

Transcript: Creative Approaches to Race and In/security in the Caribbean and the UK (CARICUK) - Dr Patricia Noxolo

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00:00:16,559 --> 00:00:20,600

(Sound of city ambience, traffic and chatting)

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00:00:26,879 --> 00:00:28,920

My name is Dr. Pat Noxolo.

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00:00:28,920 --> 00:00:32,240

I'm an associate professor at the University of Birmingham.

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00:00:32,240 --> 00:00:35,679

I am short black woman with short grey hair,

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00:00:35,679 --> 00:00:38,159

and I am wearing an orange dress today.

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00:00:39,439 --> 00:00:41,479

My pronouns are she/her.

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00:00:41,479 --> 00:00:47,039

I am a postcolonial and cultural geographer
at the University of Birmingham.

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00:00:47,039 --> 00:00:54,640

So what that means is that I'm interested in how
people think creatively about space and place.

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00:00:54,640 --> 00:00:57,079

Hi, my name is Dr. Tia-Monique Uzor.

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00:00:57,079 --> 00:00:58,640

My pronouns are she/her.

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00:00:58,640 --> 00:01:01,119

I'm a black woman. I'm 31.

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00:01:01,119 --> 00:01:04,079

I have a short, tapered afro hairstyle,

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00:01:04,079 --> 00:01:06,680

and I'm wearing an oversized black shirt.

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00:01:06,680 --> 00:01:11,840

I am a trained, contemporary and Africanist dance practitioner.

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00:01:11,840 --> 00:01:16,200

And my research is really looking at how the embodiment of these dance forms

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00:01:16,200 --> 00:01:20,079

can help us explore issues around identity and culture

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00:01:20,079 --> 00:01:22,640

around the African and African diaspora.

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00:01:22,640 --> 00:01:28,640

The project is called Creative Approaches to Race and Insecurity in the Caribbean and the UK.

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00:01:28,640 --> 00:01:31,719

And really, it's sewing together
some things that I've done previously,

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00:01:31,719 --> 00:01:36,680

putting them all together and
then trying to create a sort of impetus for change.

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00:01:36,680 --> 00:01:42,560

So I wanted to put together those ideas that
we need to deal creatively with threats and dangers,

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00:01:42,560 --> 00:01:46,040

And that race is one of those threats and dangers.

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00:01:46,040 --> 00:01:52,480

Its starting point is really when Dr. Tia-Monique Uzor
came on as the post-doctoral researcher,

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00:01:52,480 --> 00:01:56,359

as well as Rita Gale, who was
a postgraduate researcher on the project.

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00:01:56,359 --> 00:02:00,560

That meant that we had a team,
a highly unusual team within geography.

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00:02:00,560 --> 00:02:03,760

I think actually within academia more broadly,
particularly in the UK.

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00:02:03,760 --> 00:02:08,080

Where there were three black women
working on a project that is about creativity.

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00:02:11,479 --> 00:02:16,199

Rita created a prototype of an online magazine.

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00:02:19,199 --> 00:02:23,360

Where black people could contribute
from different countries in different languages.

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00:02:26,400 --> 00:02:31,960

Each of those articles could then be translated
and also to go beyond words.

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00:02:33,919 --> 00:02:40,599

How do we think intellectually in ways that will take us
out of the sort of box of academic publishing?

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00:02:40,599 --> 00:02:43,680

So lots of beautiful photography is on that website.

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00:02:46,919 --> 00:02:51,280

And also sound, experimenting with music.

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00:02:55,039 --> 00:02:59,520

Creative people, novelists, dancers, artists

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00:02:59,520 --> 00:03:04,719

have been at the forefront of
helping people to make sense of where they are,

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00:03:04,719 --> 00:03:09,319

Why there are there,
and what place they can create out of that.

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00:03:09,319 --> 00:03:12,520
So The Noise My Leaves Make,
is really a film that I've been thinking about,

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00:03:12,520 --> 00:03:15,680
the ideas from the film
I've been thinking about for a while.

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00:03:15,680 --> 00:03:22,400
and it comes from this sense that I get that
I don't belong in the English rural environment.

