



# GEORGE PADMORE INSTITUTE

## NEWSLETTER NO 19 – DECEMBER 2014

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*Our Dream to Change the World project has now moved into its fifth and final year. The last twelve months have been breathlessly busy as we bring to fruition our various outreach projects, start on preparation for our final exhibition and still carry out the day to day work of the Institute. All of this involving enjoyable, exciting partnerships and programmes.*

### The Dream to Change the World Archive Project

#### Outreach element

**The Bookman Research Project** into the early origins of the publishing work, done by John La Rose with New Beacon Books, began in October 2012 with Ruth Bush appointed as the researcher. The resulting essay *New Beacon Books the Pioneering Years*, was launched on 9 July on a lovely sunny evening. Both Linton Kwesi Johnson and Sarah White were interviewed on BBC Radio3 in connection with publicity for the project. The essay itself is now available online to freely download for any lecturers, literature lovers or students for whom it may be relevant. In response to requests from some of the audience at the launch, we shall also be preparing a hard copy of the essay but this may take a few months as the website format cannot be directly translated easily into one suitable for printing in book form and there is little time for the extra work at the moment.

**Unending Journey: selected writings by John La Rose**, another strand of the DCTW Project, is being launched at the GPI on 26 November. The title of the collection is taken from one of John's poems, which he himself had written on the cover of a file where he was compiling articles and essays clearly thinking of publication in the future. The selection covers four decades and is intended to provide a taster of John's numerous interests as well as containing ideas that resonate with issues today. It is introduced by Linton Kwesi Johnson and is available for £5.

visitors an idea of how John worked – slow builders and consolidators – with people rather than for them – independent and autonomous – mercilessly realistic. Hopefully giving people the inspiration and encouragement that they also can make a difference.

#### Archiving work

The contents of John's mystery briefcase have been unearthed! Following cleaning a full set of papers from the 1967 Cultural Conference in Havana emerged alongside contextual material gathered during that trip – fragile copies of *Granma*, other local papers and pamphlets. John's notes give an insight into who attended as well as those absent. Did the case itself travel to Cuba? We shall never know! A set of photos from the conference (in which delegates are all "wired up") have been catalogued alongside the briefcase material.

All 1174 correspondence and topic files created by John have now been catalogued on CALM and are available for public viewing and/or research. Added excitement this year has included the cleaning and cataloguing of family photos and similar work on a large poster collection, all essential components for our forthcoming exhibition.

#### Volunteers

The GPI would not be able to achieve all it does without the help of our dedicated team of volunteers. This year we have said goodbye and thanks to: Phoenix Alexander, Peter Ashan and Tahmina Begum, but...hello and welcome to Lucien Likanja, Natasha Taiwo, Anastasios Tzitzikos and Mike Watson! Big thanks to all including the regulars: Zuleika Dobson, Lelieth Dunkley, Kerstin Hegarty, Abimbola Johnson, Sumaya Kassim, Heiba Lamara and Chris Moffat.

#### Staff News

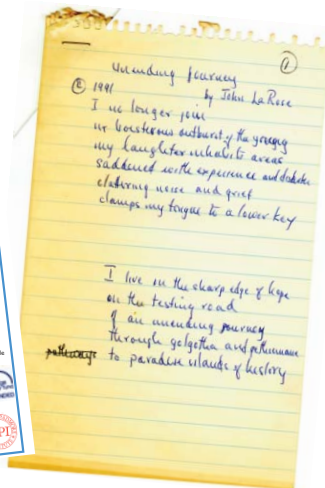
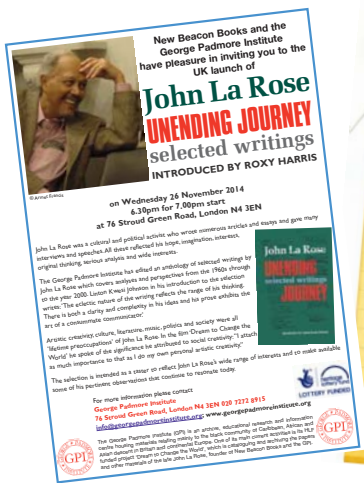
Our continued appreciation for all their hard work and a big thanks to the GPI staff – Sarah Garrod, project archivist, Kate Duncan archives assistant and Nicole-Rachelle Moore administrator.

