

Cinema and Anti-Racism Pedagogy in the Context of the Black Arts Movement:

Engaging with the June Givanni Pan African Cinema
Archive

During the time of the Black Arts Movement in Britain, the Greater London Council (GLC), which was composed of democratic working groups on key governance issues created positions for artists and curators of colour to work against the rise of fascism and racism. Within this context, curator June Givanni worked as a film programmer in the GLC's Ethnic Minorities Unit, developing touring cinema programmes in schools, community and other cultural centres. The June Givanni Pan-African Cinema Archive is a collection created, stored and funded by June, using material from this period as well the key roles she played as a film curator in the UK, Canada and around the world at institutions including the British Film Institute, the Toronto International Film Festival and other film festivals around the world. What follows are excerpts from June's archives surrounding the production of the the Anti-racism Film Programme and notes derived from a discussion held with her at the archive in July, 2018.

Built on her work as an instigator of Third Eye London's Festival of Third World Cinema. June Givanni developed the Anti-racism Film Programme in 1984 circulating rarely seen films to schools, youth clubs, community centres and cultural groups within the framework of anti-racism.

FP1.323



ANTI RACIST FILM PROGRAMME NOVEMBER '84 TO MARCH '85

SCREENINGS AT LOCAL SCHOOLS/YOUTH CLUBS/LIBRARIES/CHURCHES/
ARTS & COMMUNITY CENTRES/COMMUNITY CINEMAS



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Cover of the Anti-Racism Film Programme Education Pack, 1984-85
Programmed by June Givanni
Provided Courtesy of June Givanni Pan-African Cinema Archive

The films were accompanied by pedagogical materials that gave background on the film-makers and contexts in which they were written, but also suggested key themes to be explored to further anti-racism education in classrooms. These themes included:

Race and History

Anti-Imperialism

Institutionalised Racism

Race and Identity

Cultural Heritage and Achievement

THEME GUIDE

INTRODUCTION

The main function of the Theme Guide is to provide a comprehensive supplement to the programme notes. We attempt in the Guide to go into some detail about some of the issues raised and criticised in the films. The Guide is by no means conclusive in this respect, but it puts forward a framework, both for discussing anti-racism and the relationship between film and anti-racism.

The Guide comprises of five interrelated areas:-

RACE AND HISTORY
ANTI-IMPERIALISM
INSTITUTIONALISED RACISM
RACE AND IDENTITY
ACHIEVEMENT AND CULTURAL HERITAGE:-

and we have tried to place subject matters of all the films into one of these. Clearly, we do not discuss every film in the Guide and we also mention films not included in the Schools Programme. But we hope that the breadth and scope gained by this generalised approach will facilitate a more complete understanding of the issues raised.

Lastly, something needs to be said about the relationship between the Guide and the films. The Theme Guides discuss the phenomena which the films then critically explore. Thus, we have tried to set the scene, the background against which the issues in the films are to be understood. The relationship is therefore not a direct one, and we advise that they should not be viewed in that way.

JOHN AKOMFRAH
for
ANTI RACIST FILM PROGRAMME.

Elaboration of the Theme Guide
Anti-racism Film Programmed Education Pack, 1984-85
Programmed by June Givanni
Courtesy of June Givanni Pan-African Cinema Archive

