

Community Exchange in Contemporary London

Layna L. Johnson

University of Michigan School of Social Work



London, England

Capital of England

Size: 611 sq. miles

Population: 12,331 per sq. mile

Currency: Pounds (£)

Home of the 2012 Summer Olympics

Over 300 languages spoken within the city

One of the World's Most Ethnically Diverse Cities

Largest Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) group: Black African population

Agency/Community Partners

I worked with Tony Warner, Black History Walks Director and the Brixton and London Community. Black History Walks provides information about the British history of African/Caribbean people for residents and tourists. I worked within the Brixton and London communities and learned about areas of social change.

Project Information

I worked in collaboration with Professor Lorraine Gutiérrez, PhD and her *Empowering Families and Communities: Community Action in Contemporary London* undergraduate class. The focus of the project was to explore community action and social change within London and study community groups working for positive change. I individually researched mental health services and their progression over the years within mental health facilities in London and within the community. I maintained a particular focus of study on the black, as well as the homeless population in London.



Train tracks dividing a low income neighborhood and the site of the 2012 Summer Olympics.

Classroom Connections

Social Work 560 and Social Work 502 were two courses used in preparing and gaining insight into understanding organizational structures as well as how to create social change without eliminating cultural values and traditions.

Skills Utilized/Developed

- Becoming comfortable with being uncomfortable in new settings
- Ideas on how to make social change in America and in what capacity
- Practiced applying S.W.O.T. Analyses and concepts of Ethnography

Lessons Learned/Outcomes

- Black History Walks is an initiative that broadens the knowledge of others who are not familiar with black people of Britain. They work to eradicate stereotypes of black people.
- In America we use the term *African American*, whereas in London, *black* is the socially acceptable term.
- Experience other countries/settings individually rather than relying on the thoughts and opinions of others.
- The homeless population in London is not as noticeable as it is in major cities with the U.S.
- London is very diverse and people embrace their individual culture rather than seeking to conform to the idea of a "mainstream" society.
- Negative attitudes toward those with a mental illness has decreased over the years, according to UK National Statistics
- Taking the Tube (public train) using my weekly Oyster card was the best way to get around.
- While visiting Buckingham Palace, I was able to see the Queen and the crowd's reaction. It was great to see such high respect for a woman without the presence of a man by her side.



Career Connections

- I plan to advocate for other professionals to go outside of their comfort zones and experience people of other cultures within their individual communities.
- I am working towards using the social change efforts learned while in London to put towards making social change in America (e.g. mental health and African American empowerment).

Advice

- Keep your passport in sight! The night before leaving, I misplaced mine. Luckily, I found it in the middle of the night.
- Speak with locales and other visitors at least twice a day.
- Remember you are a visitor in the home country of others, embrace their differences.



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