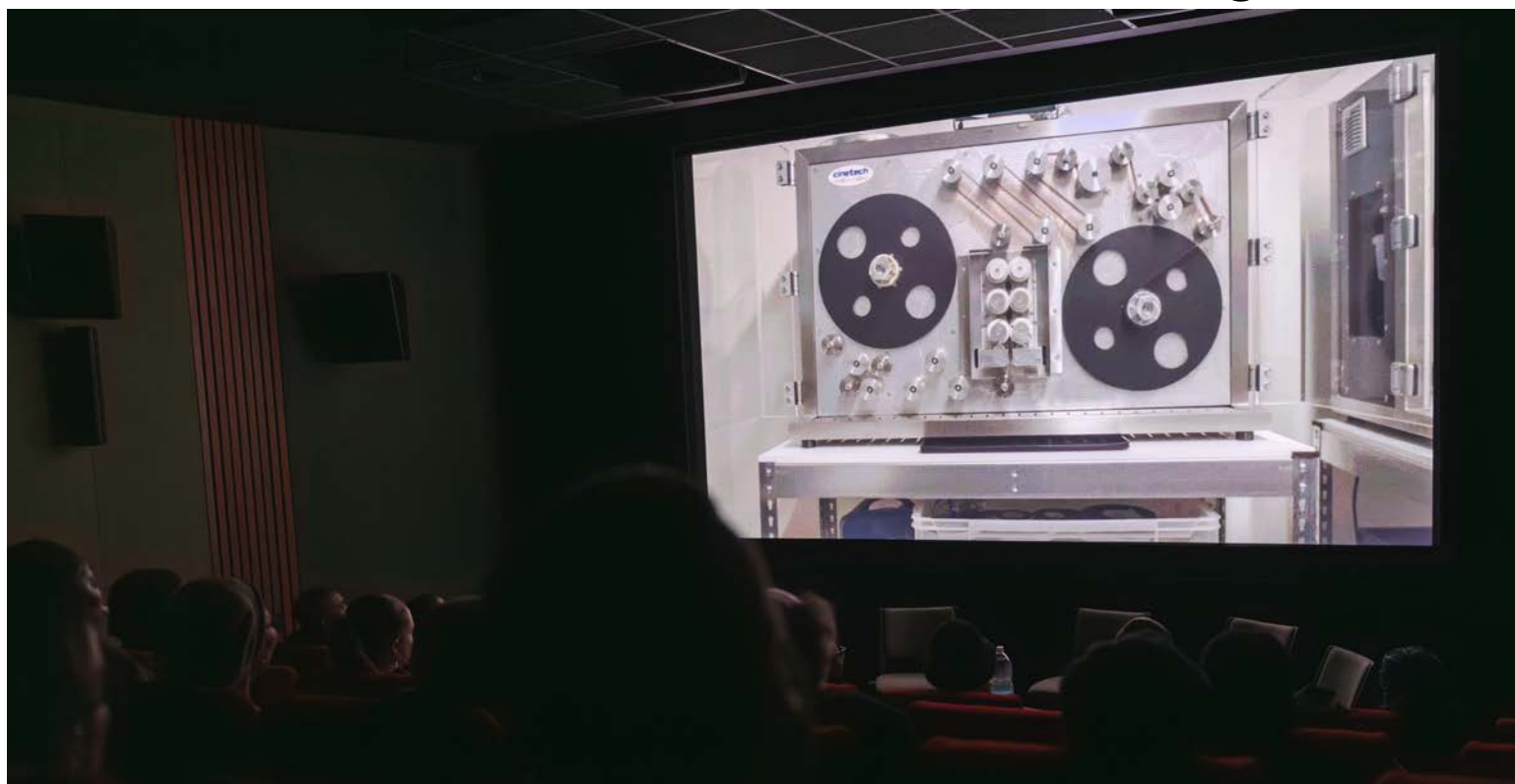
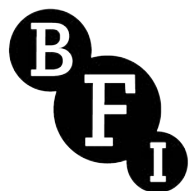


UNDOCUMENTED:

A Framework for Community-Led Black Screen Heritage Practice



WITH THANKS TO



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01

FOREWORD

Undocumented has lived with The New Black Film Collective (TNBFC) for a long time as an urgent mission to secure and validate memories within the Black community. It was conceptualised out of a need to mark our presence and reaffirm that we belong. That our lives are worthy whether it is through work, rest or play. At a time where birthright citizenship is being challenged and deportations are on a rise, we have to draw a line to say that 'we are here to stay' and this project bears witness to our existence. TNBFC has partnered with London's Screen Archives to tap into its resources and expertise but to also become equipped and independent so that we can work with both autonomy and increasing authority. This is both a personal and public examination on how we deposit and display our moving images with pride and digitise with dignity.

- Priscilla Igwe

THE CORE TEAM



LONDON'S SCREEN ARCHIVES

Storm Patterson – LSA Digital Transformation Manager and Projects Lead

Tamera Heron – Undocumented Project Manager

Amina Ali – LSA Digitisation Trainee

And special thanks to the all the LSA team, colleagues at Film London, TNBFC and volunteers who have supported us and made this programme possible.

THE NEW BLACK FILM COLLECTIVE

Priscilla Igwe – Founder and CEO of The New Black Film Collective (TNBFC)

Andrina George – Operations and Events Director

Maryam Jafari-Fini – Project Coordinator

We wish to thank our team, Board members, Screen Heritage Ambassadors and the Steering Group for their exceptional contribution, time and commitment to this sector-defining project.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Undocumented began as an Outreach project between The New Black Film Collective (TNBFC) and London's Screen Archives (LSA) to introduce and deepen engagement of screen heritage within London's Black communities. TNBFC expanded on their existing events by delivering a programme of conversations, events and screenings with a focus on Black British life on film. LSA's focus was on relationship building and visiting community groups to introduce people to archive material.

Year 1 of Undocumented successfully delivered a range of events alongside local Black artists and Black-led organisations, showcasing archive film from our collections reaching over 30,000 people across London largely from Black communities. 40 screenings took place, 60 community events and 23 newly digitised films, with the project concluding with a conference attracting 124 attendees.