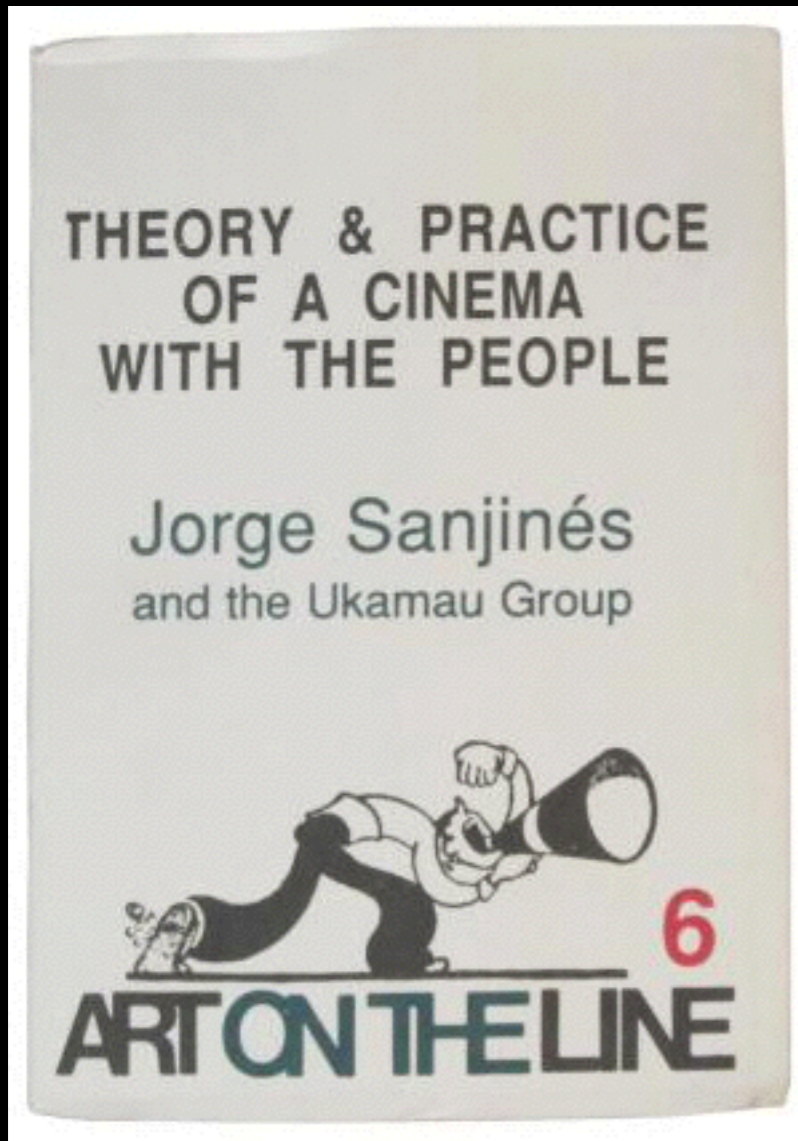


The themes in the Education Pack explicitly placed the circulation of films in the service of anti-racism learning. They are outlined in accompanying materials by film-maker John Akomfrah, who was, at the time, involved in Black Audio Film Collective, one of a number of community-situated film workshops across the UK at the time. Film workshops such as Black Audio Film Collective and Sankofa were at the forefront of working in experimental film-making formats, and on the analysis of racism in Britain through media arts that had strong connections with diasporic communities. Funded by Channel Four Television, the local metropolitan councils and the films and television unions collectively to provide financial and structural support to black media and cultural makers, these workshops negotiated an agreement between the media institutions and cultural makers to enable independent productions that examined the diasporic African and Asian experience in Britain and across the continents. Many of these films appear in the anti-racism film programme created by Givanni.

The themes are described by Akomfrah as a framework for viewing intended to be worked through in the context of classrooms, hybrid clubs and community groups. They do not reduce readings of the films to a single message, but, according to Akomfrah, 'set the scene' for definitions and analyses of racism and anti-racism around and for which the film programme was created and discussions could take place.

This understanding of film as an instigator of anti-racism and anti-colonialism education, discussion and social confrontation, echoes those of the Third Cinema movement, films from which were featured in the Anti-racism film programme. Third Cinema practitioners like Jorge Sanjinés and Group Ukamau's in their manifesto for a 'Cinema with the People' for example, suggest that their films - raw confrontations with colonial violence in Bolivia - should only be shown in contexts in which the audience is activated through self-questioning and self-implication. A film should be seen here not as entertainment but as an instigation of social change through participatory discussion and long term commitment to change. The film *Time to Rise* by Anand Padwardan, included in the programme, is both an experimental documentary and a tool for mobilising agricultural workers in Canada, and was as such set to the length of the worker's break period.

These practices seem crucial as art objects related to anti-racism and histories of the Black Arts movement today in 2018 often circulate through institutions that performatively stage an interest in Black Arts but do not always sustain commitments to anti-racism in their organisations and communities.



Activity:

Community Anti-racism film festival.

Consider films that you think address these themes of anti-racism in contemporary Britain /elsewhere.

Where no come to mind, work in small groups to research films that could be shown.

Consider how each film can be activated to engage in contemporary discussion of each theme.

