Laurent John ([00:00](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=JWvdiYnYFFq4jQJXb6clb9DovSPeIozhj2dLiSy7drW5VdXw4_ZFD_-9FnL4xILIHp2lItzYl_YKILbRdltfPBNdkH8&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=0.33)):

Episode 1: African Filmmakers in the Diaspora Underground. Weyland mediates a conversation between Somerset House Studios artists Akinola Davies, Jr. and Dr. Robin J. Hayes, to discuss the role film archives play in what Dr. Hayes refers to as the diaspora underground. Welcome to the Echoic Archive

Weyland McKenzie-Witter ([00:25](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=M9RhjHkRs3W1DYEU-6cZfcaaOY9GvO1p7k16RmGZvH8UEdY_1YRQq2dsDvqDgI0hPdghoRwsPTh71RN-gWcHXlTIeyE&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=25.05)):

For some members of marginalised communities whose histories are often subverted or omitted from their history books and classroom teachings, films can be the most significant way in which they engage with the history and culture of their ancestors. As a result, the work of Black filmmakers that accurately depict the history and experience of Africans around the world not only create an essential archive, but they can be the catalyst for political consciousness and relational networks that are significant to building and sustaining what Dr. Robin J. Hayes calls the diaspora underground. Black filmmakers do this by using their work to challenge the harmful dominant representations of Africans on the continent and in the diaspora, be that in Brixton, Los Angeles or Lagos. In this episode, we'll be hearing a moderated conversation between two incredible Black filmmakers, Akinola Davies, Jr. and Dr. Robin J. Hayes. I'd like to welcome you to the Echoic Archive.

Akinola Davies Jr. ([01:27](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=58phQ0rGXn2GbndrUON7b5YtjLoIaWq-zkb_GoT0PRSfxWLDtBBW8on1QRR5O-kOEnmS5VzXYJOHZ4dvVor81vLwwt8&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=87.69)):

Hi, Robin. My name is Akinola Davies Jr. I am Nigerian, Nigerian British, whatever suits whoever's asking at any given time. I guess I'm an independent filmmaker first and foremost. I guess a lot of my work deals with, I don't know, ancestral dialogue is a lot of things I like to coin in my film. I like to try and deal with things that talk about memory, that talk about folklore, that give permission to reappropriate and create folklore and try and, I guess, maybe connect the older generation to the younger generation because I feel, maybe, at some point during formulating my practise, I thought there was a lot of information being lost. At least when I was a kid, there was a lot more, it felt like there was a lot more conversation happening, dual conversation happening in both ways.

Akinola Davies Jr. ([02:30](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=fUFSoCTXgMPd9onxVdloLjjS5Ba_MgEfSOA0Gxz5z0P33YiOOk1kPCgOg0bPYGcALKNfMRb-khvHv5KW5Jd9-7G-05Q&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=150.09)):

So yeah, I guess my work is trying to do visual reach around, so taking things that existed and theories and practises from ancestors and trying to reinfuse them in contemporary filmmaking, in a way. And it goes beyond... I do narrative stuff. I do ethnographic stuff, some commercial stuff. But yeah, I'm just generally interested in... Yeah, I'm just interested in people.

Dr. Robin J. Hayes ([03:11](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=N4F-b9yWOq8l8jjFLRxG-aO6M1Xfvvf2huP-fol7ma_Y6a9C6Ve1NYXAJT9Dgc_PBgcKHZTnLAkzEQeDkrIFVb3VicY&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=191.76)):

That's so interesting that you say that, Akinola, because I feel like an interest in people and communicating with people is something a lot of artists share. I think that's what drives us to create, often.

Dr. Robin J. Hayes ([03:28](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=7SeOwYYMUaFhjqwd3ati4Yh3b4004QEfaMxEcuWZLsqSY6oC49avqZF-fTe-3h19ltiBENOJKGRFMuOXkmkWpxaQ-fM&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=208.41)):

I'm Dr. Robin J. Hayes. I am African American and a queer and a fem woman and also a Latine and Caribbean. A lot of my work deals with intersectionality because I hold a lot of identities at the same time. I'm also from a proud working-class family, a second-generation union member.