The second year was titled 'Undocumented: Screen Heritage Ambassadors' and prioritised building skills, confidence and knowledge with a cohort of Black Londoners through workshops including digitisation, cataloguing and understanding archival practice. In both years we offered free digitisation and the second year was vital for the forming of our new donations policy.

In Year 2 we engaged with 42 Ambassadors, hosted 10 workshops and 3 touch point days. Ambassadors chose to donate 20 home movies and in total 37 were digitised.

Undocumented was made possible thanks to the support of the BFI National Lottery Screen Heritage Fund, awarding National Lottery Good Cause funding.

ACROSS TWO YEARS

Year 1

- Conference with 124 attendees
- 14 new additions to the LSA website
- 2,112 participants
- Introduced LSA heritage film material to 80% new audiences; 33 films from our network of archives and 23 collections
- Heritage material seen by 30,000 people across London largely from Black communities.
- 23 films digitised
- Acquired 14 born-digital works

Year 2

- 42 Black Londoners engaged
- 10 workshops
- 3 touch-point days
- 6 Steering Group members
- 4 Steering Group meetings
- 1 Ambassador hosted celebratory event
- 'Custodians' a short film created by Ambassador Monalisa Chukwuma
- Ambassador curated Zine with 9 contributors
- 80% attendance rate for the core 10 workshops
- 37 films digitised
- 20 films donated

02

1. WHY UNDOCUMENTED?

In the UK, Black home movies have been historically under-collected and under-valued as a result of years of systemic racism. Distributed at the hands of those deciding what is of importance to collect, preserve and who they want to represent their country. Additionally, home movies that are categorised to represent Black life in Britain are often through the gaze and context of the onlooker, leading to inaccurate, dangerous, racist storytelling and cataloguing.

In response, 'Undocumented' sought to address these historical absences and inaccuracies. The first year of the project focused on building trust amongst the black community, introducing audiences to archives as a source of learning and inspiration but also making them aware of the gaps within them. This year was a vital foundation of uplifting the Black people as custodians of their own legacies and informing them that their home movies are in desperate need of preservation. The second year focused on training and supporting participants to digitise and preserve a selection of material. The 3rd year of the project would aim to mark a significant step change: moving from training and initial collecting, into sustained ambassador activity and sector-facing leadership.

Community-led heritage is essential to addressing these gaps. The people connected to home movies hold knowledge about the families, traditions, places and moments on screen that can easily be missed or misinterpreted by an archive. Undocumented sought to recognise that knowledge and give Black communities a greater role in how their histories is preserved, contextualised and shared.

2. THE APPROACH

From the beginning, we envisioned Undocumented as a three-year programme. We knew that building trust, introducing people to archive practice and beginning to address decades of under-collecting couldn't be achieved through a short period of outreach or a one-off call for donations. Although we had an overall ambition for where we wanted the programme to go, we deliberately didn't plan every detail of the three years from the outset. Each phase was intended to build on the previous one and give us time to respond to what we were hearing from participants, partners and the wider Black community.

The first-year prioritised outreach, awareness and relationship building. We wanted to introduce audiences to London's Screen Archives and engage them with screen heritage, while also being honest about the gaps within archives and the urgent need to preserve Black home movies. Community screenings, viewing days and workshops allowed us to begin conversations with people without immediately asking them to hand over their material.

This shaped the Screen Heritage Ambassador programme in Year 2. Rather than continuing with broad outreach activity alone, we wanted to work more closely with a group of Black Londoners over a longer period. The programme focused on building skills through workshops covering preservation, digitisation, cataloguing, collecting and programming, alongside decolonising the archive and non-Western approaches to archival practice.

Year 3 will be the final stage and is intended to move the programme forward again, although the exact shape wasn't decided until we had worked with the Ambassadors. The final legacy sessions, one-to-one meetings and more informal conversations gave us a much clearer understanding of people's interests and what they felt was missing after the training. Some wanted opportunities to apply their learning within archive collections, others wanted to develop their own projects or curate work, and many wanted more opportunities to stay connected with one another and the wider sector.

This flexible approach has been important throughout Undocumented. There have been times when activity has changed or developed in ways we didn't expect, and some of the strongest project outcomes have come from leaving enough room for this to happen.

There are a few key principles that have shaped the programme throughout the three years:

- **Trust before collecting** – the lack of Black home movies in archives created an urgency around preservation, but we were aware that this urgency couldn't be used to rush people's decisions about their own material.
- **Community expertise is archival expertise** – the programme recognised that many of the Ambassadors were already doing archival work in practice without the title; through keeping archival materials, heritage and stories preserved in their communities.
- **Shared authority** – we wanted Ambassadors to have opportunities to shape the project rather than only attend a programme that had been designed for them.
- **Context is preservation** – digitising audiovisual material does not automatically preserve the full story within it. Ambassadors were key to the cataloguing and contextualisation of their own home movies, bringing their knowledge to the process.
- **Care-centred practice** – care has been a thread throughout the programme and our understanding of what this means has continued to develop, from how sessions are delivered to the support available around difficult material and personal collections.
- **Legacy over extraction** – we didn't want to gather material or share knowledge without thinking about what remained for the community. Skills, knowledge and opportunities needed to flow both ways, with the programme creating space for Ambassadors to develop their own practice and decide what came next.

3. BUILDING AN ECOSYSTEM OF CARE

At the beginning of the Screen Heritage Ambassador programme, we shared an Ecosystem of Care with the cohort. This was our code of conduct and outlined the type of community we hoped to create together, built around authenticity and compassion. We encouraged Ambassadors to 'come as you are', recognising that people would not arrive at every session feeling their best or able to participate in the same way. We asked the group to meet one another with kindness and patience, be mindful of how their words and actions might affect others, and respect confidentiality and personal boundaries.

The Ecosystem of Care also covered the practical realities of the programme. All venues were wheelchair accessible, Ambassadors were encouraged to share any additional access needs and core workshops were not recorded for online use, helping protect the sessions as spaces where people could talk and ask questions openly.

