# Hidden Herstories

16/02/2010

A documentary film that uncovers four of history's most significant, yet unsung heroines has been made by 20 young people in an extraordinary community project featuring big names including Gurindha Chadha, Ms Dynamite and Tristram Hunt.

'Hidden Herstories, women of change' unveils how the achievements of Octavia Hill, Claudia Jones, Amy Ashwood Garvey and Jayaben Desai had significant international impact on the issues of race relations and social poverty. While their names are known to few, their legacies are anything but unsung.

The film exposes the plights and determination of Octavia Hill, a pioneer in social housing and one of the founders of the National Trust; Claudia Jones, a pivotal figure in establishing the Notting Hill Carnival; Amy Ashwood Garvey, founder of the Universal Negro Improvement Association and the Association for the Advancement of Coloured People; and Jayaben Desai, who made unprecedented advancements for workers rights by leading the famous Grunwick strike.

The women have inspired many of Britain's biggest success stories today including Bend it Like Beckham Director, Gurindha Chadha,  Hip Hop revelations Bashy and Ms Dynamite and local figureheads Colin Prescod and Bob Crow, all of whom feature in the documentary.

Learn more about how the 20 young people involved with Hidden Herstories put together their documentary film (link to YouTube).

While the premise of the film has already impressed enough to earn it a screening tour across the Capital, the real story lies in the making of the film itself. With funding (£50,000) from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), the documentary is the brainchild of the Octavia Foundation, a local charity who offered 20 people aged 13 to 24, some disabled, the chance to research, direct, film and edit the film themselves.

Hidden Herstories is a follow-up to Grove Roots, a similar film, set up by the Octavia Foundation, which saw 8 novice young film-makers produce a documentary about the history of Ladbrooke Grove and the 1958 race riots. One year on, the crew of Grove Roots have grown from shy, inexperienced young people to award-winning confident film makers capable of  accepting requests to speak in front of the likes of the Mayor of the RBKC and local MPs. Now Hidden Herstories, has given them the chance to mentor other young people.

Hidden Herstories the project, has also given the young people the chance to acquire other vocational skills in producing a supplement magazine and website but more importantly the project has required the young people to understand the value of history, interview individuals from all generations and has seen the most diverse group of young people from all ethnicities and  backgrounds including disabled and non-disabled people, to work together.

Stephanie Vaz, one of the young people involved, said: "We have had the chance to be involved in every aspect of film-making…we are learning so much. The group work really well together, it's really professional."

Hidden Heroes will be brought to the wider community through a free screening tour of theatres, cinemas and education centres beginning with the public premiere at the London School of Economics, a conference where the public can view

the films and engage in a question and answer session with the young people.

Councillor Pat Mason, Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, said: "I wholeheartedly support the "Hidden Herstories" project, that explores the history of great women and activists who either lived or were active in North Kensington. There is a great thirst in the people here to learn and to preserve the history of North Kensington - an area that has historically been poor and deprived but an area that has been rich in great community activists like Claudia Jones who not only helped to start the Notting Hill Carnival, but whose actions helped to change the face of race relations in this country."

Sue Bowers, Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund London, said: “This project focuses on the lives of four groundbreaking women whose desire for a more equal society played a hugely significant role in our country's history. It's important that young people today remember the sacrifices that these remarkable figures made on their behalf. Hidden Herstories gives them the perfect opportunity to do so whilst also helping them develop a whole new range of skills - interviewing, researching and film-making - which they can take into the future.”

**Notes to editors**

Hidden Herstories will have its world premier during the weekend of International Womens’ Day, on 6 March at the LSC. Event by invitation only. The screening tour will begin following the premiere at the London School of Economics in March 2010 going to 20 different locations.

The Octavia Foundation is a charity set up by Octavia Housing which aims to improve the quality of life of local communities and individuals within the areas that Octavia Housing operates. Octavia Housing is a housing association which manages 4,000 homes in central and West London. The work of the Foundation is divided into five key areas; training and employment initiatives; young people and children; community safety and involvement; welfare services and the elderly.

Hidden Herstories is part of a wider agenda for the Foundation to engage with young people and children.

Using money raised through the National Lottery, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) sustains and transforms a wide range of heritage for present and future generations to take part in, learn from and enjoy. From museums, parks and historic places to archaeology, natural environment and cultural traditions, we invest in every part of our diverse heritage. HLF has supported 33,900 projects, allocating £4.4billion across the UK.

The project was made in conjunction with HISTORYtalk, The Institute of Race Relations (IRR) and Action Disability Kensington and Chelsea.

Octavia Hill (1838-1912) was the pioneer of social housing, founder of the National Trust, and the first clean air campaigner for London. Octavia Housing and the Octavia Foundation take their name, and many of their values from her and continue to promote these through the work that they do.

Jayaben Desai led the 1976 strike against the Grunwick film processing factory, campaigning for trade union rights for black and asian people and against racism.

Claudia Jones (1915-1964) was one of the founders of the West Indian Workers and Students Association, founded the black newspaper the West Indian Gazette, protested against the racist murder of Kelso Cochrane and founded the

Notting Hill carnival in 1959.

Amy Ashwood Garvey founded the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) with her then husband Marcus Garvey,  chaired an enquiry into the racist murder of Kelso Cochrane and campaigned for Pan-Africanism.

**Further information**

Rachel Harrison, Octavia Housing on 020 8354 5666 or
rachel.harrison@octaviahousing.org.uk

www.hiddenherstories.org