Dr. Robin J. Hayes ([04:00](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=S-L0QXzzbP9NBq338ecgrYUMka1-WMj0I4LeOj-ZYi984qT81xnIx1Zcgcyrb7zgx3_ezzGePMfQ2N3CaD4_fTKJQ6U&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=240.96)):

I started off as a documentarian because I was an academic full time and I just wanted to make the scholarship about Black Studies that I was fortunate to have access to, I wanted to help make that more accessible to everybody and so I started making documentary films. And then, as I was doing that and doing a lot of community-based distribution and talking with people, I realised there was just a hunger for content by us and for us that really delved into the complexity of our identities and the international scope of our diasporic community. So that's when I became interested in getting into narrative. So I moved to LA from New York a couple of years ago and started focusing full time on that.

Dr. Robin J. Hayes ([04:58](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=cCVdBikOOKsuLIJ-PC3oLGGAbs30DcCErlDgT4ssK3-fZbie5pVCqfvox2GXJYYr9V4ZEYq6DhChbe_oTA9o6m2xWg4&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=298.2)):

I am actually currently writing for a show that's forthcoming called Sandokan, that's actually about an anti-colonial pirate in Southeast Asia in the 19th century. I'm working on developing some series and narrative feature films. That's a little smidgen of my journey.

Akinola Davies Jr. ([05:22](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=0RSHgeZpkMr22gVh8h_QqPCRdyX77_nN6cztUPHX3wtxNbgRuWF6bCNSIFYOM4BpJwHverhw6I8PSvd4NH8kcl8a3fM&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=322.11)):

How do you finding the shift to narrative from documentary?

Dr. Robin J. Hayes ([05:26](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=Piq9835Jv1Rbv5iz4J4g5_wNYd8-57xIN5Yv8Tg9j7qHmWFQArYtQHJkg0_Q7F5de-iP9yPLF0qoSGe3RLawtCmo71g&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=326.1)):

Well, I find that... It's been great because I think there's so much of our experience that hasn't been documented, and narrative helps us fill in the gaps. Hasn't been documented because we are part of a historically-marginalised community, Black people all over around the world, and then also hasn't been documented because... I don't know if this is the same in Nigerian culture, but certainly in African American culture, the ethos has been... So many times, even now, my friends will still say like, "Don't let them do it to you." Put on the noble face, hold in the tears, and just keep persevering despite all the obstacles. So even when people's experiences are documented, their emotional experiences are not, because we have not felt free to be sad or afraid or hurt or, if we are women, survivors of certain kinds of violence in public. So the narrative form allows me, with my understanding of the human experience, to fill in those gaps and tell complete stories.

Dr. Robin J. Hayes ([06:46](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=BVa-ndqfqQizXltQGfwCF2wmZlVbGqpxpos2I8cCXn07P56imlxcUyE3w8V03PK-d4H0R4_D3V3IWcb1F1_GOgP0Gc8&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=406.44)):

I think it's very freeing, and also it allows... This may be a controversial assertion, but I think there's more of an allowance for Black joy in the narrative space than in the documentary space. There's still, I think, a question a lot of time with documentaries, who is this documentary for? Is it for people who have lived this history or who have ancestors who have lived this history, or is it to convince people not to be racist? And I think that those are two different goals. I think they're both valid. I'm interested in making things for people who feel an investment in the Black experience and how it's lived and want to understand more about that, not people who feel the need to be convinced to endorse human rights. So that's my audience, I think. And there's more space for that, I think, in the narrative realm.

Akinola Davies Jr. ([07:48](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=3aZqbJxvY33J2Czs3k1XWU2GllJEgJT2ZjPLhgAGD6neVSkf7nJRz5zrPWxrKwljMMVDPfZxWSQQXyLGMR4ioYDClsM&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=468.06)):

What's the negotiation around... I guess a lot of conversations I've been having recently... What's the negotiation around the, I guess, resources or the capital to be able to tell those stories? Because I guess...

