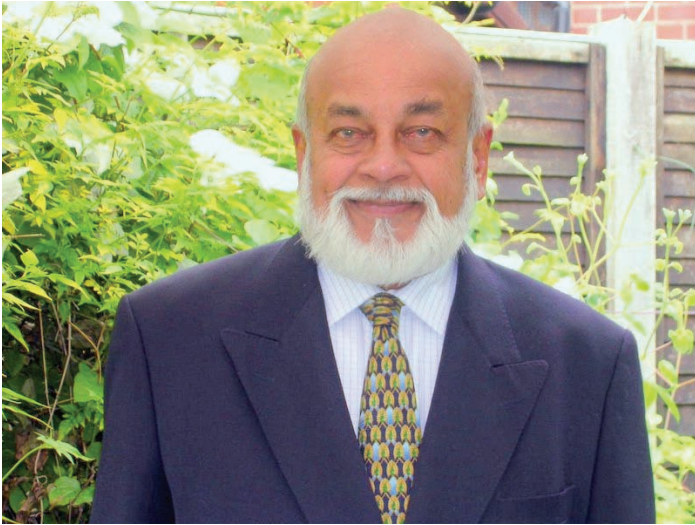


INTRODUCTION

Historical Background, Formation and Survival

Anver Jeevanjee



INTRODUCTION

Who are we? Why are we here? What are we about? The Cultural Diversity Advisory Group to the Media (CDAGM) is an independent and diverse voluntary group, free from political, commercial, sectarian or religious affiliations. We strive for quality and diversity in British broadcasting and media. We are concerned with the structures, regulations and funding of institutions that underpin public value for the citizens of civil society.

In documenting our brief history of how the group came to be formed, the basis of its foundation is important as we hand over the reins to the future generation. In 1992 and of course much prior to that, arrogance and the misrepresentation that people of colour, the Irish, Jews and other minorities faced either at home, post-slavery, in the Empire or wherever British influence prevailed, was immense. Nelson Mandela and Bishop Desmond Tutu were the latest to emphasise that Truth was vital for any Reconciliation process to even begin. In Britain, unlike other colonial powers, that process has not begun and there is still a massive effort of maintaining the hollow stance of denial.

Some of us were victims of the worst apartheid and barbarism the world had ever faced. After the so-called defeat of Nazism and the Jewish slaughter, Britain's 'holocaust' in Africa and Asia surpassed all norms of inhumanity or civilisation. It is only fairly recently that some of us have been allowed to write about our experiences and writers have been able to research evidence from the deliberately obliterated records of imperialism.

Caroline Elkins in her book, *Britain's Gulag: The Brutal End of Empire in Kenya*, and many such writers have been prominent in recording the brutality of the UK. As a British senior civil servant myself, indeed a conditioned loyalist in the past, I have personally witnessed some of these atrocities and participated in the gin and tonic 'bonfires' of confidential files implicating Her Majesty's Government. The UK and indeed the Japanese media have been reluctant to listen to the truth from their own soldiers. Unless the tables are turned and countries within Asia and Africa regain their former economic might which was destroyed by colonialism or the demographic of population shifts in the UK rendering the present majority a minority, the gatekeepers are likely to continue to remain in denial and fail to apologise or address the issue of reparations to their previous colonial subjects or their descendants.

The UK's white population is perceived to be fair-minded and generous. Indeed they largely are and it was a great relief to arrive in the UK in the 1950s and even to be permanently settled here in the late sixties. The whites, too, have been consistently victimised by denial of truth, as many are learning today of the shameful deeds of their ancestors. It was the support of some liberal-minded people of Britain, such as the Quakers, that encouraged nationalist leaders like Gandhi, Kenyatta and Mandela to fight imperialism. I remember this as a young student in the UK in the early 1950s, an undying support for which I was most grateful. They still exist now but amongst a larger sea of far less tolerant attitudes.

There was also a certain 'old boy network' amongst the libertarian folk whereby racial barriers were less prevalent within some class structures. Hence in Southampton, my wife Sara appeared on the weekly Southern TV's *House Party* programme and through it on other channels (except the BBC). Our friends Britt and Angus Allcroft (then a Southern TV presenter, but now a famous *Thomas the Tank Engine* multi millionaire), Vivian Tidbury, the Orba family and several others made this possible. Sara also wrote a regular weekly culinary column in the then *Southern Evening Echo*. In my case, Lord Horace King, a local resident and the then Speaker of the House of Commons, introduced me to appointments to the Civil Judiciary on Tribunals in Hampshire and London, on several Prison Boards, involvement in the Race Relations saga (now a large industry) and concerning Research on Drug Addiction, Victim Support and a long list of other bodies. I was also very lucky to have a good Conservative MP for the Southampton Test constituency, the late Sir James Hill, very much a people's man.

