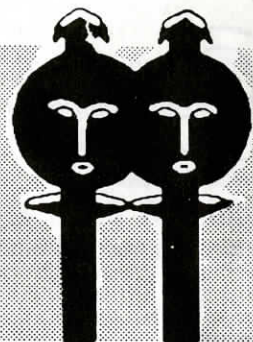


Black Lesbian & Gay Centre

BM Box 4390
London WC1N 3XX

071-732 3885 (office)
071-837 5364 (helpline)

Newsletter: August/September 1992



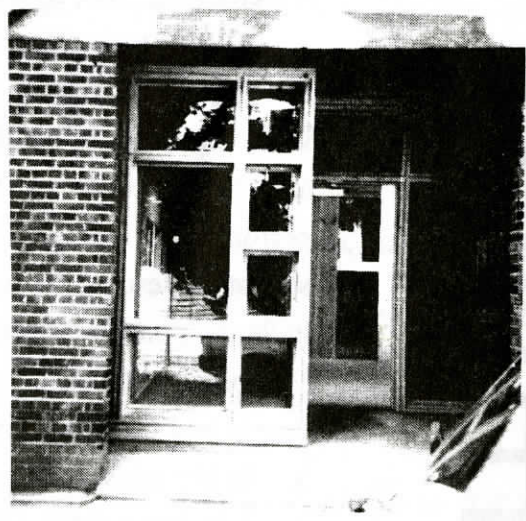
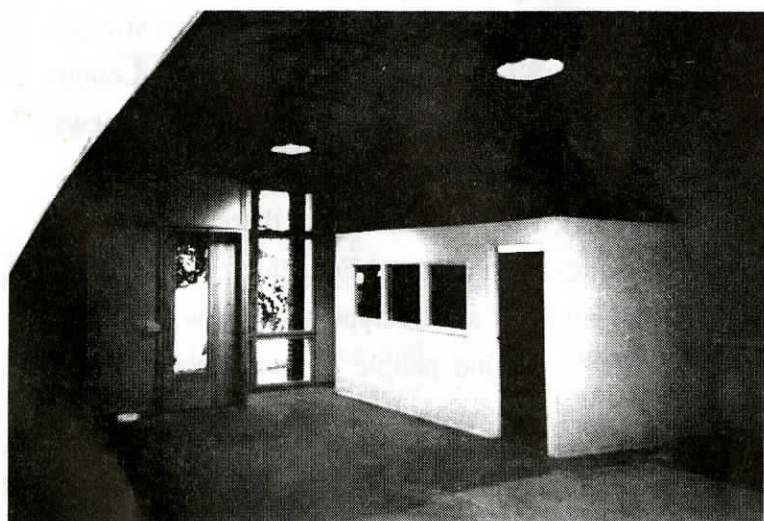
MOVE TO CENTRE

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

C U P D A T E

E

The move to the centre came at the end of two months of exhausting activity.

When the builders finished the first stage of converting the 2,000 square foot railway arch in Peckham into a community centre, there was lighting but no heating, a shortage of furniture and equipment and only a bare cement floor. A couple of small heaters were kindly donated by another community organisation and a computer by an individual: workers and volunteers will no longer have to vie with one another for use of the one-and-only office computer! Flooring was laid.

N

Staff and management committee members shopped around for additional desks, filing cabinets and shelving at low prices; shelves cannot be attached to the walls of the arch because it is lined.

T

After several telephone calls and a few hours of waiting at counters and in the empty arch, the electricity and telephone line were connected. The new office number is 071-732 3885. Arrangements were made for the mail to be redirected. A number of removal firms visited the office to give quotes for the cost of moving the contents across London, and the cheapest was selected.

Meanwhile two new workers were recruited, and their induction planned to prepare them for their work at the centre. The job descriptions of the existing staff are changing, too, to take account of the exciting developments at BLGC.