Dr. Robin J. Hayes ([08:06](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=GdqTRsbZ3XTHQ_1pnqaKwIUBsPV0viwkv0nJra6B9dPEk9gi1io8eZwW_i_yIaV0_k0_vsX9ZVOKL-wtMMzQsrcTgiE&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=486.36)):

You use the term negotiation and I was like, "Ah, negotiation implies that there's two equally leveraged sides." I certainly believe in the value of the stories I'm working to produce and tell. There are a lot of great ideas out here. I mean it's a marketplace of ideas. There are a lot of great ideas. It is a little bit about how much you're willing to persevere and refine those ideas and show you that you're prepared to execute those ideas great, and then it's also just a little bit luck of the draw. I mean, I think, to me, that's just what I've found and what I've observed since I've been working on this full time. It's just something that you kind of have to accept. Everyone experiences rejection. And when I say everyone, I mean our favourites, our magazine-cover stars, our Oscar winners are being told no. No one advances every single thing that they would like to advance, that's just the reality of the marketplace. So, it's hard work, but the reward is great if you succeed, and that's something that inspires me to keep going.

Akinola Davies Jr. ([09:16](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=dcIzRivKa_dRyZk7sfpFQCkmKeynim1IY9w5A9YMRP7AMVkcSkdKndKDOmVF1Y8ZIHjvJjtnCx-lTFbPtySryBFFTI4&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=556.2)):

I liked how you said narrative was freeing because that's definitely something... That's definitely a way I'd been articulating it, with my first contact in narrative, to say that a lot of my, I guess, trajectory as a filmmaker had always been in... And I don't necessarily mind it now, because it's another thing I've been saying to myself, that a lot of my work has been in service of other people's ideas or other people's resources or other people's content, for example, but I felt like narrative presented an opportunity whereby I could... Yeah, it was freeing. I could tell the type of stories I want to tell. I could take resources back to Nigeria to make the films with the local technicians, because having them behind the camera not legitimises, but, I guess, in a sense, it kind of authenticates situations. If they're not behind the camera, some of those things can sort of go awry if... yeah, basically. But very freeing, for sure.

Weyland McKenzie-Witter ([10:29](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=5SUmeWC2nOnSl2_IDm95yBVQyy1gHs8dmamS6f5qKlJhrDazD-6wkTpHWIDlupCVBzC3vub9YG9OlU87hnhWv9sZ388&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=629.67)):

For a lot of filmmakers, there's that one moment, usually in their childhood, where they're captivated by the storytelling that they see on the screen. The narrative transports them from wherever they are in the world directly into the story that they're watching and they realise the power of film. I wanted to know what that moment was for Akinola and Dr. Robin J. Hayes.

Dr. Robin J. Hayes ([10:52](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=UpPH_jyXWRwTQZcLbbQ-xmwYPzu01ZNdCcWbfqOaXEU9FwAxjot7OLlOoZ7Cp8-5zGYgmZw_x7rHz36FWmAFiaplJLU&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=652.86)):

I would say the first thing was The Wiz, which is an adaptation of both an all-Black musical and The Wizard of Oz. The musical, the Broadway musical starred the great Stephanie Mills and was directed and costume-designed by the genius Geoffrey Holder, genius Trinidadian Geoffrey Holder, and starred Diana Ross, Michael Jackson, Nipsey Russell, and the great queer icon Ted Ross. Well, Diana Ross is also a queer icon too.

Audio ([11:35](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=-KIIXUpgefwmi24rFaqxCO6GF_APTxp7ItHbAJa7fV3_haHpojWPxnW7f3FwqxGSi30tRSR_3U0zuHTkCgY7iy5xnkc&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=695.22)):

So what's your name?

Audio ([11:38](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=f-loJ_Bhe91ZKMr5LvaPY58Qf-Vv1g3BSQTYu91vLYYOov9Ua3pwZhY81iXi8AAoPYH6M-0cG5HJ4OO76WDL0AbTG2A&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=698.88)):

My name is Dorothy.