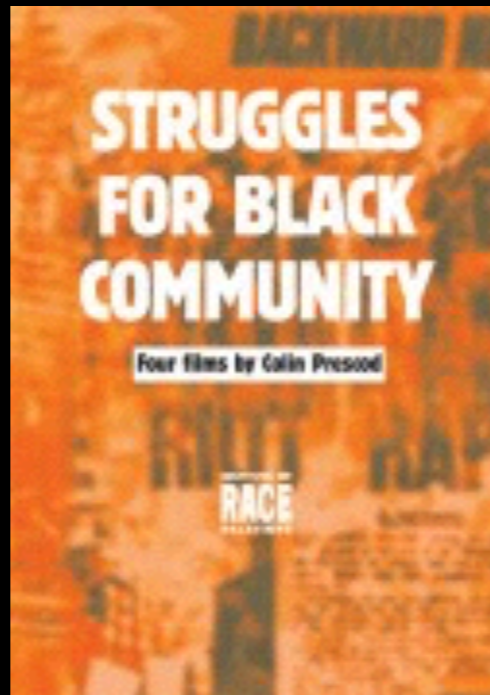
Consider if any of these themes need updating,

for example, there are no themes related to the inter-sectional experiences of racism and sexism or racism and homophobia, for example.

Develop a proposal for a film programme and the ways it might be activated.

Present and discuss with the group

For the Anti-racism Film Festival these commitments to political analysis and action around racism are articulated squarely in the elaboration of the first theme, Race and History. Disputing the idea that racism is formed from individual beliefs and negotiations of difference, the film guide defines racism as a structural condition underpinned by British imperialism, by relationships built of prejudice and subordination, on and the profits and global status and power Britain gained through its involvement in slavery. The links between slavery and the British Imperial project are elaborated through examples drawn not only with racism against communities of colour but also the racism experienced against the Irish, drawing solidarities between communities of struggle in Britain and globally.



The films selected are in keeping with this analysis including films like *The Last Supper* (1976), which detail conditions of slaves on a Cuban plantation, *Struggles for Black Community* (1980s), a film looking at key moments of black struggle in Britain, alongside films about British racism against the Irish, including, *Ireland Behind the Wire*.

RACE and HISTORY

Racism as it presently exists and functions is assumed by many people in schools and in the education system to be timeless and 'known': racism exists because of 'differences' amongst social groups; racism exists because of 'prejudice' based on our awareness of known differences. Such views are misleading at best, or an apology for racism in its most complacent form.

Racism is a structural feature of our society; it is not beliefs or ideas floating in the air, but beliefs and ideas that are constructed and sustained by practices and operations of the society in which we live.

Created and maintained through relationships based on domination and subordination, racism is the product both of power and prejudice. In this way racism is not simply a set of beliefs, but a phenomena rooted very directly within the structures and relations of British Society, structures and relations with specific histories.

The films in this section are specifically concerned with these histories. They are concerned with uncovering some of the roots of racism; the strategic significance of colonial expansion; the scale of the imperialist enterprise.

England's involvement with slavery began in the Elizabethan period. The first English slave-raiding expedition set off for West Africa in 1562 with the backing of Queen Elizabeth I.

The key to England's prosperity was the trade with the colonies, and in particular the trade in African slaves. In the Eighteenth century, the development of plantations in the Caribbean and the Americas prompted a huge growth in the slave trade, with some 60,000 Africans being carried across the Atlantic each year. *QUEIMADA*, for example, is concerned with aspects of the event; *THE LAST SUPPER*, though produced in a Latin American context, is concerned both with the tensions which existed between slave and master and the savagery of the colonial experience. *BITTER CANE*, a documentary on present day Haiti, looks in some detail at what has happened to contain post-slave societies.

The question of Race and History also has significance in other more indirect ways. Anti-Irish racism, for example, from which Anti-Irish humour springs, is a very old theme in English culture. It is one of the oldest manifestations of the pervasive delusion that the English are a culturally and physically superior people – white Anglo-Saxon and Protestant – who are superior to every other kind of people. Whilst it is therefore important to point out how the renewal of conflict in the North of Ireland (1969) brought with it an upsurge in anti-Irish racism in England, it must also be stressed that the racism and the conditions that the Irish community face today are deeply rooted in British colonial legacy in Ireland. A legacy as fiercely resisted; as barbaric in its operation as in other colonies in the Third World. The *IRISH IN ENGLAND* tapes are an excellent introduction to this history.

In some contexts, the History/Race couplet the title speaks of might be in reference to collective Black political struggles, previously hidden or excluded from the established histories of British society. The "STRUGGLES FOR BLACK COMMUNITY" films/tapes are an exemplary introduction to this rich area. For specific coverage of this area films like *BLACK BRITANNICA*, *RIOTS AND RUMOURS OF RIOTS*, *IRELAND BEHIND THE WIRE*, might prove more valuable.