#### Other Archive Collections

Work on the following collections has now been completed and they are being prepared for export to our online catalogue: NAME (National Antiracist Movement in Education) and Committee for the Release of Political Prisoners in Kenya. The latest phase of the collection of Carnival material and additional journals (e.g. Savacou) have been catalogued on CALM.

#### Archive Connected Public Events

In February the GPI's archivist "Sarah G" gave a well-received talk at Iniva as part of Autograph's 'Art and Activism' event. New Beacon's Janice and the GPI's administrator Nicole-Rachelle "womanned" a book stall on the day. Also in that month Nicole-Rachelle participated in a 12 hour CLR James Read-a-Thon which was organised by the Worldwrite/Worldbytes group. The summer months found "Sarah G" expounding on the value of archives to research: in July alongside "Sarah W" to volunteers who were working with the Barbara Asante Collective on a project entitled 'Baldwin's Nigger Reloaded': a reinterpretation of Horace Ové's 1968 film 'Baldwin's Nigger'. This was supported by Iniva and the GPI loaned some of its material for the project. In August Sarah G led a workshop for volunteers from the Efiba Arts Heritage Project. In early October, the GPI was invited by the Hornsey Historical Society to give a presentation on 'The Local Black Education Movement'. Both Sarahs delivered!



**Exhibition Plans:** Our final exhibition *Dream To Change The World: the Life and Legacy of John La Rose*, which brings our current project to a hopefully inspiring finish, will take place at the Islington Museum from 22 May until 29 August 2015. Preparations have proved a steep learning curve for us all but have also proved very enjoyable if time consuming. We were lucky to have our schools consultant, Sarita Mamsari, over from Tanzania in the spring and she was able to set us off on a strict timetable of dos and don'ts, in particular the need to keep things simple. We are very pleased that Sue McAlpine from Hackney Museum is working with us as a guest curator. Her experience and enthusiasm as to what works and what doesn't is invaluable. We have appointed as exhibition designers the Special Design Studio, recommended by our HLF mentor Claire Adler. We are looking forward to working closely with them over the next few months as images and text are finalised. The aim of the exhibition is to give

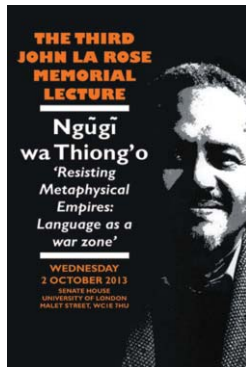


# Fundraising Christmas Lunch

Our usual enjoyable and delicious Fundraising Lunch will be held on Sunday 7th December between 1.00pm and 4.00pm. We look forward to seeing you there. Tickets can be bought on the door or in advance from the GPI or New Beacon Books. Price £15; children £7.00

## The Third John La Rose Memorial Lecture

*Resisting Metaphysical Empires: Language as a War Zone* by Kenyan writer and activist Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o has now been published with the support of the Hilden Trust. In addition to the text and an audio cd of the lecture, the booklet contains background material on Ngũgĩ and his connection with John and the GPI and numerous colour photos. Our thanks to photographers – Luke Daniels and Lelieth Dunkley – for helping to bring alive this very enjoyable and inspiring occasion. The booklet is available at £5.



## GPI and New Beacon Books Public Events

We seemed to have had a flurry of book launches and readings this year, all of which added numbers to our growing mailing list and gifted us with diverse audiences! March 21st saw the launch of Tabish Khair's novel *How To Fight Islamist Terror From The Missionary Position*, followed on 10 April by Lloyd Bradley's historical musical odyssey *Sounds Like London: 100 years of black music in the capital*. Barbara Jenkins, the inaugural winner of the Hollick Arvon Caribbean Writers Prize, read from her collection *Sic Transit Wagon and Other Stories* on 20 May and two months later on 29 July the GPI and New Beacon hosted the Barbados based writer Philip Nanton's UK launch, and rivetingly humorous performance reading of his book *Island Voices From St. Christopher & The Barracudas*. In October the GPI teamed up with Speaking Volumes for an evening of poetry at the British Library with the esteemed Poet Laureate of Jamaica, Mervyn Morris, together with John Hegley and Mimi Khalvati. The GPI's Sarah White was the evening's Mistress of Ceremonies! The event was much enjoyed even though it was a miserable wet evening and our thanks to Sharmilla Beezmohun who was the main organiser.

