

**MENELIK SHABAZZ LCVA TRANSCRIPT**

TC	SYNC
12:09:12	<b>Interviewer:</b> Tell us about your early life
12:09:31	<b>Menelik Shabazz:</b> I was born in Barbados and I was there until the age of six. And so my memories are quite vivid actually of I come from the country, I know Barbados is very small but we you have a countryside St. John. And in a village it echoed its history the village that I was and I didn't know it at the time. So you had, in my village you had the plantation which was a sugar plantation on one side of the road and people and the houses on the other side of the road. And my early memories are of going on a plantation with a flask of food for my aunt and for my mum and for my aunt and so on and um and memories of learning how to capture birds um learning how to shoot at, we had little monkeys in the in the little woods who we used to throw things at and then they would catch it and throw it back at you. Learning err um the kind of schooling regime where you had to be on point with your dress, you had to be on point with your nails, they had to look right. You had to be on point with um yeah as I say the way you dress um that you look okay. So all of that they had drills and stuff. And of course you had the beatings I used to get a few times for my mathematical inadequacies. I used to get little beat rats in your hands and stuff. Which ironically continued even when I was in England because you know they had that same system because you know the Barbados system is really a replica of the UK or the British system um where it all comes from.
12:11:50	<b>MS:</b> So I have early memories of that, early memories of um er breaking my nose playing cricket and learning how to play cricket. Er and rem hitting the ball on top of one of the shingle houses and I thought I can go up and get it and fell down broke my nose, which still lives with me today ha ha ha.
12:12:12	<b>MS:</b> But in terms of my journey with film we had a mobile cinema on the pastures in the village so there you know so my first experience was watching these um Westerns mainly and I used to call it 'The Cowboy Cinema'. That's how you say it 'cowboy cinema' and so that was my first introduction to cinema. You know then I never really saw myself in it as a kind of you know I wanted to be a film...you know I didn't, that idea never even my crossed my mind. I was just a great consumer, I liked watching.
12:12:53	<b>Interviewer:</b> Did it tour the island this cinema?
	<b>MS:</b> Yes. Yeah cause they would had a, they back then would have a mobile cinema network so that would kind of go to different villages you know that was the way that um we were consuming mostly because we didn't live in a town and so it was a way that the colonial system, 'cause it was a colony in those days, devise to give us a taste of cinema.
12:13:28	<b>Interviewer:</b> Was it in the open air? Did you have to pay to get in?
12:13:32	<b>MS:</b> This was Open air. On the pastures so that you know because after four o'clock you know it gets dark five o'clock it's dark. So it was at the pastures and it would be, you know, I don't know how it did it but yeah that was my first experience.
12:13:45	<b>Interviewer:</b> Just going back to the bit about the village. Did everyone work on the plantation, was it based on the plantation the village?.
12:13:53	<b>MS:</b> Pretty much. I mean you know by that time wasn't called a plantation was called a sugar, sugar cane fields. You know terminology change but the structures was pretty much the same. You were. You either worked on the plantation or you worked in the molasses factory that produced the kinda Rum or the refined well just um the rum and the molasses. So you worked there or you worked er just doing jobs that were around that. So that was a centre point you know people worked around there. And I also remember people sharing their produce because again you know working in a village your life is not endowed with money. And so that whole system of people sharing food and so on. So people who would you know would grow potatoes, sweet potatoes other produce, they would then come and exchange. You know in our place we grew, we had a cow, we had a sheep. And in fact my first love affair was I had a pet lamb. I don't know how we became together but I remember walking around with it on a leash. We used to walk everywhere together my lamb and me. D'you know. And so and so you know. So we you know we had a cow so we produced milk, we had chickens, eggs. So there was that kind of situation where people were growing things because they had to, to sustain themselves, and then shared. It was spices you would grow and so on. So all of that economy was kinda working. And I saw that.
12:15:37	<b>Interviewer:</b> So the move to the UK. How did that happen, and why did that happen?

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12:15:48	<p><b>MS:</b> The situation was when I was about four my dad went, no before that my dad went, early actually my dad went to England in 1954, 55, sorry, he came to England in 1955. So we'd um so he sent for us and so we came in 60s, and that's kind of pretty much how we arrived. And he had been working er in other places like Miami in Florida on the plantations. He had been backwards and forwards. And at that time many of the men wanted to leave because there wasn't much on offer in Barbados for a black man um. And my dad was very bright and wanted to actually go to university or go to college and I cause he was very good at maths and so on but couldn't fulfill that because didn't have any money. And so anyway he went off to England took advantage of the you know recruitment that was happening at the time. People were coming to the UK and he was a carpenter as well, he had that skill. In fact he built the house we were living in which lived on for until the 80s you know before they knocked it down and so on. So he is very good with his hands and he was you know in carpentry and um and er so we came myself and my sister, my mum. I remember the boat journey, well at least entering the boat because Barbados was such a small island the bigger ships couldn't actually come in. So you had to kinda take a smaller boat to meet the ships and what they did and just put a plank of wood that connected the two boats and we had to walk that, and I remember that and I've, that really affected because you know you're looking down at the water just you know and you're walking and my mum's carry me like side, you know by side you know and I and that had an affect on me in terms of my fear of water. I think that had a yeah that that kinda and I still have that fear almost mostly of water. But I've kind of gone beyond it but yeah it came from that moment walking on that plank of wood.</p>
12:18:11	<p><b>MS:</b> So yeah so um so yeah we came as a result of my father being in the UK ahead of us and sending for us which was a tradition the men went and then they would send for their families. It was a kind of usual immigrant journey. So yeah.</p>
12:18:31	<p><b>Interviewer:</b> And whereabouts did you live first of all?</p>
12:18:33	<p><b>MS:</b> First we came to North London. We came to Finsbury Park and I remember my dad used to say to me 'you have to be quiet, you have to be quiet, you can't say anything so quiet' so I couldn't say anything, we couldn't say anything and it's you know coming from Barbados in a village where you're just running around everywhere it was just like free you know to kinda in this situation and I didn't understand what was happening. But obviously later on what I realized when we first came was that where he was there weren't supposed to be children d'ya know what I mean? So he's just kinda bringing us in and stuff so he just wanted to keep us quiet.</p>
12:19:15	<p><b>Interviewer:</b> This was a flat or in a mixed...?</p>
12:19:17	<p><b>MS:</b> This would be a room. These were rooms, because we didn't get, in those days it wasn't flats it was rooms because all the landlords they just basically you know took advantage of situations and er yeah we were just renting out rooms. And then we moved from that situation to another situation where it was actually a place that was owned by a Bajan. It was a house we were in in Shaftesbury Ave we still in Finsbury Park, Shaftesbury Road. And we had again a room and then what my dad would do he would like build a screen. To divide up a little bit between us and so on. And so yeah we were mainly in Finsbury Park and then eventually, by '66 I remember sixty six. We got a house. My dad and my mum they got a house because my dad was always kind of wanted to be independent always kinda you know. And many of the men in the, who came from the Caribbean often, you know they grew up with the idea of independence having your own house, do you know what I mean, that you know so. So it wasn't strange that he would want to have a house. And so you know so we got a house in um in Harrington in the mid 60s.</p>
12:20:39	<p><b>Interviewer:</b> So how was it for you? Was it like home or was it a culture shock?</p>

