

PRESS RELEASE

'STRUGGLES FOR BLACK COMMUNITY'

A BLACK AND THIRD WORLD FILM PROGRAMME

The Association of Black Workshops in conjunction with the G.L.C.'s Racial Equality Unit, is co-ordinating a film programme entitled 'STRUGGLE FOR BLACK COMMUNITY'.

The film programme is part of an overall arts programme co-ordinated by the Racial Equality Unit entitled 'The Black Experience'.

'The Black Experience' was officially opened on 7th February at the Commonwealth Institute, and includes; photography exhibitions, dance, theatre, film and poetry.

The film programme starts on 28th February and ends 6th March, and is screened at the Metro Cinema, Rupert Street, London W.1., with a one day seminar on 6th March around themes of race, cinema and community. Some of the films are being screened for the first time in the U.K., others have been screened before, but the co-ordination of a screening programme like 'STRUGGLE FOR BLACK COMMUNITY' offers the opportunity for Black and Third World film makers to showcase their films in London.

The programme is thematically structured around race, gender, resistance, imperialism and community.

One must not think of Black and Third World people as one singular community, but as vast, various and different groupings, who have similar but also different interests. These interests may integrate, but they may also contest with each other at times.

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'STRUGGLES FOR BLACK COMMUNITY'

The 'Struggle For Black Community' screenings programme is a series of films chosen by London members of the Association of Black Workshops. The ABW is a national body comprising of eight black film and video workshops throughout Britain. Its broad function is to represent and advance the interests of the Black Workshop Sector in the area of Film/Video production, distribution, training and exhibition.

'Struggles For Black Community' represents the ABW's contribution to our understanding of 'The Black Experience'. It emphasises the role of the community in these experiences, on a local and international basis. Prioritising questions of internal and external relations, it cuts across histories and geographies, concentrating on the lives of black and third world peoples in their variety and difference.

The films themselves reflect a diversity of locales, coming from Cuba, Haiti, India, Senegal, Brazil, Argentina, Latin America, Ethiopia, Britain and America. In these cinematic geographies lie the effects, artefacts and marks of the black experience. It is possible that in these sweeping geographies of struggle, we may show some of the themes, fictions and grandiloquent truths that both separate and hold us in a number of relations to community.

'Struggles For Black Community' reflects part of an ongoing concern by the ABW with questions of race and cinema, and a continuing relation of interest and activity by the GLC around questions of race and cultural

production. The programme reflects the possibility that there are other ways of thinking about what the relation of cinema and race, struggle and community can be for us.

Programme 4 is a showcase of workshop productions by Star Video. Sankofa 'Community' is held, secured, and sometimes collapsed by its own myths, histories and dialogues. Dialogues of the body, of mimesis, the imperialist incision, the pervasive conflict thrown up by coloniser, imperialist and policeman, eroding the boundaries of the external and the internal.

There are six programmes. Throughout them run questions of sexuality and desire, mimesis and imagination, conquest, history and memory.

In Programme 1, amidst the grainy light of the ghetto and the hard won post revolutionary splendour of Cuba, the languages of masculinity are splintered and dispersed through the prism of 'the Social'. Of particular interest here are Charles Burnett's 'Killer of Sheep', and Pastor Vegas's, 'Portrait of Teresa'.

Programme 2 focuses on the encounters of women with relations of state and home, body and history, from 'Ceddo' to 'Bush Mama'.

Programme 3 reels between carnivals of desire and struggle. Through 'Black Orpheus' and Albert Bailey's 'Shadow', flow carnivals tributary questions of language and ambiguity. In sound recordist turned director/producer, Bailey's 'Shadow', Calypso is traversed as a text of intrigue,

the
scandal, apparancy and displacement: a microcosm of/music and politics
of desire in Carribean social relations.

Programme 4 is a showcase of workshop productions by Star Video, Sankofa and Retake film and video collective. Each production marks its own moment in the development of an indigenous black independent film culture. Chosen by the groups themselves the work draws up an agenda of concerns; question of gay male sexuality, relations between black and white people, questions of class and politics, body and state, race and nation.

Programme 5 traces histories and myths of the grand imperial chain of incarceration and signification. There are stories of violent social upheaval in countries as separate as post feudal Ethiopia and peasant Bolivia. We look, in 'Bhopal After Genocide' and 'Qusi Mada' at the effects on the community body politic of multinational corporate scheming and Colonial free trade.

