

**Photographing Britain**

**Friday 10 May 2024**

12.00 Welcome by Tom Allbeson (Cardiff University) and Luisa Ulyett (The Photographers' Gallery)

**Panel 1: The Social Biography of a Photograph: Visualising Black Lives and the Circulation of Images (12.15–13.15)**

12.10 Introduction by Karen McQuaid (The Photographers' Gallery)

12.15 Sarah Okpokam, "Pass it on! Visualising Black Lives in Britain pre-1948"

Studies of photography of and by Black communities tend to centre on photographers and images in post-war Britain after the arrival of Empire Windrush – often positioned as the watershed moment of migration and presence. My research seeks to expand and nuance this through a critical exploration of representations of the Black presence and lived experiences of Black communities in the first half of the 20th century. Through archival analysis and with a focus on the North West of England, I aim to demonstrate the existence and nature of pre-1948 photography of and for Black communities. Through considering the contexts of the spaces in which it existed, was used and circulated, my research explores the historical and sensory dimensions to seeing, finding and reading such photography. This paper focuses on publications as a very specific intellectual space through which Black lived experiences and interpretations of Black lives were visually communicated and circulated.

12.30 Darren Newbury (University of Brighton), "Travelling Photographic Histories: Between Britain and Apartheid South Africa"

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, the South African-born, English-educated photographer Bryan Heseltine made a series of photographs of townships and peri-urban settlements in and around Cape Town. At the time, the city was undergoing profound transformation following the rapid urbanisation of the post-war years and the election of the racist National Party government in 1948. Shortly after he made this work, Heseltine left South Africa, taking his photographs with him to England. This presentation considers the significance of this journey in the biography of the photographs, as they were subsequently shown in the exhibition *A People Apart*, St Martin in the Fields, London, February 1955; toured to several towns and cities across Britain; and featured in articles in *Picture Post* and *Church Illustrated*. Heseltine's photographs were viewed by the exhibition's sponsor, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, as a means of alerting the British public to developments in South Africa, then a member of the Commonwealth, as well as generating funds for missionary work. *A People Apart* was arguably the first anti-apartheid photography exhibition in Britain, taking place just a year before the formation of the International Defence and Aid Fund (IDAF), an organisation central to the international anti-apartheid movement, and which would itself become a conduit for photographs of apartheid through until 1990.

12.45 Q & A plus panel discussion chaired by Karen McQuaid (The Photographers' Gallery)

13.15 Break

### **Panel 2: The Ethics of Images: Nation and Evolution in Conflict Photographies (13.45–14.50)**

13.45 Welcome

13.50 Alexia Singh, "The Evolution of the Conflict Photographer"

This talk will explore the evolution of war reporting since the days of the roving (white, male, western) photojournalist to modern-day conflicts like Gaza where audiences rely on photographers working inside the country and pictures are as likely to be shared directly via social media as they are to have been taken by professional photographers. We will look at how conflicts in certain regions produced a new generation of photojournalists - from Bosnia and Kosovo through to Ukraine - and how the Arab Spring and the deaths of Chris Hondros and Tim Hetherington changed the way conflict is covered.

14.05 Max Houghton, "Dreams of Nations and Other Imaginary States"

The end of WWII brought new developments in the way photography was used to foster a sense of belonging. The popular magazine industry in the UK and US published stories about 'home' alongside reportage from conflicts and wars farther afield, in Kenya, South Korea and Vietnam. How were British and American self-perceptions and ideas of national identity created through the influential narratives of Picture Post and Life magazines? How are dreams of nations conjured by the image?

14.20 Q & A plus panel discussion chaired by Anthony Lam (Kingston University)

14.50 Break

### **Panel 3: Picturing Empire's End: Violence, Gender and the British Press (15.20–16.35)**

15.20 Rio Creech-Nowagiel, "'A Planter in Malaya's Terror': Representations of colonial plantation warfare in post-war Britain (1948-60)"

My talk uses Bert Hardy's coverage of Britain's 'Emergency' war in Malaya (the former British colony known today as Malaysia/Singapore) as a starting point for exploring representations of planters and planters' wives in British newspapers between 1948-60. Plantation couples were presented as heroic paramilitary figures positioned on the front line of the Empire and the Cold War fight against international communism. I show how the trope of the planter/planter's wife was used by mainstream press outlets and appropriated by critics of Empire and colonialism living in post-war Britain

15.35 Dr Rosalind Coffey, "Press Representations of Britain in Africa during the 'wind of change'"

This presentation examines how British newspapers depicted Britain in Africa between 1957 and 1960. During the 'wind of change', a period which witnessed Britain's imperial decline as well as violence in many British colonial territories, British

newspaper coverage tended either explicitly or indirectly to affirm Britain. This presentation explores some of the roots and legacies of these representations, including their probable implications today for Britain's 'imperial reckoning'.