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12:20:47	<p><b>MS:</b> Well it was a culture shock. The cold, the fog. Because in those days you had smog as well as fog and in and it was so dense that you had to have torches to see. You know what I mean it was you know so you had that you know going from clear blue skies, sun shine, to this you know and the cold. But I was fascinated by the lights. And I remember I used to always kinda sit and wait for the lights to come on at night you know it was a kinda. You know I was I was fascinated by the bright lights um people closing their curtains and lights going on, and switching off and on. So yeah, that kind of thing and school-wise er I was in the B stream. Because the Barbados system was very advanced in terms of its education. So even though I was about six, six or so, I kinda had, I was pretty in terms of literacy I was ahead of kind of most although I didn't, I never worked hard, that was my thing I never, you know unlike my sister, she was younger - Grade A! Always grade A! I always just like never kinda just took it never, always kinda laid back style. So I was in a kinda B stream or at least, sorry I'm saying B stream but that was later on, secondary, when I go into primary school because at that time you're second primary school. My experiences were. I was in a minority. And I had. And there was a few experiences that we had that started to show that I was kind of different. And and so I'm now in a white world a world that you know was for me a world that I wanted to I guess be part of. It wasn't, I didn't feel that oh I didn't wanna be part of it I just felt - You're going to a new place and it's all new, it's all exciting. Okay let me be part of it. Um and so that was my, my instinct was to be part of it. And then but part that meant assimilating, which also meant because again you know you had all the world around you was white. So then you then begin subconsciously to want to be white. I think that was then the transition that I went through wanting to be white in terms of. Yeah. Or white, not necessarily the skin colour. But in mannerisms and in all the things that would make me be acceptable. So. So I went to that process bit by bit.</p>
12:23:57	<p><b>MS:</b> And erm I. Then got in to that time I think. Just coming out and transitioning from Primary school to Secondary school. I then got into tennis. I mean I was also a sport. The other side of me was sport. I was very sporty, even though I was coming from Barbados, you know cricket was a big thing. I was playing cricket when I was about three or four. That's why I broke my nose because we were playing cricket and we used to play with these little make up. Was it fruit's that we used to use as a ball and stuff. And so when I got here I was kind of like number one in cricket. And so when you're good at sports when you coming in you know I mean people gather round you know I was you know so sports and then I took on football got to learn football was good at that. So the sports was something that I kinda held onto and so, and by the time I got into secondary school. I was like already, Cricket Captain I was kind of like all that stuff. And then I got into tennis and then that took me into a whole new middle class world. That um I... Which was another experience because my dad gave me a tennis racket I remember when I was about 11, don't know why, he went into, it was a 'Victory' racquet, he went into Woolworths, saw it, gave it to me. I took to it and started playing on the back of the walls off corners of the houses and stuff. And so I kind of got into it and I became very well, and generally all sports I kinda can do and er so. And then I got into tennis seriously. I remember I used to play little local tournaments so I thought I was very good and I got to the final and then I got beaten by this guy. Mashed me up completely and I thought 'where does this guy come from?' And then I found out he was part of a tennis squad of guys and fine and then joined that. And so then I was on this serious tennis situation. I was playing tournaments. I was in the top 16 of Middlesex boys at the age of 16</p>
12:26:22	<p><b>Interviewer:</b> And were you the only black guy?</p>
12:26:23	<p><b>MS:</b> Yeah I was cos I remember people, I remember did..I played a tournament in Pinner and these, I remember these old ladies used to come out and they used to come out watch me because in those days all I had, cause you know, all I had was khaki shorts, you know I used to play against all these middle class guys with their white shorts and five racquets and I only had my one little racket. I got sponsorship at that time from Wilsons so I had one racquet. And I remember people used to come out because I was a bit of a novelty definitely at that time. A few guys came out after that, but yeah at that time I was yeah. And so all of that kinda confirmed my world of whiteness. And and the place to be. And riding alongside that now was a whole black power movement that started to come in. And I was at school where I was, I was at this school Tollington Park, which was really a, they called it a sink school. So there wasn't much that was expected of us and by that time in my age group when I came in it began to become like nearly, 60/40 or 60 percent white 40 percent black. Where as before it was kinda much, the numbers were much smaller. So 'cause there was now a kinda surge of people coming in. Coming in from all over the Caribbean in the 60s.</p>

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12:27:57	<p><b>MS:</b> And I remember the racial dynamics in the school my secondary school shifted in, in one incident that happened. We was in the fourth year. And at that time you had the older guys you know the older years, the fourth years and so which was kind of less black. But so you had a kinda in the school a dominance of the white working class families, gangster families, who used to be in the school you know. And they had a certain ascendancy in terms of the dynamics of power. And then there was this fight that happened after school. And I remember it was "There's going to be a fight! There's going to be a fight!". And one of the guys who used to make these knuckle dusters in woodwork to put on their hands and stuff and everybody was preparing an Ollie, who was Jamaican, had come and he was you know, there was going be fight between him and this guy, white guy. And so everybody was there and that and the whole, and I didn't realize at time but the whole psychological dynamics in that school for us hinged on that fight. And after school they fought and Ollie just gave him two right handers and dropped him, and broke his hand, and that was the end of that. But then it gave us now that, it broke that kind of psychological fear or psychological whatever it was that you had. So we were now, as a result of that fight, we were now, you know, in the first year you know "Yeah! Okay!". Um so so yeah.</p>
12:29:45	<p><b>MS:</b> So that was a kind of a moment I remember. But for me being in the B Stream it was always you know, because the streams went all the way to H. Right so generally you had at the A and B streams were kinda mainly white. And then it kind of as you go down the grades, towards the end your H an F and all that was mainly black and so. And that kind of also underlined certain things that were happening that I you know we didn't know because there was that level of racism that was happening there that wasn't, that we didn't pick up on yet. Um. But there was also levels of racism in terms of we had a deputy head. His name was Mr Bull. And Mr Bull was like one of these guys that came out the army and he was like, he used to give all the canings, mainly, yeah. So we would get in those days you know I remember you know if they see you standing outside a classroom you know if the teacher said "Go outside the classroom and wait" he would come along and see you and then he would say "Okay, come to my office" and he would give you six or three depending. Either on your hand, you know "Put your hand out boy!" or "Bend over!" so you get it on your arse so it's kind of depending on his mood and depending on the severity you'll either get it on your hands, the cane, or on your backside. And he ruled the roost in our school, Mr Bull. The name goes... (laughs). And er so he'd um... Yeah so we experienced, and we knew there were injustices happening. The people were getting their caning and so on and stuff. But we didn't have a way of responding to it.</p>
12:31:44	<p><b>MS:</b> So that was going on. And then also I was developing my artistic side of things I was doing art and I started to do well in art which I never really thought about. And so I was beginning to develop that creative shoots. You know I had already had the sport and I could you know, and I was interested in writing a little bit but not great in a way but I was interested in French because I had a French teacher that I liked or I was kind of like they called me teacher's pet at the time so my French went up. Doing very well at French and um so I was still in the white world in my mindset I would say in that um er. And um the shift came when I read 'Malcolm X' his book 'African American History'.</p>
12:32:50	<p><b>Interviewer:</b> Interruption for sound.</p>
12:33:04	<p><b>MS:</b> I was around 14. And the shift happened for me when I read 'African-American History' by Malcolm X, because we were now in the kind of black power era but because my mindset was still white I kinda didn't I kind of dismissed it in a way, I'd say "ah, its not true what they're saying". You know so I found ways of saying nah this black thing no. Anyway I read African American History and that pressed a button in me in realising certain things and realising about slavery realising that I'd been lied to. And um and for some reason I believed what I read when before I didn't believe what people were saying to me. So that was a watershed moment. And from there I then began to listen. Cause I had you know some friends you know we were guys who were talking and stuff and they were part of an organisation that you know, the BLF, Black Liberation Front. And eventually I started to go to meetings and started to hear what the older guys were saying and started to get all the kinda black power and all the black history, and started to to wash myself with all of this knowledge that previously I was you know not aware of. And I was really taken by.</p>