Nevertheless, there has always been an endemic element here largely stoked up by politicians and supported by the government's domestic public service media to hate all foreigners, particularly New Commonwealth citizens. Incidentally, many of our laws have always been covertly race based and of course this is much more blatantly overt now. There is a very thin line between the legalised apartheid in the old South Africa, which Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher supported and the current illegal apartheid in the UK under new Labour. The BBC remained a no-go area for most people of colour, unless there was a negative or derogatory tale to tell about them. At the time, I was on the executive of the Southampton Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) and we knew of several demonstrations taking place outside BBC studios. I remember Don John, Saleem Gillings, Wajeed Abdul and others as leading participants. Generally, the media in its colonial-style arrogance had no regard for facts even when representations were made correcting some blatant cultural errors.

The media preferred to describe everyone as 'Pakis'. To me, then, it was a great improvement on words like 'coon', 'wog', 'non-white', 'nigger', 'dog', 'Irish', 'Jew boy', 'Nazi' (for all Germans) and other such racially derogative and anti-Semitic terms. The lack of racial, historical or geographical awareness amongst the public, and more so, media staff, was pathetically obvious and apart from political correctness now, it has not gone much further. The regional media is no exception to the covert or overt racism practised by all British institutions, as described in the Stephen Lawrence inquiry by Mr Justice McPherson. This is the very reason the media still remains, in former BBC Director General Greg Dyke's words, 'hideously white'. We were told then and are often reminded now that 'Rome was not built in a day' and I keep on responding: 'We have had many nights and wondered when the dawn would break' ... and so the show goes on. The regional media still consider us just as 'difficult to reach' despite our intense and direct dialogue with them at the very least since the autumn of 1996.

BREAKTHROUGH

Initially, we began as active individuals with the BBC, later the then *Southern Evening Echo* newspaper, Southern TV and other local media in early 1992. The actual seeds of a group we now refer to as the Cultural Diversity Advisory Group, it seems, were unwittingly sown then. At the time, I acted in my individual capacity in loose consultation with the then local community leaders and the so-called grass roots frustrated individuals angry with the media at a regional level. It seemed important then to make contact with the wider national networks and to learn how the British media functioned and how best to tackle the situation. Although my grandfather started the very first English newspaper in Kenya, the *East African*

Standard, that celebrated its centenary recently, I had absolutely no knowledge of the intricacies of how the media operated.

Nevertheless, I made some significant contacts, at the Department of Culture Media and Sport (DCMS), the Broadcasting Standards Commission, the Independent Television Commission, the Radio Authority, the Central Office of Information, the Annual Ethnic Minority Media Awards, the CRE, Voice of the Listener and Viewer (VLV), and the Parliamentary Media Forum.

All this confirmed the rapidly declining Minority Community audience as well as minority staff figures. For example 92 per cent of Indians, 87 per cent of Pakistanis and 75 per cent of Afro-Caribbeans did not watch, hear or read the British media. Decades of negative portrayal and blatant neglect of minority licence fee customers had alienated them. The arrogant BBC, unlike other organisations such as the police, did not seem bothered to act.

It was sad but some of us were determined that minorities who made a significant contribution in many fields of commerce and industry ought to be recognised within the democratic process. They should no longer be relegated to the 'ghettos' and suffer from stereotyping. In this context, inclusivity within the mainstream media seemed vital. Nevertheless, in order to achieve that, sacrifices or compromise by minorities were equally essential to achieving success. No one was going to hand us over rights on a silver platter. Participation by minorities was one of the major problems facing us.

The Chinese and the Gypsies were very reluctant to join us. George Pau was the first person of Chinese origin that joined us in 1996 and made some excellent contributions to our deliberations. It was our hope that other members of the Chinese community would follow, but this did not happen. The Chinese had their own internal network but it was difficult to gain access due to the language barrier and their reluctance to participate in the wider multicultural debate within the minority communities. George Pau also moved on, as perhaps he lost patience. We maintained our strenuous efforts and only since the beginning of this century have we been able to make headway within the highly talented Chinese community. We now have several active members working with us and the media have also responded to them fairly positively.

Approaches to the local Gypsy community, through their national network, were very positive. Young people like John Leonard, Leander Dove, Seven Cooper, Patrick Duffy and Mary Pickett initially promised to participate in our dialogue of understanding. Sadly, they did not attend our meetings as their families felt suspicious of our links with the media. Their dislike of the media was intense but quite understandable, as they were a section of the community that had received the most negative portrayal in the media and consequently within the wider community. It is only very recently that, through the efforts of our Barbara Storey,

we have been able to appreciate the talents of the Romanian Gypsies amongst us. But we have some way to go before we establish links with their wider community.

