



The Origins of Nubian Link: Getting the Balance Right: A personal perspective from Kwabena A. Osayande.

Background

Nubian Link established in 1995 CE strives to develop and promote the educational, cultural and economic needs of the Afrikan¹ community from an Afrikan-centred perspective. However, the seeds of this organisation began via the innocuous friendship of 3 young-ish Afrikans from Nottingham who were studying at different universities across England over the same period of time 1989-1992 CE.

For all of us, the university experience made us think **who** we were, **why** we were there (at university) and **what** would be outcome of our time at college.

In terms of my experience University of Central England (formerly Birmingham Polytechnic and now Birmingham City University), Brother Beanie Brown from the Pan Afrikan Congress Movement (Birmingham), once addressed the Black Action Group (the political sub-group of the Afrikan-Caribbean Society) and declared, "Who are we?" as his opening to the audience. There was a muted response and he had to rehearse the response ("Afrikans!") which was repeated over until the responses were loud enough. So now I knew who I was, so why was I here at university?

The *why* answer would hit me like a Tyson combination (when he could box) during of my attendance at a community speech by the Rev Al Sharpton at the Holte School in Birmingham in the early nineties. Brother Sharpton said in essence that academic qualifications or experience mean nothing unless you put something back into the Afrikan community and that you had to be a positive example to young people and the community at large.

Conception of Nubian Link

Jeremy Prince and I decided that after graduating we should try and continue that supportive network for ourselves whilst simultaneously extending it to the Afrikan community in Nottingham.

To this end we invited Mark Dunwell and other people we knew who had a recent university experience. Some of the people who attended the initial

¹ The term Afrikan is *inclusive* of all people of Afrikan origin and descent and therefore includes people who are described or who self-describe as Afrikan-Caribbean, Afro-Caribbean, Black, Black-British, Mixed-Race, Mixed-Parentage, Afrikan-American etc

meetings included Katya Olateju, Paul Ifayomi Grant, Robert Green, Deena Goode and Kenny Dunkwu. Jeremy and I had no agenda per se for the initial meeting, we just wanted to share our experience with others and see if there was room to develop something.

Other members since the early days have been: Judith Cowan, Joanne Fletcher, Faith Wilson, Paulette Francique and Mel Richards.

Core values/principles

The initial group (as it is today) was a group of people of a similar mind and as such had a very pro-black and independent attitude; in that we believed that the best people to develop the cultural, educational and economic needs of Afrikan people were Afrikan people. Moreover, our ancestors had blueprinted methods of how this could be done. The question was...were these principles applicable or even relevant to the Afrikan situation in Nottingham in the nineties?

Quite quickly, we established that people of all race identity groups would be sceptical of us because we were adamant as in the *Afrikan Pledge*, "...to be free and self-determining". I'm not sure if any of us knew what the Afrikan Pledge was at the time, but we knew that's essentially what we had to be.

We had seen (sometimes first hand) how our organisations had been 'set up to fail' or finance withdrawn once an organisation had become too 'radical'. How community organisations in the Afrikan community had a high propensity to misappropriate funds, were unable to work together and could not deliver.

The group also acknowledged that we would aim to finance our activities ourselves as a collective and in doing so we would retain control of our activities albeit on a small scale. Nubian from inception to now is financed TOTALLY from tithes from the Steering Group or income-generating services e.g. training, kwanza workshops.

Some of the group, in particular, Paul, Katya and I were students of an Afrikan History course at the ACFF Centre, with lecturing from Mwalimu George Ben Anthony (aka Mwalimu Ayinah Kofi Anku-Ra). As a result, we became more familiar with Afrikan cultures and concepts e.g. *Ma'at* and were able to 'sell' these principles to the group.

Hence, our Afrikan-centred objectives were driven by the Afrikan-centred framework of Truth, Justice, Righteousness, Balance, Harmony, Good Order and Reciprocity (*Ma'at*).

Later, by our attempt to re-instate an annual Kwanzaa celebration in Nottingham, the group would also embrace the *Nguzo Saba*, the seven principles of Umoja (Unity), Kujichagulia (self-determination), Ujima (collective work and responsibility), Ujamaa (co-operative economics), Kuumba (creativity), Nia (purpose) and Imani (faith). Nubian Link have hosted an unbroken communal Kwanzaa celebration in Nottingham since 1997 CE.

Aim

To be an independent unincorporated organisation that strives to support the educational, cultural and economic development of the Afrikan community from an Afrikan-centred perspective.

Objectives:

- To provide support for the Afrikan community via the development of programmes and initiatives
- To highlight issues relevant to the Afrikan community through the gathering and sharing of information
- To forge links and work co-operatively with other groups
- To be autonomous and financially independent

How Does Nubian Link work?

Nubian Link is managed by a STEERING GROUP and guided by a COUNCIL OF ELDERS. This management team is responsible for the current programmes and initiatives of Nubian Link.

The current programmes are developed via consultation with The Council of Elders, and the COMMUNITY. All programmes should reflect the mission statement and objectives of Nubian Link as far as possible.

The final decision to implement programmes/initiatives rests with the Steering Group and Council of Elders given there is adequate human and financial resources to deliver the activities.

Current Activities

1. Kulture College: Aimed at 12-15 year olds. An educational and cultural programme that runs for up to 2 weeks during the Summer Holidays
2. Afrikans In Science: Aimed at recognising the achievement and effort of Afrikan children at secondary schools in Nottinghamshire in Science and/or Technology subjects
3. Kwanzaa: Aimed at putting on an communal Kwanzaa celebration and raising the general awareness of Kwanzaa via presentations, interviews and articles for the Afrikan community and the general public
4. Drum Call: Nubian Link newsletter that updates on the current activities of Nubian Link and other information relevant to the community

Current state of play

Nubian Link has one active member in the Council of Elders (Mwalimu George Ben Anthony) and four active members in the Steering Group: Paul Ifayomi Grant, Jeremy Prince, Mark Dunwell and Kwabena Osayande.

Nubian Link is always on the look out for Afrikans who share the aims and objectives set out in herein. If you are interested, please go to the 'contact us' section of the website to register your commitment.

"Up you mighty race; accomplish what you will!" – Rt. Hon. Marcus Garvey.

Based on original text by Kwabena A. Osayande, January 2001 CE. Revised May 2008 CE.