

Wednesday 5 October 2011

EASTSIDE COMMUNITY HERITAGE CELEBRATES BLACK HISTORY MONTH WITH UNSUNG HEROES ON FILM

Part of the [Archive Awareness Campaign](#) and in the celebration of Black History Month, Eastside Community Heritage (ECH) is honouring the achievements and legacies of Black and Asian champions in the East End, with a film screening of *Unsung Heroes on Film*.

Produced in partnership with Black Cultural Archives and RAMFEL (Refugee and Migrant Forum of East London), four films tell the moving and powerful story of Black and Asian community activists and their contribution to the history of East London during the 1920s and 1930s.

Judith Garfield, Executive Director, Eastside Community Heritage said:

“The films reveal incredible history of regular East End people who worked tirelessly to campaign against racism and prejudice and who sought to improve living conditions for Black and Asian communities in East London.

Eastside is proud to make what we consider to be a significant contribution to London and Minority Ethnic history by researching and documenting this collection of films, and we hope they will inform future generations”.

Black and Asian stars in East London

The films document the remarkable story of Kamal Chunchie, the founder of the first community centre for the Black and Asian community in Canning Town is highlighted in a collection of oral history interviews of his daughter, Muriel Simpson.

Chunchie arrived in London from Ceylon, now Sri Lanka after serving in the British army during the First World War. He was shocked at the poverty and racism he witnessed while walking the streets of East London. In 1920, he established the Coloured Men's institute (CMI), a community centre in heart of London Docks to provide a sanctuary food, meals, support and clothing for the impoverished ethnic minorities in his neighbourhood. He continued raised money and supported the families in the area until his death in 1953.

Other films reflecting on the lives of community leaders include *Living in Barking – Story of Dr Prasad*. Dr Prasad (1893-1959) was born in India and trained at medical college graduating in the early years of World War I. He served as a doctor in the Indian Army and was stationed in Iraq until the 1920s. During the Second World War, he served as an air-raid warden and later travelled to England. In 1939 he became the first Asian doctor in Barking and Dagenham after taking up post as general practitioner on the

Becontree estate in Barking. His Ripple Road surgery was reputed to house the largest Morrison shelter in the town capable of protecting a whole waiting room.

Dr Prasad worked tirelessly on the estate ensuring that social and economic conditions changed and improved for the local community. The film also depicts Mr Prasad, Dr Prasad's son and is introduced by Historian Rozina Visram.

Visitors will also be able to view *The Road to Freedom* a film produced by a group of young people in Newham about the Abolition of slavery. Arthur Torrington the founder of the Equiano Society is also interviewed about the work of the organisation.

Booking information

The films will be followed by a panel discussion and refreshments

When: Thursday 6 October 2011, 6.30 – 8.30pm

Where: The Cardinal Heenan Centre, 326 High Road, Ilford, Essex, IG1 2QP

Admission: Please book by contacting office@ech.org.uk or go to <http://ramfelbhmunsungheroesonfilm.eventbrite.com/?s=5405384>

Films: The *Big Lunch 2010* discusses communities coming together in the London Borough of Redbridge; *The Road to Freedom and Living in Barking – Story of Dr Prasad*.

Ends

For further information on Eastside or photographs please contact Judith Garfield on 020 8553 4343 office@ech.org.uk or www.hidden-histories.org.uk.

Notes to Editors

Black History Month is a remembrance of the events in the history of the African diaspora. Since 1976, it is celebrated annually in America and Canada in February and the UK in October. In the U.S Black History Month is also referred to as African-American History Month.

Partner details

Eastside Community Heritage was established in 1993 as part of the Stratford City Challenge community history project. Over the years the organisation has worked on numerous projects documenting the lives of people who live and work in east London. It created the East London Peoples Archive which now holds over 1000 oral histories, thousands of photographs and video material all preserved and archived for public benefit. The archive is now accessible to the public at University of East London Docklands Campus Learning Resource Centre.

RAMFEL (Refugee and Migrant Forum of East London) provides high quality and effective advice, support and advocacy services to asylum seekers, migrants, refugees and BAME communities to enable them to make a positive contribution to their local community

Black Cultural Archives (BCA) was founded in 1981 to collect, preserve and celebrate the contributions Black people have made to the culture, society and heritage of the UK.

Their unique and growing **archive collection** offers insight into the history of people of African descent in Britain and includes rare documents, photographs, oral history testimonies and objects dating from the second century to the present day. Though their public programmes and partnership work with other organisations, they enable a variety of communities to learn and connect with this often hidden history.