

Wednesday, January 3, 2007



Have you got what it takes to be a reality TV star?

AT THE risk of sounding like a second-rate politician, I want to say a few words about unity as we start another year.

2006 was a year filled with conflict and differing opinions. We did not have a single focal point of tragedy or conflict such as 7/7, but the political tension was more drawn out and all the more potent because of it.

Jack Straw and his comments on the veil induced a furore with angry responses from both sides of the debate whilst Tony Blair made a bold statement about British culture: "Conform to it or don't come here". Christmas was marred by debate over political correctness: 70 per cent of 2,000 employers surveyed by employment law firm Peninsula said they were restricting or banning Christmas decorations so not to offend people of other faiths.

Why are people concentrating so much on the finer points of integration and multiculturalism? Perhaps it IS a potent way of preventing feelings of alienation and acts of extremism in a roundabout kind of way, but I can't help but feel that politicians are unnecessarily labouring over this single issue.

I don't know one non-Christian person who was offended by Christmas lights.

The BBC Asian Network discussed this issue and the majority of callers agreed that banning Christmas decorations was ridiculous.

Are politicians pulling policies out of a hat? Whose opinions form their guidelines? My message to them is that integration and harmony will either happen naturally or not at all.

It certainly won't be coaxed into existence by misinformed policy-makers who are out of touch with the very people they are trying to reach.

It may not be a proactive way of going about things, but lets just head into 2007 and just exist together.

Kia Abdullah is a 24-year-old author from Limehouse.

Her first novel, Life, Love and Assimilation, was a huge success and she has already embarked on her second book, a crime thriller. Send your comments to kia.abdullah@gmail.com

By **KALA PAUL-WORIKA**
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THE king of all reality TV shows is about to start a search in Docklands for its stars of 2007.

Thousands of Big Brother wannabes are expected to flock to the Royal Docks when auditions for the show are held at ExCeL.

The venue is fast becoming the first choice for reality programme auditions. This is the third time Big Brother producers have visited ExCeL, and the makers of Pop Idol have held two sets of auditions there.

A spokeswoman for ExCeL said: "We are delighted that Big Brother is returning to ExCeL London for their 2007 auditions.

"The flexibility and size of the venue means that we can adapt to any

kind of event. The ease of access to the venue, catering facilities, coupled with our 4,000 parking spaces also means that we can accommodate the thousands of hopefuls who turn up and queue all day for the chance to appear on one of our most popular reality TV shows."

London auditions will be held on Saturday, February 10 and Sunday, February 11, following auditions at Glasgow, Cardiff, Newcastle, Birmingham, Dublin and Manchester.

A lucky few will then be invited to attend a call back on Monday, February 12.

Producers of the show, which last year made a celebrity out of Tourette-sufferer Pete Bennett, are looking for people who think they can bring "something extra special" to the house.

Michele Marsland, a spokeswoman for Endemol UK, makers of Big Brother 8, told *The Docklands*: "Big Brother is always looking for big



Fame-seekers: Pop Idol auditions at ExCeL. Producers of Big Brother are holding London auditions there next month.

characters, intriguing and dynamic people that will make interesting, entertaining and memorable Big Brother housemates.

"Some people may feel that they have been under-represented in the Big Brother house and Big Brother producers are always keen to cast the net as wide as possible. The producers want to emphasise that Big Brother is about a diverse cross sec-

tion of people living in a house together, and in order to make this possible a diverse cross section of people must apply for the show."

Those who turn up should be prepared to impress and aged over 18 in the summer of 2007.

All applicants must bring photo ID and are advised to wrap up warm. Anyone with specific access requirements should call (020) 8222 4356.

DID YOU KNOW..

This year's Christmas decorations on the Canary Wharf estate included 19,479 decorations (not including the baubles hanging in the rotunda), 249 sets of lights, 101 trees and 44 garlands.



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