



A new show for
mixed families on
BBC Asian Network



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Letters of support for the proposal

Equalities and Human Rights Commission

The Equalities and Human Rights Commission supports the right of individuals to choose their spouses based on free and full consent—regardless of factors such as gender, faith or ethnicity.

We recognise that cultural justifications are sometimes invoked to deny individuals freedom of choice when selecting a partner, and we oppose this. We consider this societal pressure to be at odds with the protection and promotion of the right to marry, and the right to respect for private and family life, both of which are expressly protected in the Human Rights Act 1998.

Legislation alone will not bring an end to the difficulties in this area. We look to responsible voices from within each community to promote a message of tolerance and understanding, and to help safeguard basic human rights.

With those ideals in mind, we commend this proposal to the BBC Asian Network.

John Wadham

Equality and
Human Rights
Commission

equalityhumanrights.com

Group Director Legal, Equalities and Human Rights Commission.

Letters of support for the proposal

Karma Nirvana (Reg Charity No. 1089477)

Karma Nirvana has worked with MixTogether as an organisation supporting their aims and objectives for the last two years, and we support this proposal wholeheartedly.

Many of the cases that Karma Nirvana deals with are rooted in denying freedom of choice to Asian children and young people, many of whom do not have the basic rights to dignity, respect, free will, education and choices.

The sense of shame and a misplaced notion of honour is often at the heart of these problems.

The BBC Asian network has an important role to play, as a network that speaks to this community, both in speaking up for the right of young Asians to live as they choose, and in helping to educate partners and children about Asian culture.

We look after a number of Asian young women and men currently in temporary accommodation after being forced to flee their families. They live on very little, and rely on the support of their friends who have become family. We know of hundreds more who have endured abuse and disownment.

It would be refreshing to hear more programmes on the BBC Asian Network that recognise the courage of these young Asians, and unequivocally validate their life choices. Talk shows which broadcast opinion from both sides of the fence are no longer enough.

We believe that the show proposed in this document could be a good start to which we will offer our support.

We recommend this proposal to the BBC Asian Network.

Jasvinder Sanghera

Karma Nirvana



Karma Nirvana (Reg Charity No. 1089477)

Letters of support for the proposal

Ann Cryer MP

I have been aware of the work of MixTogether since 2007, and I support this proposal.

I have campaigned for the human rights of young Asian women in my Keighley constituency since taking my seat in 1997. It would be very helpful to have a programme on the BBC Asian Network that overtly supports young people who exercise the right to choose their own partner.

The legislative approach to ensuring respect for young Asian people's human rights has gone almost as far as it can with the Forced Marriage Act plus some quite radical changes in entry clearance regulations. It is now up to society at large and ethnic communities in particular to ensure that the spirit of the existing legislation becomes the norm, as it should.

Towards that end, I commend this proposal to the BBC Asian Network.

Ann Cryer MP



Letters of support for the proposal

Vince Cable MP

I have been aware of the work of MixTogether since 2007 and I support their aims and objectives.

I embarked on a mixed marriage four decades ago and have three children and (so far) two grandchildren. The children are successful in their careers and families and proud of their mixed identities. I am, in turn, very proud of them.

When we married, my wife and I both encountered hostility to our relationship from our families. It saddens me that couples of mixed race can still encounter such hostility in the present day.

I am sure that the BBC Asian Network should provide content for Asian families which include non-Asian members. I also believe that such a bold statement would bring the channel in line with our times, and would be a great help to couples and families who suffer from a lack of tolerance and understanding.

I therefore commend this proposal to the BBC Asian Network.

Vincent Cable MP



Letters of support for the proposal

Rishi Saha

I have followed the work of Ashley Chisholm and MixTogether since 2006, and have always supported their goals.

They have successfully highlighted the challenges that mixed couples can face in our society, and have worked hard to engage a large audience with the issues involved. Their extensive online work has proved that there are many people who want to discuss their own experiences in this area and currently have very little outlet to do so.

I believe that the subject of mixed relationships could provide exactly the kind of original, fresh broadcasting opportunity upon which the BBC Asian Network has built its reputation on. I have no hesitation in supporting their proposal.

Rishi Saha



**Head of New Media
The Conservative Party**

Letters of support for the proposal

People in Harmony

As the national charity supporting mixed race people, couples and families over the past 37 years, People in Harmony lends its support to this proposal and wishes for its success.

