Jamaica Hidden Histories project receives lottery support

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The two-year project will focus on Jamaica in its historical context with Britain when Oliver Cromwell succeeded in capturing the island of Jamaica from the Spaniards in 1655, then document the five decades of Jamaican influence on British culture and economy since Jamaica's independence in 1962.

The project presents an important opportunity to unearth and communicate valuable knowledge for diverse communities to understand Jamaica's distinctive cultural identity. Through researching, learning and conservation, participants will explore how Jamaican culture has, over 50 years, become a recognisable and global brand that continues to grow today.

Explore the 'Hidden Histories' relating to Jamaica and Britain - the project will discover artefacts, oral histories, paintings, photographs, sculptors, films, publications, textiles and business archives - to fill in the gaps in archives and collections to provide a cultural reference for future generations.

Full Spectrum Productions will work with a range of exciting partners across the capital and in the East and West Midlands including the London Metropolitan Archives, JAMPRO, the Royal Geographical, Society, Rich Mix, New Art Exchange (Nottingham), The Drum (Birmingham) and gallery@oxo, Oxo Tower Wharf. Commencing with a Cultural Re-Awakening conference at the London Metropolitan Archives on 26 October 2013 the event will feature a snapshot of the historical and continuing links between Jamaica and Britain.

The project will involve secondary schools in London (Brent, Camden, Lambeth and Southwark) to inform subjects in the national curriculum such as history (Oliver Cromwell); art and design; new media and language; identity & cultural diversity. For example in art and design students will be introduced to the work of the Jamaican born sculptor, Fowokan George Kelly, especially his sculpture, 'Meditations Beneath Duppycherry Tree' exploring myths and legends. An educational resource pack for schools will be produced.

Volunteers from schools, colleges and unemployment centres will also be involved in an exciting and dynamic training programme to learn valuable heritage related skills including research, conservation, object handling, cataloguing and exhibition curating.

Activities for young people will include a sustainable carpentry and wood work technology course in Hertfordshire, and a course on business language and marketing based on Jamaican branding to be held at Rich Mix to include Jamaican patois, imagery and music used in business branding. Rich Mix will also host a 'Jamaican-led Fashion Business Archive Display' in 2014.

Elders will be creating traditional craftwork (basket weaving) and learning new technology assisted by young people, while intergenerational Oral History Workshops will be held in London and in the East and West Midlands and diverse communities will share experiences with people from Jamaican background. Oral histories, artefacts, and objects will be collected to fill the gaps in archives and collections.

Sue Bowers, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund London, said: “This fascinating project will unearth valuable information about the history of Jamaicans living in London and across the UK whilst bringing alive our understanding of five decades of their influence on British culture. It will give many opportunities for people of all ages to get involved helping to preserve stories of this distinctive cultural identity for the future.”

The project will present its findings in a 3-month exhibition in 2015 at the gallery@oxo, OXO Tower Wharf that will subsequently tour to New Art Exchange in Nottingham and ‘The Drum’ in Birmingham. The work created by the elders and young people will also be represented.

Commenting upon the significance of the Jamaica Hidden Histories project, Lorna Holder, Managing Director of Full Spectrum Productions, said: “By identifying and seeking out hidden histories of Jamaican contributions to the culture and economy of Britain, this project will establish a legacy that future generations can explore and expand upon.”

Notes to editors

Full Spectrum Productions, formed in 2004, is a BME not-for-profit production company. The main purpose is to design, develop and deliver interactive community educational projects to inform, enable learning and participation. Our activities include research, volunteer training, theatre/film productions, publications and events relating to the varied social issues, past and present that are topical in diverse Britain.

To date HLF has funded five projects run by Full Spectrum Productions:

Living under One Roof (2004—2009) - stage play, exhibition, learning pack:
Caribbean migrants arriving in Britain for the first time during Windrush era and the tensions and celebrations of communal living.

Moving Out (2007) – stage play:
The contributions that Caribbean people made to industries in Nottingham during the 50/60s.

The Ones We Left Behind (2008) – stage play, exhibition:
The decisions Caribbean and other communities made in leaving their homelands and the impact on loved ones left behind.

Building Bridges (2008) – documentary:
The experiences of the host community in seeing large groups of Caribbean people arriving in Britain after the 2nd World War.

Hanging Out (2010-2012) – exploring 1950s and 1960s youth culture. Visit the Hanging Out website.

Further information

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