## Trustee and Supporters News Round Up

We are delighted to announce that *Sharmilla Beezmohun* has joined the GPI board of trustees. She will provide much valuable experience, ideas and enthusiasm. Multiple congratulations go to the *Harris* family – trustee *Remi Harris* gave birth to a baby boy in June; her brother *Roxy Ade*, who often helps the GPI with digital material, fathered a baby daughter in March; so trustees *Pat* and *Roxy Harris* became grandparents twice over in the space of three months and have been kept busy ever since! A fascinating biography of the radical lives of *Eric* and *Jessica Huntley* – *Doing Nothing is Not an Option* by Margaret Andrews – was published this year. Trustee *Linton Kwesi Johnson* was awarded the Order of Distinction – Commander Class by the Jamaican government in this year's national honours, and was also Artist-in-Residence at the Institute of African American Affairs, New York University this autumn. *Michael La Rose*, GPI chair, hosted the British Film Institute's showing of Bruce Paddington's thought provoking film on the Grenada Revolution. *Ozzi Warwick*, education office of the Trinidad Oilfields Workers Trade Union, visited the GPI in the summer and updated us on the situation in Trinidad as well as South Africa where he had been the OWTU delegate at a conference discussing plans for a new political party in South Africa. Finally the GPI was delighted to be present at the opening of the *Black Cultural Archives'* new premises in Brixton on 24 July. The afternoon celebrations and opening ceremony, with Dame Jocelyn Barrow, were followed by a cultural evening held in the neighbouring Windrush Square. Congratulations to all the BCA workers and volunteers for their staying power, sticking to their vision and bringing this project to fruition through many long years. The BCA in its new home will contribute greatly to the development of black heritage in the UK and the GPI looks forward to working with them.

**Deaths** This has been a sad year with the loss of four long standing friends of the GPI. The first who passed was pioneering cultural theorist and sociologist *Stuart Hall* on 10 February, after many years of ill health. *Winston Best*, spent much of his working life in the UK, where he was a stalwart of the many struggles facing black children and their parents in the British school system, died on 18 March. *Norman Girvan*, a radical Caribbean academic and intellectual, who worked towards transforming the Caribbean in the interests of the ordinary men and women, died on 9 April. Norman met John La Rose in London in the 1960s and they remained friends and comrades. Another longterm friend and comrade, trade unionist *David Feickert* died on 2 July in New Zealand. He and John spent many hours discussing workers issues such as the introduction of new technology, the fight for a reduction in working hours and the international dimension of trade union politics.

The GPI is working with Dave's family to help in the organisation of a UK tribute to Dave in 2015.

**Friends of JLR** web-based mailing list continues to provide for the exchange of information and ideas from members around the world. Anyone interested in joining should email Milverton Wallace on milverton@gmail.com

**Friends of JLR Crisis in the UK Group** has continued its work discussing and networking around political and social issues. It now has a facebook page and is planning an e-newsletter. The group is showing the film 'Miners Shot Down' on the Marikana Massacre followed by a discussion on the future politics of South Africa post-apartheid on 14 November at 7.00pm.

## Notices

**Snail mail and email:** Like all organisations the GPI is trying to use email as much as possible to save costs. If you are happy to receive information about GPI events by email, and are not already doing so, please send us your email address for future use.

**Fundraising** The GPI is always grateful to receive one off or regular donations to help sustain our archive and educational work.

**GPI flyers & events.** Barbara Jenkins; Philip Nanton launches *Island Voices*; Tabish Khair; Ruth Bush introduces 'The Bookman Essay'; the British Library event with Mervyn Morris, John Hegley and Mimi Khalvati Photos © Margaret Busby and Glenda Pattenden

