

**Citation for Angela Mason
on the Conferment of the
Degree of Doctor of Laws *Honoris Causa*
Royal Holloway, University of London**

Principal, it is my pleasure to present to you Angela Mason OBE.

Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaims that ‘Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.’ Today we honour a graduate of Bedford College who used her own education to pursue those aims. After taking her BA in History and an MSc in Sociology at LSE, Angela Mason became a welfare rights organizer for the London Borough of Camden, where she worked with women’s groups to negotiate flexible working and paternity leave and established the first lesbian and gay employee group in her trade union. Later she served the Bangladeshi community of the Isle of Dogs as its legal liaison with the Tower Hamlets Borough Council.

In 1992, Angela became the Executive Director of Stonewall, Britain’s leading homosexual rights organization, at a time when any attempt to promote lesbian and gay equality – or even to describe our relationships as ‘families’ – was outlawed in the nation’s schools. So indeed was service in the armed forces, and any sexual relationship between men under the age of 21. Today, when lesbians and gays can register their partnerships, adopt and foster children, enjoy the same rights at work and the same access to goods and services as everyone else, it is difficult to remember how secondary our citizenship then was. It is difficult to remember because Angela Mason, her colleagues at Stonewall and the thousands of people who marched and lobbied and raised funds and their voices, ended the legal persecution of homosexuals in this country so completely.

For those services Angela was awarded the Human Rights Award in 1998 and an OBE in 1999. But there was much more to come. Five years ago, she was appointed what a less ironic observer might describe as the country’s ‘Equality Czar’ and charged with the delivery of equal rights in regard to gender, ethnicity, religion, physical ability and sexual orientation across the entire legal spectrum. Under her directorship, the Government is currently holding public consultations on a new ‘Single Equality’ bill, which will simplify and improve 40 years of existing anti-discrimination law.

But while we may take these new initiatives for granted in a country increasingly 'comfortable with itself', Angela's presence here today must also remind us how far we have yet to go, [even](#) in higher education. Consult Stonewall's current list of 'Diversity Champions' who promote equality in the workplace – ranging from the Merseyside Police to Manchester City Football Club, and admirably including our colleagues down the road at Procter and Gamble. Among its 300 members you will find only three universities. No wonder that [The Guardian](#) newspaper could complain in 2005 that although British universities view themselves as meritocracies, 'they have found themselves having to scramble to comply with equality legislation.'

In recognition, therefore, of her immense contribution to this country's commitment to equality, and to renew our own commitment to education as the avenue to human rights, may I invite you, Principal, to confer the Degree of Doctor of Laws *Honoris Causa* [in](#) the University of London on Angela Mason.

***Professor Mandy Merck
Department of Media Arts
18 July 2007***