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00:03:27,159 --> 00:03:30,680
(Ominous synthesised music)

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00:03:32,240 --> 00:03:36,280
There's always a conversation,
a dialogue happening between artists and academics.

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00:03:36,280 --> 00:03:40,560
But I think what we were able
to do in CARIKUK is ...

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00:03:42,400 --> 00:03:45,360
... maybe de-centre the institution a little bit.

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00:03:45,360 --> 00:03:50,520
The Royal Geographical Society
has been a really important partner to to CARICUK.

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00:03:50,520 --> 00:03:53,840
It needs to have an institutional base.

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00:03:56,439 --> 00:04:03,280

It needs not to be about three black women talking separately from the institutions that actually control knowledge production.

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00:04:10,520 --> 00:04:12,800

Hello, I'm Catherine Souch, I'm head of research

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00:04:12,800 --> 00:04:15,680

in higher education here at the Royal Geographical Society.

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00:04:15,680 --> 00:04:19,600

I'm female, I'm white, I'm quite short, my hair's grey.

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00:04:19,600 --> 00:04:22,839

I lead the research and higher education team.

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00:04:22,839 --> 00:04:26,279

So we do things that you might expect a learned society to do.

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00:04:26,279 --> 00:04:30,519

We publish journals,
we give grants to fund research.

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00:04:30,519 --> 00:04:33,680

We've got research groups
that bring together people with similar interests.

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00:04:33,680 --> 00:04:36,439

We have conferences.

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00:04:36,439 --> 00:04:41,560

We do lots of things to create networks

to bring the academic community together.

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00:04:46,839 --> 00:04:49,399

We're in the building of the Royal Geographical Society.

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00:04:49,399 --> 00:04:52,199

The organisation's been here for a bit over 100 years.

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00:04:52,199 --> 00:04:54,839

The building's got lots of different spaces.

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00:04:54,839 --> 00:04:56,959

Theatre, the Map Room.

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00:04:56,959 --> 00:04:58,399

Education Centre.

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00:04:58,399 --> 00:05:00,560

And currently we're in a room that was the old library.

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00:05:04,040 --> 00:05:07,759

I'm very familiar with this building.

It's a real kind of centre for geography.

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00:05:07,759 --> 00:05:09,759

I've been a geographer for about 30 years.

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00:05:09,759 --> 00:05:11,560

I've been to lots of conferences here,

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00:05:11,560 --> 00:05:15,199

and it's often a space

where I'm the only black person in the building.

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00:05:17,399 --> 00:05:21,120

There's lots of paintings
of old white men on the walls,

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00:05:21,120 --> 00:05:23,519

... worthies of various kinds.

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00:05:26,360 --> 00:05:31,480

People who I would not consider particularly
to be worthy as Captain Cook is down there, for example.

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00:05:33,480 --> 00:05:37,040

The artwork in the room testifies to the history

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00:05:37,040 --> 00:05:41,439

in a way that when those artworks
went up would be quite celebratory.

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00:05:44,199 --> 00:05:47,040

And in a way now,
is much more difficult.

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00:05:47,040 --> 00:05:50,319

The people running the
Royal Geographical Society are very aware of that.

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00:05:50,319 --> 00:05:52,279

While it was centred on the building

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00:05:52,279 --> 00:05:54,800

and that place does matter,

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00:05:54,800 --> 00:05:56,279

I think it's the conversations that

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00:05:56,279 --> 00:05:59,240

it's enabled to open up more broadly

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00:05:59,240 --> 00:06:01,360

with the geographical community.

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00:06:01,360 --> 00:06:02,720

So the Royal Geographical Society

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00:06:02,720 --> 00:06:04,040

have been an important partner.

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00:06:04,040 --> 00:06:05,120

They've been a great partner as well

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00:06:05,120 --> 00:06:07,839

They've been a very kind of facilitative partner.

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00:06:09,319 --> 00:06:11,959

So we challenged the map room.

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00:06:22,759 --> 00:06:25,000

The map room is a really interesting space.

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00:06:25,000 --> 00:06:28,279

It's the space from which many expeditions went.

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00:06:30,360 --> 00:06:32,879

They came to the map room to do the research,

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00:06:32,879 --> 00:06:35,240

and then they went to do the conquering,

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00:06:35,240 --> 00:06:37,040

and then they brought back maps.