Similarly, over the years, some 650 individual professional people lacked patience and moved on, while new people joined through our revolving door. This provided a constant turnover of new talent and ideas for the media to tap into.

I also made contact with individuals and small Asian organisations during my court sittings in the north of England and Scotland. They were trying to obtain slots for their tribal groups, 'back home' coverage, within the media. I formed the view then, and hold the same view now, that this was divisive and not in conformity with the multi-racial concept the group were seeking within the mainstream. To most of us it was the mainstream or nothing. Nevertheless, regrettably, the BBC jumped on this opportunity to 'divide and rule' and developed the idea further. Hence, the BBC proudly holds up the Asian network as their success story in respect of multiculturalism, even today. I do not consider that wholly inclusive, particularly now with several other minority groups from the European Union joining us.

As my paid job was based in London, with trips to the northern courts, it was easier to research and campaign there, in the capital. Moreover, attempts to talk to the regional media had been rebuffed and my intention was to bring in pressure for change from external sources. This I had successfully done in respect of my own personal appointments in prisons, parole, the judiciary etc., and saw that as a way forward. I considered the south of the UK similar to the 'Deep South' of the United States—known as a redneck area. Having worked in similar areas of legalised apartheid during my time in the British Colonial Service, it provided me with a greater challenge to defeat this illegal apartheid.

START OF THE FIRST DIALOGUE – BBC

My incursion into the inner sanctuary of BBC South began in the context of my other activities. I was invited by HM Prison Service headquarters (never by the BBC itself) to participate on a panel, which included the Director General of the Prison Service, at BBC South TV on 23 January 1996. It was my first daunting experience of entering a studio rather than demonstrating on the streets.

Nevertheless, I thought during the programme that the entire discussion went well and was seemingly friendly. It was only when I reached home and watched the actual transmission that I was shocked to discover that everything I had said had been edited out. The same points subsequently made by my white colleague *were* broadcast. This did not surprise me, so I decided to ignore it in this instance. It was only the next morning when my colleagues jokingly questioned why had I become so 'tongue tied' on the telly the night before that this really angered me. It made me realise at first hand how deeply ingrained within the BBC was the

negative portrayal against minorities that others had experienced long before me. I lodged a formal written complaint with the Head of Centre, BBC South and copied it to all the other panel members in London. I did not expect a reply.



Fortunately for me, we had a fine human being as head of BBC South at the time, in the person of Nigel Kay. Instead of maintaining a stance of denial as most others consistently do even now, he invited me to discuss the matter further. Nigel and I then met, followed by several long honest and frank discussions. He showed great patience and understood our dilemma. He admitted that the BBC needed to improve its racial awareness of the then nearly seven per cent of ethnic minority audience in Southampton alone. The *vox pops* and other researchers needed to include rather than exclude them as insignificant, contrary to the training perceptions erroneously instilled in them. On 1 February 1996, Nigel wrote to me welcoming my 'constructive advice—[noting] clear misunderstandings of the past and [a wish] to improve future relationships'. He invited me to bring along a representative group to talk to him and other staff on a brain storming exercise, to instil racial awareness and understanding.

We were all very excited at this new development of working together with the BBC for the first time ever. On 20 February 1996, I introduced Vaughan Richards, Don John, Aliya Hassan, Manju Tank and others for an initial meeting in Nigel's

office at BBC South. Nigel introduced us to Andy Griffee, Chris van Schaick, Chris Ware and Lee Desty. At this meeting it was proposed we meet again with a larger group on 1 March 1996. At the time we called ourselves the 'Minority Ethnic Communities Group' which I agreed to coordinate. Don, Manju and I got quite busy by making intensive phone calls (no emails then) to get people together to initially meet at my home to focus on issues of this new development. The large kitchen of our home became a regular meeting place and has been a permanent address over the years for the group. It became an open house, where we also entertained, prepared campaigns, networked and initially met with the media or journalists.

Eventually, about 35 of us turned up at Nigel's office for the first BBC tea, over some heated discussions. Sadly, years of pent-up anger burst forth. Some became quite abusive and walked out. Nigel did not lose his cool and we of the core group were determined not to let go of this window of opportunity to work with the BBC. Those that remained continued and more joined us, as word spread and we were able to establish a loosely knit group to meet Nigel Kay regularly every month. The next meeting was on 12 April 1996. At this meeting, attended by a few of us including Manju, Don, Sarvar, Anita, George Pau and myself, we discussed some crucial issues of race awareness training, expert contacts, portrayal, and appointment of community researchers. Also issues of community concern such as reporting, editorial decision making, job vacancies, events, cot deaths, offensive remarks in BBC broadcasts, and minority diets in hospitals were raised for the BBC to highlight.

