

Programme

Moments Away From Home: Migration on Film and in Words

Details

Saturday 18 October 2025, 11.00 – 17.00, in person at V&A South Kensington, Learning Centre, Seminar Room 3.

Overview

Explore migration as resistance and reinvention—through film, literature, and lived experiences. Uncover stories of displacement, incarceration, survival, and solidarity, celebrating diasporas, new voices, and the power of culture and community.

Migration is often seen through the lens of hardship—leaving behind home, escaping conflict, or enduring the challenges of starting over in a new land. But migration can also be a form of activism: a fight for the right to stay, to belong, and to be heard. It can mean resisting erasure, survival, or navigating statelessness while holding onto one's integrity and dignity.

Arrival

On arrival, please use the Exhibition Road Entrance of the Museum and make your way to Seminar Room 3, Learning Centre, Level 4 where you will be met by Janz Browne, Senior Producer Africa and Diaspora.

For details of the Exhibition Road entrance please click here rb.gy/qzl98b for the digital map. For any accessibility requirements, please email courses@vam.ac.uk

Schedule

10.30 – 11.00

Arrival, Registration, and Refreshments.

11.00 – 11.15

Welcome, Housekeeping, and Introductions, Janz Browne.

11.15 – 11.45

Jacqueline Crooks is a Jamaican-born British writer and community development practitioner whose work explores migration, subcultures, and the rhythms of resistance. Her debut novel, *Fire Rush*, is a lyrical, genre-defying story of dub reggae, love, freedom, and Black womanhood. It won the 2024 PEN America Open Book Award and the Society of Authors Paul Torday Prize, and was shortlisted for the Women's Prize for Fiction, Waterstones Debut Fiction Prize, Jhalak Prize, Authors' Club Best First Novel Award, and the McKitterick Prize. Jacqueline's short story collection, *The Ice Migration*, was longlisted for the 2019 Orwell Prize for Political Fiction.

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11.45 – 12.30

Dr Eithne Nightingale is a writer, photographer, filmmaker and researcher. Her PHD research into child migration led to the award-winning website and films childmigrantstories.com - the film *Ugwumpiti* was nominated for AHRC's Best Research Film, BAFTA, 2017. Her book, *Child Migrant Stories in Modern Britain - Oral Histories 1930s - Present Day* (Bloomsbury 2024), records the experiences of children arriving in Britain from Hitler's Europe in the 1930s to those escaping war in Ukraine in 2022. Described as, "A powerful antidote to anti-migrant rhetoric" the book links child migrant experiences with contemporary issues such as the Windrush scandal. Those featured in the films and the book, targeted at those interested in powerful life stories, have participated in a range of events across the UK - at festivals, in museums, cinemas and elsewhere. Eithne has extensive experience of working with diverse communities within the education and cultural sectors.

As Head of Equality and Diversity at the V&A 1998 - 2014 she co-edited *Museums, Equality and Social Justice* (Routledge 2012). She lives in East London.

Websites: www.eithnenightingale.com and childmigrantstories.com

X and Instagram: @eithnenight and @youngmigrants

Facebook: Eithne Nightingale

Maurice Nwokeji, a musician whose life story of surviving the war in Biafra and reuniting with his parents in London is featured in the film *Ugwumpiti*, will be sharing this session with Eithne. His music, inspired by his experiences of the war, provides the film's soundtrack.

12.30 – 13.15

Since 2021 the parishioners of St Michael and all Angels Church in Stoke Newington North London, have celebrated National Windrush Day.

The Reverend Steve Gayle and the church's artist-in-residence, **Sheba Montserrat** have annually produced a documentary to capture the untold stories and wide spectrum of the Windrush Generation experiences.

Their films range from, how dreams withered after disembarking a ship, the emotions of children left behind, the tenacity of entrepreneurs building businesses, and military life for those who enlisted after arrival. **Windrush Allies** is the oral account of how, in the 1950's and 60's, Hackney's Jewish community rented premises to Caribbean migrants, as they struggled to find housing and tried to understand racism in Britain, their so-called Motherland.

13.15 - 14.00

LUNCH AND BOOK SIGNINGS

Please ensure you bring a packed lunch. Light beverages will be available.

14.00 – 14.30

Brian Samuel was born in Grenada, in a wooden house called Eden. Two years later, his family left, and he's never stopped moving ever since. So far, Brian has lived in 10 countries, several of them several times. After growing up as a Windrush kid in London in the sixties, he attended university and worked in Jamaica throughout the socialist seventies. Heady days of Manley and Marley – with large doses of murder and mayhem in between.

Brian and his family left Jamaica in 1988, and for 20 years he worked with the World Bank, perfectly suited to a nomad like him. He hauled his family through interesting times and places, including the violent meltdown of Zimbabwe under Robert Mugabe, where they all heartily abandoned their so-called diplomatic neutrality. In 2008, Brian hopped off the bandwagon and returned to Grenada, the home he never knew – the best move he ever made.

S. Brian Samuel, Consultant

<http://www.linkedin.com/in/stevenbriansamuel>

14.30 – 15.10

Joanna (Amara) Alexander is a filmmaker, storyteller, and producer whose work explores migration, memory, and heritage. Her documentary ***The Homemaker*** was selected as “Best of the Fest” (online) at the Windrush Caribbean Film Festival 2023 and has since been showcased at cultural venues across the UK. She was also invited to discuss the film on BBC Radio London. Joanna’s parents migrated from Trinidad to Britain in the 1960s, inspiring her to document the resilience and creativity of Caribbean communities. Her short film *Homecoming* continues this legacy, reflecting on identity, belonging, and generational ties through personal and collective storytelling.

Social Media Handles:

Instagram: [@alexander_amara](#)

Facebook: Alexander Amara

LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/in/joanna-alexander](https://www.linkedin.com/in/joanna-alexander)

15.10 – 15.50

Design, Resistance, and Representation: A Dual Lens on the V&A Collections

Zarna Hart (she/her) is a curator, designer, and educator whose research explores design theories and practices through an anti-colonial lens, with a focus on archival methods within postcolonial contexts. Zarna invites us to explore design and creativity through two powerful and contrasting objects in the V&A collections. First, we delve into Colin Jones’s 1970s photographs of *The Black House*, also known as *The Harambee Project*—a striking visual record of young people navigating alienation and identity in Britain.

The second object is a pendant, designed and crafted by an inmate in a U.S. prison housing over six thousand men. A member of the Black Panther Movement, the artist is currently serving a life sentence for armed robbery and murder. The pendant stands as a symbol of personal struggle, resistance, and a call for justice—created to raise funds for a legal appeal. Together, these objects expand conversations about visibility, activism, and the role of design in expressing lived experience and political urgency.

15.50 – 16.20

STAYING AFLOAT in WEST BERLIN

From 1981 to 1992 **Sheba Montserrat** lived in the city formerly known as 'West' Berlin. I left London to a city surrounded by a wall in the middle of East Germany. I arrived a week before my 19th birthday, with my then boyfriend. We parted 2 years later, and I navigated life in a foreign land alone.

My first job was a chamber maid at the British Military hotel. My dream of becoming a dancer gave me focus and drive. My life in Berlin grew from working as an erotic dancer, to self-finance my dance training, to three seasons in Porgy and Bess at Berlins prestigious Theatre Des Westens. Memories shared through movement, poetry and storytelling.

16.20 – 17.00

Final questions to our speakers and presenters, and last opportunity for book signings.

17.00

Event Ends.

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