Audio ([11:41](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=gIT4KwDtGQkS4LOxFYgBwZ8zzzfvIwgqPKbcUi6yHrRPutCufABdfrEuwH96e3Cccm-oZG8e1imX6v0NJQuvDxJAH08&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=701.22)):

Dorothy and Toto. What intelligent names. Okay, Dorothy and Toto, seems like we're going to have to find our own yellow brick road. Ease on down. Ease on down the road.

Audio ([11:58](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=5D21icFvm_oPuDancKYx_G3L-U2ulQMlOD4qvVkhZE_EXm79E-bGHTYROpr8Eqodofq74mY5ARSb09Ah7PHAZ9DO50c&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=718.41)):

There it is.

Dr. Robin J. Hayes ([12:00](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=owL6Y3P2KY027XMzGWjRt51qGyGYP5HwH823_V96b7vzEV4Pc_skBCMGXX1yvQEqThiyIlZBWhFUQVpP_CjtS-jHKII&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=720.45)):

What's so interesting to me about The Wiz is that it... Sydney Lumet, the great Sydney Lumet who directed the film, made the decision to use all actual locations in New York City in the '70s. So it is a pre-gentrification New York City that is after white flight on the decline. That was the New York I was growing up in, and so it was the first time I saw unapologetic queerness and sparkle and beauty and dance in my very gritty urban environment. I think that is something that has just had a profound impact on my work.

Dr. Robin J. Hayes ([12:43](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=UlVOl7T2tP3SbXzlXF7gMekrhAg1vE7eIlxpKcTBI7lTMyff6uhtD1k3JgsiKCjZ4XYu0zzfxANRiuscOnYulcgsh6I&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=763.65)):

To this day, people will still say some of my scripts are dark, to which I counter, like, "It's not dark if this is how you live, right?" If you already understand this setting because this is what you deal with every day, you can see the hope and the joy and the humour in this. It might seem dark if you live in Burbank, or, I guess, Notting Hill would be the equivalent in London. You know what I mean? If you're living in a sparkly, abundant environment, then maybe you consider this dark. But for many of us, this is how we're living every day, so the idea that we can still have beauty and joy and aspiration is actually quite hopeful.

Dr. Robin J. Hayes ([13:28](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=9dNeOWbJWZEmSsGJIuwui3UoOJCJpLJg-GZT6KSicuBm9o5Ky25qovwl9feoXPAzF5KE2mUqvmaT8B6ECVI4LnijLUc&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=808.08)):

So the first for me, a hundred percent, The Wiz. Highly recommend. There's a Luther Vandros cameo, I'm not going to tell you where it is. Keep a lookout. There is a Lena Horne cameo, you can't miss it. It's unbelievable. The Wiz is everything, underrated.

Akinola Davies Jr. ([13:42](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=2WSbPorMOzrHGbPqvZFFzLUG14WwEKtkScv5Q_mXbDJd53JnnMhNIQ3WE1aQFu6xZ5Je1_4yeGyK6hLnSjzN0flcfec&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=822.33)):

Thank you for sharing that. I think my answers are a bit different. Because I grew up in Nigeria, the specificity of Black films... I don't think I was cognizant of watching Black films until really till my late teens, maybe. But I do remember TV shows because those were the things that we had easy access to apart from Bollywood films and telenovelas.

Audio ([14:12](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=y1Dk4lN0IVD87InDTfaA6IbWZ5tLStpIseyeAwBljNDkwVZ-L7G58HKA7a4lWpffyhkX8b2nykfhBATWGg-TN2VVAas&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=852.75)):

Why did the king said that they should not touch him?

Audio ([14:15](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=HMn6ZibWKVXhmcroWBncckOrXPJOfESoy-hbtQJ27CGu5LkP0lshJ6QiP3I82ia0qTALRw02Y5NPCg5ZkQSRE9r2cu0&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=855.6)):

The king said they should not touch him because he has become a strange being, a powerful strange being.