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12:34:45	<p><b>MS:</b> And then I remember at that time I was still playing tennis. And so I was kind of like coming into his middle class world, and then into this black world. And it was just like... It came to a head. I think it came to a head I think when I was 18. I had bad results anyway. So it was like you know what, this had got to go. I couldn't really take this you know it just didn't it wasn't gelling with me having to play, be Thomas. That's my name. Thomas in one world, or Tom. And being Shebazz in the next world. So eventually I'd stopped playing tennis. And a little bit of sadness because I love tennis. And I occasionally still play. But I played at a level where it was all or nothing. I either had to be at you know I was playing you know the guys who were winning Junior Wimbledon and top guys in the UK. So I was pushing myself to play at that level.</p>
12:35:56	<p><b>MS:</b> So I got into the black power movement and which was really the beginnings of the makings of who I am really in the sense that it grounded me in being in a world and in knowledge that you know sits with me to this day. So, and also the fact that we were experiencing racism you know at that time we knew. I mean you know with the pol...I mean... 15 we took 15 16 14s little bit you know. But once you started to get into 15, 16 you start to go out to clubs and rave, because they used to have youth clubs and you used to go there and have a dance afterwards and all that. So we now began to get into, to see now the police in a way that weren't, you know, we didn't see before. And now we're starting to see that we are being discriminated against. We're seeing that we're being brutalized. And er and and so. And so that all of that then you know. You know poured petrol into the fire. You know and you know seeing the examples of what was happening to Black Panther movement, because I was really influenced by the Black Panther movement and we were getting their newspapers and the organisation actively producing our newspaper as well. And so the Black Panther movement; people like Huey P Newton, you know was my hero at the time. And then Angela Davis and George Jackson were all these people who were you know really articulating what you know, this is all about. So these these became... And then of course Malcolm X, and then eventually you know took on the name of his name Shabazz. His name was Malik, Malik el Shabazz. And I took on the name Shabazz. So all of that was a great inspiration.</p>
12:37:59	<p><b>Interviewer:</b> You ended up going to Harringay and getting into filmmaking. How did you get into filmmaking? Were you an activist at that point?</p>
12:38:11	<p><b>MS:</b> I was always an activist and still am, in different it's taken different forms but I don't. I still wear the hat. Now how I got into film. And that whole era was bizarre. It was, I was 18. I was expected to go to art school because by that time the art side of things said kind of really developed and I wanted to go to art school to do design and was accepted in on the basis that I got the required O'levels and A'levels. And I was an A'level short. I didn't make it. I didn't get all my you know because again I was, I didn't work hard enough I felt. Anyway, I didn't go to art school and I think it was the lowest moment for me because all my friends at the time you know they were going off and doing stuff and I was this like stuck. And so I had to go to get...</p>
12:39:15	<p><b>MS:</b> And yes I had to go to get my. So I decided I was going to go and do my get my ex O'level. And I decided to go to North London College. And while I was there we had to attend these social studies course courses, classes and some guys came in. With this PortaPak for us to kind of play around with and stuff. And I thought Wow um because I was always interested in how I can translate the you know my activism knowledge beyond just giving out newspapers and talking to people and stuff and my artistic side. So these guys came in with this PortaPak and I don't know if people know a PortaPak is a kind of it's like a recorder with a camera attached to it and it was a real revolutionary equipment at that point in the film industry. And and these guys got hold of this equipment and so they said to us why don't we just you know go and do something and with the equipment. And I had immediately had an idea and I got a group of people together. And we just said okay went off and we started shooting stuff and I was like wow I like this. And um and then I used to follow them because they were set up in Camden Town. I can't remember their name now that organisation.</p>
12:40:50	<p><b>Interviewer:</b> InterAction</p>

TC	SYNC
12:40:51	<p><b>MS:</b> Yes InterAction Yes Yes so I used to then be able to go and see and find out more about this equipment and how to work it and so on. I was really fascinated by it. And um I came up with an idea I said I want to shoot something. But I didn't want to do it in the style that they were working in, because at that time it was very much about um demystifying cinema and documentary and styles so it's about moving around the camera and stuff. It wasn't about you know just traditional kind of everything static kind of situation. And I though you know what I wanna do something a bit more static because I know, I wanted to, I had an idea to do a film about the life in Ridley market I think it was. But I wanted something a bit more static. I wanted to shoot a little bit more static I didn't want all this moving around because the people that I was aiming it for are not going to be au fait with that style you know that's a kinda more avant garde style and you know people weren't ready for that. So I thought no I need to do it this way.</p>
12:42:04	<p><b>MS:</b> So at the same time, 18 was a very critical year for me because I also left home and went and I went to squat. I gave up tennis, left home, lost you know in a didn't get in to art school. So er yes I left home went to squat and we found a squat in West Hampstead. We found a number we tried a few squats and a couple as unsuccessful. One squat we got in to there was a maid in there and she freaked out. It was like oh no. And then um it so happened I had a friend er who was an African American woman Alice who was in a squat. And she said well there's a room here why don't you come here. Says Okay so um I was in this squat and I said Alice you're at film school. I want a shoot this film. It's gonna be in a market it's going to be Ridley Market and so and so and so she asked she started asking me all these questions so oh what stock are you going to use? Is it daylight? All this stuff that I have no clue what she was talking film she weren't talking video. Laughs. Where you just press play on a tape and record it so I um I said to Alice come on I want you to shoot this film with me and so on and she goes Menelik you know I don't want to be your donkey so I suggest you go to film school. Because she was at London Film School. And er I said Oh right OK let me OK you put that thought in my mind alright let me check it out and see.</p>
12:43:52	<p><b>MS:</b> So I applied to London Film School who at that time were kinda had changed up their whole structure and stuff. And um but to get in I need to get a grant and it was a discretionary grant, and it's also a postgraduate course. Um er and I hadn't even done a degree much less um anyway I kind of submitted some stuff. I mean I got some photographs I didn't take. I think Horace Ové or somebody gave me some photographs. So it all kind of went into the package. And I shot, but what I did do I shot um I was down interest I got a 16mm camera somehow and I was shooting on 16mm cos I started to, the whole the whole visual thing had now um taken root in me now cos I was started off with a PortaPak and then I found out about Super 16 and stuff and I started to you know get in to that shoot little stuff and round and little stories and stuff. So I was getting to it and they accepted me provisionally in the film school. Based on me getting a grant from Haringey Council. Cause it was discretionary and Haringey Council took time to make a decision. It took them six months. But it was a blessing for me because I was in a school for six months. And at the end of six months they said no. They weren't going to give me a grant. But in that six months I was at film school. Wow. That really was another leap for me because I was amongst people who were as passionate as me. Because before then it was just me and my little passion and so on. But now I'm with other students, other people from different parts of the world. Who were now who were there want to make films and so on passion and all that was there. Wow! And of course we got a few lectures and stuff from various filmmakers who came in. Especially you know documentary film making especially was strong. Um and because of the first year you kind of did documentary more you didn't get into drama. Er and that really was a springboard mainly I think ultimately was about confidence because the film world to get into the film world for me coming from where I came from was virtually impossible. Um it was impossible not even virtually it was impossible.</p>

