

Ciné Césaire: The Film Programme

**June Givanni Pan African Cinema Archive
and The Otolith Collective**
Sunday 30 August, 1–4pm

**Aimé Césaire, une voix pour l'histoire
(Euzhan Palcy, 2009) | 165', three parts**

Part I: L'Île Veilleuse (The Vigilant Island)

In *Part I: L'Île Veilleuse* or *The Vigilant Island*, Aimé Césaire invites us to consider his 'pays natale': the volcano, beaches and colonial towns of his native land at the nexus of Europe, Africa, and the Americas. From this cultural meeting point, Aimé Césaire; his wife, the writer Suzanne Césaire; and his friend, the philosopher René Menil founded the radical literary review *Tropiques* in 1939 that informed the Antillean thought of the painter Wifredo Lam, the poet René Depestre, and the revolutionary Frantz Fanon. After World War II, Césaire served as Mayor of Fort-de-France and Martinique's representative to the French National Assembly. Césaire discusses the difficulty of balancing his commitment to poetry with holding political office for over 50 years.

Part II: Au rendez-vous de la conquête (Where the Edges of Conquest Meet)

Drawing together writers, historians, and cultural commentators, *Part II: Au rendez-vous de la conquête* or *Where the Edges of Conquest Meet* situates the Négritude movement within wider currents of twentieth-century Black internationalism. Palcy locates its intellectual energies and artistic ambitions within a transnational exchange of ideas whose impact extended far beyond its historical moment.

Au rendez-vous de la conquête focuses on Paris in the 1930s where Césaire and his friends, the poet Leopold Senghor – who would become independent Senegal’s first President – and the French-Guyanese poet Léon Damas, conceived, developed, and elaborated the project of Négritude. Historian John Henrik Clarke and the Schomburg Center’s Howard Dodson discuss the impact of American authors like Langston Hughes, Richard Wright, and Claude McKay, as well as the influence of the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s on the poetics and the politics of this predominantly Francophone movement.

Part III: La force de regarder demain (The Strength to Face Tomorrow)

In *La force de regarder demain* (*The Strength to Face Tomorrow*), the final film of *Aimé Césaire: Une voix pour histoire*, Césaire responds to the exigencies of the post-colonial world. His 1963 play *La tragédie du roi Christophe*, about the Haitian revolution, and 1966’s *Une saison au Congo*, on the life and assassination of Patrice Lumumba, each dramatise the betrayals, perils and tragedies of neo-colonialism. The anthropologist and filmmaker Edgar Morin, biographer Roger Toumson, novelists Jorge Amado, Maryse Condé, and memoirist Maya Angelou testify to Césaire’s foundational role in the aesthetics of Black radical thought that spans the twentieth and the twenty-first century.