15.50 Beatrice Lattanzi, "Unseen Controversy: The *Picture Post* story of Korean prisoners from Bert Hardy's archive"

During the Korean War, Bert Hardy recorded an episode of the inhumane conditions to which political dissidents were subjected to as they were imprisoned; the United Nations failed to address the issue, despite the case he presented with journalist James Cameron. *Picture Post's* decision of not publishing this controversial article led ultimately to the magazine's decline in the 50s. This presentation focuses on the pivotal importance of the archive in ensuring the survival of this story and on the pictures' role, reprinted in '80's, thirty years later, by the photographer.

16.05 Q & A plus panel discussion chaired by Tom Allbeson (Cardiff University)

16.35 Closing remarks

In collaboration with Special Collections & Archives, Cardiff University

## BIOGRAPHIES

**Dr Rosalind Coffey** is a Guest Teacher in the Department of International History at the LSE. Previously, she held a Senior Teaching Fellowship in African History at SOAS. Rosalind's research examines the links between British newspaper coverage of Africa, public opinion, politics and culture.

**Rio Creech-Nowagiel** is the fourth year of an AHRC-funded PhD studentship with Imperial War Museums and the department of Journalism, Media & Culture at Cardiff University. Rio's PhD project explores the diverse forms of visual culture produced in Britain around colonial wars fought in defence of the Empire, focusing on the so-called 'Malayan Emergency' (a 12-year independence war that broke out in 1948 in the region known now as Malaysia and Singapore). Alongside PhD research, Rio works as a curator and cultural producer. Past projects included a community-led photography exhibition at The Curve Gallery in Slough exploring the lives and legacies of Polish refugees resettled in Britain after the Second World War.

**Max Houghton** is a writer, curator and editor working with the photographic image as it intersects with politics, law and human rights. She runs the MA in Photojournalism and Documentary Photography at London College of Communication, University of the Arts London, where she is also co-founder of research hub Visible Justice. Her writing appears in publications by The Photographers' Gallery and The Barbican, as well as in the international arts press, including *Granta*, *Foam*, *1000 Words*, *BJP* and *The Eyes*. She is co-author of *Firecrackers: Female Photographers Now* (Thames and Hudson 2017) and her latest monograph essay is on Mary Ellen Mark (Steidl 2023). She is undertaking doctoral research into the image and law at University College London and is the recipient of the Royal Photographic Society Award for Education (2023).

**Beatrice Lattanzi** is a photography researcher based in Italy. She recently completed an internship at the Victoria and Albert Museum, where she worked on a major acquisition of photographs from Bert Hardy's archive. Since 2021, she has been Assistant Curator for the Biennial of Female Photography in Mantua.

**Darren Newbury** is Professor of Photographic History at the University of Brighton. He is the author of *Defiant Images: Photography and Apartheid South Africa* (2009), *People Apart: 1950s Cape Town Revisited. Photographs by Bryan Heseltine* (2013) and *Cold War Photographic Diplomacy: The US Information Agency and Africa* (2024); and co-editor of *The African Photographic Archive: Research and Curatorial Strategies* (2015) and *Women and Photography in Africa: Creative Practices and Feminist Challenges* (2021). In 2020 he received the Royal Anthropological Institute Photography Committee Award for his contribution to the study of photography and anthropology.

**Sarah Okpokam** is an AHRC-funded PhD student in the Department of Communication and Media at the University of Liverpool. Her research explores photographic representations of Black lived experiences in the first half of the 20th century, with an emphasis on communities in Liverpool and the North West. Through archival analysis, she investigates the existence of such representations; their contexts of production, use and circulation and critically

evaluates existing approaches to the interpretation and cataloguing of these works in museums and archives. Sarah also has several years of professional experience working in heritage institutions and settings in interpretation and exhibition design – most recently for UCL's Museum and Cultural Programmes' Exhibitions Team.

**Alexia Singh** is a senior lecturer for BA Photojournalism and Documentary Photography at the London College of Communications. She is a multimedia producer and photo editor with 20 years' experience leading teams in the news and NGO sectors. She worked as a picture editor for Reuters News Agency where she set up and managed picture desks in London, Paris and Singapore through major world events from the Iraq War to the 2016 migrant crisis. As one of Reuters' top editors she produced photo books, curated exhibitions and worked on award-winning interactive stories.

In 2010 she was appointed Editor-in-Charge of Reuters' Emmy award-winning website 'The Wider Image', leading a team of editors, writers and photographers to create in-depth, interactive, visual storytelling. She has worked as a photo editor and multimedia producer for a range of organisations such as Magnum Photos, WaterAid, DEC and Save the Children.