At the May 3 meeting, Sarvar Jamil raised the issues of mother tongue teaching, divorce, tax, mad cow disease, the M3 motorway extension and other areas where minority views ought to be sought. Chris Ware took several of these matters immediately on board for action. We also developed an excellent rapport with several other staff and felt we were getting somewhere. We provided them with community contacts wherever we could.

It was through our advice and Nigel's cooperation that Navdip Dhariwal (now BBC South Asia Correspondent) was appointed as a Community Researcher. She took up her post on the very day an important news story broke of a devout Hindu family suicide in Southampton. Navdip requested my urgent help to be able to gain access to their police-sealed house to research the story. I was able to help, largely because of her language skills and an ability to fit into the community. She was able to obtain the deepest facts, but sadly, was not allowed to present them herself on white-orientated BBC South Television.

Despite this initiative, not all BBC staff at grass root level appeared enthusiastic. Our offers of cultural training and efforts to introduce BBC South to our communities of the so-called 'hard to reach' people were shunned. I personally obtained during my travels several educational video copies, circulated them

amongst BBC staff and put them in the library but there was no evidence that they were ever watched. I invited staff to community cultural activities, often dominated by white audiences that they appeared to enjoy, but the reflections of minority people, even on Radio Solent, were considered taboo for the benefit of the wider audience. Don John provided a lot of training material from his own resources. The resistance, even to playing some limited African and Asian music, was due to a perceived fear of lowering the BBC ratings, particularly in the 45 plus age group. It was not dissimilar to the fears amongst estate agents and white communities, that to sell or rent houses to 'coloureds' would downgrade the area and lower property prices.

Our group had its own difficulties. Some of them accused me and others of having sold out to the BBC establishment, being soft, out of touch with the grass roots, middle class, millionaire and so on. We could not please everyone, but I remained quite open with Nigel about our own problems and impatient for change, as he was with me about his own difficulties as a manager. Nigel's transparency far exceeded the information one can get today from the BBC despite the Freedom of Information Act 2000. It was becoming extremely difficult for the community to trust the BBC, let alone arrest the decline of BBC minority audiences. It seemed clear that unless there was a radical change, ethnic minority audiences would vanish.

Nigel invited me to join the BBC's internal Regional Advisory Council (RAC) which had greater authority, but when I declined, he and Reverend Tim Daykin urged me to attend one of their meetings as an observer. I did so, out of respect, but that reinforced my view of the shallowness of its membership. I realised that it would be impossible for me to convey the community's dilemma through such a council. I decided to stay out with the grass roots and continued with meetings established with BBC South. Nevertheless, I agreed to assist the RAC by encouraging minorities to participate. I also invited the then Chairman of the RAC, the Rev. Tim Daykin, to attend our group meeting as an observer and take back any issues to the Council. He accepted and attended whenever he could do so. Personally, he was most supportive to the group. I managed to persuade Pam, Tom and Reefat from our group to apply and join the RAC, and they each served a full term. Pam also served as chairperson of the RAC. Looking back, it was evident that the BBC doors were opening gradually. But then, we needed to make greater efforts to enter and participate.

In September 1996, I published a detailed contact list with the consent of 150 persons from our minority group within the region, defining their specialist expertise within our communities that the media could call upon to assist with their stories. I updated it again in 1998 and expected the media to keep the list updated, but to no avail.

It was Nigel who advised me before he left BBC South on transfer to London, towards the end of 1996, to formalise our group as an organisation and give it a

suitable name if we wanted to be recognised in any form by the media. This was excellent advice. Moreover, our group had considerably increased in size and it seemed right to do so. This we proceeded to do as outlined in my review of the 1996 report below.

Andy Griffiee took command after Nigel and we continued our regular meetings under his patronage. He saw the potential for us and for himself personally. Our newly constituted group remained the only independent community organisation in the UK working with the media but with no strings attached to anyone, particularly financiers. Andy took this opportunity to nominate BBC/South and the group for the British Diversity Award 1997. We were awarded the Silver Standard for Equality Awareness at a glittering event at the Carlton Tower Hotel in Knightsbridge, London.



Kamlesh Bahl, chair Equal Opportunities Commission, presenting the award to Anver Jeevanjee and Andy Griffiee.



Don John, Anver, Helen Jackson, Navdip Dhariwal and Andy.



Kamlesh, Anver and Andy.



Momentoes of the British Diversity Awards



Anver Jeevanjee (centre) and Nigel Kay of BBC South accepts the second Silver Standard Certificate for the BT Award for EQUALITY AWARENESS.