We knew that viewing home movies could be emotional, particularly when seeing family members who had passed away or footage that hadn't been watched for decades. Ambassadors were encouraged to take a break or find a quiet space if needed. During our Communities on Camera sessions, we also offered individual screens and headphones so people could choose to watch their films privately if they wanted. In practice however, these sessions quickly became spaces of community and sharing, as people naturally gathered around one another's screens to watch films and hear the stories that accompanied them.

We also thought carefully about our approach to bringing new donations into the archive. Taking part in the Ambassador programme did not come with an expectation to donate. Participants could choose to simply have their material digitised and

returned to them. Licensing, access and the sharing of personal footage were discussed openly throughout the programme, giving Ambassadors time to consider their options rather than only having these conversations when presented with a donation agreement.

We also included a complaints procedure within the Ecosystem of Care, so Ambassadors had a clear route to raise concerns about a session, member of staff or any other part of the programme. For a project asking people to place trust in us, it was important that they also knew how to tell us when something didn't feel right.

STEERING GROUP

The Undocumented Steering Group was another important part of this approach. Bringing together artists, archivists, historians, researchers and filmmakers, the group gave us a regular space to sound out ideas, share how the programme was developing and draw on a wider range of sector and community knowledge.

We met quarterly and brought different areas of the programme to the group for discussion and feedback, including the resources guide, event programmes, plans for the third year and our approach to donations. Their different experiences helped us think through our processes more carefully and consider how we could make the programme as supportive and equitable as possible for the Ambassadors.

This became particularly useful as Ambassadors began bringing personal films into the programme and questions around rights, informed consent, access and future use became more complex. The Steering Group fed into our revised donations agreement and gave us a wider perspective on how these conversations and processes could be handled clearly and collaboratively.

Having the Steering Group gave the project team a trusted space to share ideas and gain feedback. For a programme built around care, trust and changing relationships between communities and archives, that wider knowledge and support was invaluable.

4. THE AMBASSADOR PROGRAMME

RECRUITMENT

We relied on our usual marketing streams; The New Black Film Collective's, Film London and London's Screen Archives monthly newsletter, LinkedIn and Instagram to reach an audience. Alongside asking peers in the sector, our steering groups and workshop hosts to share amongst their networks. All information including FAQs were featured on our website and Storm and Tamera hosted an online drop-in session ahead of the deadline date via Zoom.

REDUCING BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION

To reduce barriers such as the cost of living, rising travel prices and caring duties. Where possible, during recruitment we provided the dates or weeks that sessions would take place so participants, particularly those with caring responsibilities would have as much transparency and clarity on dates as possible. In the sign-up form, participants were able to select which location; north London or south London would be best for them. We had a few requests to switch in-between or attend one-off sessions which were granted to be as flexible as possible to the needs of Ambassadors.

Each participant was also given a £30 honorarium for their attendance at all in-person workshops, including the additional touch point sessions. They were then able to invoice when it was most useful to them. All venues were wheelchair accessible and we attempted to host from the same venue as much as possible, so it became a familiar space that felt safe and easy to slot into Ambassadors routines.

TRAINING PROGRAMME

▪ Session 1: An Introduction

Our first session was a chance for participants to meet the core team and their fellow Ambassadors. We ran through how the sessions worked, spoke about the value of our stories as a community, watched archive footage and connected as one larger group before being split into two.

▪ Session 2: Caring for your Collections

For this session, one group was at Southwark Archives with Archivist Dr Patricia Dark and Heritage Officer Lisa Soverall who attempted to answer questions such as *How do I ensure my archival collection will be looked after and made accessible?* using their workplace as an example. Utilising examples of past projects, Lisa spoke about the advantages and disadvantages of donating material to professional archives for collections that reflect Global Majority communities.

The other group were paired with Milo Holmes and Lynn Loo, Film Conservation Specialists at the BFI National Film and Television Archive. They shared their work on the care and preservation of motion pictures. Milo also led participants through the history of home movie equipment and explored more technical elements to preservation.



▪ Session 3: Communities on Camera

Similar to phase 1, this was a chance for the Ambassador to explore what is on their own home movies. We set up a variety of players and some headphones; some people even brought popcorn and used this time to help them to reorganise and consider what their priority for digitisation or donation might be.

▪ Session 4: Correcting our Collecting - Thinking beyond the 'traditional' archive

Hosted by Dr. Etienne Joseph, this session considered African/diaspora heritage practices and proposed alternative ways of thinking about, creating and maintaining archives. Inviting the participants to respond to archives reflects the multidimensional cultures and communities that create them.

▪ Session 5: Missing in the Archives

Genova Messiah at Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives ran a practical workshop looking at recent deposits to their archive, and how they identify and address gaps in their collections. Ambassadors looked at both physical and digital records, discussed challenges in contemporary collecting, and explored the introductory guide 'Caring for Your Collections: Community Archives'.

▪ Session 6: Visit R3STORE Studios

Ambassadors were able to book visits to R3STORE Studios and learn about how they clean, scan and colour grade film. Alongside gaining more insight into staff members' different career progressions.



▪ **Session 7: Cataloguing with London's Screen Archives**

Amy Keegan, LSA Membership & Licensing Coordinator and David Whorlow, Collections and Volunteers Coordinator hosted a session sharing LSA's cataloguing process, alongside an introduction to our donations process, cataloguing and metadata.

▪ **Session 8: Cataloguing with iniva**

iniva's (Institute of International Visual Art) Archivist Kaitlene Koranteng hosted a workshop exploring how to catalogue your own archive speaking specifically about inclusive and culturally responsive cataloguing practices.



▪ **Session 9: Programming**

The penultimate session encouraged Ambassadors to share ideas of what they want to showcase at their celebratory event. Following this, a working group was made to continue the curation of their celebratory event. We had 3 online sessions in total and where needed Ambassadors met in smaller groups or with Tamera.

▪ **Session 10: Legacy**

In our final session we asked the Ambassadors to reflect on what they want the legacy of the project to be, what tools and skills they need to be the best Ambassadors they can be and what they would like to see from a third year. All these responses directly shaped what the third phase offering now looks like.