Programme 6 grasps for the elusive core of our concern, the struggle for self determination, subjectively, politically, culturally, geographically. 'Ganga Zumba', and 'Come Back Africa', examines the perils and pitfalls of the struggle to build communities in the most adverse of circumstances - slavery and apartheid. 'The Outsiders' and 'Shaheed' evoke grand moments of flight from the mundanity of oppression. The question of memory and imagination conclude and foreground these desires for a place, in a shifting terrain of contestation and force, of ones own.

'Struggles For Community' - 4

Programme 1 :- Body & State

Killer Of Sheep

Dir: Charles Burnett

U.S.A. 1978 (83 mins) B/W 16 mm

Shot on location with local people 'Killer of Sheep', is a neo realistic portrait of a family struggle to survive the torpor and frustration of life in the Watts area of L.A.

"The idea for the film came from observation", says Burnett, "seeing the limited choices that effect a person in Stan's position". Stan works in a slaughter house. His labour reflects his alienation from his friends, his family, and his tortured dialogue with himself and his pause ridden dialogue with his wife. 'Killer of Sheep' evokes the near impossibility of life in the seam of the American dream. It was made on a tight budget and its careful use of documentary techniques, attention to detail and nuance plus an excellent soundtrack (Incl. Dinah Washington, Paul Robeson, and Elmore James), weaves a story both of compassion and despair.

My Brother's Wedding

Dir: Charles Burnett

U.S.A. 1983 (115 mins) Col

Also set in Watts, this tragic-comedy revolves around a 30 year old good-for-nothing, working in his parents laundry. He lives in the

ghetto, and loves the life he lives, looking with derision on the bourgeois aspirations of his lawyer brother. He is persuaded, slowly, to be best man at his brother's wedding, and the results are both cathartic and implosive.

Up To A Point

Dir: T.A. Gutierrez Alea

Cuba 1974

Our Cuban double bill focuses on questions of masculinity and revolution. In 'Up To A Point', a script writer and a director are researching a video about 'Machismo'. The scriptwriter's marriage is in crisis. He falls in love with an unmarried mother who works as a dock supervisor. Their relationship throws his social and cinematic 'vision' into perspective, as he experiences something of the conflict he is trying to manage.

Burning An Illusion

In 'Portrait of Teresa', Daisy Granados plays Teresa. She leads a number of inter-related lives - housewife with children, factory worker, and factory cultural secretary. Her diverse and independent lifestyle causes conflict with her machista husband, who, in due course of the film, is confronted by Teresa with a force that delighted the film's Cuban audiences.

Both films exhibit a consistent understanding of the political relations of 'the public' to 'the private'.

Programme 2 :- In The Land of Caliban and Prospero the axis of her own own understanding of her position in contemporary British society.

On a surface of shifting grids and referents, the mythical characters of Caliban and Prospero configurate relations of coloniser and colonised, teacher and student, master and slave, lover and stranger. The double edged axe which splits subjectivities into relations of polymorpha and verisimilitude.

No Virginity. No Nationality

Bush Mama

Dir: Haile Gerima (97 mins) 16 mm Col.

U.S.A. 1976 (97 mins) B/W 16 mm

Brief and powerful documentary which covers the struggle in the mid 1970's against virginity tests used on Asian women as a means of undermining the movement of black women from the third world to the 'first'.

Burning An Illusion

Dir: Menelik Shabbaz

Brazil 1981 (107 mins) Col 16 mm.

Anita

Dorothy lives in Watts, the area made familiar to Americans for its furious riots in the 1960's. She is a black woman living on welfare, trying to raise her daughter while her man is in jail for a crime he didn't commit. 'Bush Mama' mixes street scenes with the events and fantasies of Dorothy's existence as a means of initiating a process of self politicisation. In 'Burning An Illusion' Cassie McFarlane plays Pat. Pat has a flat, a job and a laddish boyfriend Del. Theirs is a relationship of ups and downs. When Del goes to prison, Pat's independence and

her experience of keeping in touch with Del provides the axis of her own own understanding of her position in contemporary British society. As the film progresses, she realizes the possibilities of challenging the difficulties faced by herself and the wider black community.

with racism.

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Programme 4 :- ABW Showcase

No Virginity, No Nationality

Dir: Claudine Boothe

Britain 1983 (15 mins) 16 mm Col.

Britain 1985 (60 mins) Col U-Matic

Brief and powerful documentary which covers the struggle in the mid 1970's against virginity tests used on Asian women as a means of undermining the movement of black women from the third world to the 'first'.

the police force. Racists attack Mohammed Sidat's home. His white friends advise the help of the police. His son Salim gets the same advice from his school mates. But as the attacks increase, the limitations of their advice

Anita probation becomes increasingly apparent.