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00:06:39,920 --> 00:06:44,279

We invited them to come and use
black hair techniques to plait.

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00:06:48,920 --> 00:06:52,480

We spent the day laughing together,
we played some music.

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00:06:52,480 --> 00:06:56,120

So whilst those old white men in
their portraits were looking down on us,

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00:06:56,120 --> 00:07:00,360

you know, fairly disapproving way,
we were doing our thing

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00:07:01,879 --> 00:07:06,759

It was a very unusual experience
to have the space filled with black women,

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00:07:06,759 --> 00:07:12,720

to have it filled with music,
laughter, conversations, challenging ideas.

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00:07:12,720 --> 00:07:15,199

And to be shredding maps.

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00:07:15,199 --> 00:07:17,560

So Dreading The Map was our third provocation.

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00:07:17,560 --> 00:07:20,000

Sonia Barrett was somebody
that I had worked with before.

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00:07:20,000 --> 00:07:24,759

I knew that she had incredibly interesting
ideas that tend to really engage people.

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00:07:29,040 --> 00:07:31,920

When she starts to explain it,
they seem very abstract,

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00:07:31,920 --> 00:07:35,959

You wouldn't think that people
would engage with them in the way that they do.

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00:07:38,480 --> 00:07:43,920

But actually, what they tend to do is
distil down a whole load of really complex ideas.

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00:07:43,920 --> 00:07:46,240

into one material object.

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00:07:46,240 --> 00:07:51,199

Sonja shredded some old maps of the U.K.

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00:07:51,199 --> 00:07:55,199

of the Caribbean, West Africa in particular,
of course, and then the U.S.

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00:08:00,120 --> 00:08:03,240

The whole kind of Trans-Atlantic triangle.

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00:08:05,959 --> 00:08:13,240

It has, I think, brought back to the
fore the value of engaging with researchers,

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00:08:13,240 --> 00:08:16,319

and research led creative practice.

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00:08:16,319 --> 00:08:18,680

And the way that that
can open up conversations,

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00:08:18,680 --> 00:08:21,959

the way that it can transform this space.

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00:08:21,959 --> 00:08:25,079

The legacies that that
needs to have in the building.

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00:08:25,079 --> 00:08:28,600

You know,
Dreading The Map was ephemeral.

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00:08:28,600 --> 00:08:32,000

It was right from the very beginning,
a short term installation,

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00:08:32,000 --> 00:08:35,240

And there were a
programme of activities around it.

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00:08:37,159 --> 00:08:39,679

The final session is tonight.

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00:08:39,679 --> 00:08:43,360

Which is a session where we're going
to think about those beautiful experiments.

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00:08:43,360 --> 00:08:46,399

What are the futures of black academics?

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00:08:46,399 --> 00:08:51,440

And so we're summing up all of these
agendas and conversations and questions.

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00:08:55,679 --> 00:08:59,440

What's been incumbent on us
is to make sure that those travel

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00:08:59,440 --> 00:09:03,480

Not just to audiences who
are necessarily receptive or ready to hear

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00:09:03,480 --> 00:09:05,879

some of those conversations
or to be engaged,

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00:09:05,879 --> 00:09:08,759

but as ways of opening up
conversations with other communities too.

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00:09:08,759 --> 00:09:11,759

So we've certainly tried
to push those out widely

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00:09:11,759 --> 00:09:15,039

across the spectrum of our publications,
Social Media.

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00:09:15,039 --> 00:09:17,559

I'm hoping that the AHRC
sees all the work we've done

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00:09:17,559 --> 00:09:21,000

and gives more opportunities to
other black scholars, black women scholars

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00:09:21,000 --> 00:09:24,080

to do the things that they want to do

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00:09:24,080 --> 00:09:27,399

and realise the impact that
it can have on the community.

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00:09:27,399 --> 00:09:29,679

I think one of the things that
we've done in CARICUK

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00:09:29,679 --> 00:09:34,399

is not just reach academics,
but we've reached outside of that space

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00:09:34,399 --> 00:09:36,440

to people who felt marginalised,

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00:09:36,440 --> 00:09:40,080

to artists that wouldn't necessarily
be in conversation with the institution.