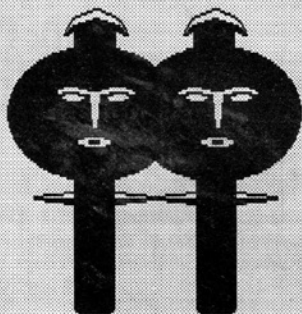




Black Lesbian & Gay Centre Project

BM Box 4390
London WC1N 3XX
081-885 3543 (office)
071-837 5364 (helpline)



Newsletter: Feb/March 1992

WE HAVE FOUND A CENTRE

The Black Lesbian & Gay Centre Project has now secured a building which will become the first Black Lesbian and Gay Centre in Europe.

After many months of hard work, the tenancy on a railway arch in South London, was finally signed in the last week in January. The property consists of over 2000 square feet of floor space and is located in an easily accessible part of Peckham, South London, which is supplied by many bus routes and a fast train service from Kings Cross. The property is as yet only an empty shell and will require a fair amount of building work to make it suitable for the community's use. Design and planning is happening at the moment and initial works should be completed by the end of March. We will be inviting the Black lesbian and

gay community to view the building when some of the building work has been completed. The works will be divided into sections. The preliminary work will enable the office to move from its premises in Tottenham to the arch and will enable us to launch the Centre officially around June. Further work to encompass a drop-in space/ creche, meeting and social space will happen later this year when funds are obtained and the necessary planning and licences come through. We will be appealing for donations of skills and money/furniture/fittings in the near future when the plans are finalised. We will keep you posted as things develop.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR VOLUNTEERS

The BLGC has now secured a grant to fund an extra post for the next three years to concentrate on developing our volunteer services. This will enable the Project to provide much better services to our volunteers and provide more comprehensive training and structure to our work with volunteers. Details of these improved services will be announced later this year.

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WARNING

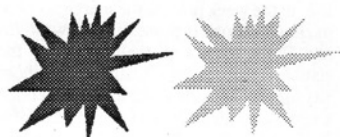
It has come to our attention that there are a number of businesses apparently run by Black lesbians and offering services for lesbians, such as home help agencies, that are not what they seem.

One particular case to be alert for is the supposed availability of cheap flights to San Francisco (£100-£200) offered by Black lesbians (unnamed) to Black lesbians.

These cheap flights and the Black lesbians offering them are apparently non-existent and women are being ripped off.

Sad to say, but there are Black lesbians and gay men out there who are ripping off sisters and brothers. Before you part with your hard-earned cash ask around, get verbal or, preferably, written references from people you trust.

Remember, if it seems too good to be true it probably is!!



BLGC DEFINITION OF BLACK

All lesbians and gay men descended (through one or both parents) from Africa, Asia (ie. the Middle East to China, including the Pacific nations) and Latin America, and lesbians and gay men descended from the original inhabitants of Australasia, North America and the islands of the Atlantic and Indian Ocean.

SORRY

As you can imagine the four part time workers have been very busy with the property side of the work, which has meant that sometimes other areas of the workplan have not been completed on time. We apologise for this and hope that as the workload from the Centre becomes more regular and more volunteers become involved that other areas will come back on schedule.

We Have Always Been Here II
Celebrating the Black Lesbian & Gay Centre
Curated by Veronica McKenzie
&
Unveiling of the Rainbow Plaque

MOCA London

28 February 2022 / 18 February 2024

LESBIAN
CENTRE
35 3543



Curator's Statement.

In 2012, I was at a social event in which a young woman proposed that the Black queer community should start to organise. At that moment I realised she she had no awareness of *what had already been done*. It wasn't her fault. We had not effectively documented our struggles to further the rights of the BAME queer community. The consequence of that was stunning - we had no representation in the general narrative of the UK's LGBTQ+ history.

Reflecting on my own experiences growing up in Haringey and how I navigated the world as a young Black lesbian, I recalled the activists who were there to support and educate me, and the struggles I had been involved in while agitating for equality for Black people, the queer community, the working class and women. I remembered the collectives, the co-ops, shared spaces, marches, protests, boycotts, newspapers and underground parties - all of which came into being as a response to the generally right-wing and conventional notions of what society was. So little of this is on the record. In fact, when I googled the Black Lesbian and Gay Centre - at which I had been a Management Committee member as a student, *nothing came up*. Rectifying that became my passion.