Dir: Rossoul Labuchin

+ Haiti 1983 (45 mins) Col 16 mm

+ Territories Part I & II

Dir: Isaac Julien

B Ceddo 1985 (25 mins) col 16 mm.

Dir: Ousmane Sembene

T Senegal 1981 (117 mins) Col film essay'. A woman narrator records

'herstory', a man records 'history' amidst a whirling rush of sound

images of surveillance, carnival, sound systems, street battles with the police. 'It will challenge, say Sankofa, 'stereotypical notions of black black sergeant, Sergeant Waters, a man preoccupied with racial advancement. Partly a detective story, partly an examination of the changing states of blacks in a wartorn small town America, rotten with racism.

Programme 4 :- ABW Showcase

Dir: Ahmed A. Jamal

Britain 1984 (76 mins) Col. 16 mm.

A Man I Never Knew

Dir: Raj Patel

Fauzia (played by Rita Wolf) is a young Asian woman who on arrival in Britain 1985 (60 mins) Col U-Matic

London from Pakistan is abandoned by her husband. Their separation

provides her with escape from the traditional responsibilities of an Asian woman, and the domination of Asian men.

Based on a play by the British Asian Theatre Company, 'A Man I Never Knew', looks at the effects of racism in the school, on the street and in

the police force. Racists attack Mohammed Sidat's home. His white friends advise the help of the police. His son Salim gets the same advice from his school mates. But as the attacks increase, the limitations of their advice and approbation becomes increasingly apparent.

the independence of women, sexual relations between Asian and white people, abortion and young peoples attitudes toward their parents. A

critical first feature by Retake F/V Collective.

Territories Part I & II

Dir: Isaac Julian

Britain 1985 (25 mins) col 16 mm.

Ankur (The Seedling)

'Territories' say Sankofa, 'Is a film essay'. A woman narrator records

Dir: Shyam Benegal
'herstory', a man records 'history' amidst a whirling rush of sound and

India 1974 (131 mins) Col.

images of surveillance, carnival, sound systems, street battles with the police. 'It will challenge, say Sankofu, 'stereotypical notions of black films/anti-racist films dealing with black cultures'. 'Territories' argues with a busy eclecticism that there are other ways of writing the anti-racist agenda.

Majdhar (Midstream)

Dir: Ahmed A. Jamal

Britain 1984 (76 mins) Col. 16 mm.

Fauzia (played by Rita Wof) is a young Asian woman who on arrival in London from Pakistan is abandoned by her husband. Their separation provides her with an escape from the traditional responsibilities of an Asian woman, and the domination of Asian men.

Fauzia is financially secure, and this partly enables her to try and establish an emotional security at her own pace. The film follows her relationships across cultural, social and religious barriers, touching on many themes which affect the lives of young Asian people in Britain - the independence of women, sexual relations between Asian and white people, abortion and young peoples attitudes toward their parents. A critical first feature by Retake F/V Collective.

Ankur (The Seedling)

Dir: Shyam Benegal

India 1974 (131 mins) Col.

A healthy spanner in the workshop showcase. Shyan Benegal's first feature is a still work of lucid and tremulous beauty, dealing with caste laws and the position of women in a small Indian village. A young servant woman lives and works on a farm owned by a coarse and callous bourgeois son. His wife is too young to join him so he turns his interests to his servant. She succumbs to his advances only after her deaf mute husband has been humiliated before the whole village and is forced to leave the community.

Dir: Jorge Sanjines and Grupo Ukamau

Shyan Benegal's work has a special place in the development of a popular/cultural Indian cinema. 'Ankur' initiated his determination to synthesise 'art cinema' with a popular, widely accessible mode of cinema, to persuade people to think seriously about social issues, by inflecting them into familiar forms.

Programme 5 :- Empire and Corporate Body. The peasants discuss with other exploited communities their mistake of acting in isolation. They learn

Bhopal After Genocide

Dir: Tapan K. Bhose, Suhasini Mulay

India 1985 (70 mins) 16mm

On December 3rd 1984, a union Carbide Plant in Bhopal sprung a leak of lethal isocyanate. About 1,750 people were killed, 13,000 people were injured according to the government. Independent sources say around 2,500 died. 'Bhopal After Genocide' documents the responsibilities of the three parties mainly involved in the scandal. Union Carbide, responsible for policy decisions effecting the plant, negligent local officials, and the

and the Indian Government, which failed to protect its citizens before and after the disaster. 'Bhopal After Genocide' / the strategies of technology and development which gave rise to this disaster.