The question of support for people with partners from different backgrounds has long been part of People in Harmony's work. These partnerships frequently provoke emotive responses from families and communities and such partnerships and families are met with rift, unhappiness between families and occasionally more serious and physical responses.

People in Harmony supports the proposal and is pleased that such relationships are at last receiving public attention. We have known of the work of MixTogether since its early days and offer the members our very best wishes for the success of a brave and necessary project.



People in Harmony

Charity reg. no. 1045356

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FORWARD >

By Parveen and John Bird of The Big Issue

The world recently witnessed something which was previously unthinkable: the election of Barack Obama to the Presidency of the United States of America.

This was a victory over adversity, and the triumph of a mixed race man over historic disadvantages.

His election is a zeitgeist-defining moment, which catapulted people's thinking into the future.

It articulates a feeling among the people of the world that race is no longer a barrier. It is not a barrier to achievement, nor a barrier to cooperation between friends.

Mixed race is the fastest growing ethnic group in the UK. This growth is defined by the kind of thinking that placed President Elect Obama in the White House; the thinking first articulated by Martin Luther King Junior when he dreamed of people being judged 'not by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character'.

There are hurdles faced by mixed race and faith couples in the UK today. They are not as long-standing as the racial problems that have haunted the USA for centuries, but they are significant nonetheless, especially for those who experience them at the sharp end.

We are faced with a choice: either we allow negativity and fear to be the defining terms for the next generation of mixed and mixing young British people, or we move beyond the politics of victimhood to provide an environment where mixed race children can thrive as leaders and pioneers.

Children of dual heritage are more than the sum of both their parents. They deserve the chance to grow up in touch with the best that both their ancestries can offer.

Asian radio broadcasting, if it is to lay any claim to representing the modern community, needs to ensure it is doing enough to support mixed-race Asian children, helping them to thrive with an understanding of their Asian heritage.

We commend this proposal to the BBC Asian Network.

Parveen and John Bird
The Big Issue.



A new show for mixed families on BBC Asian Network

A proposal by MixTogether.org



Executive summary

This proposal is for a new programme on BBC Asian Network aimed at mixed families (mixed race/ religion/ caste) which include at least one Asian family member.

Although an increasing number of Asian people are now choosing a mixed relationship, there is currently no content on any Asian radio station aimed at couples and families that include non-Asian or part-Asian listeners.

BBC Asian Network is not, therefore, serving a significant section of its potential listener base. Girlfriends, boyfriends, spouses and children of mixed relationships — and, importantly, the parents and grandparents of those in such couples or families — do not find themselves addressed directly by the Network.

We are proposing a new programme to meet this need.

The key purpose of the programme would be to help bridge the gap in understanding of Asian music and culture. Where cultures that originate thousands of miles apart meet in a loving relationship, there can be barriers. These barriers include language and culture, and can be very difficult to overcome.

The show should be based around music. Songs in the programme would have key phrases translated for the benefit of those who do not speak the relevant language and may be trying to learn that language. This would follow the successful model of Parveen Bird's Mum Power Books series (featured on Nihal's daytime show in 2008), where a children's story is offered in phonetic Punjabi with a parallel English translation.

The songs should be drawn from across the existing roster of shows, to reflect the full range of language and religious content offered by the Asian Network.

The programme should have a strong presenter who can relate to the experiences of mixed couples and families.

The program should offer a clear and unequivocal welcome to non-Asian partners and families. It should make listeners feel positive about their choice of partner, and should encourage extended families to include new family members into their lives.

In the era of President Barack Obama, it should reach out especially to a new generation of mixed-heritage children.



A new show for mixed families on BBC Asian Network

Background: Mixed/Asian relationships in the UK

Today in the UK, an increasing number of Asian people are choosing a non-Asian partner.

The 2001 national census showed that about 7% of all married Asians had a spouse from a different ethnic group (Source: Office of National Statistics.)

The 2009 report 'Ethnicity and family' by the Equalities and Human Rights Commission identifies that this proportion has increased to around 10%.

This increase is in keeping with a general trend for more inter-ethnic partnerships in the UK. Mixed race is currently the fastest growing ethnic group in Britain, and the report states that 'the decline in [...] partnerships [between people of the same race] over time and with new generations may reflect a general view that ethnicity – or 'race' in itself does not provide a meaningful basis for the selection of a partner'.

However, despite the fact that Asian people form the largest minority group- around 4% of the total British population- their rates of inter-ethnic marriage are far lower than any other minority group.