AMBASSADORS IN PRACTICE

Throughout the programme Ambassadors also shared that they were working on archival projects of their own. A recurrent theme was that they were often culturally specific archives like London's GaDangme, Montserratian and Caribbean communities, exploring topics of migration and adaptation of traditions in Britain. Additionally, some Ambassadors who met on the programme shared that they are starting their own archive.

The New Black Film Collective hosts a blog on Black Film, sharing articles from reviewers and enthusiasts across the diaspora and they encouraged Ambassadors to use this platform to share their own reflections. Articles written by Ambassadors included 'Letting the Body Speak- establishing the legacy of the Black performers body as archive' by Ariane Barnes and reviews of films that features archival footage such as The Eyes of Ghana and Black is Beautiful, both written by Eileen Gbagbo. Under their Heritage tab TNBFC's website has a dedicated section to Undocumented including spotlights from the Ambassadors, the zine, relevant articles, events and a resource list that was collated by our team and members of our Steering Group.

5. PROJECT OUTCOMES

Undocumented: Screen Heritage Ambassadors took place from June 2025 to March 2026. During these 10 months, all core 10 sessions had an 80% attendance rate from a total of 42 Ambassadors split across two groups. As a result of the high level of engagement, we experienced a rich array of outcomes.

An aim of the project was to encourage Ambassadors to digitise their home movies as an act of preservation and potentially donate footage in response to the lack of Black home movies within the archives. In total 20 new films were donated, largely VHS and mini-DV, alongside some Hi-8 tapes and born digital films. These were from 8 ambassadors and included family weddings, birthday parties, speeches from Black activists and cultural festivals. Including donated films, a total of 37 films were digitised from 14 ambassadors.

EXAMPLES OF AMBASSADORS HOME MOVIES ADDED TO LSA'S ARCHIVES

Lloyd's and Riaz Curtis Baptism: The video show clips of Riaz and Lloyd Curtis (father and son) being baptised together at the New Testament Church of God in Edmonton.

Eileen's 10th birthday party: A 10th birthday party for Eileen Gbagbo, at her home featuring members of the Ghanaian community in Barking and Essex in 2009.

The Wedding of Sharon and Malcolm: This video depicts the wedding of Sharon and Malcolm Mitchell, which took place on Saturday 4th July 1987 in Haringey and Enfield, North London.

Black Women's Movement Oral History Project Launch: The event is hosted by Maureen Roberts, who at the time was a trustee of the Black Cultural Archives (BCA), Senior Development Officer at the London Metropolitan Archives, a qualified teacher, and a published author – pictured is noted writer and activist, Stella Dadzie.



*Lloyd's and Riaz Curtis Baptism
(2000), LSA30629*



*The Wedding of Sharon and Malcolm
(1987), LSA30632*



*Eileen's 10th birthday party (2009),
LSA30639*



*Black Women's Movement Oral
History Project Launch (2009),
LSA30641*

AMBASSADOR CURATED EVENT

Another priority of Undocumented: Screen Heritage Ambassadors, was to provide the opportunity for the Ambassadors to curate their own event motivated by their learnings, discussions as a cohort and passions. From this, Custodians of the Archives: Shaping our Future Histories came to life, a multi-activity day at BLOC, Mile End including a home movie screening room where Ambassadors films played for the community to come, watch and ponder on. The day began with a workshop titled 'Identity needs Memory' from Ibiwunmi Balogun, which guided by an archival map provided people with the tools and prompts to reflect on what they've tangibly and in-tangibly archived of their individual journeys.

“Enlightening and inspiring. Has encouraged me to do my own research into archiving and preservation on a private and professional level”



Ambassadors then took charge of curating two community discussions, the first being 'GaDangme in Britain: Adapting Beyond the Homeland' hosted by GaDangme Researcher and Medical Herbalist Naa Adjeley Tsofanye, Ade Sawyerr member of Nikasema Asafo and Joana Awushie Humphreys who is the Chairlady of New Generation GaDangme Association. They shared and responded to home movies containing Homowo, Ngmayem and Asafotufiam celebrations, highlighting the joy and dedication of the organisers who now in their 70s continue to educate people on the history, complexities and traditions of GaDangme people. The second discussion was 'The Black Archive is Alive', with Memory Worker and Ambassador Hayley Reid, fellow Ambassador, Filmmaker, Producer and Photographer Dr Monalisa Chukwuma, Artist-Filmmaker Onyeka Igwe and Audio Artist, Archivist, Creative Producer and Writer Weyland McKenzie. Alongside the audience, they explored cultural production and community archives, looking at how creative practices can activate the archive and help build living histories, centring Black history in London and beyond. The day concluded with a screening of Black is Beautiful: The Kwame Braithwaite story.

“Inspiring and Introspective”
“Amazing. Educational”



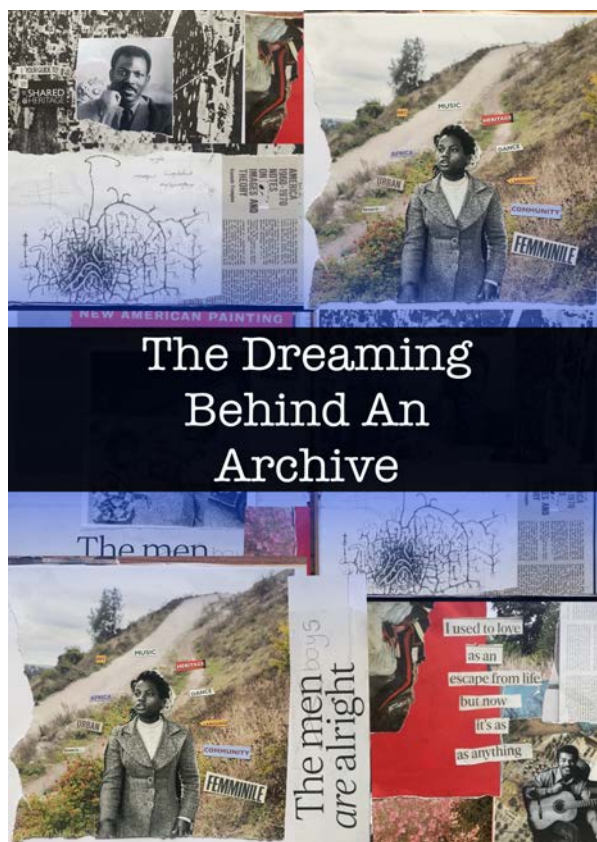
We then followed the event with an online sharing with 5 of the Ambassadors to continue discussion about community archiving and were joined by 62 people online.