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All this took place at what tends to be the busiest time of year - lesbian strength and gay pride. BLGC organised a meeting at St Pancras Library in central London where members of the Black lesbian and gay community were able to air their views, and helped with an InterNations event at the Oval House with workshops, performances and DJs. The banner was carried on the march, and there was a BLGC stall at the festival. A worker appeared on 'Out' on Channel Four the following week in an item on EuroPride and 1992; in the midst of all the hype about how wonderful European unity is, it has been important to remind people of the effect on Black people and civil liberties in general. It was also the audit season.

E

In the midst of all this, the computer crashed!

Not surprisingly, the three part-time workers have been so busy that standard tasks such as replying to enquiries have sometimes been delayed. Hopefully soon the usual service will be resumed!

NEWSLETTER

This issue of the newsletter focuses on the centre.

The October/November issue will contain national and international news, articles, a list of Black lesbian and gay groups and other items.

Please send information about what's on, opinions and anything else you would like to contribute, by 18 September, to BLGC, BM Box 4390, London WC1N 3XX.

If you require the newsletter in large print or on tape, ring the office on 071-732 3885. If you know anyone who might find this useful, please let them know.



*Former
Black
Lesbian
and Gay
Centre
project
office*

INTO THE FUTURE...

Opening the centre

The arch is now partitioned, dividing it into a front area, to be used for the office and library, and a slightly larger back area. This contains one rather small lavatory and leads to a back exit. The front part of the building has recently been carpeted.

There is still a lot to be done before the centre is ready to be used for drop-ins, advice sessions, workshops,

courses and meetings. Proper heating will be needed to keep the arch warm especially in winter; the back door leads on to waste ground which needs to be cleared; the centre is noisy and not fully wheelchair-accessible; a play area for children and kitchen equipment are still needed.

Cafe, bar, socials

In the long term, the back area is to be converted for

use as a cafe, bar and space for cultural and social events with performers and DJs. This will help to raise money to keep the centre going.

If you would like to visit the arch between 11am and 1pm on Saturday 12 September, ring 071-732 3885 or write to BLGC, BM Box 4390, London WC1N 3XX for details.

STILL NEEDED

The centre still requires:

ramps;
~~adequate heating;~~
an accessible toilet;
a wider back door;
and more.

Building work, furniture and equipment can be very expensive. Money is urgently needed to make the centre a welcoming space for all Black lesbians and gays.

If you can help with fundraising, please contact the office on 071-732 3885. Your support can make the dream a reality.

WORKERS' TEAM

There are now five part-time workers (the equivalent of two and a half full-time staff) at BLGC. There are an administrator, a finance and fundraising worker, an outreach and development worker, a volunteer coordinator (female) and a volunteer coordinator (male).

Among other tasks, the administrator coordinates the upkeep of the building and use of its resources, newsletter production and the helpline and deals with enquiries; the outreach and development worker builds and keeps up links with other organisations, publicises the

centre and raises public awareness through the mass media and coordinates talks, courses and - with the volunteer coordinators - advice services; the volunteer coordinators recruit, train and support volunteers; and the finance and fundraising worker ensures that bills, tax, salaries and expenses are paid, keeps accounts, prepares grant applications and coordinates overall fundraising.

VOLUNTEERS

Even with hours of unpaid overtime, it is clearly impossible for a tiny handful of staff to raise the funds for, publicise and run a community centre - especially for a community which talks dozens of different languages, is scattered over a large area and for the most part goes to great lengths not to be easily spotted!

Over the years volunteers have done valuable work for BLGC, from one-off tasks like driving a van or stuffing envelopes to regular stints on the helpline. With the move to the centre, volunteers will play a more important part than ever before.

If you would like to volunteer, please contact one of the volunteer coordinators on 071-732 3885. It will give

you a chance to be part of something vital and unique, perhaps to learn new skills and make new friends.

MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

The Management Committee is responsible for BLGC, trying to put into practice the aims, objectives and annual workplan agreed by the full membership as a whole, developing policies, budgeting and planning ahead. It meets once a month and has sub-groups, including a supervision team which liaises with the workers.

The MC is elected at the Annual General Meeting. If you are interested in joining and would like more information, contact the office or come to the AGM, to be held in late 1992.

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