

Knowing One Another Through Philosophy



A Brick Lane Circle project, funded by the National Lottery Community Fund

The project

London is a very diverse city. Its multicultural characteristics are continuously deepening and widening. Diversity generates positive outcomes as well as cause community tension. This is due to myriads of peoples and cultures sharing the same space.

This project aims to utilise philosophy and its various traditional sub-divisions – such as logic, metaphysics, ethics, political thought and epistemology – and eastern philosophy and de-colonial methods to critically explore community cohesion issues in East London. This includes, for example, the recent increase in Covid-19 related prejudices that have been directed, by some, against the Chinese community. The focus of the project is on race, ethnicity, faith and culture.

The project will engage ten to twelve community participants and provide them with training on the basics of philosophy. This will enable them to apply critical thinking in a systematic and rationally valid, step by step manner, to dissect and analyse local community cohesion issues/problems.

Each participant will focus on a factor perceived to be responsible for causing community cohesion issues – such as xenophobia, multi-culturalism, religious extremism, white nationalism, living parallel lives, racism, stereotyping, othering and fake news – apply a branch of philosophy to examine the matter critically and systematically and produce and present a short paper setting out the outcomes of the enquiry.

The problem

'Report 6, Community Cohesion, Prepared for Big Lottery Fund, April 2015' by Trajectory talked about the existence of complex relationships between various factors and community cohesion. It presented information that showed the decline of community cohesion in Britain since the start of the economic downturn in 2007 and the unprecedented increase in the numbers and diversity of immigration into the UK since the late 1990s and suggested that there exist certain non-deterministic correlations.

More recently, the BREXIT referendum has contributed to an increase in hate crime and fear of diversity but has also stimulated conversations and studies on addressing these problems. Improving 'Muslim integration', changing white working-class attitudes towards diversity and significantly reducing immigration were considered by many to be necessary elements for effectively reversing the gear of the UK's declining levels of community cohesion.

This Initiative

This new initiative is the third in a series of 'knowing one another' projects by Brick Lane Circle. A greater mutual understanding between peoples delivers better community cohesion in neighbourhoods. Of the first two projects, one engaged twelve community volunteers. They learnt and wrote about one another's origins and migration experiences.

The other engaged thirty-five volunteers, who utilised drama to explore Multi-generational, Multi-cultural, Multi-faith and Multi-routes into Britain experiences. The participants developed scenarios, produced scripts, rehearsed and delivered public performances.

The first two projects generated thoughtful discussion on community cohesion issues. Many of those engaged suggested that there should be further and deeper explorations of the problems being covered.

Based on this and findings from subsequent discussions with other individuals, Brick Lane Circle developed this new innovative project. It aims to engage community volunteers to apply philosophy to undertake systematic analyses of community cohesion issues/problems.

Outcomes

10-12 written pieces (size to be decided with the group who join)
An Exhibition
A theatrical production

Support

Training workshops
Monthly group meetings
One to one support
Travelling and volunteers' expense

Training workshops (Tuesdays, 7.00-9.00 pm)

1. Logic, 1 June 2021, Dr Gabriel Apata
2. Eastern Philosophy, 8 June 2021, Dr Radha D'Souza
3. Epistemology, 15 June 2021, Dr Gabriel Apata
4. De-colonial perspectives, 22 June 2021, Mama D. Ujuaje
5. Space/architectural, 29 June 2021, John Bell
6. Political Philosophy, 6 July 2021, Dr Halima Begum
7. Ethics, 13 July 2021, Dr Aminul Hoque

Application deadline: 31 May 2021

For further details of the project or if you are interested in getting involved, please email bricklanecircle@yahoo.co.uk.

Project completion between December 2021 and March 2022.