The documentary *Under Your Nose* was born. The Haringey Vanguard project was born. Today, no young, black queer person must ever feel adrift from a community and a history which is rich, nurturing and vitally important to LGBTQ+ equality. Each successive generation should honour and build on the sacrifices made by those who have gone before us in the fight for equality. My mission is to make sure that this history is preserved and widely shared.

In completing the Haringey Vanguard project, I would like to thank all the participants who so generously allowed us to record their oral histories, contributed their personal materials to the archive, our volunteers who helped shape the project and injected a youthful perspective! Thanks to the funders, National Lottery Heritage Fund, our partners, London Metropolitan Archives and Haringey Archive and Museum Services, and everyone who attended our events and supported our work.


We look to the youth to take this work forward!


Veronica McKenzie.

Statement for the exhibition at MOCA London 2022.


BLACK LESBIAN AND GAY SOCIAL


ON
 FRIDAY 15TH JUNE
 7.00 TO 10.30 PM




 AT
 SWISS COTTAGE COMMUNITY CENTER
 19 WINCHESTER ROAD NW3
 FIRST ACT 7.30


 WITH...

STORME WEBBER.


AMIR SHAKHAN.

SAVITRI HENSMAN.

•FOOD•  •BAR•  •CRECHE•

£3.00 (£1.00 CONCESSION)
 •TRANSPORT AVAILABLE TO SHAKTI DISCO.
 •SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETER.
 •WHEELCHAIR ACCESS.

CONTACT NO: 081-802-8981 Or:
 BLACK LESBIAN AND GAY PROJECT:
 081-885-3543





Dennis Carney

Raised in Manchester, with a supportive family, Carney experienced racism at gay clubs there, and moved to London in his early twenties. He joined the Management Committee of the Black Lesbian and Gay Centre, which empowered him in life and shaped his career in housing and activism. He was involved in many campaigns including the *Stop Murder Music* campaign against derogatory dance hall musica lyrics.





Blackliners
THE BLACK COMMUNITY

African/Caribbean men who have sex with men, aged 25 years and under.

London Black MESMAC (men who have sex with men: action in the community) is part of the overall London MESMAC project, currently involved with workshops, peer education, training, small grants and the youth group.

Z
ZERO TOLERANCE
of violence against women
A-LA

BLACK LESBIAN & GAY COMMUNITY

071-7

PAPER

Savitri Hensmen

Hensmen's family emigrated from Sri Lanka when she was two. Aged 16, she got involved in LGBT groups at university and locally within the Islington and Haringey Gay Group. She was one of the first and longest serving workers at the Black Lesbian and Gay Centre Project. Her writings about Christian faith and sexuality have appeared in numerous publications.



Black Lesbian & Gay Centre

BM Box 4390
London WC1N 3XX

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Newsletter: August/September 1992



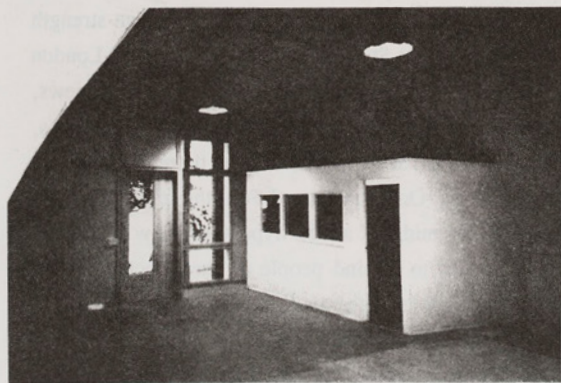
MOVE TO CENTRE

The formerly office-based Black Lesbian and Gay Centre project has moved to a centre in Peckham, South London.

For years BLGC has been searching for a suitable building from which to expand the services it offers. Earlier this year it at last found a centre space - a railway arch in fairly good condition at a reasonable rent. At the time, the project was crammed into two small rooms in Tottenham, North London.

The move took place at the beginning of August. It will now be easier for members to make use of the library and other resources, and for staff and volunteers to get together at the new premises.

The centre, the first of its kind in Britain, still needs more furniture, equipment and building work to make it accessible and welcoming. It is due to open around the end of the year.



