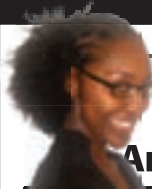


# LET THEM SEE THEIR KIDS



**Akosua  
Annobil-Dodoo**

## EXCLUSIVE

**A NEW WEBSITE for fathers struggling to gain access to their children is being launched today (15 October).**

For years, black men have been tarnished with the stigma of being absent parents, but FathersTogether.com aims to highlight the plight of those who have been unjustly stereotyped in today's society.

Many young fathers are saying they need more support as they struggle to break the negative stereotype, often perpetuated by their children's mothers.

Fredi Nwaka, founder of FathersTogether.com (F2G), says: 'There are hundreds of men out there who are being denied access to their children by bitter or malicious mothers. There are many mums who, through jealousy or resentment, make it very hard for men to be the best fathers they can be. Then society blames it on to the man as if the women are totally exempt from blame.'

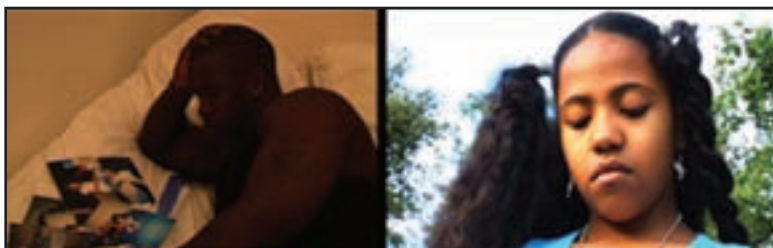
Nwaka, who is 'in his 30s', adds: 'I admit there are a lot of bad dads out there who do run off and want nothing to do with their children, but those who don't should be given a chance - even if the parents are no longer together or on talking terms.'

The south London-based father of two decided to set up F2G following a personal experience, which cannot be detailed here for legal reasons. He says: 'Although I was still doing the things expected of me as a father, both financially and morally, I found myself in a situation where I was unable to see my child. I went through the whole legal scenario and found it to be heavily sided in the mother's favour.'

'But I also found there are certain procedures that every father should follow, such as obtaining "parental responsibility", which gives you almost the same rights as if you were married to your child's mother.'

'I decided to set up Fathers Together to help educate other men about their rights as responsible parents, and encourage them to play an active role in their children's lives. Instead of becoming bitter and angry myself, I decided that by helping other men in the same predicament and by celebrating the good fathers out there, I was doing something positive,' Nwaka adds. 'It's great that something good can come out of something so painful.'

F2G is an interactive website giving fathers the chance to share experiences and receive useful information, such as services and legal advice. 'F2G is



**Video story: Stills from Fredi's new video, *I Just Wanna See My Kids*, tell a story that is familiar to far too many men in the community**

divided into two sections: legal advice/information and charity/fundraising,' Nwaka explains. 'The project is run by a small team of volunteers, and individuals with counselling and social science qualifications.'

'I have already received a number of phone calls from fathers who are in conflict with the mothers of their children. Just being able to give them advice from my experiences is very rewarding.'

'But while the site provides legal information, it is also a fun read with a lifestyle section, which looks at celebrity dads, fathers of the month, men's health, recommended books and much more. Plus, fathers coming together and sharing parenting tips is a great thing.'

Day trips and 'Give Mum a Break' summer holidays are also in the pipeline for 2008 and beyond, Nwaka says.

In addition, he adds: 'As part of our commitment towards our children we have our Fathers Against Guns section, which is dedicated to reducing the violent crime plaguing our community.'

Some may also recognise Nwaka as Fredi Kruga, a music artist who has been circling the industry for many years. He recaps: 'I have won a number of awards, including Best Hip Hop Artist, Best Video, and Best Newcomer at the Hip Hop Awards a few years back. More recently I took to the streets and shot my own documentary series called *Married 2 Da Streets*, which was subsequently nominated for a Screen Nation Award and sold more than 10,000 copies independently.'

'I am currently trying to use my music and life experience to inflict a positive message on today's society, by addressing issues that are real,' he adds.

Fredi recently completed a music video for his latest single, *Just Wanna See My Kids*, featuring fellow musicians Majah Tunda and Kimberly. The track was made in association with the F2G website.