TC	SYNC
12:46:53	<p><b>MS:</b> And the PortaPak was what I always called the boat that took me across the ocean. Into the film world because without that PortaPak, one I would not have thought about the possibility of shooting anything. Secondly to get the equipment was way out because you know those days equipment was either film or kinda you know big equipment that was way out of my league. So um so the PortaPak took me across in a way the film school kind of made me land on the you know on the ground and to land and to feel confident because again you have a confidence thing class and all of that you don't think you're good enough you can be up to all of that. So now I'm in this film school when I'm getting the confidence. I knew I wanted to direct so in the film school I didn't really do, cos you had a choice of modules and I kind of wanted do sound all the the other things except direct and to learn about the sound learn about all the areas of film and so that will really my you know my stepping point. And then after six months I was confident and I wanted to make a film and I made my first film um Step Forward Youth. So off all of that you know which I wouldn't have done I don't think in the same way in terms you know if I hadn't been to film school, cos we're shooting, I shot Step Forward Youth on 16mm film.</p>
12:48:28	<p><b>MS:</b> And also I was working with someone who I'd met David Kinoshi at film school. He was in a few years ahead of me. David Kinoshi was also in Horace's film Pressure. And I used to see him cos those days I was also in a move, when I squatted I was also a part of the organisation I was with had a bookshop in Ladbroke Grove, Grass Roots. And so I used to be in Grass Roots and I used to see David and these guys you know he was one of those guys who used to walk around the area you know a group of them you know. And I never imagined then one day I'd see him in the film school I said "wow what you doing here?" You know um and we became very close friends. And in fact we kind of had a joint vision. And it started with Step Forward Youth in 1976. Um and unfortunately our vision died when he died in a way because he had sickle cell anaemia and he died in 1977. So I was kind of having to now go forward. But working with him working to shoot the film, he shot the film, edited the film um and then we worked at um the place in um it was filmmakers co-op. That's what we did. I kind of found out that you know they've got equipment and we can edit the film and all of that cos I was very good at that I was always very good at being proactive and finding out things and making things happen. And so we edited the film at cinema action.</p>
12:50:05	<p><b>Interviewer:</b> Tell us about what the film was about</p>
12:50:10	<p><b>MS:</b> Step Forward Youth OK it came about because I was concerned at the time of the way in which black men, or young black youth were portrayed in the media. And it was at the time when the whole term mugging came into being. And so all these newspaper um reports and stuff was kinda associating young black men with muggings and then there was one big case in Birmingham where um a young young guy um attacked or no took some money from an old white woman and she died or something happened and he got 21 years or something. So it kinda everything was just blown into, just like today and knife crime and all of that it's kinda blown up. And um so I wanted to respond to that. And I wanted to interview young people to hear from their point of view what all of them how the media was portraying it. So and at that time I was living in Ladbroke Grove and I interviewed Drummie who is you know in Aswad who became famous in Aswad when he was 16 at school and wanted to be a drummer and all that. But interviewed him and then interviewed a young woman in Brixton. And then we also had a discussion group. And then we took them into nightclub er dances and stuff but anyway it's really about giving their view about the police, about family, about education the school system and all of that. So that's what inspired me to want to do that film.</p>
12:51:51	<p><b>MS:</b> And all that's come out of my activist background and desire to wanting to translate my consciousness around black politics into to my work, to film which is how um I saw it. I saw it as a tool for that, from the early when I saw that camera and all that. I immediately it all just came together. Wow! I could do this. I can tell these stories. Cos that was really what was uppermost in my mind wanting to tell our story that was really the driving force and so um Step Forward Youth was really the culmination of that process.</p>

**MENELIK SHABAZZ LCVA TRANSCRIPT**

TC	SYNC
12:52:36	<p><b>MS:</b> And um I remember even to make that film because we were shooting on film now. So you know stock alone is costing you two hundred, three hundred pounds for four hundred foot or something. And I remember having to discipline myself in terms of that stock in how I'm interviewing people. And I remember we did a pre-interview with people to get a sense of what they going to say. And I had to work out every question and how much it's going to be in time and (laughs) And so that was good for me though because it obviously gave me discipline. And also I remember um David Kinoshi his uncle was a kinda erm he lived in St. John's Wood, he had a bit of money, and he decided that he was going to give us some money to help us make the film. But we had to go to his house in St. John's Wood every morning not every morning but he'd say come up and talk. And he'd be in his bar for an hour talking on the phone. And then an hour later he decide he wants to talk to us. And then you know we went on for that for a little while until we couldn't take anymore of it. But eventually he coughed up some money towards the film. So that really helped and er I think Trevor Phillips also, not Trevor Phillips Mike Phillips his brother, gave us a little bit and so on so we cobbled together cobbled together some money. Old stock that people had in their fridges because in those days you know camera men used to have stock in their fridges (laughs). So so yeah so it was a combination of me, the desire and cobbling together money because you couldn't do it for free. You know once you get into that scenario.</p>
12:54:29	<p><b>Interviewer:</b> And where did you find the young people?</p>
12:54:32	<p><b>MS:</b> No apart from Drummie Aswad I knew him cos I was an in the Grove and I knew him but the others um Jennifer Louisha I didn't. The group discussion that we had was um through Ansel Wong who I did know from back in the day and he was working in Brixton and he you know he said he could pull together a group to talk. And we filmed the group um so so in that way it came together.</p>
12:55:02	<p><b>Interviewer:</b> So is it fair to say that was the first representation of black youth, by and for black youth in the country would you say and how influential was Horace making that movie to back filmmakers?</p>
12:55:30	<p><b>MS:</b> Horace was influential to me. I think I was on a set of pressure. Pressure came out in '75 I think. So '74 so I was on the set of Pressure. But prior to that I was at an Angela Davis event. And I saw this guy with his Afro with this big 16mm camera shooting and I goes wow! Who is this guy? I never seen any black person with a camera out shooting um it was Roy Cornwall. And er I said Roy... SO I met I didn't know him so we introduced each other and so on. And so that was when I really you know that, that camera you know I thought wow I want to be doing this. I mean this is still this is after PortaPak and I've just come out film school... I... '75. So I was in that zone and I saw this guy with this camera black man and then he was also linked with other filmmakers. Ni Quate Awo and they kind of and that's also where I met Alice who then helped me in the squat and all of that so it may have been just before. And I'd heard about Horace because David who was at film school with me he was in the film. He was an actor as well. So I went on the set. And so again I was able to again you know wash myself with this film um experience and so so he was in... you know he was important for me in again confidence building the confidence to see someone doing it. You know who is black and you know so it's giving you the precedent. You know you see it because you know at the time there was no one to look at in the UK. And so so yeah he was important in that way.</p>
12:57:42	<p><b>Interviewer:</b> And distribution, screenings? What happened to the film?</p>
12:57:47	<p><b>MS:</b> Step Forward Youth didn't have a lot of screenings at the time because in those days it was um it was... There weren't many places that you could show 16mm. And so I had a few little screenings and importantly well it did two things Step Forward Youth. It erm was accepted to be shown at the Festpako or festac the festival of black arts and culture in Nigeria. In 1977 and they paid my fare, put me up in a hotel, gave me £40 a week pocket money I was like wow! Wow! So it took opened my door to going to Africa which I always wanted to get to but never thought I could at that stage. And that film took me to Africa not just took me to Africa, took me to Nigeria and took me to a celebration of the greatest talents in the Pan African world. Stevie Wonder all kinds of other people were there. And so I was again bathed in this tremendous experience I think probably the greatest experience of my life that being in a national stadium with all the different countries all over Africa, Europe, America um just sharing as artists. And so Step Forward Youth did that.</p>

