decisions that affect their neighbourhoods. This is a good opportunity to put forward your views and help make Edinburgh a better place to live. **RSVP to Shasta by Monday 19th June.**

For any of the above, contact Shasta on 0131 556 0441 for more info.

*By Shasta Hanif
Community Development Officer*

YZ New Recruits

ELREC has recruited a number of sessional workers to help meeting the increasing demand of YZ. Tommy George is now joined by **Lisa Lam** and **Maurice Kazoka** in the YZ team. They have both brought new energy and interesting ideas to the YZ. Already they are getting stuck in in finding out job opportunities for the young people and getting suggestions from young people for the Summer outings.

In Aisha's absence Shasta has been helping out with supporting the young people out of YZ hours and in organising the programme for the YZ. Over last few months, YZ has had speakers from Relationship Academy and Communities Scotland, as well as preparing a performance for ELREC's 35th celebration.

The **Youth Zone** is the **only** space in Edinburgh and Lothians that offers such a **unique service**. It evolved from suggestions made by BME young people through a needs consultation/research that was carried out a few years ago. The Youth Zone is cost effective, free from racial harassment or discrimination and young person led. These factors were also originally put forward by young people and given priority when establishing the project.

New and Exciting Outings So Far

As the weather getter brighter and the temperature starts to rise, YZ workers and young people have been starting to get "oot & about" more... like picnic at Calton Hill.

DJ VIP will be coming to talk to young people on 15 June. There will be future workshops with the man himself so get in touch.

Many more activities are planned for the summer, such as day trips away to M & Ds theme park to name one. We will also be trying to take advantage of the glorious Scottish Summer and get out to the park for games of tennis, cricket, frisbee and football.

By Liza Lam

We Need Your Story

This is the 35th year of ELREC since it was established in 1971. Many people have been involved in different capacities to shape ELREC, e.g. from community relations council to racial equality council and from a constituted body to a company limited by guarantee.

The services provided by ELREC have also evolved. From being the only source of information and support in all areas for Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) individuals, ELREC has moved into specialising on race-specific case work and working in partnership with other agencies to improve access of their services. ELREC played a key role in supporting the development of many services specialised for BME people that we see today.

To mark the success of ELREC, we hope to produce a special edition of Annual Report to be published later this year.

If you have any interesting story, photo, other memorabilia that is connected to ELREC. We would appreciate if you could share them with us. Or simply you wish to supply a statement to be published in our special annual report, we would like to receive that too.

Closing date for contribution will be 15 September 2006.

Please contact Nina Giles for further information.





Lothian and Borders Police

Attempt murder within the Chinese community

You may have read or heard of the disturbance in the Saughton area of Edinburgh. This was a large fight between Chinese men about half past midnight in the early hours of Sunday 30th May. This violent disturbance resulted in one male receiving very serious injuries. All of the people detained and the injured person are from a specific province of mainland China and did not involve any of our established Scottish Chinese community.

This was a serious incident and I know many people will be worried by what has happened and how it is being reported by the press.

Despite what you may have read, there is no evidence of Triad or organised crime involvement in this incident. However we are determined to prevent a recurrence of such violence and we are still actively seeking any information the community may have or their suspicions of people who may have been involved but who the police have not yet been able to identify.

I appreciate that many people have concerns about reporting crimes or even suspicions about criminal behaviour to the police. These concerns can even make it difficult for people to tell us when they have been the victims of racist abuse or crime.

I want to reassure you that we are determined to protect and serve **all** our communities. If you call on us we will do all we can to provide the professional service you deserve. However there are two services I would like to make you aware of.

Firstly, if you wish to tell us about any crime or suspicion you have but do not want to identify yourself or get further involved you can contact Crime Stoppers, 24 hours a day on 0800 555111. You don't need to give your name but you could be given a financial reward and in any case your information will be acted upon.

Secondly, if you are the victim of any crime or incident you can report this to another agency that will in turn tell us. Telephone 0131 311 3909 to hear full details of how you can report incidents without having to approach the police.

We all need to increase the confidence of all of our communities to come forward and help your police service protect and serve you.

Chief Inspector George Denholm
Safer Communities
Lothian and Borders Police

What's On

ELREC Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM)

Monday 12 June 2006
6:00pm to 7:00pm
Business Centre, City Chambers, High Street, Edinburgh

ELREC 35th Anniversary Celebration

Monday 12 June 2006
7:00pm to 11:00pm
Main Council Chamber, City Chambers, High Street, Edinburgh

Race Equality Forum

Wednesday 14 June 2006
6:00pm
City Chambers, High Street, Edinburgh

Leith Festival

2nd to 11th June 2006
Full programme can be obtained from www.leithfestival.com

BME Community Safety Working Group

29 June 2006
2:00pm
City Chambers, High Street, Edinburgh

ELREC Annual General Meeting

Wednesday 26 October 2006
6:30pm
Venue to be confirmed

Office space is available for renting at ELREC. Monthly rental £300. For more information, please contact Elizabeth, Administrator.

