

POLITICAL SAUCE

JESSICA FELLOWES meets Wilfred Emmanuel-Jones, a West Country farmer on a mission to delight our taste buds and shake up our politics

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ILFRED EMMANUEL-JONES was born in Jamaica, raised in inner-city Birmingham and owns a farm in Devon. According to various reports by the Countryside Agency (CA) and the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) this man can hardly exist. But Mr Emmanuel-Jones is not only a successful man in the countryside, he is delightfully happy there as The Black Farmer—the name by which he is known to his neighbours and the name of his range of sausages, sauces, dips and marinades.

In July this year, the CA published a Diversity Report which concluded that 'People from inner cities, disabled people and the black and minority ethnic communities are among the groups whose needs could be better served by many organisations who offer recreation opportunities.' This followed a report by the CRE last year, which concluded much the same thing, adding that only one in 85 people in the South West are of black or Asian origin, compared to the national average of one in 12. Such reports may well continue in the same vein, were it not for a small band of people determined that it shouldn't always be so. 'The tragedy would be if 50 years on the children [of immigrants] felt there were still parts of Britain that were unavailable to them,' Mr Emmanuel-Jones says.

In January this year, Mr Emmanuel-Jones established The Black Farmer Rural Scholarship, which has already gained support from the Prince of Wales. As a media-savvy former television producer with his own marketing company, CommsPlus, Mr Emmanuel-Jones is well placed to make this a triumph. Out of hundreds of applications, nine teenagers—all of whom were in the Last Chance Saloon—were chosen to work on his farm for six weeks, at the end of which, two won permanent jobs. The course was filmed by Channel 4, to be screened later this year, and Mr Emmanuel-Jones was on hand the entire time. 'I wanted to teach them discipline, to rework the notion of "respect",' he says. 'These kids have learned how to manipulate the politically correct white middle-class world. But they came here and none of the same rules applied. The difference was, I came from the same place as them. There were a lot of tears at first but they all did so well. I hope the documentary shows

what will happen when people are given the opportunity.' This project was sparked by the CRE report, but not because Mr Emmanuel-Jones has encountered any racism. In fact, he says, he has been overwhelmed by the support shown by his neighbours. Admitting he is really just a 'hobby' farmer, he leaves all the big decisions to the farmers round him—one of them would never let Mr Emmanuel-Jones choose his own cattle at shows anyway, in case he was ripped off. But the name 'The Black Farmer' came from the local villagers. 'I thought it was a great name. It suits my personality and it's in-your-face.'

Mr Emmanuel-Jones is well aware of the hardships



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farmers face in the current climate, but is adamant that there is more they can do to help themselves—by forming co-operatives and being canner in marketing themselves. 'You can be the best producer of food or breeder of cattle—but if you can't do marketing, you can't survive.' The proof is in the sausages, as in the single year that he has been running The Black Farmer, the brand has won awards, featured in a sheaf of newspaper articles and is sold in most of the major supermarkets.

All of this has happened against the odds. Brought up with his eight brothers and sisters in a tiny terrace house, after his parents moved to Britain from the 'bush' in Jamaica, Mr Emmanuel-Jones left school for the Army and a short spell in a catering college. After that, he badgered his way into the BBC, eventually becoming a successful food and drink programme producer and director: Gordon Ramsay, Anthony Worrall-Thompson and Jean-Christophe Novelli all got their first television breaks under him. Leaving to set up CommsPlus with his wife, Michaela (with whom he has three children), Mr Emmanuel-Jones saw the fortunes of his clients rise, including Loyd Grossman's pasta sauces and Kettlechips. Now it can only be a certainty that we see the same happen for his own produce, the motto for which is 'Flavours without Frontiers' as he picks the best flavours from round the world without labelling them as Italian, Asian, whatever. After the interview, I drove to a house party in Dorset where the hostess fed the guests The Black Farmer Premium Pork Sausages for breakfast. The verdict was unanimous: delicious.

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