



# GEORGE PADMORE INSTITUTE

## NEWSLETTER NO 21 – Winter 2016/17

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2016 was a spinning disco ball of events marking the 50th anniversary of New Beacon Books! As ever, the GPI carried on with its good work amidst the coordination and preparation for various events celebrating the pioneering achievements of New Beacon Books since its formation in 1966. Thank you all for your sterling support of the GPI throughout 2016 and indeed of New Beacon Books over so many years. 2017 here we are!

### New Beacon's 50th Anniversary Celebrations

Apart from its book trade, New Beacon Books has always been more than just a bookshop. It has been at the centre of ground-breaking campaigns, organisations and political and social projects. Its ethos has been one of connecting different generations of Asian, Black and other ethnic populations through sharing knowledge of their histories via grassroots independent organisation and the ability to build committed networks and strong foundations.

The celebrations took place over the autumn. Five were held at the GPI as follows:

**6 October:** George Padmore and the Historical Present... With author

Leslie James; **19 October:** The Development of the Black British Novel... With authors Ruel White and Yvette Edwards; discussion led by Deirdre Osborne; **3 November:** Publishing for Activism... With Mogniss Abdallah, Roxy Harris and Michael La Rose; **20 November:** The Caribbean



Artists Movement 1966-72... With Anne Walmsley, Errol Lloyd and Nicole-Rachelle Moore; **8 December:** Launch of *Wasafiri* Special Issue 'Print Activism in Twenty First Century Africa'... With Guest Editors: Ruth Bush and Madhu Krishnan and others.



Above: Three of the events that took place in the GPI multipurpose reading and meeting room.  
Below: Gus John giving keynote speech

Two major events took place on **3 December** at the British Library: The keynote speech **Changing Britannia – Through Arts and Activism** by Gus John, long-time activist, friend and firm supporter of New Beacon Books and the GPI. His address brilliantly contextualised and historicised New Beacon's place in British society as a movement, not solely a book shop and publishing house. The presentation was interspersed with relevant film clips which added visual reiteration to what was being conveyed in Gus' oratory.



**A Meeting of the Continents: International Poetry Night**, hosted by **Linton Kwesi Johnson** one of our trustees. Ten poets starting with **Jay Bernard** (the GPI's first time Poet in Residence) treated an appreciative audience to a protean mix of verse. It was an amazing line up of long established and newer poets: **Imtiaz Dharker, Vesna Goldsworthy, Lorna Goodison, John Hegley, Tabish Khair, Vladimir Lucien, E Ethelbert Miller, Selina Nwulu and Rafeef Ziadah.**

Each event attracted different audiences and this was noted and welcomed by the GPI. There was wide media coverage including 'Inside Out' on BBC One, radio programmes on LBC and BBC, BBC

on line, press such as *The Voice, Islington Tribune, The Guardian.*

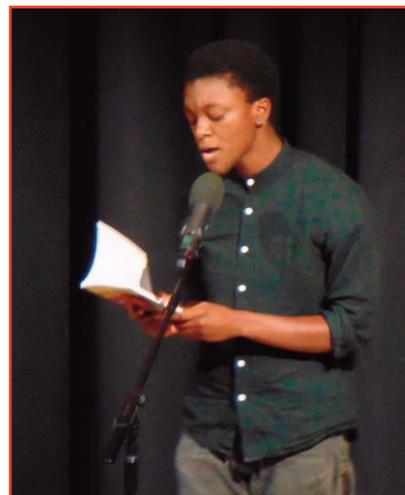
We also welcomed a number of old friends from abroad for different events – including David Abdulah from Trinidad, former General Secretary of the Oilfields Workers Trade Union, currently the political leader of the Movement for Social Justice; Mogniss Abdallah, Coordinator of Agence IM'media, a multi-media anti-racist organisation based in Paris and regular participant in the International Book Fair of Radical Black and Third World Books; and Paris based Kristin Couper, also a regular Book Fair participant and long time New Beacon supporter.

