

# **Jamaica Hidden Histories**

## **Cultural Re-Awakening Conference**

**Saturday, 26<sup>th</sup> October 2013 at the London Metropolitan Archives**

The event kick started with refreshments on arrival followed by an enthralling, energetic and vibrant opening performance from the fabulous all female Harambe Drummers and a short introductory film. This engendered great interest and enthusiasm for the day's events. Delores Cooper, OD eloquently chaired the day, and shared some of her childhood experiences of growing up in Jamaica.

The conference was well attended with a diverse mix of people from a variety of cultures, neighbouring Caribbean islands, ages and national locations. It was truly wonderful to see so many elders who took the time and effort to come and share their wealth of knowledge and experience and to enjoy the day, and the number of young people who came to learn more about Jamaican culture and heritage.

There was a variety of presentations and activities to inform and celebrate all things Jamaican as well as our cultural heritage, historically and in the making. This included a 'Black Business Media' talk by George Ruddock, Managing Director of the Gv Media Group Ltd (The Voice & The Gleaner) and the importance of archiving by Karen Sampson, Head of Archives (London) at Lloyds Banking Group and Hon. Secretary of the Business Archives Council, as a way of preserving, valuing and heralding our continued legacy for future generations. Vivienne Siva, Community Relations Officer at the Jamaican High Commission also addressed guests, giving support to the project.

Participants not only learnt about some of Jamaica's hidden history but actively took part in sessions oral history sessions with Sharon Rapaport, factual buccaneer story telling with Gene Huie Manneh, Rastafarian culture with Kandake Makonnen, business archiving with Karen Sampson and Anne Archer. Ask the Archivist' session with Richard Wiltshire (Senior LMA archivist) and Lorna Williams (Archivist at Bank of England) with Charlie Phillips, urban photographer and collector. One of the highlights of the day was four bright, articulate and ambitious young Londoners, sharing their thoughts and views on 'identity and belonging' in our society today with a captivated audience.

Maureen Roberts, Senior Development Officer and other staff at the LMA conducted a tour of the LMA archives relating to Jamaican history.

Guests were treated to delicious traditional Jamaican cuisine for lunch which included jerk chicken, rice and peas, ackee and saltfish, vegetable curry, mixed salad and hard dough bread; lovingly cooked by the Plantation Inn restaurant. At afternoon tea, guests taste buds were tantalised again by homemade rum and banana cake, coconut drops and Jamaican fruits such as guinep and tamarinds. Grace Foods, one of our sponsors, supplied drinks and snacks such as coconut water, ginger beer, mango and carrot juice and plantain chips and the Ackee and saltfish. These tasty treats and performances of Jamaican folk songs and dances by The Harambe Drummers in full colourful costumes throughout the day added an authentic and uplifting vibe to the proceedings.

Modern day Jamaican artists and entrepreneurs showcased their diverse and creative artefacts and goods. John Harris, an inspiring modern day furniture maker, exhibited his wood carvings made from recycled wood. Other showcases included 'Promoting Our Heritage' publications. Black River Chocolate and paintings and jewellery by Akiwali.

Lorna Holder, Managing Director of Full Spectrum Productions, closed the day outlining the project's aims, objectives and activities over the next two years, including the volunteer training programme, educational resource pack and future exhibitions to rapturous applause.

Gene Huie Manneh  
Education Coordinator

## CHOICE OF QUOTES

### Relevant comments about the day –

“I feel like I am more motivated to learn about my cultural heritage”(young person).

“This event has made me believe more strongly that West Indian culture/history should not be confined to just one month – it should be part of everyday history taught in schools.”

“The event has reinforced my strong Jamaican heritage and its links to Britain which is both positive and negative”

“Much more aware of a unique and rich culture”

“Makes me want to research our history in depth”

“I’ve always felt strongly about my culture, but this event has further enhanced that”  
(Leeonnie Hayles)

“”

“It makes me want to know more about the Jamaican heritage”.

“Confidence about my right to be here”

“Such a rich culture and history which needs to be advertised more and celebrated”

(Louise Jones, Newman University student)

“It has reinforced my thoughts on ensuring that my child and nieces have an awareness of their culture”.

“My feelings are the same – black people do have a very positive/rich history not just slavery”.

“Makes me feel more involved in a society”

“Sense of pride of our achievements” (Skecia Mardenborough – Newman University student).

“I feel very proud – it was great” (Monica McCorkle).

“I know I still have a lot to learn about Jamaican heritage and will be seeking out information”

“Very proud, and armed with facts”.

“Very proud and uplifting”.

### Storytelling – Buccaneers

Buccaneers – Brilliant! Amazingly informative!

“the story telling was excellent, beautifully relayed by a most competent person who held the attention of the audience well.” (Theodore Lawrence)

“the careful chronological outline of forgotten history of buccaneering”.

“very lively; speakers were knowledgeable, relating the information to a well known film made it easier to understand. Very engaging, told like a living story.

“Buccaneers was very good.”

“Very good speakers”.

### Rastafarian

“informative and will want to seek more information.

“I wasn’t aware of the strong links to the Bible in Rastafarianism. I will do some further research”.

“It was great, very insightful – engaging. Different. Enjoyed the music, interaction and the knowledge from both presenters and audience.

“Absolutely amazing, awe inspiring female drumming group.. The tutor, Kandake, was amazing. The presentation was first class, very informative. We wanted a whole day and weekend on the subject. Please do more work with her and the amazing drum group.

Drummers were fantastic.

The wonderful speakers, food and discussion with youngsters on the stage.

Business archiving –

“business archiving – wonderful”

“Learnt about the various archives being kept on Caribbean personalities – awesome!”

“ Very informative and importance for archiving materials for historical references”.

“Interesting listening to the Archives and tour. Buccaneer/Pirates – fabulous.

Delores Cooper

Sharing her childhood experiences as part of her presentation throughout, linking all of the presentations.