

# Tomorrow's Men

By **Jeanefer Jean-Charles**,  
choreographer and Rayne Fellow

**Jeanefer Jean Charles was awarded a Rayne Fellowship in 2007. Her choreography credits include Mass Choreographies for the world record-breaking *Big Dance* for BBC TV in partnership with the Arts Council and the Mayor's office and *Bolero Re-Mixed* in partnership with Greenwich Docklands International Festival and East London Dance amongst other successes. Her fellowship has supported her in setting up her boys' project *Tomorrow's Men*.**



Company: State of Emergency  
Choreographer: Jeanefer Jean Charles  
Dancers: Tony Mills, O'Neil Ricardo Pryce,  
Julius Ebreo, Matthew Newton & Antoine Marc  
Photographer: Owen Lewis

It was perfect timing: The Rayne Foundation were selecting choreographers to engage in bridge building projects during a period when I was developing my ideas for *Tomorrow's Men* (originally named *Lads and Dads*).

I wanted to explore the idea that dance could have a positive impact on improving social behavior among disenfranchised male youths. Addressing the disengagement of boys and young men from society, the project aims to effect change by a process of self-discovery and empowerment through dance. The Rayne Fellowship enabled me to write my business plan for *Tomorrow's Men* and, set up a creative environment in which movement activities build trust and provide support to vulnerable young men by helping them to express themselves.

Several secondments have been instrumental in propelling the project forward. Two of these were: Only Connect Creative Arts Company, this entailed taking drama workshops to prisons and offering performance projects to recently released male prisoners and Dance United's *Academy* in Bradford, a 12 week intensive dance training course for youth at risk, involving interviewing ten key figures in the Metropolitan Police, Criminal Justice Board and Scotland Yard.

Such experiences challenged me to think in original ways. Normally I would begin by approaching a dance agency when developing a project. Here, I had to connect with social welfare organisations and convince them of the relevance of the scheme. Operating outside the dance sector has been refreshing and edifying. The biggest challenge is the need such organisations have for proof of effectiveness.

I would regularly be asked: 'What difference does your project make? What will the impact be?'

The experience gained through the Rayne Fellowship has impacted on my other ventures. The *Big Dance* commission in 2006 gave rise to other large-scale commissions. East London Dance and Greenwich and Docklands International Festival are commissioning *Tomorrow's Men* for 2012 which is a powerful expression of trust and belief in my work. Having the support of such organisations engenders me with greater self-confidence in tackling the social welfare aspects of the project's process. I am currently forging links with local youth services, pupil referral units and youth offending teams.

I am deeply indebted to the Rayne Foundation for its vision and understanding in supporting my work. *Tomorrow's Men* will enable me to work with many 'hard-to-reach' young men. It will enable them to create a large-scale production with a team of professional artists. It will be extremely rewarding to witness these youngsters receiving the appreciation and applause they deserve.

Finally, and most importantly, I am very grateful to have a team to help me develop my project: Life Coach June Gamble, Morton Bates from Arts Services, Yorkshire based (CIDA) Creative Industries Development Agency, and Business Transformation Consultant Helen Jakeways. ■

If you would like to get involved in *Tomorrow's Men* please email Joe Bates: [info@tomorrowsmen.co.uk](mailto:info@tomorrowsmen.co.uk)

📱 [www.tomorrowsmen.co.uk](http://www.tomorrowsmen.co.uk).