The appointment of a poet in residence was a first for the GPI and a key part of the celebrations. We thank **Jay Bernard** for agreeing to spend time with us and for the poetry which resulted from her GPI sojourn! She spent three months looking at the GPI archives during August to October 2016 studying many of the core collections and in several formats, including audio and audio-visual material, books, files of documents, photographs, placards and posters. Jay felt that the archive was of a manageable size and not at all overwhelming, with ample opportunity to browse. She found the archive materials fascinating and is hoping to return to the GPI in the future to follow up on some of her research.

Materials relating to the New Cross Massacre resonated strongly with Jay and inspired her subsequent long poem **'Surge'** featured in our publication **Beacon of Hope... New Beacon In Poetry And Prose** – another key element of the 50th celebrations. The book, published in time for the British Library events, contains creative work and research carried out recently under the auspices of the GPI: Jay Bernard's long poem **'Surge'** together with her fascinating introduction; and **'New Beacon Books – the pioneering years'** by Ruth Bush, an online essay based on a year's research at the GPI, launched in 2014 and for which we received repeated requests for a print version. The title of the book was taken from Linton Kwesi Johnson's poem dedicated to John La Rose entitled 'Beacon of Hope'.

This title and a wide range of other books, DVDs, posters and cards published by the GPI in association with NBB are available for sale. Email GPI or [newbeaconbooks@btconnect.com](mailto:newbeaconbooks@btconnect.com) or visit GPI website.

Below: Jay Bernard reading from 'Surge' at the International Poetry Night.



Above: **Beacon of Hope** sold for the first time at New Beacon's bookstall at the British Library. Price £6.00

## Other GPI Events

The GPI was invited to participate in the 2016 Huntley Conference on 27 February: '*Animating Black Archives*'. Lelieth Dunkley, a GPI volunteer and part time New Beacon Books staff member, gave a talk on '*The Importance of Moving Image and Sound in Archival Exhibitions*'. The GPI's administrator Nicole-Rachelle Moore also contributed a presentation '*Beyond Sepia*' which was delivered in her absence by the GPI's Project Archivist, Sarah Garrod.

The same weekend saw the *10th anniversary of the death of our founding chairman, John La Rose*. On Sunday 28 February, trustees, family members, friends and supporters gathered at the Islington Cemetery for a simple and moving service led by Gus John, followed by refreshments at 2 Albert Road.

On March 24 the GPI held a showing of **Legacy in the Dust: The Four Aces Story**, a documentary feature film charting the life and death of the legendary East London music venue. Winston Whitter, the producer/director and Dennis Bovell, music producer and sound system operator contributed to the lively audience discussion.

## Archives

*Seven new catalogues* from the last *Dream to Change the World* project are now available online! Most are from the John La Rose Archives and include *Papers from the Cultural Congress of Havana*, *Committee for the Release of Political Prisoners in Kenya* and *Personal Papers of John La Rose*. All can be accessed through the GPI website

The Archives hosted a second group visit on 24 February (the first was in 2015) for *UCL students completing their MA in Archives and Record Management*. The discussion session focused on the management and provision of access and user services at the GPI. These visits are always enjoyable and also an excellent way of discovering all that needs to be rectified!

We noted a record number of *research visits* (not to be confused with visitors) this year – 133! Material was also loaned out for exhibitions at the Black Cultural Archives and the Hackney Museum.

## Staff and Volunteers

2016 was another very busy and productive one for the GPI and once again a big thank you goes out to our small team of dedicated staff and volunteers. In many ways we perhaps punch above our weight, but it is always worth it!

Sarah Garrod, the GPI Project Archivist, and Nicole-Rachelle Moore, our part-time administrator remained in post and contributed hugely to the GPI's success and achievements of 2016. Many thanks to them for their work and commitment.

