

Pan Africanism is an expansive notion that encompasses more than a century of Africa's relationship to the rest of the world. It is an enduring idea that is also said to underpin contemporary expressions such as 'Afrofuturism', 'Afropolitanism' and 'Afropessimism' that echo the 'return to Africa' that has taken many different forms over many decades. Yet how many people know of, or have heard what some of the key architects of Pan-Africanism, which manifests itself as a utopian ideal, a movement, a cultural phenomenon and a political construct, have said about it. The 70th Anniversary of the 5th Pan African Congress held in Manchester in 1945 provides an opportunity to remind ourselves of that original Pan African vision.

At this contemporary moment of heightened debates about migration and belonging, the ideas and thinking that underpinned the Pan African Movement and the independence and liberation movements of Africa bear reflection, through the work of four filmmakers who have had the foresight to capture for posterity some of those seminal voices and moments which are brought to the screen in this exhibition.

There are many ways of looking at Pan-Africanism as a complex artistic and political movement that still has an impact on the black experience today. To understand it, there are many films that can inform, illustrate and enlighten that process. The American voices are numerous and include key characters of the Harlem Renaissance, Countee Cullen, Richard Wright; and the Jamaicans, writer Claude McKay and political activist Marcus Garvey who both hold very high profiles in the US cultural sphere of the early 1900s. W E B Du Bois is the seminal figure who attended the first Pan African Conference held in London in 1900, and his legacy is presented in Louis Massiah's *WEB Dubois: A Biography in 4 Voices*. That first Conference (Congress) was organised by Trinidadian Lawyer Henry Sylvester Williams. Williams was one of the Caribbean thinkers and writers who envisaged and nurtured a direct relationship between Africa and its diaspora and would have an active and advocacy role in the African independence movement. Subsequently, the work and ideas of the Martiniquan writer and poet Aimé Césaire, proposed a vision and analysis of Africa's relationship to the diaspora and the rest of the world at a cultural level. His personal thoughts and reflections are brought to the screen with Euzhan Palcy's biographic trilogy *Aimee Cesiare: A Voice for History*. Césaire, together with Leopold Senghor of Senegal represented two of the three architects (the third being Leon-Gontran Damas of French Guiana/Guyane), of the Negritude Movement. This was one of the ideas articulated and explored during the *First, World Festival of Negro Arts* held in Dakar in 1966. The festival is captured on celluloid by American filmmaker William Greaves in his poetic documentary of the same name.

In the post-World War II journey that led to the Independence movements in Africa, Trinidadian writers and activists, George Padmore and CLR James, took centre stage. Both had a profound influence on Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana and encouraged the move towards African independence. Padmore and James were key figures in the staging of the 5th Pan African Congress in Manchester in 1945. CLR James' reflections on the Caribbean and on Africa are two in a series of six

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filmed *CLR James Lectures* produced by UK filmmaker H O Nazareth. There are many other Trinidadian names that are linked with staunch political commitment to Africa and diaspora identities in a world context, not least are the more contemporary writer and cultural activist John La Rose and the pioneering filmmaker Horace Ove, whose voices combined in Ove's documentary on the life of La Rose, 'Dare to Change the World'. This programme is the tip of the iceberg of a rich haul of audiovisual material that attests to various histories, people and events in the story of Pan Africanism including contemporary expressions. Watch this space!