The report states that 'some groups may be or feel excluded from particular partnership options as a result of discrimination or due to antagonism towards 'mixed-race' unions' and that 'partnership patterns are often asymmetrical across the sexes, opportunities for contact vary, and taboos on inter-ethnic partnerships have traditionally tended to be greater for women than for men'

These findings are in keeping with the anecdotal evidence presented by members of MixTogether.org in the three years since it was founded. The figure of 10% for mixed /Asian relationships quoted by the 'Ethnicity and family' report is not an accurate reflection of the number of unmarried Asian people in mixed relationships.

We are aware that there is a great deal of 'antagonism towards 'mixed race' unions' within some parts of the Asian community, and that this is keeping the proportion of mixed marriages artificially low.



Background: The BBC Asian Network

The BBC Asian Network has a unique remit among the ranks of Asian media outlets in the UK. It is a public service broadcaster, funded by the UK licence-fee payer, forming part of the British Broadcasting Corporation family.

The Network's aim to reflect the 'new sound of Asian Britain' has helped it to benefit from recent investment, as illustrated by the cross-platform advertising campaign launched in 2008 and most recently updated to promote Adil Ray's breakfast show.

However, the Asian Network cannot lay claim to representing the true sound of modern Asian Britain unless it begins to provide for the needs of mixed/Asian couples, children and extended families.



Current Programming on BBC Asian Network

The Asian Network provides a hugely diverse range of programming aimed at an equally diverse range of Asian listeners. Bobby Friction and Nihal head a strong grouping of DJs promoting cutting-edge new Asian sounds, including Hip Hop's 'Rani of the Decks' DJ Kayper and Shiva Sound System's Nerm bringing Electro and Drum and Bass straight out of Brick Lane.

Elsewhere in the schedule there is specific language programming in Hindi, Urdu, Gujarati, Punjabi and Mirpuri, with religious 'Devotional Sounds' programming for Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims.

The backbone of daytime programming is provided by Nicki Bedi, a DJ of mixed Anglo-Indian heritage with a strong connection to the Bollywood scene.

This range of provision gives the Asian Network a strong claim to represent the new sound of Asian Britain. However, there is one vital element missing if the station is to live up to that claim — and that is content aimed at mixed/Asian families.



Content Aimed At Mixed Families

There is currently no content, on the Asian Network or any other Asian station, aimed directly at couples and families with non-Asian or part-Asian members.

The network is therefore not serving a significant and growing section of families who share an Asian heritage.

It is also missing an opportunity to extend its listener base to include non-Asians, and children of mixed Asian heritage, who would like to feel more connected to Asian culture and music but do not currently tune in to the Network.

In 2009 and beyond, any definition of the new sound of Asian Britain must take account of this growing constituency.

It is currently left to mixed couples and their families to bridge the gap between their cultures. This is no mean feat, especially without any media offerings designed to provide help.

Where a mixed/Asian couple have children, it can be extremely difficult to provide a balance in presentation of their parents' different backgrounds.

Where one or both partners' families have reacted negatively to the relationship — particularly where there has been disownment — it is virtually impossible to give children a positive view of both cultures.

As more couples do choose to follow their own path and pursue a mixed relationship, there is an increasing risk that specifically Asian cultural heritage will be lost, unless a radical shift in perceptions takes hold at a grass-roots level: in temples, gurudwaras and mosques, at weddings and family parties, in schools, in universities and, crucially, in the Asian media.



Our Proposal

We are proposing a new show to address this gap in the Asian Network's public service provision.

The show would feature a range of records interspersed with talk, dedications and information- the classic format of an Asian Network show. It would be scheduled at a family-friendly time, and use of the BBC I-Player would be encouraged for those who want to listen at other times, and from abroad.



There would be three main areas where this new show would be unique:

1. THE MUSIC
2. THE CONTENT
3. THE PRESENTER

1. The Music

Asian songs and music should be at the heart of this new show.

Asian Network's core-offering is music, catering for the different ages, regions, languages and religions of its listener base.

Listeners to the new show would come from all the ages and cultural backgrounds currently represented in the schedule.

Crucially, and uniquely for this show, listeners would also include non-Asian partners and families, and children of mixed/Asian heritage. These listeners should be assumed to have no existing knowledge of the language and culture surrounding each record. The show itself would provide that information.

Records featured on the show would come from across the existing roster of shows, reflecting a cross section of the languages, religions and styles showcased on the Network, so that there is something for everyone.

Popular Bollywood songs could form the backbone of the show, as a unifying sound not drawn from one particular section of Asian culture.