Our thanks also to all our volunteers for the contribution they make. Nine new volunteers joined us this year. We welcomed: Rebecca Adams, Amel Badri, Larissa Bailey, Ame Ekhaguere, Nick Horton, Ayodele Jabbar, Laura Leonard, Owen Little and Monique Todd. We later had to say goodbye and thank you to Ayodele, Larissa, Laura and Monique who at different times and for a variety of reasons had to leave us. Amel had the opportunity to work with our conservationist Amelia Rampton at her studio, cleaning some of the GPI's posters.

Two of the GPI's longstanding friends and supporters, Jenny Green and Lawrence Scott have been beavering away this year on archive material from the estate of the late educator Joan Goody (a great ally of New Beacon Books and the GPI). A celebration of her work and the concomitant archives to be made available is scheduled for May 2017.

## GPI's Fund Raising Lunch

We had a number of enquiries before Xmas about our fundraising Xmas Lunch in December. We were unable to organise it as usual because of the work involved in the New Beacon 50th Anniversary Events which did not finish until 8 December. However we thought it would be good not to miss out on the occasion altogether as many people find it an enjoyable social get together and we are planning to hold a New Year lunch instead.

**Stay tuned!**

**Fundraising: The GPI is always grateful to receive one off or regular donations to help sustain our archive and educational work. Paypal donations can be made through GPI email.**

## Notices and Trustee News

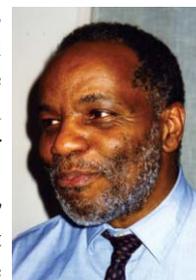
**Friends of JLR** web-based mailing list continues to provide for the exchange of information and ideas from members around the world. Anyone interested in joining should email Milverton Wallace on milverton@gmail.com

**Friends of JLR Crisis in the UK Group** – The long standing campaign to obtain justice for Trustee *Azim Haje*, after he was fired in June 2015, scored a tremendous success in September 2016 when the judge hearing the case at the employment tribunal held in February 2016 found in Azim's favour that he had been wrongfully dismissed. We have to tell you that the case is still dragging on as the union are challenging the verdict so Azim is still denied justice and is left in "no man's land" as far as applying for jobs is concerned.

Our congratulations to trustee *Remi Harris* who received an MBE for her services to the music industry in the June honours and is also expecting her second baby early in 2017.



*Michael La Rose* (left), stepped down from the position of Chair of the GPI, which he had held for ten years since the death of his father John. Our thanks to him for his excellent, committed and productive chairmanship. He is remaining a trustee. Michael also retired from his job at the Health and Safety Executive in October so we wish him well for his post-60s future.



New postholders after the October AGM: *Aggrey Burke* (right), stepped up from the Vice-Chair post to become our new Chair and *Ali Hussein* is the new Vice-Chair. Sarah White remains Secretary and Remi Harris Treasurer.

**Forthcoming: Peepal Tree Press** are organising a conference on '*Narrating the Caribbean Nation*', at Leeds University, Friday and Saturday 24-25 February. The annual **Huntley Conference** will take place at London Metropolitan Archives on Saturday 4 March. The theme '*What's the New Radical? Deep Roots and New Shoots in Black Publishing*' promises a very interesting discussion day.

**Snail mail and email:** 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. This will save us valuable funds.

**Social media:** The GPI is gradually entering the world of social media and you can follow our activities on both **facebook** and **twitter**. Do join in and give us your comments. We have a **qr code** for use.

## New Beacon Books is Reorganising in 2017

**In December 2016 the Directors of New Beacon Books announced with regret the closure from the beginning of January 2017 of New Beacon's six day a week retail bookshop business that has been operating for decades. Due to changes in the bookselling industry worldwide it has been evident for several years that it is extremely difficult for small independent bookshops like New Beacon to survive.**

**New Beacon will be spending 2017 exploring different avenues for its future way forward in the bookselling and publishing fields. Meanwhile for the time being:**

- **The shop will be opening on Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays, 1.30-6.00pm.**
- **The bookservice and publishing services will continue as normal.**

**Please contact [newbeaconbooks@btconnect.com](mailto:newbeaconbooks@btconnect.com) or call on 07921 992836 [Janice Durham].**