Andy had a different approach. Although, he often emphasised that the BBC's own Regional Advisory Council was an important forum, he continued to work with us. He felt our free advice was sound, even though it was often ignored. Subsequently, the BBC's action plans for diversity were launched whereby the BBC decided to work with its own paid internal Cultural Diversity team. The intention, we were told, was to work with our voluntary group and exchange views, but that soon fizzled away.

Andy put together several new initiatives, including our diversity database, which he carefully demonstrated with regard to a computerised contact list. However, it did not seem that journalists were using the system – they preferred to telephone their usual contacts within our group, often at the last minute. Andy was

quite positively attentive to many members of the group. In my view it was his youthful personality, understanding and ability for dialogue that led to his promotion as Controller of English Regions in the spring of 1999. Andy has often gratefully acknowledged that our challenging dialogue with him has equipped him to implement the diversity strategy across the country.

Sadly, Navdip Dhariwal left BBC South on unpaid leave to travel and there were concerns within the organisation that we shared with her in confidence. She did not return to BBC South but joined as BBC's Health Correspondent in London and now is South Asia correspondent. Her life at BBC South, however uncomfortable, had opened up new opportunities for this talented journalist who was determined to succeed against all odds.

Craig Henderson then took over as acting Head of BBC South. During his brief period in charge he got us actively involved in helping the BBC far more than ever before. We were pleased to assist him by participating in recruitment assessment interview panels, monitoring, Community Hero Awards (later known as Community Champions), comprehensive audit of output, etc. Our Mohamad Mossadeq played a leading role in coordinating the recruitment panel that was greatly appreciated by Craig and some members of the BBC at the time.

So now we have my personal family friend and a local resident, Eve Turner, as Head of Centre. Our dialogue continues on the same repetitive basis as before. Eve provides us with a generous lunch at licence fee payers' expense, prior to meetings. However, we do not meet her as often or regularly, as she seems to have additional responsibilities and is kept very busy. Eve started off by reducing our meetings to bi-monthly instead of monthly, then further reduced to quarterly, and now even less frequently. Eve appears to find our meetings rather burdensome and confrontational, which indeed they are and I make no apology for that. However, she continues the tradition established by her predecessors. She maintains that BBC South is resourced only to work with the BBC's internal advisory bodies and not with us.

In any case, with respect, meetings have always been rather confrontational as those with most independent external groups would be. Some staff perceived our forthright approach as an attack on them personally. Loyalty by staff to the BBC is admirable but members are appalled when their agenda is often hijacked to express an alternative point of view. Some correspondence is attached below to demonstrate our dilemma. Our independent voluntary group is committed to working with the media, including the BBC, for a common purpose and our informed criticisms whether negative or positive, are frankly conveyed in that spirit. We already filter out a lot more expressed by the community, as was experienced when the BBC team was taken out on a walkabout by us. Not to take on board the views expressed is typical arrogance that the new 2007 Charter and the BBC Trust ought to deplore.

Eve Turner revived the 1997 action plan for diversity but one does not know, due to lack of transparency, what has happened with BBC staff training or its internal Diversity Group. She also continues to actively promote our original idea of choosing Community Champions, but has shifted the focus largely to white faces. Eve is a great defender of her employer's failings and rightly so, but minority viewers and listeners continue to get even less value for their licence fees.

Soon after Eve Turner's arrival, we were pleased to introduce her and her regional team to many minority groups in order to improve the contact base. How many of those community contacts survived or were actively fostered, it is difficult to assess. We also held our meetings in the outlying parts of the region, such as Brighton, Worthing and Reading, rather than members travelling to Southampton.

It appeared that Pauline Brandt, a newsreader of many years' standing, had felt unhappy for some while. She was the only black face on the screen but is now no longer there. Sundry other minority community researchers, trainees and broadcasters also left as they felt that the atmosphere at BBC South was not conducive to their survival. Therefore, it is easy to guess why retention and recruitment from minorities will always remain a problem. We see no attempt at change to improve working conditions or to woo minority staff or audiences back, within the endemic culture of the 'old boy network'.

We were invited to participate in and provide contacts in respect of the excellent Islam series for BBC 2. We were very glad to be given the opportunity to support Ruth Pitt, Aaqil Ahmed and their team. It was a controversial screening with so many conflicting views across the Muslim world, almost to the day of the launch on 26 July 2001. In retrospect the screening of the Islam series achieved a great deal towards promoting the understanding of Islam at the time. This is particularly true since the recent stirrings of a climate of crusade against Islam, increased Islamophobia and racial profiling of persons of colour.

In the past there was a reluctance to meet all the media together because of confidentiality issues between them. We were glad that Eve Turner was able to resolve that issue with the others, and now we meet all three media representatives, at one single meeting. It is far more economical for our unpaid volunteers to travel to one meeting rather than on three separate days. After all, our issues with the South's media are relatively common to all three to a large extent.