On the same theme, this film programme strives for an international dimension to this area. Including films on Black struggle and settlement in Canada *A TIME TO RISE*; films about successive Australian government policies towards Aborigines (*LOUSY LITTLE SIXPENCE*, *MY SURVIVAL AS AN ABORIGINAL*, *MUNDA NYURINGU*); the historic development of the structures of apartheid and separate development (*SOUTH AFRICA BELONGS TO US*); life of the oppressed in colonial Martinique (*RUE CASES NEGRES*).

In other instances the films included will work more appropriately under a rubric of Race/History/Memory. There are films which primarily attempt to tap a shared or collective knowledge(s) about event(s). In *TSIEMELO*, for example, the film is clearly concerned with the

Race and History Theme card
Anti-racism Film Programmed Education Pack, 1984-85
Programmed by June Givanni
Courtesy of June Givanni Pan-African Cinema Archive

Activity:

Race and History: Collaged Timeline

Current debates often de-historicise racism, suggest that it takes place as a misunderstanding between cultures.

This exercise is derived from the Race and History section of the guide Anti-racism film programme guide. Watch the three films suggested here (The Last Supper (1976) , Struggles for Black Community (1980s), and Ireland Behind the Wire or films addressing similar issues from our time.

Make a timeline/collage of the context of colonialism and its relationship to contemporary racism in the UK/ elsewhere based on knowledges in the room. If a printer is available, printed images, quotes etc can be used. The timeline does not have to be chronological but can be organised around thematic issues. It can also include personal moments of the class in which they have experienced racism and /or the impact of colonialism.

When complete look for gaps in this.

When complete discuss, look at key issues that emerge.

Extension: the materials gathered could also be used to make a film collage if the means are available or to make a zine.

According to Givanni, the pedagogical materials developed for the Anti-racism film festival were generated in conversation with the Anti-racism Unit of the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA). The ILEA Anti-racism Unit was composed of teachers seconded from the education system charged with pointing out key issues in the institutionalised racism in schools and re-writing whole school policy, with making links with other anti-racism organisations across the city, with writing anti-racism curriculum in all subject areas and developing in-service teacher training. In the Unit's report from the year before the film festival, also found in June Givanni's archive. key areas of the work of the Anti-racism Unit are outlined including. a course for teachers on 'anti-racism strategies', curriculum development at both primary and secondary levels and a special section on the role of the police in schools.

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**ILEA Centre for Anti-Racist
Education**