'It really works as it's written from the heart and not just as a gimmick or as a song to make money,' he says. 'It's the story of one man's journey from being able to see his children, to being restricted. You can listen to the song and also watch the exclusive video by logging on to the Fathers Together website.'

Fredi says he hopes the tune will inspire those who can benefit from Fathers Together: 'If you are having difficulties don't give up. If you can't work things out or come to an understanding with the child's mother, then go through the legal system. She'll probably hate you for it but your child will one day love you for it.'

'There are thousands of men out there experiencing the same or similar problems. Come to Fathers Together and we will lend a listening ear and also give you the advice and information you need to be there for your children.'

He adds: 'Being a father is one of the most beautiful things a man can be. Watching someone, who is part of you, grow up is so rewarding. You don't even have to be a biological father. If you are a step-father or a father-figure in a child's life, you can still reap those same benefits.'

'I never have and never will understand men who run off and don't have anything to do with their children.'

Fredi also stresses the importance of supportive mothers when it comes to parenting. 'We'd love to hear from the mothers out there who encourage fatherfulness, and especially those who make that extra effort to ensure that the father of their child is in their lives.'

'I recently spoke to one young lady who separated from her partner of nine years after finding out he had been having a four-year affair.'

'They have three children together, and she still lets him come round to the house and be part of the children's lives, despite how hurt and devastated she was by the break up.'

'This is very commendable and shows that she has put her children at the forefront.'

'Some mothers do a great job and I know quite a few who, through no direct fault of their own, are left to play mum and dad. But the harsh reality is that children need both parents.'

■ *If you would like to join FathersTogether and receive their bi-monthly newsletter, visit [www.fatherstogether.com](http://www.fatherstogether.com) or for further information email [info@fatherstogether.com](mailto:info@fatherstogether.com).*

## Church hits back at video nasty

A BLACK-MAJORITY church hosted the launch of a new Christian board game as an alternative to X-rated violent video games.

'Salvation Quest' allows players to go from the Garden of Eden to the Cross by answering Bible-related questions. Pastors gathered at the Dominion Christian Centre in Wood Green last Saturday welcomed news that all profits would go towards homes and orphanages in Africa and the Caribbean.

Makers of Salvation Quest hope the game will be an antidote to titles such as Resident Evil 5, which caused controversy recently by featuring a white character whose job it was to gun down zombies in Africa.

Salvation Quest is available from Wesley Owen stores.

## Revealed: govt role in slavery

THE ROLE of British diplomats in maintaining the slave trade has been revealed. Up to now the focus has been on slave traders, MPs, campaigners and black abolitionists.

But the actions of Whitehall mandarins have escaped attention. Later this month the FCO will hold a seminar on what bowler-hatted civil servants did during the African Holocaust.

During the 1820s and 30s the Slave Trade Department was the biggest section within the Foreign Office. It was responsible for compensating slave owners and monitoring the illegal transportation of Africans after the 1807 Act in order to close it down.

There was growing concern at the time about slaves in central and south America.

The Slave Trade Department was later changed to the Africa Department, which oversaw the partition of the continent with the onset of colonialism.

## 'I want to see my son': One man's experience

**Stefan, 28, London**

'I WAS WITH my ex-girlfriend for just under six years. Some of the relationship was good and some bad, but if I'm honest I don't really know why we broke up. I guess we just drifted our separate ways. We have a two-year-old son, who I love and adore. I was there at his birth, and did the typical daddy stuff.'

'When we first broke up everything was fine, as it was a mutual separation. I used to go to their house all the time and take my son out to see my family. I spent all my time with him as I wanted to make sure that I played an

active part in his life. I never knew my own father. I still gave my son's mother money each week and every time he needed anything, all she had to do was ask.'

'A year or so after we separated, I started dating my current girlfriend - and everything went crazy. She stopped me from seeing my son and even though I was giving her money she called the CSA to try and mess me up. She actually ended up getting less than I was giving her in the first place.'

'She started calling my phone and hanging up, and spreading malicious rumours about me, telling people that I ran off and left her

and I've never done a thing for my son.'

'I haven't seen him for more than seven months now and I've just filed papers to take her to court for visitation. My name is on his birth certificate, so I guess that counts for something.'

'All I want to do is be there for my son and continue being the father I was. It's so painful. I miss him like hell and I know he misses me too.'

■ *You can read more true stories like this one, or submit your own at [www.fatherstogether.com](http://www.fatherstogether.com)*

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