There is a strong belief and support from various groups nationwide that the licence fees to fund the BBC ought not to be collected from the vast majority of minorities and other vulnerable communities it has failed and is still failing to serve. The promises after the last charter renewal, a decade ago, were worthless policy/action plan documents that never got implemented. The new Trust status promises improvements but can one have confidence in a used-car dealer twice? If matters turn out to be better on delivery, as promised by Michael Grade and Mark Thompson, then one can review the situation in that light in the future. Meanwhile,

the group have submitted to the DCMS and others that there is a case for the licence fee to be refunded or sliced in favour of those sections of the media who deserve it.

DIALOGUE/MERIDIAN/ITV/NEWSQUEST

In the summer of 1996, we began separate overtures towards other private sector media companies. I also met officials of the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) and the Department of Culture Media and Sport (DCMS), emphasising the negative portrayal of minorities. Southern TV or Meridian, the then *Southern Daily Echo* (Newsquest: now the *Daily Echo*) were amongst them.

Meridian's London Offices were extremely enthusiastic and arranged for me to meet the regional Director, Mary McNally, along with Elaine Johnson, already a well-established Community Liaison Officer. Unlike the BBC they already had a statement of purpose on race issues and held seminars to instil race awareness amongst staff. However, they lacked proper monitoring of progress either on recruitment or portrayal at the time.

We immediately established separate confidential monthly meetings with Meridian TV at Southampton Civic Centre in 1996. Meridian used our good offices to mutual advantage and we were invited to participate in research and advice. As an example we provided advice and contacts for their series 'Four Returns to India' transmitted in 1997 and other stories. Elaine Johnson worked quite closely with communities and individuals of our group to produce diversity research booklets. We advised them of the need for ethnic monitoring of staff and output, and after some considerable reluctance, they have managed to put that in place.

The *Southern Daily Echo* or the Newsquest group proved a bit difficult. It all depended on who was in charge. Editors before Pat Fleming were quite dismissive. Pat Fleming was extremely welcoming and we had very useful meetings in the winter of 1996 and established a framework for future meetings, separately from Meridian and BBC. We provided him with a training video, a contact list, etc. Sadly, Pat left the *Echo* and his immediate successor lost all our material and showed no interest in meeting us.

The appointment of editor Ian Murray changed all that and regular contact was re-established in Southampton, Reading and Brighton. Subsequently, the *Echo* or Newsquest as a group has considerably improved its minority profile all round. This is reflected in its generally diverse output and staffing.

Some may say that the commercial media had the foresight or vested interest to improve their portrayal amongst the economically sound, young and growing minority populations for the sake of their advertisers' reach. By contrast, the BBC, entirely reliant on licence fees even collected from those it deliberately excluded, had no such need and could afford to remain generally arrogant, ignorant, secretive, and in denial.

Nevertheless, the community felt confident enough to report to me and to local politicians in respect of portrayal of events such as lack of coverage of the opening of the Art Asia premises in Northam. The then Liberal Mayoress of Southampton, Councillor Margaret Singerman, was particularly supportive and personally complained to the media about the lack of coverage. Meridian's excuse was that they were short staffed on the day. The BBC's defence in 1996 was, I quote: 'We have now convened a working group [the CDAGM] to advise us on the reporting and portrayal of ethnic minority affairs ... [which] will be a valuable conduit for news and information'. The BBC also began putting down on paper its action plans for diversity. Consequently, BBC South and we were awarded the prestigious British Diversity Award, but that is where it stopped.

The *Daily Echo*, the *Argos* and others as part of the Newsquest group felt that they had to deliver a newspaper for sale to a market with potential for growth among the youth and minorities. They made strenuous efforts to contact individuals from our group to tackle some difficult stories emerging from time to time. Newsquest's publications are not as they were when we first started working with them. All minorities seem to be included in its mainstream output, particularly the recent arrival of the new European Union members, such as the large Polish community, who have received a tumultuous welcome. Be it for pragmatic commercial reasons or the personality of the local editorial staff, the publications have gone through a considerable revolution in coverage. Occasionally, mistakes do occur, which is inevitable, but when pointed out they are promptly addressed either by the editor or his deputy.

