

THE EXCHANGE PROJECT

www.photoexchange.org

The Exchange Project seeks to bring together communities and cultural institutions in the twinned cities of Birmingham and Johannesburg. It aims to encourage dialogues between the UK and South Africa through the interaction and exchange of cultural materials, personnel and workshops.

The project grew out of ideas expressed in an UNESCO Report, *Our Cultural Heritage* (1996). This saw 'culture' as the process to which all people contribute in the ways they make meanings for themselves in their everyday lives. The report challenged museums, libraries and archives to develop an approach to culture as 'everyday life' and create new, more inclusive and participatory approaches to 'heritage'.

The Exchange Project, initiated by staff at Birmingham Library, the University of Birmingham and the photographer Vanley Burke, has grown to take on many partners. It has also received the generous support of UNESCO (Memory of the World Programme), the British Council, Visiting Arts, The European Regional Development Fund and Birmingham City Council.

The first phase of the project focuses on an exchange between two photographers. The display of George Hallett's exhibition, *Handsworth Through Southern Eyes* at Soho House Museum will be followed by the showing of Vanley Burke's exhibition *Council of the Elders: Veterans of the South African Liberation Struggle* in Museum Africa, Johannesburg in December 2002. For more details of these see the project web site.

Neither photographer was able to collect sufficient written information about the people who were the subjects of their photographs at the time that they were working. One of the key aims of the project is therefore to work with local communities and organisations in Birmingham and South Africa to enable this retrospective documentation to take place. The information gathered will be exchanged and added to the images deposited in Birmingham Library and Museum Africa.

The Exchange Project reveals the way in which the histories of peoples, places and events in one country can be separated in space and time from their place or origin. It also demonstrates the ways in which, through chance encounters and positive engagements, these histories can be rediscovered re-examined and represented through the process of cultural exchange.

For more information on **The Exchange Project** contact:

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