Annual Report
September 1983 - August 1984

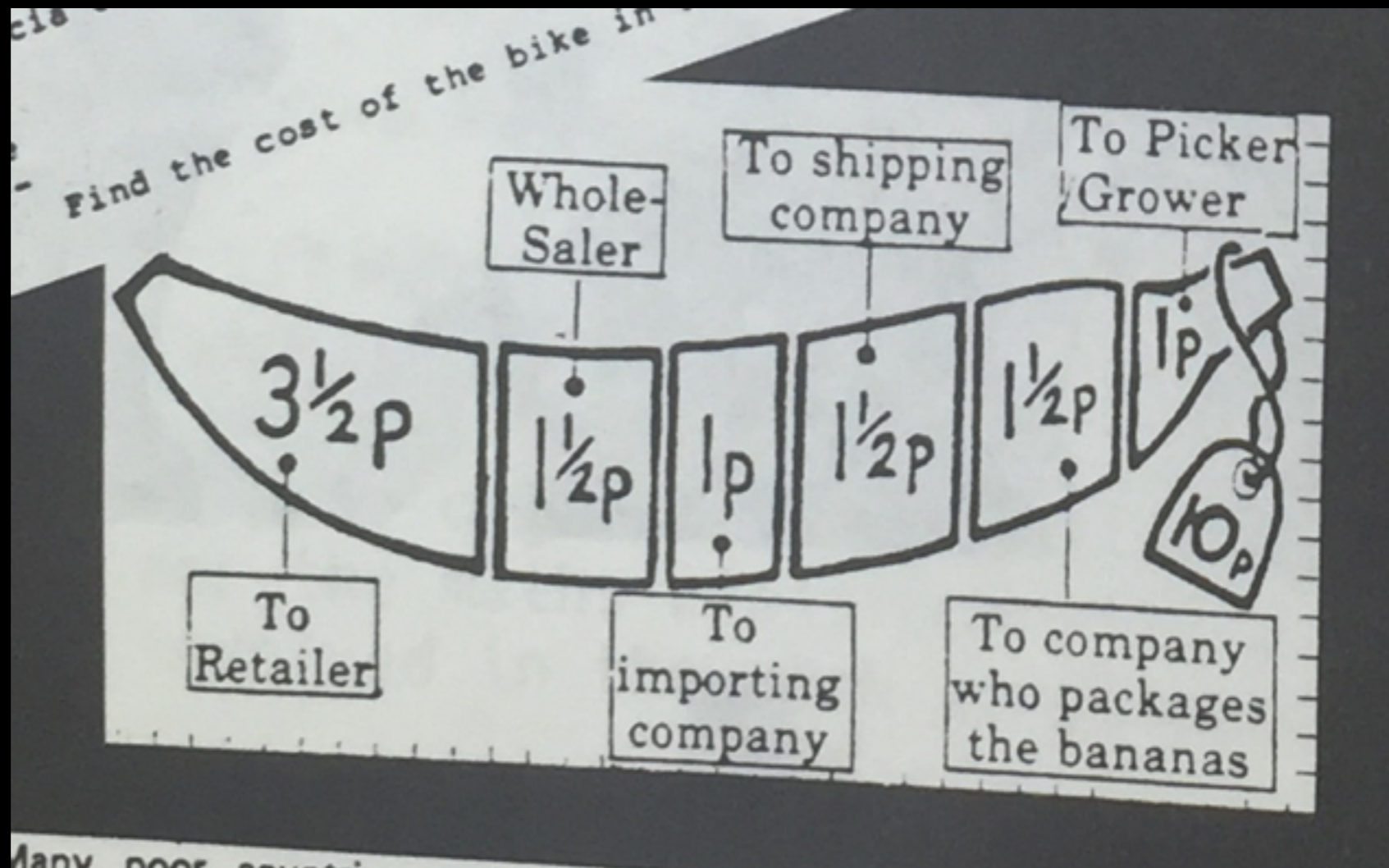
ILEA Anti-racism Unit
Cover of Annual Report, 1983-84
Courtesy of June Givanni Pan-African
Cinema Archive

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ILEA Anti-racism Unit
Cover of Annual Report, 1983-84
Courtesy of June Givanni
Pan-African Cinema Archive



In relation to curriculum, the ILEA anti-racism Unit organised teachers in subject area working groups. A group working on anti-racism maths curriculum developed visualised activities around percentages through which global economic and social inequalities could be explored. A banana, for example is used as the visualisation of the unequal distribution of profit for primary school students. The banana is divided into the profits generated for pickers, importers, retailers and wholesalers to demonstrate the ways in which racism and economic injustice are related.

Activity

Anti-Imperialism Mathetics

Take a product or service that you use every day

Research the chain of production and profit associated with elements of this product

Visualise the product, using percentages to determine who benefits the most and the least. Discuss the relationship between this and histories of colonialism described in the last section.

It is clear in these materials also that anti-racism education in the 1980s made a concerted effort to move away from 'race awareness' education, which focuses only on cultural difference. Rather the ILEA Anti-racism unit placed race and racism in historical and political frameworks that implicated structural conditions and the institutions of British society, including schools but also in relation to histories of anti-racism strategies and struggles. While the training developed for teachers works from this structural understanding of racism the its everyday forms, for example the presence of police in schools, it also attempts to personally implicate teachers, inviting them to analyse their own racism through a series of focused activities.

Activity (adapted from the ILEA guide):

Policy From Below

1. Students / teachers brainstorm the key elements of racism in society

Facilitator contextualises these elements of racism through historical political frames.

2. Watch a film (Motherland is the one suggested) that links histories of immigration in the context of British Imperialism but there may be one that is more appropriate to your context. Discuss the film in relation to these histories.

3. Now ask the class (or in small groups) to look at the issues they have developed and how they currently manifest in your institution (school, art gallery etc)

4. In small groups, brainstorm key elements of an anti-racism policy for your institution to address the issues brought up in the last section.