“It was a wonderful experience. Not only did I discover lots about artists I have never encountered, I was able to share and participate and it opened up a whole new host of opportunities.”

THE FILM: CUSTODIANS

Monalisa’s film ‘Custodians’ was a joyfully unexpected outcome; she had pitched the concept to Tamera and Storm in early 2026 and ended up creating a beautiful short documentary celebrating the Ambassadors as cultural workers reshaping the archival landscape of London. It honours the labour of preservation, foregrounds the beauty and politics of Black home movies, and asserts that Black stories deserve to be cared for, held, and remembered.

Image (on the right) from ‘Custodians’ by Monalisa Chukwuma



The front page of ‘The Dreaming Behind An Archive zine’

THE ZINE: THE DREAMING BEHIND AN ARCHIVE

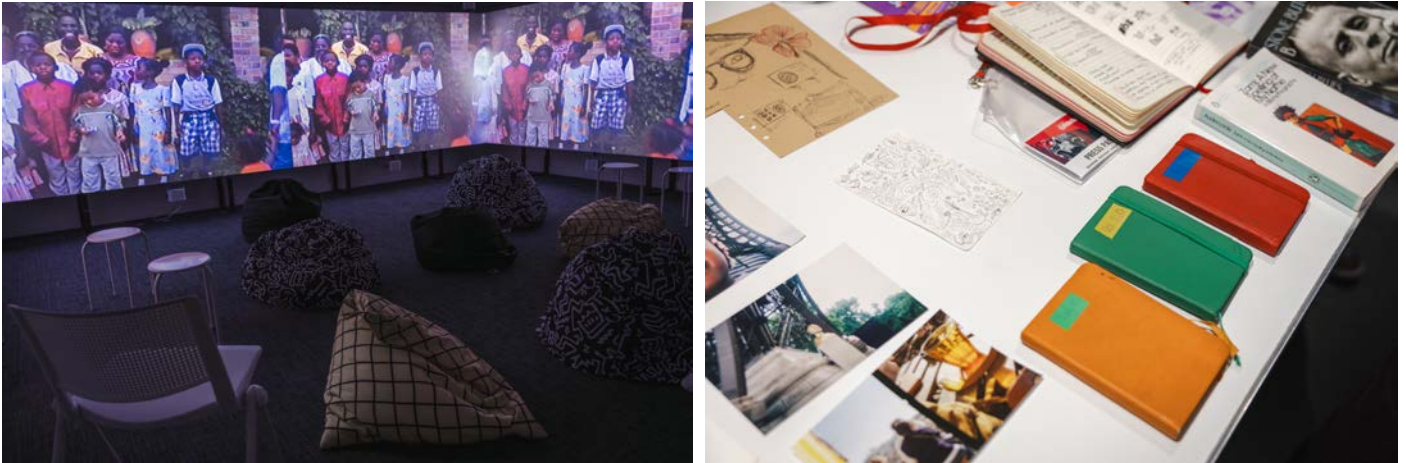
In addition to Custodians and in-person / online sharing's, a selection of Ambassadors created a zine titled ‘The Dreaming Behind an Archive’ curated by Dominique Vincent and including contributions from 8 Ambassadors. It featured poetry, collages, interviews and photography, drawings and longer form reflections and was available at the event and online.

“Archives are meant to transform. They are the beginning of a cycle of proactivity that we are able to carry forward to our communities. A chance to really explore how we envision our autonomy. We’re looking past the strict regulations of traditional archives and choosing to add variety.”

- Dominique Vincent

6. STORIES FROM THE PROJECT

The summary detailed the programme's tangible results—including a zine, short film, community collections, and group archives, plus digitised and donated films. Beyond these, the programme equipped Black Londoners of all ages and backgrounds with valuable archiving skills. Participants gained the expertise and confidence needed to work in restoration studios, challenge traditional Western archiving, and serve as custodians and leaders within their own communities. Below are reflections directly from Ambassadors.



Lloyd Curtis

For me, being a Screen Heritage Ambassador was both a privilege and my civic community responsibility. Personally, it represented for me an opportunity to help preserve, celebrate, and amplify my family stories, experiences, and cultural contributions of Black communities in London and the wider United Kingdom, that have too often been overlooked, underrepresented, or excluded from traditional archives.

As a Black man residing in London, I understand the importance of seeing our histories reflected and valued in the voice and media it was intended for, not only for ourselves but for future generations. Home movies, family recordings, and community stories such as the video tapes I had donated provide a unique and authentic record of everyday life, identity, resilience, joy, and achievement from a uniquely Black lens. Preserving my own stories and the stories of others ensures that our collective heritage is not lost and that future generations can better understand the richness and diversity of Black experiences in the UK and London. The Screen Heritage Ambassador programme particularly resonated with me because it challenged traditional approaches to archiving and embraces a community led and non-western perspective on preserving my own cultural history but also other black history from various other black communities residing in the UK. An example of this, happened when a SHA put on a viewing of her Ghanaian ethnic community living in London in the 1980's and held a Q&A afterwards. I am passionate about storytelling, community engagement, and creating spaces where people like me feel empowered to share their experiences. The Screen Heritage Ambassador offered me the opportunity to do this. I believe archives should not simply be repositories of the past but living resources that help communities connect with their histories, identities, and futures which is something I learnt during my learning and engagement on the programme.

As previously mentioned, being a Screen Heritage Ambassador meant that I was actively able to develop the knowledge and skills needed to support the preservation of Black screen heritage. I was excited to be given the opportunity to learn about community archiving, digitisation, cataloguing, film formats, and non-western archival practices which I have been able to apply in my community work and interactions. Those learnt skills have not only allowed me to preserve my own family and community histories but also support others in understanding the importance of safeguarding their personal collections and cultural memories.