Get Out Of Here

Dir: Jorge Sanjines and Grupo Ukamau

Bolivia/Ecuador 1977

A re-enactment of the story of a community of Andean peasants who are partly destroyed and dispersed by multi-national companies after the discovery of mineral deposits in Indian land. The aim of the film is to establish the means by which Imperialism exploits natural resources and suppresses the resistance of third world people. The peasants discuss with other exploited communities their mistake of acting in isolation. They learn the importance of unity.

Quie Mada

Dir: Gillo Pontecorvo

Brazil 1968 (112 mins) col.

'Quiemada^a' is an island in the Carribean, the story is set in the early 18th century. On this island of sugar plantations worked by descendants of

Dir: Lionel Rogessin

U.S.A. 1960 (90 mins) B/W

African slaves. The island is the object of international sugar trade monopoly. Sir William Walker, a military and political strategist is sent by the British to Quei Mada to overthrow the Portugese administration. Walker instigates a rebellion and a new puppet Government is formed by the British. Ten years later Walker is called to Quei Mada to stop a slave rebellion started by a revolutionary movement he instigated to depose the Portugese. The battle quickly becomes one between Walker and the revolutionary leader Jose Delores, whom he initiated into the insurgency of ten years earlier and who now stands as a major political strategist in his own right. 16 mm

+ A historical drama of the 'Cinema Nuovo' school, a group of rebel slaves in the Portugese area of 17th century Brazil, make their way to freedom

Harvest 3000 Years ^{instigated slaves.}

Dir: Haile Gerima

Ethiopia 1976 (150 mins) B/W 16mm

Dir: ^{Art.} Unknown

3000 years of class oppression are chronicled with a new kind of story telling. Set in contemporary Ethiopia, 'Harvest' tells a story of a family of three generations. They are all peasants struggling to stay together among the remnants of feudalism on the estate of a wealthy farmer. The film uses pace and rhythm to produce ^{the} a complex ^{movement} rhythm of Ethiopian life, providing a lyrical portrayal of a family held in ^{moment} ~~movement~~ of violent transition.

Programme 6 :- Aluta Continua

Come Back Africa

Dir: Lionel Rogosin ^{(ns) Col.}

U.S.A. 1960 (90 mins) B/W

'Secretly filmed in South Africa. Rogosin and his crew pretended to be shooting a musical but in fact were comprising footage on the streets and in areas banned to whites. The result was a damning indictment of apartheid.' Other Cinema.

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Ganga Zumba

Dir: Carlos Diegues

Brazil 1963 (103 mins) B/W 16 mm

A historical drama of the 'Cinema Nuovo' school, a group of rebel slaves in the Portuguese area of 17th century Brazil, make their way to freedom in a camp of liberated slaves.

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Shaheed

Dir: ~~A.N.~~ Unknown

India (165 mins) B/W

This is the story of Sardar Bhagat Singh, a young political activist hanged by the British Government during the 1947 war for Indian Independence.

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The Outsiders

Dir: Mrinal Sen

India 1977 (115 mins) Col.

'To work in this rotten system is to serve the system - the people have always worked hard, and yet they are dying of hunger. I prefer to die of hunger, without working' The words of a cantankerous old man who lives with his son, on the margins of a small farming village in India. The entrance into their lives by a young woman provides the scene for a tragic-comedy of limited life, love and useless labour.

Seminar 1: 'Cinema & Race' looks at the histories of racial presence(s), on the screen and in the 'real world', questions of race in British cinema; cinema's dialogue with its own racial communities, cinema's language of race.

Seminar 2: 'Community of Struggle' looks at the current interventions made by the black workshops into the relations of cinema and race, and the possibilities held for struggle by new racial bodies, new cinematic presences - the possibilities held by the cinema of the black workshops for a dialogue with cinema and struggles of the third world.

SEMINAR 1 - 4.00 - 7.00

SEMINAR 2 - 7.15 - 10.00

Speakers to be confirmed.

Compiled by DAVID LAMSON, AND EDIE GEORGE OF THE BLACK CULTURE COLLECTIVE
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'Struggles For Community-Seminars'

There are the films, and there are the questions. There is also dialogue; agendas of struggle, demands to be made of cinema. 'Struggles For Community' ends with two seminars. (6th March)

Seminar 1: 'Cinema & Race' looks at the histories of racial presence(s), on the screen and in the 'real world', questions of race in British cinema; cinemas dialogue with its own racial communities, cinemas language of race.

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(COMPILED BY DAVID LAWSON, AND EDDIE GEORGE OF THE BLACK AND FILM COLLECTIVE FOR DETAILS AND FURTHER INFORMATION TEL 256 9536)

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