

Outside view of Black Cultural Archives building in Brixton

The £7million building, with £4.5m from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), is located in the heart of Brixton in Windrush Square, providing access to a captivating collection of black, culturally important material and artefacts. This new and unique space, dedicated to black heritage in Britain, will host a number of culturally-centred exhibitions with its own community arts and educational programmes, special events, talks and workshops.

Commenting on the opening of BCA, the Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, said: “I am delighted to be supporting the BCA. With a collection that stretches from Roman times to the present day, I hope it will become an important resource for schoolchildren, researchers and scholars, underpinning the role that black people have played in British history.”

Sue Bowers, Head of HLF London, added: "We're delighted to be supporting BCA’s vision for a major black history and cultural centre in the heart of Brixton. This project has been a long time in the making but all the more worthwhile for that very reason. Thanks to the completion of Raleigh Hall's redevelopment, people will be able to learn more about the contribution of black Britons to the UK's cultural, social, political and economic life.”

Launch exhibition:
Black Cultural Archives opens with the exhibition Re-imagine: Black Women in Britain, which runs from 24 July to 30 November 2014. Re-imagine asks the viewer to reimagine and reconsider historical narratives and accounts of black women in Britain. The exhibition spotlights fascinating accounts that reflect the varied contributions they made to British society.

Re-imagine brings together a tapestry of voices of women from diverse backgrounds, talents and perspectives. From the Roman era to the present day, the exhibition is presented in five sections: Section A: Out of the Shadows: black women in early history; Section B: Breaking the silence, revolutionary voices; Section C: The road to respect; Section D: The movement still exists inside us; and Epilogue: Dedication to Queen Mother Moore. The exhibition will include images, documents and oral testimonies for visitors to enjoy and learn from these many inspirational stories.

Highlights of the archives include:
A coin depicting Septimus Severus, the African-born Roman Emperor; the Nestor tablet, which is a square resin cast of a wall-plaque that tells us the story of a black servant called Nestor who died aged 36; a fascinating compilation of oral histories including interviews with individuals from the Windrush generation and the Black Women's Movement of the 1980s; collections of periodicals (including newspapers cuttings), ephemera and photographs; a small collection of original photographs of a black Edwardian family in Britain, including the young Amy Barbour-James, born of Guyanese parents in London in 1906. BCA also holds between 8,000 and 10,000 books with the earliest book by Professor Charles Davenant, *Reflections upon the constitution and management of the trade to Africa (*printed by John Morphey in 1709) and a number of attention-grabbing advertisements with the earliest item being a coffee bag for Ferns Coffee c.1900.

Schools programme:
The centre will be offering a schools' programme to enrich the delivery of the National Curriculum. BCA will engage learners with histories of Black people in Britain, widening access to past narratives that resonate with the present. BCA's highly experienced Learning Team and professional practitioners will deliver hands-on sessions that will inspire exploration and bring archive materials to life through exhibitions, tours and workshops based around Key Stages 1, 2, 3 and 4 and covering subjects such as PSHEE, Art & Design and History.

Digital interactive pods:
Sponsored by Bloomberg, BCA's digital interactive pods will enable visitors to digitally access key collections within the archive from user-friendly pods located around the heritage centre. The digital interactive pods will reveal interesting materials, through visually stimulating design and playful interaction will engage users of all ages. Users can experience a digital exploration of the collection whilst in the café or even enhance workshops in the learning centre, offering an easy entry point into the wider collection.

Notes to Editors:

- BCA holds 31 cubic metres of archive material
- Paul Reid, Director of Black Cultural Archives, was appointed in October 2006
- On completion Lambeth Council will transfer Raleigh Hall to BCA on a 99–year peppercorn rent

Major funders of the building's capital project include: the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), Lambeth Council; the Mayor of London (GLA); and Biffa Award.

Pringle Richards Sharratt
Established in 1996, Pringle Richards Sharratt is known for its significant portfolio of cultural projects, including the award winning William Morris Gallery in Walthamstow, as well as its track record in urban landscape renewal and regeneration, most recently in Hull and Folkestone. The practice's work frequently includes HLF-funded schemes.

Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts
Since 1997, the Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts (RSWT) has been awarding grants to environmental and community

projects under the fund name Biffa Award. The fund administers money donated by Biffa Group Ltd, a leading integrated waste management business. Biffa Award has awarded grants totalling more than £145m to thousands of worthwhile projects.

Over the years Black Cultural Archives have had the support of politicians, artists, sports personalities and community activists including: Dame Jocelyn Barrow CBE; Lord Paul Boateng; Sol Campbell; Idris Elba; Lord Herman Ouseley; Colin Jackson CBE; Kwame Kwei Amah OBE; Sir Willard White OM CBE; Chuka Umunna MP; and Benjamin Zephaniah

Further information:
Kim Morgan, PR, on tel: 020 7277 9559, mob: 07939 591 403, or email: kim@kimmorgan-pr.com.