TC	SYNC
12:59:32	<p><b>MS:</b> It also open me up to television. I had a screening of Step Forward Youth at the Filmmakers Co-op and at that time a producer from a TV was there. what's his name? It'll come to me. Err and he saw the film and he says oh I like this. What else have you got doing? I'm with ATV give me a project. And I had a project which was SUS. You know about a SUS law and was what was happening at the time. And he commissioned it. I remember also because at that time I said David you know you know who was my partner this is your turn now I've done this one. And he said to me no no and then he died obviously in that year um and so on and so I kind of took on the mantle of it and that experience took me into mainstream. So now from step forward you that took me into ATV mainstream channel. And um and that was er an experience.</p>
13:00:59	<p><b>MS:</b> The other thing I wanted to mention was that. Going back a little bit in my activist years because I was in the organisation for a number of years. And I, we had youth clubs going on.</p>
13:01:15	<p><b>Interviewer:</b> Which organisation?</p>
13:01:18	<p><b>MS:</b> Sorry it's the BLF, the Black Liberation Front, and we produced a magazine called Grass Roots. And we had a shopfront called Grass Roots as well. We had youth clubs. And I was kinda active as a youth worker in that and I started to show films um. This would have been before I went to film school. We'd um I'd realised that I could show some of films that especially the kind of mainly Blacksploitation films that were coming out at that time. And I'd thought that I could show some of these films in our youth club and um cobbled together and I could get a projector so I thought let me ring up these companies. You know Warner Brothers and all these people and see me and get the film. And so they had a hire cost which was a bit too much. But I come up with this idea if I shared the film over the weekend with another youth club we could do it. So that's what we began to do, so I'd hire the a film on the weekend. So hire it on a Friday one cost and then give it back on a Monday and so we'll show the film and pay for the cost. And so that was again my introduction to kinda showing, exhibiting films. Which again was late I guess developed when I began the festival but at that stage we did that and then later we used to have a... open up a late night screenings at the cinema in Harlesden there used to be a cinema in Harlesden by the clock tower and they used to show kind of Asian films, porn films late night as well. And I thought wow let's go and talk to the guys maybe we can show some Kung Fu cinema because again that was a time again Bruce Lee and all the Kung Fu thing was happening and so again began set up with a few guys we then started to do screenings in the cinema. And so again I was growing in the range of the my interest in cinema.</p>
13:03:50	<p><b>MS:</b> So um yeah that's that's so I'm coming back now to ATV experience. Um Richard Creecy was the producer and he's a one of those rare radix, radicals in television at the time there was a few scattered around. Um and who were kinda given carte blanche to kinda do what they wanna do more or less. And so he wanted me to do this documentary. And the documentary initially I had a title for it, always have something, title clear which was Battering Down Sentence which was from a Bunny Wailer song because, cause even with Step Forward Youth that's from a Reggae song called Step Forward Youth there's a song so a lot of my titles I tend to think of reggae songs as a kind of link into the title. They said erm no come up with another idea. So eventually we ended up with a title called Breaking Point. OK and they put me with a producer. I had an office, they gave me a pic... a researcher. And so we're shooting in London and in Birmingham and stuff around the SUS law because a SUS law was being used against young black men and the SUS law, being a suspected suspicious person often with a scenario that a police officer would say they saw a young black man trying to put his hand in a woman's handbag. You don't have to actually commit the crime. But you can be suspected of it. And so they were using that to arrest and you could get to six months imprisonment for that. And it was happening a lot, and especially in the West End. And so it became a big issue in the community. And caused a lot of tension.</p>
13:06:04	<p>And so I wanted to do a film to talk about this. And we had people like Stuart Hall, Yehudi Narayan, Paul Boateng, or Lord Boateng now, who were the talking heads. And it was a first actually, I didn't realise, there's never been a documentary on mainstream television where all the people were talking in authority positions are black. That was a kind, I never thought about it because you know when you're young it's just like I'm going to do it. That's how I naturally think so I'm going to do it that way. So, so they let me get away with it.</p>

TC	SYNC
13:06:50	<p><b>MS:</b> And er we so the shoot and everything went well then. Then I didn't realise they put me with a right wing editor, I didn't know all this. They put me with this right wing editor so we'd be in the cutting room setting things up and you know. And then I'll come back and I see somethings been cut out. Cause one thing I do have is a photographic memory when of anything when it's all laid up I remember every scene. So. So when I came back well there's something missing here so on. So we used to have these little, I mean we didn't have a confrontation it was never like that, it was never on that level, it was kind of more subtle. And so I had to kind of correct certain things at certain points but um the the issues didn't really come to a head until they presented the film to the IBA - the Independent Broadcasting Authority. The Independent Broadcasting Authority looked at the film, the programme and said it's imbalanced, because it's all these black people talking about their experiences. I didn't say about the talking heads but just the fact that the view of the film was imbalanced they felt. And we argued I'd argued that actually it's redressing an imbalance that the mainstream media has been projecting consistently for years. And so they agreed with the controller of ATV to decide if it kinda went out, Charles Denton, to have a disclaimer on front on the front of the film so that was the agreement that was made. But this disclaimer is very interesting. This disclaimer said cos the programme went out after News at ten. It said: This film is made by a black director. It's about people's feelings. It's about people's feelings. That's the disclaimer that they put on the front of Breaking Point.</p>
13:08:53	<p><b>MS:</b> That's a disclaimer that they put on the front of Breaking Point before it went out, or as it went out, as people watched it. Which was quite extraordinary. Never ever seen that happen before. I've never seen anything, so this film is made by a Scottish director this films made by a Jewish director this film is made by wow. So that's what went out. And um unbeknownst to me and I think Richard told me years later there was a lot of stuff happening around me because I'm in this mainstream environment. The only black person making this film and it's kinda yeah very unusual and er. The film did help to repeal the law sus law because soon afterwards there was changes in the Sus Law and the film did help to do that. And that's the the the power of mainstream. And I always felt that if mainstream was able to work for the benefits of people and ideas and to be expansive then it would be such a great er tool, vehicle.</p>
13:10:15	<p><b>MS:</b> But I realised after that experience that this was not a place for me to try to continue my development because I knew that I would have to sensor myself and I'd get in to that censorship mode. And then I would loose my cutting edge, my voice really and so I'd decided I do not want to work in mainstream. I would become an independent filmmaker, as I had been anyway. So so so that's what I learned about that experience I learnt how the mainstream worked. It was not really interested in change. And and so so that was what I learnt from that experience.</p>
13:10:58	<p><b>Interviewer:</b> What year did you make Breaking Point, how long was it and why was it so different?</p>
13:11:29	<p><b>MS:</b> Okay. Breaking Point um was originally for an hour and then they cut it to 38 minutes. So well and it went out er at News at Ten and it was in 1978. I think Time Out a review if it as well. I think I still have it somewhere. But um and obviously national press did stuff too. And so yeah so it went out um in 1978 and it was the first film directed by a black director on mainstream television that put out also the voices of the black black young people as well. And also our point of view of what was happening around the sus law. So it was kind of important in that in those respects and and as I said it it was influential in in in changing the sus law erm and er.</p>
13:12:45	<p><b>MS:</b> I've got clips of if actually DVDs of it now, cos I've got all my films out on DVDs. Yeah and it was. Yeah and it also had a re-enactment kind of reenactments in the film I think I didn't probably realise at the time in the way that the film was structured because we was telling a story of a of er two guys who were arrested and beaten up by the police officers and the community relations officer who was arrested for trying to help them. But the police didn't know he was a communications officer, I mean a community relations officer, and so they just bundled them together, so when you know the community relations [officer]... when they all arrived at the police station the community relations officers was there and the command or the chief said "What are you doing here?", and we kinda re-enacted that in terms of the storytelling of it, which I think was again interesting for television at that time. Although I didn't really know it. But yes so it was er important stepping stone again for me in understanding about the media. Understand also the power television and also being in that environment of mainstream, you know coming from where I was coming from to be here was like 'Wow.</p>

