

The Roosevelt, Renaissance, Gem, Alhambra:
Harlem laughing in all the wrong places
at the crocodile tears
of crocodile art
that you know
in your heart
is crocodile:

(Hollywood
laughs at me
Black—
so I laugh
back.)

Langston Hughes



photo • David Sutherland

The Actor-vist

by Jacen Braithwaite

So you want to be an actor? And you just happen to be Black. Well, well, well. First, as an aspiring actor myself, I say more power to you. The road is rocky, but the rewards of a job well done are limitless. As a Black actor you must have a certain mentality. I call it the actor-vist mentality. An

actor-vist is a combination of an actor and activist.

As we all know, being Black in this world is not easy. There are obstacles every step of the way, including racism and stereotypes. Being a Black actor doesn't change this. One of the things that will help you is to get an education. By now, I believe that we all know, even those of us who dropped out of school, that we can't go far without

an education. Acting would be nice as a career, but you'll need a backup. Go to school. Period.

Another important detail is to keep your knowledge current. It will help you in your decisions about which roles to accept, who to work and not work with. By keeping yourself up on current events, you'll be able to carry on intelligent conversation, which is important to all Blacks, not just actor-vists.

Another important point: choose your roles very, very, very, carefully. I cannot stress the importance of this enough. There are too many negative stereotypes out there about Black people. Having the actor-vist mentality means working hard to destroy these stereotypes. If you allow stereotypes to continue, you're just limiting the amount of roles that you can get. When *The Young and the Restless* is looking for another doctor to cast, you can be damn sure that its not going to be another Black one! This is why as Blacks and

Black actor-vists, we must support such ground breaking efforts as *The Cosby Show*. In that family, the father is a doctor and the mother is a lawyer. In a Black family! And what do they say about the show? Its not realistic (no surprise there, right brothers and sisters?). But at the same time, *Growing Pains*, has a mother who is a journalist and a father who is a doctor. Have you ever heard that show called unrealistic? Think about it. I didn't think so. As an actor-vist, consider carefully the reason you were cast.

That brings me to my next point. The reason why these things can and do happen (negative, stereotypical casting), is the same reason why when you try to get a job Joe Whitey gets hired over you. The roles are written by whites for Blacks. The production companies are white owned, and the money is white money. So branch out, don't stick to acting. Become a producer. Become a director. Become a writer.

This is where knowing current events will help. You can write about things that are pertinent to Black people. You can also place Blacks in a more positive light.

At this point, I get to talk about my idol, Mr. Spike Lee. Spike epitomizes the meaning of the Black actor-vist. He is a writer, producer, director and he owns his own production company, aptly named "Forty Acres and a Mule." Spike should be an idol for any actor-vist and his achievements deserve the highest honours.

Finally, and most importantly, the actor-vist has to stay positive. This is even more important when an actor-vist gains widespread fame. It is your responsibility, as a actor-vist, to create positive role models for other Black people and for white people. And one more thing. Don't forget where you come from, because as long as you have a foundation, you'll only go up. Peace and 'NUFF Power, actor-vists!

Screen Time: Black Canadian Cinema

by David Sutherland

Black filmmaking in this country starts with documentary, and it starts rather recently. The late Jennifer Hodge de Silva is known as a pioneer in Black Canadian Cinema. In the seventies and early eighties she was the only Black Canadian filmmaker that consistently made films. Before that, there were films about Black folks maybe, but not by Black folks.

Hodge de Silva apprenticed at both the National Film Board and the CBC. She made a variety of social documentaries including: *In Support of the Human Spirit*, a film about the John Howard Society, an organization that eases ex-cons into life outside; *Joe David: Spirit of the Mask*, a film about a Native Canadian Artist, and *Home Feeling: Struggle for a Community*, a film about people in the Jane-Finch area. Her films found an audience but in some cases, that audience was almost prevented from seeing her work.

The Metro Toronto Police tried to block screenings of *Home*

Feeling'...for their own particular reasons. Our Cops are tops.