Songs from other scheduled shows could then be introduced and put in context by the presenters of those shows, in a recorded message. For instance, Neelu Kalsi could introduce a Punjabi song, or Bobby Friction a new fusion track, explaining in English why they have selected that song.

This would provide an important opportunity to cross-promote the different shows, encouraging both new and experienced listeners to tune in to Asian Network at other times to learn more.

During key religious festivals such as Diwali, Eid and Vaisakhi, a relevant devotional record could be played and its meaning explained.

The unique selling point of the show should be that the different languages in the songs are presented with an accompanying English translation, and contextualised for an audience with no assumed prior knowledge.

This unique feature of the show would mirror the successful format of Parveen Bird's Mum Power Books series. The books present a colourful children's story in phonetic Punjabi with an accompanying English translation. They are specifically designed to empower mothers of mixed heritage children to pass on their language in an accessible way.



The songs played should be presented with explanation about their background, and a translation given by the presenter of key phrases such as the chorus, or title line. [Please see Appendix A: Example segment of the show.]

On the Asian Network website, a full translation of the song could be offered. Week by week this would build into a library of translations which could be referred to when listening to the different songs.



2. Content of the show

The show would be designed to create a feeling of community and solidarity among listeners, reinforcing a message of approval and welcome to non-Asian partners and in-laws, and especially to children of mixed/Asian heritage. The production would be of top quality, and there would be a positive focus on making people feel good about their life choices and their heritage.

Between the songs — as with all the other Asian Network shows — there would be dedications, messages from listeners, and announcements.

The show would offer all the usual channels of direct communication with the studio: phone, email and text (SMS). A new message-board could be opened up on the Asian Network website to cater for listeners to the show.

The content generated by listeners would be placed in the foreground of the show, with as much importance as the music itself.

Listeners would be encouraged to send dedications and messages to their families. These might be:

- greetings from a non-Asian partner to their new extended family (or vice versa).
- dedications from couples to each other
- dedications from children to their parents (or vice-versa)
- messages from people who have become estranged from their family but would like to say they are OK, or greet a loved one with whom they have lost contact.

The presenter of the show should be able to handle the full range of different listeners' needs in this area with great sensitivity.

Each week there should be information on forthcoming events which mixed families might like to attend. An obvious example would be summer Melas, or perhaps a new play or art exhibition — anything of interest.

The show would offer a full range of information which mixed families could draw upon and relate to.



3. The Presenter

A programme which represents and speaks to mixed couples and families will require a strong presenter.

There will be a huge reserve of goodwill among listeners for whoever presents the show. This would be the most modern and forward-thinking show on any Asian radio station, and the presenter ought to be able to make it their own.

That person — whether male or female — should be able to articulate the feelings of mixed couples and families. They should also be a full-time ambassador off-air, putting the case for greater acceptance of non-Asian partners and children of mixed Asian heritage.

He or she should be able to take their place at Asian Network events and outside broadcasts, alongside the best of the Asian Network DJs, to connect with mixed couples in the audience.

The inherently mixed-race nature of the programme would also allow the presenter to cross over into more than just Asian events, taking the Asian Network brand beyond its traditional boundaries.

The presenter should be sensitive to the needs of listeners who may have been cut off from their parents and other relatives and therefore from a large part of their cultural heritage, but nevertheless would like to maintain Asian culture, for themselves and their children.

They should be able to communicate with parents and families who are not yet aware of their child's mixed relationship, and convey the positive side to having a mixed family.

He or she should also be able to grow with the show as time goes on, helping it to evolve as recognition of mixed couples spreads and more couples have the courage to be seen together.



Conclusion

No station can claim to represent the new sound of Asian Britain while it ignores a major section of the Asian community.

An Asian person does not become less Asian because he or she chooses a mixed relationship, nor can the Asian heritage of children from a mixed marriage be denied or ignored.

The parents of BOTH partners in a mixed relationship need help to reach out to each other, and to impart their cultural heritages in an equal way to their grandchildren.

This document proposes a radical new departure for Asian radio. No UK radio station currently offers any type of content aimed specifically at mixed/Asian families.

To the best of our knowledge, no other Asian radio station in the world offers content aimed at mixed families. With the power of internet broadcasting, such a show would attract listeners not only from around the UK but also from other countries and continents — including India.

The Asian Network will have first-mover advantage if it launches this show, giving it a large dividend in listener loyalty.