TC	SYNC
13:14:20	<p><b>MS:</b> And I remember also that I had to get a union ticket and the union wouldn't give me a ticket. Because at that time you had to get a job to get a ticket. It was just kind of a catch 22 situation. And you can't get a ticket before you get a job. Yeah. Anyway so then I got a job. And I said OK Union give me a ticket. And they umm'ed and ah'ed around it and they gave me I think a discretion, something they gave me. Was it a deferral or something that was not a ticket proper and I could never understand what was going on there with those erm. I mean later when I did a ticket but it was just bizarre that I had a job, mainstream, but they wouldn't give me a ticket, a fully fledged ticket.</p>
13:15:15 - 13:16:04	<p><b>MS:</b> So a lot of things was happening. A lot of things were happening at a time which was Broadening or, Educating. Educating me about the world of film, TV, Politics, and so on. But I also knew that I had a voice and that voice has to be as it is, pure, it cannot be censored. It cannot be, yeah, or changed. And I was always clear, till this day, about that.</p>
CLIP 2	
13:16:30	<p><b>MS:</b> 'Step Forward Youth' was distributed through the other cinema. Tony Kirko. And they yeah they picked it up because they were distributing all the alternative cinema films that they could get. And they used to have screenings as well. 'The Other Cinema' That's what they were known as 'The Other Cinema'. They were a distribution outfit. And they used to have screenings of films from South America you know all the radical filmmakers basically the films. And at that time we were in the period of the liberation movements that were happening in Africa, South Africa, Angola, Mozambique, and then you also had movements happening in South America you know. And... for change. So films were being made representing those points of views. And I was now exposed because I went to their screenings. So I was now been exposed to a different kind of cinema. I was exposed to... And Frederick Wiseman came into that, I loved his films. He was really someone I really aspired to. And so I was now been exposed to a lot of alternative cinema which again supported my work in what my vision and my energy in terms of what I was doing. And so that was very important again in my growth, seeing these films made by other filmmakers who were radical, wanting to make a change. So that's another chapter here in the many chapters.</p>
13:18:38	<p><b>Interviewer:</b> So tell me about Burning an Illusion.</p>
13:18:50	<p><b>MS:</b> 'Burning an Illusion' came after I did um 'Breaking Point' and I was interested in drama and prior to that when I was doing the youth club work I wrote a little theatre piece which was a story of David Oduwole, who was killed. Beaten up and killed and tormented by police officers in Leeds way back, and it became a national thing and stuff. And I wrote a play around it. So I had that in me, and I was also part of a theatre group for a little bit. So I had that in me. And so I started to write a short piece a short film. It just came to me. It wasn't something that I'd kind of previously thought about, I just had this vision of this woman in front of a mirror talking about her experience. I don't know why a woman I just said ok. And I then submitted it to submitted the story, the idea was it or the script, yeah the idea to the BFI as a short film. And then they gave me some money to develop it. And so I developed it initially as a short story. But then I was writing and writing and it was just went on and on and on and on and on till I ended up with a 90 page script. That's how it came about really. I just went on a flow. I was in the flow.</p>
13:20:30	<p><b>MS:</b> And then went back to the BFI who then gave me the money. Apparently Jeremy Isaacs was critical, was crucial in that, turning the decision makers to give me the money BFI I'm told. So yes so the BFI gave me the money to make 'Burning an Illusion'. And so that's how it all kind of started. I didn't have any intention really of doing a movie. It was just a very small little film that I had in my mind.</p>
13:21:08	<p><b>Interviewer:</b> What was the budget for it?</p>
13:21:11	<p><b>MS:</b> The budget for Burning an Illusion was eighty thousand pounds. Which was not bad in those days. But then it wasn't it was seen as a very small budget, even in those days it was seen like you know. And then they put money into it for the distribution as well as and for the blow up, because it is one thing to shoot, we shot on 16mm. But it's one thing to shoot a film at 16mm, but to have a theatrical release you now need to blow it up onto 35mm. So they paid for that cost and all of that, and had prints and stuff. And we had about five or six cinemas showing it. Which was amazing.</p>
13:22:02	<p><b>Interviewer:</b> And after that you set up Ceddo or what happened next?</p>

TC	SYNC
13:22:10	<p><b>MS:</b> After 'Burning', I had another track I was thinking about. Which was, to set up a structure which would allow for myself and other filmmakers. Because I've always had in my mind not just the consideration of myself as a filmmaker. I've always had in my mind bringing people together to create something. And so I kind of thought about having a workshop. And also I was concerned that we didn't have equipment. We always had to go to, I remember going to Mark Carlin or other people to get equipment and other people to get equipment there was an independent... The good thing was there was a kind of independent sector where you can get, you know, equipment. But I was like "I don't want to keep having to go there, maybe we can have our own things"</p>
13:23:16	<p><b>MS:</b> And at the same time I came to be aware of the workshop movement which had been in existence where you had a collective format of working and it was unionized and these were supported by the BFI and other people put money into it and even Channel 4 as well supported them you know.</p>
13:23:41	<p>Adam Fountain was very crucial in all of this. And so you had these workshop being set up. So I thought wow...or being in existence. So I thought wow why don't we have one of those. So I then went to the BFI and Channel Four, Adam Fountain and they supported you know the workshop Ceddo. I brought a number of people together and because my structure of working was slightly different because we had a group of people that were like I brought together to set it up but they weren't going to be the people that are going to be working and therefore the unionised relationship wasn't with us, it was about the people who were being employed. So that created a different type of relationship. But nevertheless we got the funding and also got money from Harringay. They also gave us the old school building...one of the floors which was amazing.</p>
13:24:37	<p>So we were able to have equipment. We were able to do training courses. We were one of the first organization in the black community to do film courses in the community, make it accessible, as opposed to you know the way the film industry works. So we were doing that. We also were showing films. You know and we had Spike Lee over when he when he came with his film school days. He came to the workshop. And we had other filmmakers.....and others. So it was a real hub. Ceddo and then we did that for I think eight years or something 8/9 before the funding went with Margaret Thatcher came in and also I produced a film inside erm Ceddo which maybe helped towards bring the kind of... inadvertently looking back, I think that the film I did was called Time and Judgment. And Time and Judgment is probably the most radical film that's been made on television from a black perspective ever. And it had people that were banned that Farrakhan it had Kwame Ture who was banned. And it had a lot of radical voices. It was a film that was a kinda I call it a Sci Fi Doc because it has kinda spiritual symbolism with a kinda diary, a diarist looking back at a period of time 1980 to 80/87 ah and events that were happening. And so and we had a lot of archive footage as well cos we had the money from Channel you know so you know. So it was a it was a very powerful piece and an MP got up in parliament the next day and complained about film. So it reached and I think.</p>
13:26:40	<p><b>Interviewer:</b> Where was it shown?</p>
13:26:42	<p><b>MS:</b> It was shown on Channel 4 in 1988. And er and I think that may have triggered the movement to start to close down the workshops. I can't, I'm not sure but I just think that erm that you know that whole era where you know Adam Fountain was supporting independent voices and so on, and showing radical cinema and all of that was a landmark, and what really helped to build Channel 4. But then at this time it all changed. Where they stopped funding that department. Close it down, and then Channel Four became a different beast. Jeremy Issac left.</p>
13:27:28	<p><b>Interviewer:</b> Were you involved in the People's Account?</p>

TC	SYNC
13:27:30	<p><b>MS:</b> The People's Account? Yes because I was involved in that heavily in the sense that I lived in the area. I lived across a road from Broadwater Farm. I knew the people. I um er cause Tottenham was my manor. Yeah and so, one of the things that I'd I felt was very important in Ceddo, and it came off, which we haven't mentioned 'Blood of the Run' film which I did after just straight after Burning an Illusion. Blood of the Run was about the New Cross fire And er and a black people's day of action. Um off that film. I you know cos I was in, I'd said we had to I was also on the committee, support committee, for... cause I was still a radical in those days. And I want, I felt we had to document the march, we had to document because this, this is too important and so I got some crews, two crews actually, to shoot the march but out of that I thought we need to document, we need to have a consistent way of documenting our story. Again back to this idea or documenting or telling our stories you know put our voice... And so that's kind of where the seed of Ceddo in a way came about. In, we need to do and we have to have a structure to do this because it can't just be myself. And erm and so when the Broadwater Farm thing came out and in and in Ceddo I'll just say one of the things that I wanted to do, why we had equipment was to go out and document and you know get this history. That's what we had you know the liberty now to do. And so when it kicked off you know.</p>
13:29:20	<p><b>Interviewer:</b> Sorry what kicked off?</p>
13:29:24	<p><b>MS:</b> Sorry when the Broadwater Farm umm uprising kicked off. We were in the area and it was important that we had to be there. And I was there and Sister Dennis, you know what I mean, who was a real revolutionary woman Camera-man/Director, Camera-woman/director. We went down there and erm the thing is though we couldn't really film that much because we we were now behind the lines and so you know we can film film the police people but we couldn't really do because obviously we were now in a very very dangerous situation in terms of who you film. Erm and and so filming that bit I just said look we have to make, we have to follow up this, we had to make this film. And but I myself didn't direct it I thought somebody else should do it. And so, but that's how it came about, it came about because we had to tell this story, because Bilton the director is not from the area he's, you know he was part of the workshop. And so erm he took on the mantle of making the film.</p>
13:30:51	<p><b>MS:</b> But I was, because I was a producer on it in effect. But in that time we were insistent that we wouldn't have going to have his producer credits so I'm down as a kind of assistant something can't remember what it is. But in reality you know to get into those places and to film and to tell the story was because people knew me and I was from the area so that was the kinda opened up all of that situation.</p>
13:31:22	<p><b>MS:</b> And People's Account was another one that we had an experience with television censorship issues there. This was much more... So Channel 4 came back to us and said you know edit needed some changes or there was some things they were concerned about and we made a number of changes. But there was one change that we were not going to make which was they there was a comment in the commentary which says. Because the film also not only talks about the Broadwater Farm it also takes us back to what happened in Brixton with Mrs. Groves who was shot by police officers and so on and that caused the Brixton riots and so on. And s the comment was that she was a victim of police racism and they objected to that. But we stuck with our guns with that because we said there was no legal reason why that cannot be said. Cause we went through all the legal stuff and and er they still didn't show it and they've never shown it and will never show it and er so um that film was again our voice being represented but the mainstream having difficulty swallowing the voice err.</p>
13:32:49	<p><b>MS:</b> Much more so with the People's Account. I mean the people in it were very strong and very radical and very angry. And so it had a power to it which er you will never see on TV erm but fortunately is available I had the copies around, and it will be it's coming back out so people can reflect on it. Especially recently we had a screening in Nottingham with that film and The Hard Stop which is about Mark Duggan. So we had the two films cos it's set in Tottenham. So so people were able to look at what we did in you know The Broadwater Farms film er People's Account and contrast that with Hard Stop and Mark Duggan and also some of the people who were in the Hard Stop were in People's Account so an interesting dynamic there.</p>
13:33:44	<p><b>Interviewer:</b> What was Ceddo? When did you set it up, who with and where?</p>