Ultimately, being a Screen Heritage Ambassador meant becoming a custodian of stories that might otherwise be forgotten. It meant ensuring that Black histories are preserved with care, context, and authenticity, while helping to create a more inclusive

historical record that reflects the voices, experiences, and contributions of our communities. The programme was an opportunity not only to learn but also to contribute meaningfully to a legacy that will benefit future generations.

Finally, I gained some really good friendships and support

Naa Adjeley Kwei

What being an Ambassador means to me personally and practically is validation. It was work that I had been doing but I didn't quite know what it was (or put a name to it), being an ambassador gave a title and enabled me to also share this with my community and give them a route to archiving and making sure their history is not forgotten. Practically, I really appreciate the support and community, for the first time in a while, I feel like my 'crazy' ideas and all the discoveries I want to make, hidden in archives and peoples homes barely touched are all possible. There is a lot I didn't know that was out there, the inspiring conversations have made me want to go even further in my work.

Brandon St Catherine

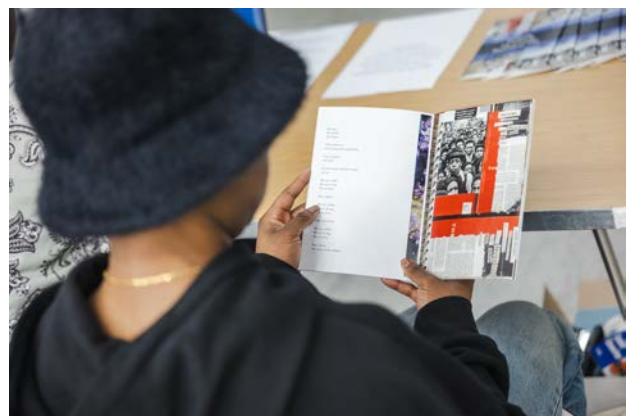
The honest answer to your question: my first year I wasn't able to fully engage. An unexpected care responsibility came up, and I missed more than I'd have liked. But the sessions I did attend were useful, and so were the online resources — iniva's cataloguing presentation in particular has been something I've returned to.

The main reason I joined was to build the knowledge to develop the Montserrat Living Archive, a project I'm working on in collaboration with Montserrat's National Trust. The programme has helped me make real progress. We're now at the stage of looking at funding options and have found some operational partners. What I've learned about cataloguing, data collection and archiving ethics has fed directly into that work.

The programme also opened up a relationship with Iniva, which has become a genuine home for a lot of what I'm doing around diasporic archiving. It's introduced me to people and opportunities I wouldn't have found otherwise.

More recently, it was the programme that led me to the Screen Heritage mentoring opportunity. I've only just started, but early conversations have already helped me think through some of the projects I'm working on, particularly around grant funding.

I'd love to continue into the next iteration. Life has opened up a bit since last year, and I'm looking forward to being more present.



Monalisa Chukwuma

For me, being a Screen Heritage Ambassador has meant becoming part of a community of people who care deeply about memory, archives and the stories that shape our collective identity.

Practically, the programme gave me the opportunity to develop Custodians, a film that brought together my interests in filmmaking, memory and archival practice, and to create the Custodian Portrait Series, which has become an important part of

the project. Through visits to different collections and conversations with archivists, I gained a deeper understanding of how material is described, catalogued, preserved and shared. It changed how I think about what an archive actually is. Rather than fixed collections of objects, I now see archives as living spaces shaped by people, relationships and acts of care.

One of the most valuable things the programme gave me was a deeper understanding of self-authorship within archives. As a Black Screen Heritage Ambassador, it reinforced for me that archives are not neutral. Who is preserved, how they are represented, and who has agency over those representations shapes how history is understood. Preserving the images, stories and voices of Black communities is not simply about recording the past; it is about ensuring that future generations can see themselves reflected in history through authentic narratives shaped by the communities themselves.

Perhaps most importantly, the programme made clear that archives are not only about preserving the past. They are also about shaping the future. By creating space for communities to tell their own stories and contribute to the historical record, archives become places of belonging, understanding and possibility.

7. KNOWLEDGE SHARING AND SECTOR INSIGHTS

Post project we spent 3 months reflecting and conversing with peers in the sector and workshop leaders. This was to encourage knowledge exchange and gain a greater understanding of the current zeitgeist.

We spoke with some of our key project partners, Lisa Soverall, Dr Patricia Dark, Genova Messiah and Dr Etienne Joseph, about their process of creating workshops, if there are ways we could have better supported them and their wants for the sector and Ambassador engagement. Although it is a regret of our team that we didn't start these conversations both directly after their workshops and after the second phase was completed. Workshops hosts mentioned that Ambassadors were enthusiastic and they were "impressed by the calibre" of Ambassadors and questions. However, there were some cases where the facilitators felt that the Ambassadors were only partially engaged depending on their personal focuses, for example some were more interested in the technical elements of digitisation vs cataloguing their own archives.

Below are some of the common themes that arose, conversations they'd like to sector to expand on alongside learnings from their workshops.

Things that would have been useful either before or to incorporate into their session include:

- Sharing a harmful language statement with the Ambassadors before interacting with archival material / at the beginning of workshops
- Including more peer learning into sessions and finding a greater balance between the outside and inside e.g. what they've come to learn but also their personal interests and identity
- Meeting the Ambassadors beforehand to better tailor sessions towards them
- Virtually meeting other workshop leaders to hear about their practice and what their session will bring
- Not undervaluing socials as they allow people to become more open, comfortable and build trust for the sessions

This process has also made them consider a lot about their own work such as:

- The need to identify gaps in their collections and consider how to access and represent these missing aspects, all while emphasising the importance of sensitivity and care when engaging with communities.
- The "need to do more scoping and assessments as an archive" and "collaborating more with diverse communities"
- Doing more reading on decolonising the archive
- As a sector, focusing more on the importance of collaborative working, managing expectations, and job prospects in the heritage sector

A thread weaving throughout all conversations was ensuring that care and humanity are embedded into not just the individuals but wider organisations and digitisation projects. It can be all too easy to separate technical deliverables from care particularly with funders involved, so we must remain holistic and people-centred in our approach.



