

## Session 2 / Re-imaginings

**Cynthia Kros (University of the Witwatersrand), Pervaiz Khan (University of the Witwatersrand), and Reece Auguste (University of Colorado)**

*Cynthia Kros is a historian and public history/heritage specialist who taught for many years in the History Department at Wits University and was subsequently the Head of the Arts, Culture and Management Division in the Wits School of Arts. She holds a PhD (1997) from Wits, is the author of *The Seeds of Separate Development: Origins of Bantu Education (2010)* as well as many journal articles in the fields of history, heritage, history education, and art as research. She is one of the convenors of the research project *Reframing Africa* and an editor of a forthcoming book that aims to make the contributions of the first colloquium accessible to a broad public of scholars across the Humanities.*

*Pervaiz Khan, co-convenor of *Reframing Africa* and editor of the forthcoming book is a curator, writer, theatre maker, new media artist, filmmaker and lecturer. He established *Vokani*, an exhibition circuit for black & third world films and was awarded the British Film Institute's award for innovation in film education. As curator of *Third Focus (Birmingham International Film & TV Festival)* he curated over 300 films, bringing together filmmakers, writers and critics including: *Ngugi wa Thiong'o*, *Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak*, *Kumar Shahani*, *bell hooks*, *Haile Gerima*, *Michelle Wallace* and *Stuart Hall*. Khan was contributing editor of *Sight & Sound* and co-edited with *John Akomfrah* issue 36 of *Framework – Third Scenario: Theory & Politics of Location*. For a decade Khan was artistic director of *Duende Performance Company*. In 2017/8 he co-edited *Ellipses*, the Wits School of Arts online journal and is a lecturer in the Wits School of Arts Film & Television Division.*

*Reece Auguste has been central to the conceptualisation of *Reframing Africa* and is an editor of the forthcoming book. Auguste holds a PhD (2009), University of Nottingham, UK and is Associate Professor in the Department of Critical Media Practices and the Film Studies Program, University of Colorado, Boulder, USA. His research focuses on national cinemas, transnational screen cultures and documentary media practices. Auguste was a co-founder of the *Black Audio Film Collective (BAFC)*. With *BAFC*, Auguste wrote and directed the award winning *Twilight City and Mysteries of July*. He has published in *Framework*, *Cineaction*, *Undercut*, *Journal of Media Practice*, *The British Avant-Garde Film 1926-1995*, *Questions of Third Cinema*, *Dark Eros*, *The Encyclopaedia of Southern Culture: Media and The Ghosts of Songs: The Film Art of the Black Audio Film Collective*. He was awarded the *Grand Prize at Melbourne International Film Festival*; *Josef Von Sternberg Award*, for most original film of the *Mannheim International Film Festival*, *Golden Hugo Award for best Documentary at Chicago International Film Festival*, and the *International Documentary Association*.*

## Unmuting the colonial film archive?

Our paper will take stock of the intellectual progress made by a collective comprising filmmakers, artists, photographers and scholars, convened by four annual colloquia on African cinema between 2017-20, recently broadened to include the moving image under the rubric *Reframing Africa*. The project is hosted by the Wits History Workshop, Wits School of Arts and the Market Photo Workshop. A theme commanding increasing attention is that of the colonial archive. Arguably, few spectres from this archive continue to have as much haunting power as those on film, responsible as it is for projecting searing images of the Other and for locating the colonised within landscapes of the colonial imaginary apparently authenticated by the nature of the medium.

One of the participants declared that he refused to be 'framed' by the colonial film archive. However, most of the other presenters have argued that encounters with it are unavoidable. The issue has become how to re-deploy the archive for purposes of: deepening understandings of colonisation and trajectories of post-colonialism; writing more continentally astute histories of African cinema; emancipatory/subversive filmmaking.

The notion of the archive as acquiescent has been challenged, with participants arguing and, often demonstrating through their work that the archive is, by nature heretical. In some cases, it is clear how the voices of archival subjects and traces of their expressive inner lives have been muted by the modes of conventional documentary filmmaking. Remedies through strategies of recovery and re-voicing are available, if controversial. In other cases, the task of detection and potential resuscitation is made more difficult because only pallid spectres are still visible, so gutted have they been by overriding ideologies. And in yet others, the spectres are hanging on for dear life as the material that sustains them deteriorates or has had to be stashed away in deep vaults because of its volatile nitrate base.



*Filmmaker Teddy Mattera in a scene with his father, poet Don Mattera, from Teddy's film Cinema from Within.*