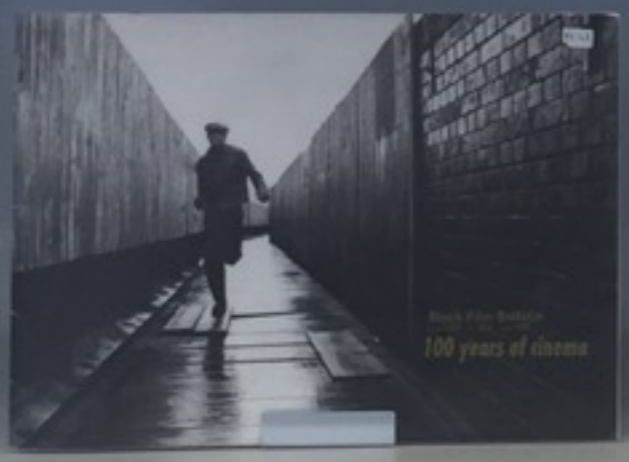
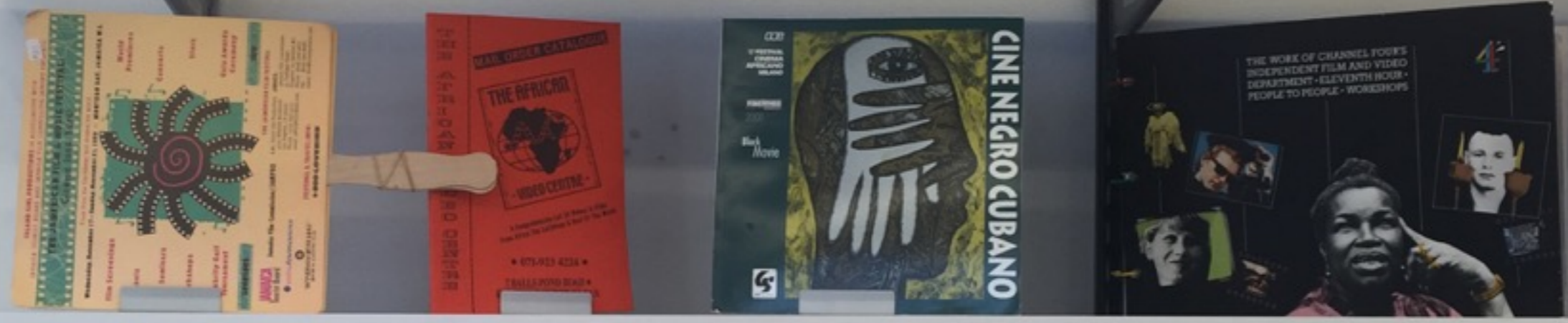
5. In smaller groups, take one element and talk through how this policy would play out in everyday life in the school/other institution.

Discuss the barriers of how this policy might be realised., what would be the next steps, how to overcome these barriers and campaign for anti-racism in the school/institution.

The June Givanni Pan African Cinema Archive is a significant archive built through June's personal and committed relationship to the films, film-makers and pedagogical process through which they are circulated. Where we might imagine that this material to be housed in official archives, and to be regularly exhibited in the face of a resurgence of racism and fascism in Britain, Givanni's archive, has, until recently, been housed in her home. Developed without funding or institutional support, the archive continues to be run by June as a resource for African and African diaspora cinema, anti-racism pedagogy and the Black Arts Movement. In addition to the Third Eye London's first Festival of Third World Cinema, and her work with the Greater London Council's Ethnic Minorities Unit, June ran the African Caribbean Film Unit at the British Film Institute and edited the quarterly Black Film Bulletin; and the book *Symbolic Narratives: Africa Cinema at the British Film Institute*. She also programmed Planet Africa at The Toronto International Film Festival over 4 years. She has worked as a film curator with festivals on 5 continents – including India – and has been involved in key moments in the development of Pan African cinema on these continents, and the development of the links between them. June has worked closely with many of the key filmmakers, critics and theorists involved with 'Black British Cinema'; 'African Cinema'; 'Third Cinema'; 'Caribbean Cinema'; Black Cinema from Europe; and African American Independent Cinema. She has always remained committed to education and discussion that impacts communities in the context of film curation. The lack of institutional support, not only for the collection, but for the materials and their ongoing use by June and others in programming anti-racism and anti-imperialist film demonstrates that the condition of institutional racism is still very present, particularly at a moment of resurgence in interest in the black arts movement and the context of the 1980s.



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Activity

June runs crowdfunding campaigns on regular basis

Ask your institution to support the archive by making a fundraiser.

Funds can be donated through the archive website [http://
www.junegivannifilmarchive.com/june-givannis-story/](http://www.junegivannifilmarchive.com/june-givannis-story/)

<http://www.junegivannifilmarchive.com/june-givannis-story/>