TC	SYNC
	<p><b>MS:</b> Ceddo Film Video Workshop was set up with myself. I'd kinda had the vision, had the idea and I brought in other people like Cesar Bukari Imma Bacardi, Lazell Daily. A few other independent filmmakers that I knew around so said OK I want to set this up. But in order to set it up I need to have a structure, a formalised structure, I can't just do it on my own to get funding all that. And it was concerned with our voice. And the title Ceddo came about. It's a it's a name film by Ouseman Sembene a Senegalese director and Ceddo means culture resistance. And so that was really um typified reallt what we were about. We were trying to tell our stories without filter.</p>
	<p><b>MS:</b> And um and also create a way in which other people can tell their stories, empowering other people, through our screenings and through our training. So that's what we were about. We then er, we then had four people that were employed in the actual workshop. Almina Davis Sister Almina Dennis, Dennis Almina Davis, June Reedd and Sukiya Ecclestone and Ujebe Masaquame were the kind of four people that were the working part. Day to Day of the workshop. And the workshop went on for about eight years.</p>
	<p><b>Interviewer:</b> What date did you set it up and where? And were you working in video or in film at this time?</p>
	<p><b>MS:</b> Ceddo was set up in 1982 I believe yeah 1982 it was set up. And we didn't initially have a building and then eventually we had a building and the funding that went with all of that. And we were also with other workshops that set up there after Black Audio Film collective was set up. Sankofa was set up. And so it was um. So we then had now, we had a a sector that kinda grew up around the workshop, and it became known as the workshop movement. Because out of that movement you had different filmmakers that emerged like you know John Akomfra, Isaac Julian and others. And yeah so and they each of us had different voices, a different way of representing you know our stories. So yes it was a movement that came out of that whole era.</p>
	<p><b>Interviewer:</b> Can I ask about class and colour? What do you see as the interplay in your life and in your filmmaking between those two? Is there a relationship? What is the relationship? And how's that played out in terms of black filmmaking do you think?</p>
	<p><b>MS:</b> Class and race. Race and class. How did it play out in my life or how did it play out in my work? Certainly my work was focused on the black working class in a sense of class. It wasn't focus, the white working class perspective was something that other filmmakers were putting together that I came into an industry and there were other people who were doing that. Third World Newsreel and various other people were. But in terms of how I interface I, it was clear that we were, I was part of that, I was part of the working class. I've come from a working class background or come from a rural background to working class background. And in this society we live in you cannot escape the class. And my work has always been erm erm looking at the Int... not so much interplay between class it's more an interplay between race that's.</p>
	<p><b>MS:</b> It's been more focus. I've been more focused on erm. And in that looking seeing it as part of a tapestry of the class so that you don't just have one voice that is but you have other voices within the working class. It's a multicultural [coughs] landscape So um so that's the way that I looked at my work. And erm but at the same time in the Blood of the Run for example. Blood of the Run is very much about class. And er and it's a very strident film in that I tried to reproduce a kinda newsreel type format. Because after the the fire in Deptford we were very angry. And um and the film and then we did a march and so on. But the film itself talks about um class as well as it talks about you know and the way in which because it extends to looking at capitalism, and our place in that so. So in that film certainly I'd um extended the the vision of the film to erm to look at it in the way of the context. But I'd always felt that the what makes me interesting is the fact that my particular story. What is my voice? So all my stories are about working class people essentially and they are part of the tapestry of working class life.</p>
	<p><b>Interviewer:</b> You talked earlier about an aesthetic that would be understood in contrast to other kinds of filmmaking. Has that been important to you? That the stuff that you make is important to you people in some senses and who you identify with. Would you care to something about that?</p>

TC	SYNC
	<p><b>MS:</b> Yeah um the style and language is important for me to the audience that I'm speaking to. And as I referred back how I said earlier about making a choice um when I was exposed to the kind of camera that was moving around the place the kind of different type of aesthetic I kinda didn't really want that because I didn't think the audience that I was reaching would appreciate what I'm saying. So my films have well have been yeah have tend to be a very straight narrative in this sense and let the power of what's said carry it more than kind of visual. And um and of course that is also something which I'm not wedded to but it's something that the films that I did kind of dictated that kind of way. I mean Blood of the Run isn't like that, Blood of the Run is much more, cos it's a march it's much more edgy in that sense. It's a different type of style in a way but it's still within a way in which people can engage. Because I always feel that I tend to work with people's emotions. And and of course obviously intellect comes into it but at the heart of filmmaking you want to bring people in emotively to what you're doing. And so I felt that to do that you have to be still. And that's kind of I guess you know part of it in a way because if you're moving around people are not, are looking at you know are drawn to your style or drawn to something else standing up but you're not drawn to you know, it doesn't always happen. I mean I'm just being general here. But that's kinda that the way that I'd looked at things.</p>
	<p><b>Interviewer:</b> The next stage of your life and Black filmmakers magazine and black filmmakers festival. An also why did you find it difficult to get stuff off?</p>
	<p><b>MS:</b> After I did Burning an Illusion. I thought the way was going to be open for me you know I mean I've done the hardest thing which must actually make a feature film which cause everybody was saying you know once you make a feature film dadada anyway. So I did all that and I thought that I would then be able to make a lot more drama. But it didn't work out that way. A number of projects were developed but never green lighted and I was getting frustrated with that process. And um til I reached a point I think in 1993 or something like to where I gave up. I literally said I can't do this anymore. I can't be, because I was more interested in um, I mean a Ceddo thing was going on but I was interested in drama and wanted to tell the story that way cos after Burning an illusion that you know. But and I was not getting anywhere. I was not um so um yeah so. And also I was getting all these comments back from the scripts you know. And so you started to doubt yourself and so you what you I was ending up in a place where I was doubting myself and that is a most dangerous place you can ever be in. And so I decided no I'm going to stop. So I kind of said I'm not making any more films. And and I was very frustrated. And decided to channel my frustration in doing a magazine of sorts.</p>
	<p><b>MS:</b> I mean initially it was just a little thing, then it kind of grew. And that's how the black filmmaker magazine came about. It was a kind of channel for my anger and frustration. And also my consistent interest in empowering others. And so I thought let me create something that could pass on some of my experience to the next generation. And the magazine was a vehicle for that. So that's kind of how thatt came about really. And what enabled me to do that was that when I was in Grassroots organisation back in the day we had a newspaper or BLF Black Liberation Front. We had a newspaper called Grassroots and and I became the editor of that. You know it was when I was about 18 or something 19 or something. And so that was key in it to enable me to think that I could do a magazine.</p>
	<p><b>MS:</b> And so you know you look at your life and you look at the things that trigger certain things because nothing just happens out of just you know. There's always some thing going on before. And so um so yeah. So I felt that I could make, do a magazine. And did got a designer in and we did a magazine. And then it developed over the years until it you know for about eight/nine years it went on and then while I was doing the magazine, early years of the magazine. Because the magazine started in 1990. Yes, is it 1990? My gosh time moves. Yeah I think it was about 1990. And er I was in Paris for a film festival and one organisers said to me oh Menelik why don't you do a film festival in London? There's no film festival in London eh? So then I started think about it. And then eventually I decide OK let's do a film festival. So I talked, you know connected with the ICA. They gave us a weekend. And um and that's how the festival and thing about what enabled me to do the festival as well is that I had been travelling with Burning an Illusion to festivals around the world. I've been meeting filmmakers and so I had a network of filmmakers. I knew the films so it wasn't difficult for me to find films do you know what I mean which most people wouldn't known of the films you know. People like Halle Garima, Charles Burnett um you know err. All kind of filmmakers that I was meeting. And so. So yeah I was in a position to do the festival and so that's again how the festival came about and that went on for what nearly 11 years.</p>