8. REFLECTIONS

WHAT WORKED

Our relationship with Ambassadors continues to strengthen, throughout the programme we all began to learn more about each other's interests, passions and sense of humour. There were times when Ambassadors temporarily left the programme due to personal circumstances, however several of them felt comfortable enough to confide in course leaders during these periods which we hope is a testament to the environment of transparency, grace and understanding that we're trying to build.

The Project Manager reminded Ambassadors that herself and the wider team encourage conversation outside of the sessions, that if there were any concerns, questions or if they simply wanted to chat, that the team are keen and available to connect further. Ambassadors positively and increasingly responded to this with each reminder, with people being in touch for references, career advice, soundboards for ideas and general chats.

Sessions took place on the same day, times and venues where possible and honorariums were provided based on attendance. This aided them to embed Undocumented as a regular part of their routine. Ambassadors were joining us alongside juggling home life, work, study and personal projects. It can be easy to forget new commitments, so the PM sent regular reminders ahead of lessons to reassure workshop participants that sessions were going ahead, confirm details and simply serve as a reminder whilst they manage their own schedules. The spacing of the workshops worked particularly well, taking place twice a month on average. They were regular enough to become part of a routine but wide enough fit in life's priorities.

We decided to organically respond to the needs of the second phase to shape the third. We wanted to be led by the Ambassadors desires and needs rather than assume where their emotional positioning, knowledge and priorities would be. Our final session was a beautiful, insightful and constructive catalyst into a third phase.

WHAT WE WOULD DO DIFFERENTLY

We began the course by sharing our motivations, heritage and interest but did not begin by defining language. We asked Londoners to join us on a journey to become Ambassadors, but we should have spent more time exploring what this word meant to us individually and collectively, so we knew how to operate as a unit and lean on one another's strengths.

Several leaders within archives joined us to facilitate workshops. It would have been good to gather online to discuss each person's session and create more of a flow from sessions to session. So that workshops leaders can gain knowledge of what

Ambassadors had already learnt and create a greater rhythm from session to session. The Project Manager would have also used this time to confirm grounding exercise that she of workshop leaders could host to begin in session, to allow participants to recentre their minds and bodies in a new space after a day of work, study or simply being preoccupied somewhere else.



There were few points for social gatherings and the joy and connections built from these moments highlighted the importance of non-workshop time, which in hindsight was undervalued as an opportunity to create cohesion amongst the group and build enthusiasm. Ambassadors shared that they would have appreciated weekend gatherings to encourage more peer-to-peer relationships. This time is essential for the retention of knowledge and the motivation to apply it as a collective of individuals who feel like they know one another as people and not just “someone on my course”. It would have also been of benefit to provide more snacks at workshops to keep people sustained and energised particularly as people were traveling in the evening for 2-hour long sessions.

Ambassadors also raised that Undocumented should be spoken about more online and contributed videos, photos and captions for their events. Ideally there would have been a social media strategy so that storytelling around sessions was embedded into our agenda. Ambassadors were keen to share pride in the project and their individual stories, there was a want to encourage communities to reach out, get involved or simply become aware of the call to preserve home movies and access screen heritage as a source of information.

Our 2-1 sessions which included Tamera, Storm and an Ambassador took place in the later section of the year. Despite reiterating that Ambassadors could reach us with questions or thoughts at any point (and many did), earlier or more check-in points could have strengthened relationships, retained more attendance, quelled any queries from an early stage.

Another key point of reflection was that a slower approach to building the programme would have been of preference. Between receiving funding and the due date to begin the course it felt like a tight time span particularly as the Project Manager didn't roll on from the end of the first phase to the beginning of the next, instead there was a 4-month gap. Additional lead time would have been beneficial for creating the application process and the confirmation of unofficial partners to ensure that care and quality is at the forefront of the organisation and programme. Perhaps more thinking time would have eliminated points raised within this section.

9. LOOKING FORWARD

We had always planned Undocumented as a three-year programme, with each year building on the activity and relationships developed before it. However, we didn't want to decide exactly what year 3 should look like without first understanding where the Ambassadors were at after the training programme.

A common theme was the need for opportunities to put learning into practice. The Ambassadors had spent a year visiting archives, learning about digitisation, cataloguing, collecting, programming and questioning more traditional approaches to

archival practice. The next step couldn't simply be more workshops covering similar ground. People wanted practical experience, paid opportunities and the time to explore their own research interests.

As an iterative project, we are still seeking funding for the third year, but the plans continue to develop in conversation with Ambassadors, partners and the learning from the programme so far. Paid early-career opportunities for Ambassadors and sector-wide training to support co-creation with communities remain key aims of this next phase.

RESEARCHERS IN RESIDENCE

An area we want to develop in our proposed next stage is a Researchers in Residence programme, giving Ambassadors the opportunity to undertake early-career development and opportunities through supported research within LSA and partner archive collections. Interested Ambassadors will submit their own research proposals, focusing on Black screen heritage connected to communities, histories or cultural interests they want to explore. We want the research to start with their interests rather than handing them a pre-selected collection or subject. Where possible, they will explore material that is currently hidden, under-catalogued, poorly described or not widely used.

Each Researcher would undertake between 10 and 15 days of research across a six-month period, with flexibility around how they use that time. The emphasis would be on learning through doing and giving people the space to spend meaningful time within a collection, work through research questions and develop their own relationship with archive material.

We would also facilitate public-facing activity. This might be a screening, event, written piece or online content, shaped by the material and the interests of the Researcher. We want the findings to reach beyond the reading room and create different routes for audiences to engage with Black screen heritage.

WELLBEING PROGRAMME

The Researchers would be supported by a wellbeing programme developed with The Rebirth Project, recognising that archival research can involve difficult, racist or distressing material and that this can have a personal impact on the people working with it. The six in-person sessions would cover collective grounding, understanding triggers and body responses, working with disturbing material, navigating institutional power, speaking up and advocating for individual needs, and developing a more sustainable approach to the work.

