

## NEWS

### Citizenship Working Group launched at the GA conference, Derby 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2007

The Citizenship Working group held its first event at the GA conference in Derby. Over 30 teachers attended the session on Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> April 2007, enjoying two exciting workshops exploring themes of public histories and geographies and ethical consumption. Both workshops gave participants the opportunity to discuss and consider how they might incorporate a diversity of voices for teaching citizenship through geography.



The first session was provided by Toby Butler, project director at the London East Research Institute, University of East London, who introduced his PhD research and MemoryScapes guided audio walks, 'Drifting' and 'Dockers'. These rich oral histories from people who have lived and worked around London's Docks and along the river Thames provided geography teachers with a lot of food for thought. Toby suggested ways in which MemoryScapes could be used to bring to life issues of economic geography, including the changing histories of ports in a wider context,

environmental issues, such as the clean air act and local pollution, and contemporary issues of urban regeneration – including the social, cultural and personal importance of the changing geography of the London Docks and the impact of the Millennium Dome. Teachers discussed with Toby how they could encourage students to reflect on their surroundings, represent the past, interview each other and their families about local histories and develop a sense of empathy and attachment to their local geography and its people. One suggestion was for students to make their own MemoryScapes to help them cope with and learn from the transition from primary to secondary school, or to make connections between rural and urban schools or develop global school partnerships. Others explained how MemoryScapes could be used to challenge historical/place-based stereotypes and perceptions of place, develop understandings of diversity and to make cross-curricular links (with Citizenship, ICT, media, music, history), or to provide a focus for field trips. All materials can be accessed for free from the website [www.memoryscale.org.uk](http://www.memoryscale.org.uk), and Toby can be contacted at [tobybutler@boltblue.com](mailto:tobybutler@boltblue.com).

A second session was led by Ian Cook, Senior Lecturer in Human Geography at the University of Birmingham. Ian introduced the group to an art installation by artist Shelly Sacks called 'Exchange Values: Images of Invisible Lives'. He showed pictures of the installation which is made up of 20 'sheets' of banana skins, taken from 20 boxes of Windward Island bananas, dried, stitched together, and hung around the walls of a gallery space. Ian explained how beneath each panel is a set of headphones via which visitors can listen to the people who grew these bananas. The group then listened to a couple of the farmers voices (which can be downloaded from the Exchange Values website). The farmers talked about world trade, their increasing poverty, the declining educational opportunities for their children, how the bananas they grow have to be increasingly standard and blemish free, and how these issues relate directly to the consumer in the UK. The group then discussed how this work made important connections with global citizenship and how they could use this work in the classroom. One suggestion that Ian made was for pupils to download the voices onto their MP3 players and listen to the voices whilst out shopping. Further information on Shelly Sacks' work can be found at [www.exchange-values.org](http://www.exchange-values.org).