The new Black Lesbian and Gay Centre

Rainbow Plaques

Rainbow Plaques was initiated in 2018 as a national scheme organised by the London LGBT+ Forums Network and Studio Voltaire, to highlight the importance of intersectional LGBTQIA+ visibility in our streets and public spaces. The programme was established by York Civic Trust and the York LGBT Forum to honour lesbian diarist Anne Lister (1791–1840). The programme builds upon existing work established by Wandsworth LGBTQ+ Forum and StudioVoltaire in creating permanent plaques for Oscar Wilde (Clapham Junction Station, 2019) and the 1980s film classic, My Beautiful Laundrette (Wilcox Road, 2021).

In 2023/4 five new plaques will be sited in Greenwich, Peckham, Westminster, Ladbroke Grove and Haringey. This is possible as the London LGBT+ Forums' Network and Studio Voltaire received funding from the Mayor of London's Untold Stories Fund (part of his Commission for Diversity in the Public Realm) with additional support from Wandsworth Oasis. More than 100 people participated in consultation workshops alongside an advisory panel to



decide on the five new plaques. The advisory panel was Dr Justin Bengry (MA Queer History course convenor at Goldsmiths, University of London), Fisch (performer and activist), Tessa Havers-Strong (Director of Forum +), Juliet Jacques (writer and filmmaker), Nathan Lewis (Programme and Partnerships Manager of Black Thrive & Chair of Southwark LGBT Network), DJ Ritu (DJ, broadcaster, producer) and Marc Thompson (curator and activist).

The Black Lesbian & Gay Centre was established in Haringey in 1985, and was a groundbreaking support centre for Black Queer communities. After many years of fundraising the project found a permanent home in a converted railway arch in Peckham in 1992. The project reached people far beyond London, providing advice and counselling, a library, a safe social and drop-in space, a telephone helpline, and community resources, whilst challenging homophobia and racism in wider society. The Black Lesbian & Gay Centre Rainbow Plaque unveiled on 18 February 2024, in Peckham, is the third of five new plaques to be installed across London.





Black Lesbian
& Gay Centre

1992-1995

Europe's groundbreaking
first support centre
for Black Queer
communities.

MOCA's 2022 exhibition highlighted some of the material held in the Haringey Vanguard collection which specifically relates to The Black Lesbian and Gay Centre. The exhibition explored and celebrated the various support networks, campaigns and activism cultivated by the black* LGBTQ+ community through the Black Lesbian and Gay Centre.

The Rainbow Plaque can be found at Bridge Underpass, next to 83 Bellenden Road, London SE15 4QJ.

Veronica Mckenzie would like to thank, the Bruce Castle Museum, Haringey Vanguard volunteers, LGBT+ Forums' Network, London Metropolitan Archives, The Mayor of London's Untold Stories Fund, MOCA London, Shola A, Studio Voltaire, Wandsworth Oasis and her lovely family.

Image credits:

Outside cover: Rainbow Plaque design image.

Inside front cover: BLGC Find centre, BLGC newsletter:

inside back cover: Smash The Backlash poster circa 1987.

Page 2: UYN Dennis Carney. Credit K Mulji.

Pages 4 and 5: BLGC social flyer and young Veronica Mckenzie.

Pages 6 and 7: BLGC March 1987. Credit K Muljicmyk and Dennis Carney.

Pages 8-9: BLG centre. Credit Suzanne Roden.

Pages 10 and 11: Film still, *Under Your Nose - The Story of the Black Lesbian & Gay Centre*.

Dorothea Smartt and Savi with the BLGC t-shirt and Savitri Hensmen poster.

Pages 12 and 13: BLGC newsletter, *move to centre* and Black Lesbian & Gay Centre former members and staff, Rainbow Plaques announcement at the Mayor's Pride Reception, City Hall, 2023. Courtesy Greater London Authority.

Page 14: Film still, *Under Your Nose - The Story of the Black Lesbian & Gay Centre*.

Page 15: BLGC plaque installed **Bridge Underpass, next to 83 Bellenden Road, Peckham, SE15 4QJ**. Credit: Joel Ryder media.

www.studiovoltaire.org/rainbow-plaques

www.twitter.com/LondonLGBTNet

www.veronicamckenzie.com/under-your-nose

Haringey Vanguard www.hqbh.co.uk

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MOCA
LONDON

STUDIO
VOLTAIRE

LONDON
LGBT+ FORUMS' NETWORK



*BLGC original definition of Black: those descended through one or both parents from Africa, Asia, (ie the Middle East to China including the Pacific Nations) and Latin America and from the original inhabitants of Australasia and North America and the islands of the Atlantic and Indian Oceans.