THE CDAGM IS BORN

In early 1996 the Cultural Diversity Advisory Group to the Media (CDAGM) was formally launched as an organisation, with a statement of its brief aims and objectives. It held its first formal monthly meeting with individual media groups separately starting on 1 March 1996. On 4 September 1996 I produced a contact list of about 150 members with local expertise within our communities, identifying people in the region working in housing, education, information technology, health, equal opportunities, art, media, music, photography, video, religion, politics, science, commerce, industry, law, youth, social matters, probation and prisons for circulation to all the media and members of our group. This was the time *before* I learnt word processing skills through my daughter Salma. There was no email. All my reports were either in manuscript or typewritten, posted in recycled envelopes or hand delivered. Over a hundred such communications went out each month consisting of meeting notices or other relevant information. It was very much a one-person band but my wife Sara helped with typing.

The group was originally Southampton-based, but I managed to attract individuals from other parts of the region and beyond. Later we decided to recruit more women and diversify ourselves as best as we could within our communities. Don and I managed to persuade Helen Jackson to be chairperson, Kuldip Benepal (Dorset) to be deputy chair, with me as secretary general, Sarvar Jamil as treasurer and a small committee, led by Don John, Pam Toussaint, Rintu Basu (Berkshire), Mary Genis, Jagjit Grewal, and Di Bernstein. I was determined that we ought not to attract any external funding as I had seen many organisations go bankrupt. When money is involved, accountability becomes a problem, with the units breaking up because of infighting over cash.

I wanted merely committed people willing to give their time freely and generate interactive support from their communities. Hence we had an open door policy for people to walk in or out. We did not care if some had hidden agendas to fulfil. In accordance with my loosely held records to date we have had at the very least 650 individual workers passing through the group over the years. Some came for the day or others left if they were urged to be proactive in a particular area of our policy. Many preferred to attend the media meetings to project their own personal views but were reluctant to work as a team to develop new ideas. Moreover, we also did not mind if sections of the media used us for tick-boxing purposes in the light of the Government's then seemingly shifting emphasis on race awareness and diversity, the old colonial tried and tested 'divide and rule' or other familiar tactics. I felt that our individual backgrounds and past experiences ought to be able to counteract external attempts to undermine the organisation or anyone amongst us.

Nevertheless, we recognised that we had a long way to go to effect any change to the current status quo. BBC South had to catch up with the country and other commercial media on diversity matters. Anyway, 1996/97 was very busy for us. The months and years that followed proved equally challenging.

Elaine Johnson of Meridian TV often complained that we were bordering on being a lobbying or campaigning group rather than a consulting or advisory body. In retrospect, she was absolutely right. It seemed obvious that we were coordinating with other individuals or organisations both nationally and internationally. We were quick to complain and criticise when our advice failed to be implemented and if any of the regional bodies would not emulate or discuss some simple ideas on diversity training presented to them either from Australia, Africa, Asia, South America or Canada. I visited broadcasters in most countries during our travels, as well as developed links with organisations such as the Commonwealth Broadcasting Association and International Network of Cultural Diversity, based in Ottawa.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The group was established as an independent voluntary body in 1995, later known as the Cultural Diversity Advisory Group to the Media (CDAGM), operating from 132 Bellemoor Road, Shirley, Southampton, SO15 7RA. UK. Tel: 023 80 773435. One of our key documents from shortly after that time, 'Review of 1996', is reproduced overleaf. On 10 January 1997, I started circulating formal reviews of CDAGM, reiterating its original aims and objects. These primary Aims and Objectives were then redefined as at 1 March 2000 and approved by its founder members and its current core committee along the following lines:

- to ensure that various sections of the media fully and properly reflect the aspirations and portrayal of its visible minorities within the multicultural and diverse society, in every aspect of its composition and delivery, in a fair and just manner;
- to monitor and assist the media on matters relating to the recruitment, retention and employment of its workforce, with a view to facilitate compliance with the spirit of its own standards, public policy and the law;
- to advise on matters relating to the representation of its culturally diverse audience in the fair portrayal and characterisation of relevant visible minority communities;
- to determine and advise on whether the media provides visible minority viewers with any positive role models;
- to assist in the development of means by which visible minority communities or individuals can be involved in the media; and
- to advise and comment on national and international issues that impact on the condition of all minorities in the region.

TEXT OF THE REVIEW OF 1996

The group is now in the process of organising itself outside BBC South. It will now be known as the 'Cultural Diversity Advisory Group to the Media'. The interim committee is chaired by Helen Jackson, Kuldip Benepal to be vice chair, Anver Jeevanjee, Hon. Secretary, Sarwar Jamil, Treasurer. The members of the committee are Don John, Pam Toussaint, Rintu Basu, Jagjit Grewal and Pauline Catlin. In addition the committee will continue to invite other persons or minority groups periodically. Broadly speaking this will now leave us open to

project our views to all sections of the public and the commercial media: most have already welcomed our voluntary consultative role. Although the media is totally white-dominated, it wants to be seen as one that reflects a multicultural society. Our primary aim is to work towards a greater and more realistic representation of the varied races and cultures that now live and work in multi-racial/cultural Britain.