Perspectives from a Community Education Student

It has only been two weeks since I began a six week placement with ELREC, and already I am amazed by the variety and scope of work which is carried out by the organization's hard working and committed staff and members. Working primarily alongside Shasta, the Community Development officer, I have the opportunity to be involved in a wide range of activities. During my first few days, I attended the Lothian and Borders Police Diversity Training, joined Anjam and Maurice for outreach work in Leith and met the highly enthusiastic young people and youth workers who transform the office's second floor

meeting room into the vibrant Youth Zone on Thursdays and Fridays. There is also of course, the necessity of attending meetings – but even there I have the chance to meet the government officials and representatives who implement the policies which shape our communities and question their meaning face to face.

Having spent the past year studying for my post grad certificate in community education at the University of Edinburgh, this placement is a fantastic opportunity to put theory into practice and

acquire hands-on experience in a community setting which I can use in my next professional position. I chose to join ELREC precisely because of its strong stance on equality issues, diversity and support for individuals within the BME community.

I have been particularly moved by the people I have met at the weekly Diversity Training with the Lothian police where members of the BME public courageously share their own experiences with racism. It is inspiring to see people from such diverse backgrounds coming together to learn from each other and develop mutual understanding and respect. The meaning of community education is to support people in discovering their own potential to change their world for the better and if we are going to truly challenge the myths and false perceptions which are often portrayed about ethnic minorities, we all need to be willing to listen to and empathise with each others experiences.

As a student, I often find myself in the role of observer and I am confident that the next four weeks will expose me to new insights and understanding which will influence my own future work with communities of all backgrounds. The elimination of racism is, I think, one of the most important and difficult challenges facing society today. If you are frustrated by racism, I hope that you will consider finding ways to get involved, whether through one of ELREC's many programmes or other activities in your own community. Your voice can make a real difference. I am very thankful to all the staff at ELREC for giving me this opportunity and I hope that I will have the opportunity to meet many of you over the next month and continue to be inspired by the people who work so hard to promote essential change for equality.

Brenna Nyznik

Community Education Student

May 9th – June 16th

Refugee Week is a UK wide festival of arts, cultural and educational events which celebrate the contribution of refugees to the UK, and aims to encourage encounters and better understanding between different communities.

19 – 25 June 2006

For more information about Refugee Week or events in your area please visit our website: www.refugeeweek.org.uk or telephone: Refugee Week Scotland: (0)124 2148 9777.



Back Page Information



ADVERTISING

We welcome organisations to advertise in ELREC Community Newsletter, for example:

- Promoting services
- Disseminating flyers
- Advertising
- Vacancies
- Consultations
- General marketing

This service is available for a contribution of £100.

To find out more, please contact Nina Giles on 0131 556 0441 or admin@elrec.org.uk

The newsletter is available on a quarterly basis.

CONFERENCE ROOM BOOKINGS

You can book our 20-seat meeting room on an hourly basis for £10 per hour

Tea & Coffee £1 per head

Please contact the office for any bookings

DONATIONS

ELREC is a registered charity in Scotland. We welcome donations however small, from individuals or organisations to help us to pursue our goal - *racial equality and justice for all.*

If you would like to share any interesting fundraising ideas with us, please give the office a ring.

SERVICES

Edinburgh & Lothians Racial Equality Council (ELREC), founded in 1971, is a voluntary body and charitable company made up of individual members and representatives from a wide range of organisations. ELREC has a remit to work across the areas of City of Edinburgh, East Lothian, Midlothian and West Lothian Councils.

We aim to:

- Work towards the elimination of racial discrimination
- Promote equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different racial groups
- Promote and organise co-operation of the statutory authorities and voluntary organisations

We pursue our aims through:

- Individual Complainant Aid Service
- Education and Training
- Campaigning
- Publications
- Consultancy and Signposting

To contact us:

Edinburgh & Lothians Racial Equality Council
14 Forth Street
Edinburgh
EH1 3LH
(T) 0131 556 0441
(F) 0131 556 8577
(E) admin@elrec.org.uk
(W) www.elrec.org.uk

Charity Number: SC007896
Company Number: 183419

OUR TEAM

Nina Giles - Director

Christine Maitland-Francis - Complainant Aid Officer

Shasta Hanif - Community Development Officer

Tommy George - Youth Zone Support Worker

Lisa Lam - Youth Zone Support Worker

Elizabeth Obiegbu - Administrator

Anjam Sheikh - Outreach / Street Worker

Maurice Kazoka - Outreach / Street Worker