

# KWANBENA'S CORNER

## Hotep!

**S**o the date for the General Election has been set for Thursday May 6<sup>th</sup> 2010. So what, you may cry? Well for me, we as Afrikan people should, if eligible to vote, register to vote and then consider whether we use our vote for the collective or individual good.

Collectively, a group of race equality organisations came together to work on a Racial Justice Manifesto whereby they seek interested organisations to collaborate with them to be part of the editorial team/working group. The aim is to develop a 'Black Manifesto' or for those with more 'political correct' sensitivities a [Racial Justice Manifesto](#), which develops a shared vision for Race Equality. A [summary](#) of this manifesto is also available.

The authors of the proposed Manifesto believe it will offer prospective parliamentary candidates an understanding of the key issues for race equality and invite them to formulate a policy response to the key issues identified. The Manifesto will be sent to all political parties and candidates who will be invited to respond to the key policy areas identified in the Manifesto. These responses will be disseminated regionally to help [Black] BME voters frame their decisions with regards to their voting intentions. While I don't strongly disagree with this approach by the manifesto's authors I do feel that we should be more categorical and state to the main parties, whosoever endorses dis ya manifesto a guh get nuff a fi we vote...seen!

The 2010 Elections present an opportunity for Afrikan people an opportunity to influence its outcome particularly in marginal constituencies. However, this will only happen if Afrikan people vote strategically in favour of one of the three major political parties who openly endorse the manifesto.

Let me state straight away that I for one do not agree with all aspects of the manifesto and my objective with this article is not to critique it per se. I do advocate that we exercise our right to vote even if it to tick a 'non of the above' box if there was such a box or spoil the paper. If you have no intention to vote regardless of the argument for that I'll to put forward, then perhaps its time to stop reading and gwaan guh watch 'eediat-enders' or whatever foolishness you watch on the tell-lies-vision.

Whilst we have very little or arguably no political power in the UK; we do (I believe) have great potential influence in some key areas. Operation Black Vote (OBV), the campaign to address the under-representation in politics of Black and Ethnic Minorities highlight seats such as Finchley and Golders Green in north London, held by Labour with an estimated majority of only 31 as a result of boundary changes, and with a Black (BME) population of 21,000, "demonstrate the potential clout of the BME vote". Other key seats include Solihull, Crawley, Battersea, Harlow, Bradford West, Ealing North, Birmingham Yardley and Hove.

However if there is a 'even' spread of black votes across the parties in Finchley and Golders Green and assuming ceterus parabus of voting amongst other race identity groups then Labour despite their slim majority retain the seat with no overall impact for the Black Community. Now, if we champion the 'Black Manifesto' and the Liberal

Democrats openly endorse it this will guarantee (for arguments sake) 75% (15,750 votes) from the Black community and 'goodbye' Labour in Finchley and Golders Green at least; but the problem as we all know is the high proportion of political apathy and low voter registration in our community. Hence, as politics is a key piece of the 'power' jigsaw, we as Afrikan people and Black people in general should register to vote and do it now without further delay. After this step, read the manifesto; do we agree with it? If 'Yes'; then work with others to see which party openly endorses the manifesto and then vote for that party especially in marginal seats where our vote can influence the outcome. If not, then make suggestions to the manifesto authors as to your concerns, start your own manifesto or go watch 'eedit-enders' as suggested earlier.

As a founding Steering Group member of [Nubian Link](#), I would like to use this electionary climate to open more dialogue amongst the Afrikans abroad here in the UK to articulate our vision and expectations for our community to the mainstream parties in relation to meeting our identified group needs. Politics per se is not a direct part of Nubian Link's raison d'être, but does have direct and indirect influences on our organisation and on our past, present and future lives and wellbeing as Afrikan people home and abroad.

So for me, it's not a case of whether we should vote or not on Thursday May 6<sup>th</sup> 2010 CE; but will my vote be effective for our collective?

**Kwabena Osayande is a 'senior adult' nearly 40, married with two boys and a founding Steering Group Member of Nubian Link. This article does not represent the collective views, politics or opinions of Nubian Link the organisation.**

References:

1. <http://raceequalitypolicy.co.uk/index.php>
2. <http://www.obv.org.uk/>
3. <http://www.nubianlink.org.uk/>