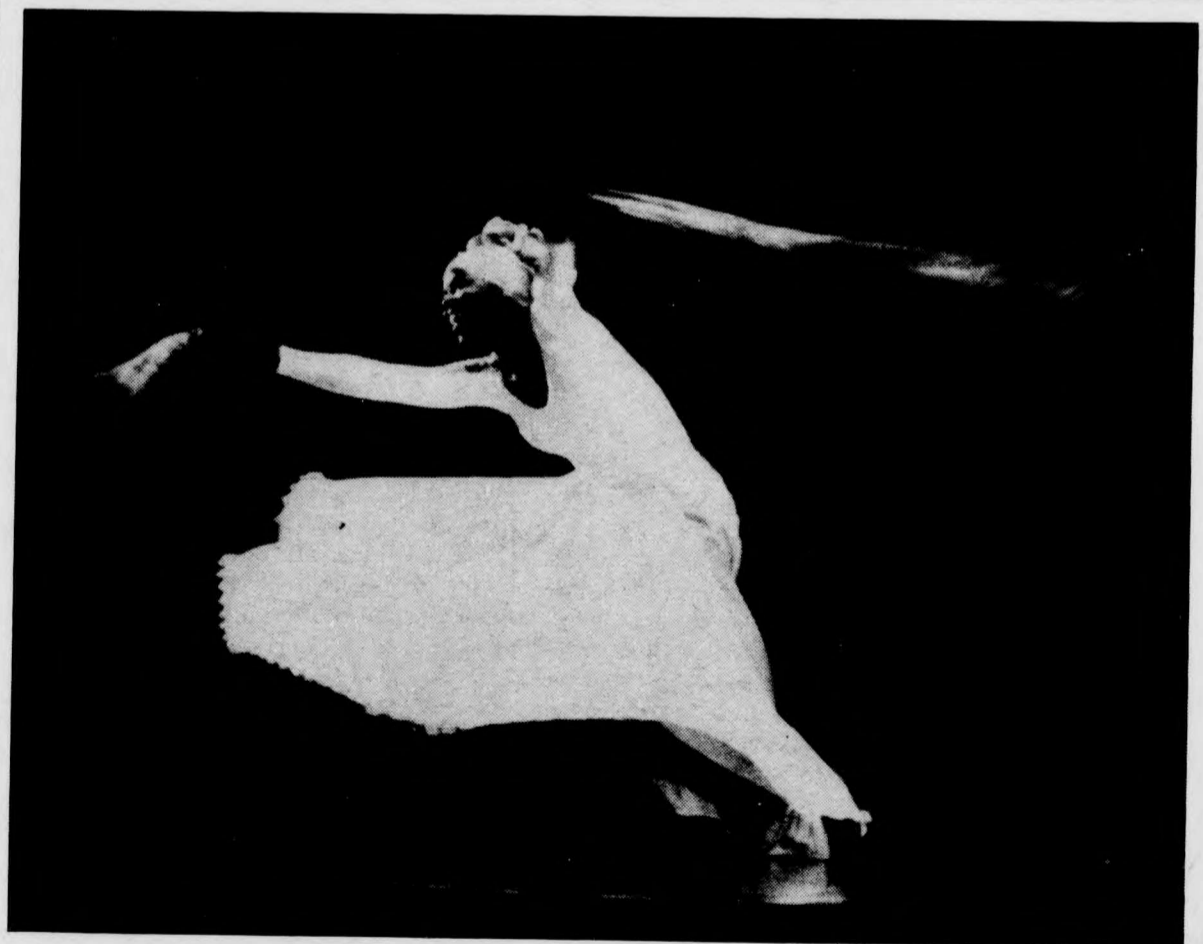
Jennifer Hodge de Silva died of Cancer in 1989 still immersed in film. A few years ago, a group of her friends and colleagues united to honour her memory at the Euclid Theatre, by donating a chair in her name. They also started a fundraising drive for a film about her life and work. From these collaborations, the Black Film and Video Network was born. The Network is a collective dedicated to raising the profile of Black Canadian Filmmaking.

With the creation of the Network, a new generation of filmmakers across Canada has emerged on the national scene. Among them: Sylvia Hamilton from Halifax and Claire Prieto from Toronto who collaborated on *Black Mother, Black Daughter*; Dionne Brand, who made *Sisters in the Struggle*; and Andrew Davis from Toronto, whose film (made while a student at Ryerson) *Good Hair, Pretty Hair, Curly Hair* debuted at the Toronto Festival of Festivals this past year.

For now African-Canadian cinema is in its beginning stages, but we have a lot of stories to tell each other, and a lot of history to make.

Check this:

- go to the Backstage Cinema to check out film during the Black British Film series playing in February and March. These films rarely make it across the Atlantic. Not to be missed.
- go to King Culture Video on Eglinton West (east of Keele) to rent Black Video.
- go to the NFB cinema Thursday, February 20 for a tribute to Jennifer Hodge.
- join Black Film/Video Network. 534-9148
- join Fullscreen (producers of colour) they're running workshops in beginning film/video production this winter. 961-9539
- join Trinity Square Video. They are running workshops in beginning/advanced video production. 593-1332
- read books.
- make movies.
- peace.
- out.



Art in Motion

by Andrea Douglas

From early history Africans have danced with a spontaneity which sprung from the natural urge to express themselves in movement. Dance expression formed part of and represented the very life of the people. Essential in every

way to their very existence, dance manifested and celebrated the many stages of life — birth to death — fertility, improved health, war, history, mimicry, religion. Each dance had its own character in style and accompaniment and participation, but whatever the function, all the community participated.