Importantly, the responsibility for creating a supportive research experience shouldn't sit only with the individual entering the collection. A separate online programme for participating archives and the wider screen heritage sector would explore racial trauma in archival work, institutional culture and power, defensiveness, implicit bias and how learning can lead to structural change. By working with both the Researchers and archive professionals, we would hope to create more open and supportive environments for difficult conversations and ensure concerns can be raised and heard.

PROGRAMMING AND EVENTS

Not every Ambassador wants to become a Researcher in Residence and not everyone has the capacity to commit to a more in-depth research project alongside work, caring responsibilities and other commitments. Our one-to-one conversations also made clear that the cohort has a wide range of interests and we didn't want the third year to create one narrow definition of progression.

The wider Ambassador group would then continue to have opportunities to curate and present screen heritage through activity with The New Black Film Collective, alongside peer support, social gatherings and connections with archive professionals and wider screen sector networks. There would also be opportunities to explore community collecting, develop more skills, and helping to demystify what archives do and how people can engage with them.

Many of the Ambassadors were already filmmakers, artists, researchers and community workers before joining the programme and the aim isn't to funnel everybody into a traditional archive role. We want them to use screen heritage within their own practice and communities, while continuing to build relationships with archives.

The first two years introduced people to collections, supported the preservation of home movies and developed archival skills. The third year would be about seeing what happens when the Ambassadors begin applying that knowledge for themselves and their communities, becoming screen heritage professionals in practice through developing research, curation, and other key skills to further their knowledge and develop the sector.

10. A MODEL FOR THE SECTOR

Undocumented began with collaboration. The New Black Film Collective came to London's Screen Archives with the idea of addressing the absence of Black home movies in archive collections. TNBFC brought their knowledge of Black film, audiences and community relationships, while LSA brought archival expertise, collections and a network of organisations across London. That exchange of knowledge has shaped the programme from the beginning.

We don't see Undocumented as a programme that should be copied but a framework that can be replicated. As such, there are key considerations that we believe can support other organisations looking to address gaps within their collections.

PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Find partners who bring knowledge and relationships that your organisation doesn't have. Community partners shouldn't simply be brought in to recruit participants or promote activity. Give them space to shape the programme and be honest about where different expertise sits.

Our wider partnerships with archivists, artists, cultural organisations and our Steering Group also gave Ambassadors access to a range of practices and perspectives rather than presenting LSA's approach as the only way to work.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND RECRUITMENT

Take time to understand why a gap exists before asking people to donate material. Our first year focused on screenings, conversations, free digitisation and viewing days. This helped us understand people's concerns around ownership and access and the types of support that might be useful.

For the Ambassador programme we recruited through LSA, Film London and TNBFC networks, alongside partners and workshop leaders. We shared dates as early as possible, offered various options for engagement, offered honorariums for attendance to the programme, and hosted an online drop-in for anyone with questions before applying.

TRAINING MODELS

Build training around the people in the room and recognise the skills they already bring. Undocumented combined practical archive training with sessions that questioned traditional collecting and cataloguing practices.

We invited workshop leaders because of their knowledge and experience in a particular area but gave them space to shape the session and draw on the strongest aspects of their own practice. We shared the wider aims of the programme and where their workshop sat within it, rather than prescribing exactly what they should deliver. This meant the Ambassadors were introduced to a range of approaches, experiences and ways of working across the archive sector.

SAFEGUARDING AND CARE

Think about safeguarding in relation to the collections and material people may encounter. Our Ecosystem of Care covered access, emotional distress, confidentiality, complaints and choices around donating footage.

We would introduce conversations around harmful language and difficult archive material even earlier. Support also shouldn't sit only with participants; archives and project partners need to consider the environments they are inviting people into.

BUDGETING AND RESOURCES

Resource the relationships as well as the workshops. Regular communication, individual conversations and supporting Ambassador-led ideas required significant project management time.

Honorariums were also important in recognising the time Ambassadors gave to the programme and showing that their presence was valued and supported.

EVALUATION

Listen throughout the programme rather than waiting until the end. Our conversations with Ambassadors shaped the plans for the third year, while feedback from workshop leaders highlighted changes we would make to future delivery.

If repeating the programme, we would build in more regular reflection points with facilitators and introduce one-to-one conversations with Ambassadors earlier.

REPLICATION FRAMEWORK

Before developing similar work, we suggest considering:

- What is missing and why? Look at your own collecting history as well as barriers within the community.
- Who should you collaborate with? What knowledge, relationships and trust already exist outside your organisation?
- What are you offering? Consider what communities gain before asking for material, time or knowledge.
- Who is already in the room? Build on participants' existing skills, interests and community knowledge.
- What support is needed? Think about access, payment, care and the material people may encounter.
- Where is there flexibility? Allow participants and partners to influence the programme as it develops.
- What happens next? Consider how people can use their learning beyond the funded activity.

Our biggest learning has been to give the work time. Undocumented was always envisioned as a three-year programme and each phase has built on what came before. A slower approach allowed relationships to develop, but we would still build in more lead-in time between phases, earlier one-to-one conversations and more opportunities for peer and social connection.

The exact model will be different for every community and collection. For us, collaboration is the starting point: recognising that archive organisations don't hold all the knowledge and that the strongest programmes can begin with someone outside the institution bringing you the idea.

03

CLOSING THOUGHTS

It has been a privilege to develop this project side by side with LSA and be instrumental in breaking new boundaries in the sphere of screen heritage, especially on the level of being recognised and elevated. To be 'listened to' and 'respected' is something that cannot be taken for granted by a community that is constantly navigating a hostile environment, and where its contribution is often erased. We have a great platform from which to further build and experiment. We have been enriched by rediscovering our materials and adding meaning on our own terms. TNBFC is extremely proud to have grown with the Screen Heritage Ambassadors, met with the Steering Group of outstanding peers and seen a future where we are opening doors that set archival records straight. The journey has just begun, and we shall safeguard this process for the ancestors that came before us and the next generations to come.

- **Priscilla Igwe**



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