**MENELIK SHABAZZ LCVA TRANSCRIPT**

TC	SYNC
	<p><b>Interviewer:</b> So coming back to the beginning again and looking at the current situation now. A young black person trying to. What's the difference do you think for a young black person. How have things changed? Have things changed for the better for the worse? How do you look at it? Relative to that period, when you were a complete pioneer at that point.</p>
	<p><b>MS:</b> Now things have changed for the better in terms of technology, without a doubt. That's what's enabled me to even get back in the game. Because I came out of it and cos when I went to Nigeria and I was seeing what they were doing with very little equipment but it was digital equipment and then also with the digital cinema side of things coming into play. It opened up things that I wouldn't have been able to do previously. And now people got phones and so on, so the technology has really accelerated and made filmmaking open much more than at my time and also access to distribution points and so on it's there. So I think it's a very good time for filmmakers. The only difference now I think is that filmmakers don't seem to have the voice or the that the kind of the voices the kind of revolutionary or the strident or the strong voices to say something that's kind of to me missing. So you have the irony of all this equipped all these facilities but where's the voice? And so that to me is what I kinda reflect on nowadays with filmmakers is that you know a lot of talent. But I need to hear your voice. And so that's really the major difference.</p>
	<p><b>Interviewer:</b> What year was it that you and your mum and your sister turned up in London?</p>
	<p><b>MS:</b> I think it was 1961.</p>
	<p><b>Interviewer:</b> Also you spoke earlier about having two names, can you explain that?</p>
	<p><b>MS:</b> Okay. At school I was known as Thomas. Or Tom. In my tennis world I was known as Tom (laughs) and I. And they were very much linked to the consciousness of me living in a white world and wanting to aspire to that white world. And the conflict came when I then entered into the Black Power world or the black, the black power movement. And so I then began to realize that the name that I have was a name that was given to me, not so much Thomas, but my surname Braithwaite which was give, which was my slave masters name. And it was a name that was not my name. And so once I began that once I began to understand that then I thought I got to change it. And so that you know. And so um that's how the conflicts came about was because I was realising that his name that I was carrying was not the name that I want to carry. It was a Christian name you know. Anyway all these things, so that's why I decided that I need to change it.</p>
	<p><b>MS:</b> And that was confirmed when I went in Nigeria for a festival. With my first film I said to myself I can't go to Africa and a slave name. That's what my inner voice was telling me. And so I made a change. And then I went all the way, change it completely. To Menelik Shabazz.</p>
	<p><b>Interviewer:</b> Why did you choose that name?</p>
	<p><b>MS:</b> Menelik is from the. Is it Ethiopia? Sorry. Menelik is the name for the Emperor of Ethiopia and there were two one is kind of more mythical. The second Menelik the second which is the one that inspired me. He defeated the Italians at the battle of Adua in 1896 or something and kept, he was the only place in Africa that was avoided the carve up because you know the invasion of Africa 1884 where all the different nations of Europe went in and just carved it up. Ethiopia was the one, because the Italians came in and tried to take Ethiopia and he defeated them. So Menelik er Menelik because he was the emperor of Ethiopia and a victorious one. Shabazz comes from Malcolm X his name. So that was a combination that I liked.</p>
	<p><b>Interviewer:</b> Out of interest what did your mum and dad think about that?</p>
	<p><b>MS:</b> My mum. My mum had a nervous breakdown when I was about twelve and so she wasn't as active. I mean that's another story that is in way latest film that we kinda get into. But yeah they didn't have a problem. My mum later on she didn't have a problem with dad didn't really. My dad was always laid back anyway he wasn't very active in my life other than to pay the bills. So they kind of let me. I mean I, the thing about it both of my parents regardless they allowed me to live a free life in terms of do what I want to do they didn't kinda get behind me to do this or do that. And so I'm grateful to them for them for allowing me that... that space really. So they didn't really and when Burning an Illusion came out. My dad came to the opening and everybody's calling me Menelik Shabazz so he has to just go with the flow.</p>

TC	SYNC
	<p><b>Interviewer:</b> You spoke about seeing the PortaPak for the first time and you said something about hanging out at InterAction Arts.</p>
	<p><b>MS:</b> Right um the experience of the PortaPak was that it enabled me to actually film something and it was simple to operate and that it opened a world that I have only dreamed of watching film. Oh I can. You know it I suppose all of a sudden things came together. What I wanted to do in terms of having my voice always felt that I needed to speak and so here was this instrument that allowed me to do that. And so they gave us it and we went out and did some bits and pieces. So going to where the guys who were involved one of them his name was Tom. Hahaha Tom Tom. He took me. He took me to cinema action no not Cinema Action InterAction. He took me to InterAction who had like a caravan and they had this equipment in it and they would store it in or something. Anyway so I would see what they were doing at a level because what I was doing was kind of what you know just doing little bits and pieces not with any kind of education about how it works how other people are doing it. So going there I was then able to see how other people were using this equipment what kind of stuff they were shooting and all that kind of stuff. And then that's when I realised that I didn't really want to be doing all that stuff moving around too much. Um so so yeah. So that's kind of how we two interacted. One was to kind of show me a bigger picture of kind of how this equipment can work.</p>
	<p><b>Interviewer:</b> Did you shoot on video after that or on film?</p>
	<p><b>MS:</b> Yes ironically I only shot on film after that until Lovers Rock. And my last two films in fact they're the only two films I've shot on digital. Now as a digital format to perform. So yeah. Yeah. Once I went to film that was it. Once I kind of knew about celluloid and all of that and there's big cameras Aatons and Eclairs and Arriflex cameras and all that stuff I was like I was in love [laughs].</p>
	<p><b>Interviewer:</b> This archive is all about Community Video. One question I like the everyone is is what is Community Video to you?</p>
	<p><b>MS:</b> What is community video for me? Community video is empowering a voice at a local level in one line. To elaborate um we live in a culture where the voices of ordinary people. Are eroded or trampled on and even though we have all this technology it doesn't seem to be a consistent way in which the voices of um of people, ordinary people, are expressed. And so I think community projects videos is really a way to build that voice.</p>
	<p><b>Interviewer:</b> Is that why Ceddo was set up then?</p>
	<p><b>MS:</b> Yeah. So Ceddo was set up to be that kind of voice, to be a community voice that empowered people in as I said in the films that we made, telling our stories, giving a voice, in the training that we did. And in the screenings that we had. It was all about developing the voice developing the confidence and opening up people's minds.</p>
	<p><b>Interviewer:</b> Thank you!</p>