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Mr. D. Whetton
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Greater London Council
The County Hall
London SE1 7PB

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GLC STAGES 'BLACK EXPERIENCE' ARTS FESTIVAL

London will stage the largest and liveliest black arts programme ever, over two months under the banner of 'The Black Experience', thanks to the Greater London Council's Race Equality Unit.

It will emphasis the artistic and cultural life of both the black and asian communities through theatre, dance, photography, films, paintings, literature and seminars. These events will be organised and performed by black arts groups at dozens of venues around London.

One of the highlights of the project, which starts in February, will be a tribute to Trinidadian writer and historian CLR James. His play, 'The Black Jacobins', will be staged at the Riverside Studios for three weeks.

'The Black Jacobins' was premiered at the Westminster Theatre in March 1936, with Paul Robeson playing the lead as Toussaint L'Ouverture, the Haitian liberator. This new production will be the first in Britain since, although it is regularly performed in the United States, Africa and the Caribbean.

An exhibition "Focus on GLR James" on James' life and works will also accompany the play, from his early life as a journalist, teacher and historian through to his resettlement in Brixton, where he has now retired.

Other projects in the programme include:

- * An exhibition in the history of Black Resistance and Rebellion
- * A multi-media dance production, tracing the movement of black labour from the Caribbean to Britain with political and social consequences
- * 'Signs of Resistance' - a slide/tape presentation on London murals with messages linked to universal struggles.
- * 'Forces and Figures in Black History' - photographic exhibition on Afro-Caribbean and Asian peoples from history
- * 'Reflections of the Black Experience' - ten photographers each portray their perceptions of the historical and contemporary struggles of black peoples.
- * 'Business Behind Performance' - a three-day exhibition with workshops, looking behind the scenes at how black music is produced.

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- * 'Struggles for Black Community' - film screenings of black and third world films.
- * Film script competition
- * Oral history project.
- * Plays by two young black theatre companies: Afro Sax Theatre Co and Double Edge Theatre Co.
- * Race and Labour History - Exhibition and Seminars
- * Life and Works of Ranjani Palme Dutt 1895-1975 - the outstanding Indian Marxist philosopher who transformed the political and intellectual climate in Britain.
- * Caribbean Labour In Revolt: The 1930's and its aftermath - exhibition on the most crucial decade in the Caribbean's collective history since the abolition of slavery.
- * Aurat Shakti exhibition ("Power for Women") - exhibition showing the complex expectations and experiences of Asian women.

Ken Little, who chairs the GLC's Ethnic Arts Sub-Committee, said today: "The GLC will be chalking up another accomplishment for Londoners as many people have asked for such a diverse and lively arts programme as we have managed to put together. By emphasising the historical and cultural input and significance of black arts from a black British perspective, Londoners will be the richer in turn by sharing in this 'Black Experience.'"

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Press contact: Vanessa Summers (01) 633 6057

PR Company: Positive Publicity (Yvonne Thompson) (01) 723 1558.

NOTE TO PICTURE AND ARTS EDITORS: THE BLACK EXPERIENCE will be launched in early February 1986. Advance press photos and biographies are available either from the GLC Press Office or from Positive Publicity.