The experience of MixTogether shows clearly that there is a gap in the market for this kind of programming. There are literally thousands of Asian people in mixed relationships, in the UK and beyond, who would be grateful for the smallest hint of approval of their life choices from within their own culture.

The Equalities and Human Rights Commission supports this proposal.

Karma Nirvana, Ann Cryer MP, Vince Cable MP, Baroness Sayeeda Warsi and People in Harmony also support this proposal.

All the members of MixTogether.org sincerely hope that the BBC Asian Network will give our idea serious consideration.



The MixTogether Team
February 2009

Appendix A: Example segment of the show

Presenter:

“OK now we have a dedication from Scott in Wembley, he wants to thank Manju and Arun, his girlfriend’s Reena’s parents, for the lovely afternoon on Saturday. He says he really enjoyed the day and he’s never had such nice samosas!

He also says ‘[presenter] please could you tell me a bit more about a song I heard while I was there? It’s called CHAIYYA CHAIYYA and I think it’s from a film called Dil Se’

Well Scott you are absolutely right the song does come from the film Dil Se with Shah Rukh Khan, Manisha Koirala and Preity Zinta. It’s a breathtaking film and you should see it if you can.

If you can’t see the film, then at least try and find the video to CHAIYYA CHAIYYA somewhere online, it’s one of the most famous modern Bollywood scenes. The whole song is sung and choreographed on top of a moving train, it’s unbelievable.

All the music in the movie was written by A.R. Rahman, a very famous Bollywood songwriter. Andrew Lloyd Webber liked his work so much that he teamed up with A.R. Rahman to make Bombay Dreams. In fact, the original recorded version of CHAIYYA CHAIYYA is used in Bombay Dreams, they did not re-record it.

The chorus of the song says ‘chale ishq kii chha.nh chale chaiyya’ which means ‘walk in the shadow of love’ - ishq is the Urdu word, the Arabic word, for love. The song uses a lot of Urdu words and Muslim spiritual terms to describe the love that Shah Rukh’s character is feeling for Manisha, and it gives the sense that his love is almost fanatical, which is a big theme of the film.

You can find a full translation of the lyrics on the Asian Network website, and someone on the forum might be able to point you towards that famous video.

Thanks Scott for your request. Here it is, CHAIYYA CHAIYYA. . .”

CHAIYYA CHAIYYA

Chorus:	Chorus
jinke sar ho ishq kii chha.nh	He whose head is in the shadow of love
pao.n ke niiche jannat hogi	will have heaven beneath his feet.
jinke sar ho ishq ki chha.nh	He whose head is in the shadow of love. . .
chal chhaiyya	Walk in the shadow.
pao.n jannat chale chal chhaiyyan	Walk in heaven, walk in the shadow.
vo yaar hai jo khushbuu kii tarah	There's a friend who is like a sweet fragrance,
jiskii zabaan Urdu kii tarah	whose words are like poetry (lit. Urdu, the language of poetry),
merii shaam raat merii qainaat	who is my evening, my night, my existence.
vo yaar mera saiyya saiyya	That friend is my beloved!
Chorus	Chorus
gulposh kabhii itarae kahii.n	Sometimes (my beloved) flirts like a flower,
mahake to nazar aa jaa'e kahii.n	so fragrantly that you may see her scent.
taawiiz banake pahanuu.n use	Having made it into an charm, I will wear it.
aayat kii tarah mil jaaye kahin	She shall be obtained as a miracle is obtained.
mera nagama vahii.n mera qalama vahii.n	She is my song, my declaration of faith (kalama: the Muslim confession of faith, as in, "la ilaaha il allaah" — "there is no God but Allah").
(vo yaar hai jo imaam ki tarah)	(My friend is like a priest to me.)
mera nagama nagama mera qalama qalama	My song. . . my declaration of faith. . .
yaar misale.n os chale	She moves like the dew.
paon ke tale phirdaus chale	She walks with the garden of heaven beneath her feet,
kabhii Daal Daal kabhii paat paat	sometimes through the branches, sometimes amidst the leaves.
mai.n hawa pe DHuu.nDHuu.n us ke nishaan	I shall search the wind for her trail!
Chorus	Chorus
mai.n uske ruup ka sedaaii	I trade in her beauty.
vo dhuup chhaa.nho.n sa harjaaii	Fickle, she flits shamelessly from sun to shade.
vo shokh ra.ng badalta hai	She changes her bright colors;
mai.n ra.ng ruup ka saudaaii	I negotiate that as well.
Chorus...	Chorus