We recognise that we have a long way to go to effect change to the current status quo. A great deal of work is required in this region even to catch up with the country as a whole. Considerable perseverance, self-belief, teamwork and stamina are absolutely essential. In that context we are thankful to Nigel Kay, Chris Ware, Chris van Schaick, Lee Desty, and others for meeting us regularly to pioneer this movement of awareness in this part of the world; regretfully still perceived by the visible minorities as the 'Deep South' of the United Kingdom. We hope that we can continue this dialogue of co-operation between us in the hope of creating a rich diversity of human experience.

Since our first meeting on Friday 1 March 1996, we had our ups and downs in consolidating a group of individuals to participate in our discussions. Naturally, there was impatience at the dull, repetitive and frustrating lip service being paid and the fact that minority licence holders had waited too long for some kind of positive action. Subsequently, we were given explanations of how editorial decisions were currently being made about stories, news, etc. Individuals from the group started contributing story ideas and information, which they considered relevant to minority groups. Several of the ideas were taken on board, including the sensitive issue of racial attacks that fortunately did not invite negative responses from white viewers. This demonstrated that the majority of whites need information about the sufferings and joys of the so-called immigrants who live amongst them.

The group began compiling an ethnic minority contact list primarily from the Southampton area in April. This was completed and delivered to the BBC in May and updated in September to include a few names from outlying areas such as Reading, Bournemouth and Portsmouth. A lot more work still needs to be done in this area. This list has certainly helped networking within the community as well as provided access for journalists to the community if they so wished.

The need for racial awareness training for BBC staff and indeed for all the other media was recognised very early on by all concerned. Various materials and names of trainers were suggested in our April meeting and it was expected that a trainer would resume training by September. Regretfully this has not happened as yet, hence in our view programmes continue to show this vital deficiency amongst presenters and producers. We hope the trainer Ms Linda Mitchell will enlighten us further about her syllabus when she attends our next meeting on 13 February 1997.

Meanwhile a recording of a BBC 2 series outlining the negative racial portrayal of minorities on television was obtained and circulated primarily to make staff aware of their historical shortcomings. The videotape has been placed in the staff library. It is not known how many people have studied its implications. There are best practices galore from Australia, Brazil, the USA, the new South Africa and indeed the BBC's own multicultural unit, but serious motivation is needed for their implementation.

We were informed at the 12 April meeting that funding had been 'in the BBC South's coffers' for the appointment of a community affairs researcher, but for some reason no one had been appointed as yet. Eventually, through our persistence, the post was widely advertised and finally Navdip Dhariwal took up the post in August 1996. In the relatively short time that she has been here, BBC South has made some impact on the screen and radio. With due respect for Navdip's efforts it is our view that she needs to get out and about amongst the various communities, to be proactive and research the issues thoroughly, as indeed BBC correspondents and researchers do in their respective subjects in the northern regions of the UK. At this moment one ought to consider whether these duties ought to be elevated to a community correspondent status. With Navdip's language and understanding of minority issues, we are confident that she will outshine her competitors in the field, provided she is given adequate support by all concerned within the BBC and the community as a whole.

The group were very pleased to welcome Rev. Tim Daykin, the chairperson of the all-white BBC Advisory Council, to attend our meetings in order to convey our views to his membership. Consequently, Rev. Daykin and Nigel Kay were kind enough to invite me to a council meeting as an observer. It is now hoped that from the number of visible minority applicants who have applied to join the formal advisory structure, a couple will be successful in meeting the council's criteria for appointment and will serve in 1997. Apart from 'discolouring' the meetings one hopes that the new appointees will inject the greatly needed minority perspective into their deliberations.

Research has shown that the vast majority of ethnic minorities have been driven out as viewers, listeners or readers of the British media; thus alienating them from the democratic process and awareness of British society. This cannot be a healthy environment for this nation or the English-speaking world. The BBC as a public service is not seen to be aware of their needs. We must aim to welcome them back, but before one can do so, a little repair work is needed to put our house in order. Today is the only opportunity we have, while facing the invasion of 100 channels, to redress the past imbalance in the BBC. Tomorrow will be too late. We consider the American system of reserved channels for each minority group as divisive and against the spirit of nationhood for future

generations. The Brazilian channels promoting unity between all races, colours and cultures offer a far better option in principle.

We recognise that BBC South's management may be restricted in all they and we can do together by way of two-way co-operation to improve the negative portrayal of the visible minorities perhaps by the BBC's chair, the directors or its board of governors. We as a group are committed to lobbying all or some individuals in these corridors of power to assist BBC South in any way we can to enable them to achieve steady progress for the region's TV and radio network.