Akinola Davies Jr. ([14:22](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=iyH0enjU7zibahm4rDNTjph4ukfb1Fiu1j9mMHT9jwkpR-DPPNGK4bosCh_LuvEixOYf-H1h2yxWDGiOkdYTszCBYkU&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=862.59)):

Every Sunday night...

Audio ([14:24](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=x7zS428ZsPWRJK2y66KqIZUKU3RbxA8VQs4M3jRb6bP_ib845Qkw7_J13KtLtlfetP9BF_0Ke3g13y7aKvmi4w64buA&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=864.84)):

The lesson of the-

Akinola Davies Jr. ([14:24](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=WUmeATdjFJ8hXIEIF3a2IQ_82xFE6-brAG8nCc89c8UvlHp9nmAzNTGUm9Gu0eRGFH4RVzR8HR9Gv6s-qHeAn19Xczk&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=864.9)):

... on terrestrial TV, it was called Tales by Moonlight. The premise was a griot would gather in front of a hut and all these kids would come and sit in front of him or her and they would get told stories. They would get told folklore stories, and those stories would be dramatised and reenacted across the hour. Maybe they'd be about 15 minutes each, so I think we'd get about four stories in an hour. I just remember every Sunday wanting to watch that. I don't know if there's a huge archive of it left. I don't know if it was digitised or kept, but I think there's something that that has done in my subconscious, which I probably wasn't conscious of the time, is that it really lay a huge foundation for my obsession with the thing I said before, this thing of ancestral dialogue and mythology. There was always a sense of harmony between nature and humans, because in those stories you would have animals who would take on characteristics and they would talk to the humans and back and forth, and you would learn stuff, and some were tricksters and things like that.

Akinola Davies Jr. ([15:49](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=jV07Klpk2UmSgjl3rQJb6mTLgMDdORJnoJ4aorpks_5j2Vkjscu0JTw9rAvBjWXpBaRNvCCMJO3ctNUYMa2ZcV5-_fM&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=949.86)):

I'm not sure how conscious they were of what they were doing, but I like to think there was someone in there who was kind of radical and using this as an opportunity to infuse a lot of... yeah, just a lot of stories, basically,

Audio ([16:05](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=gQwwbcL-IE_qHLi677AnrmWZAlofUT3Ym9hx87EesdNZ2LCM_RzX0jeWRLkK-No9nutUwZe-BIt_MgZ8yDAfNtOWMDc&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=965.79)):

Whatever God has given you...

Audio ([16:07](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=Uq1RwocUOZuKxebou7rCiU5d3EQDMDavXWGWcBUvubPXUE3hzyoTMVv_wYvglqA8VWK_yolPG-c0fNtXi3n5mRB6JOY&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=967.38)):

We shall appreciate it.

Audio ([16:14](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=CeinVwV60yQ6G-xO-KwK8avxILph1i32Y2yo5DYfKzbRzj-hPgijRgpuwN0F0AD3K8bSRkS-HMxrLftMjbtxZBIIWHU&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=974)):

... cherish it. That is the end of our [inaudible 00:16:14].

Weyland McKenzie-Witter ([16:16](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=nYGt12dD57FQS_Q_Yh1wVTFD5OpDQ3_-3LRU0zsBP4DvvtczKrxFS9Wvz1PXZkd6gKsfHn0ARHkcV_VlMNNA440A2n4&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=976.32)):

Now that we've discussed how Black film can connect us to and help us reinterpret our own experiences, it's also important that we discuss just how it can be used to connect us to each other in the diaspora underground

Dr. Robin J. Hayes ([16:29](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=4N0bmJ4FPOpwf-b4WyilH7PzhtxMKfhNb_peOt81BCq_-QBawMt9RdLOejKV3N_Z-Bu5ZtC4pD1aoYHPydfgf3BdIog&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=989.34)):

For our listeners, Weyland is referring to an idea I have in my book, Love for Liberation: African Independence, Black Power, and the Diaspora Underground. The idea of a diaspora underground is that there is a space, there's been a space in the Black radical tradition that activists and organisations have used to forge transnational connections between Black social movements. So it's a configuration of, I say, roots and routes, in the sense that it involves an understanding of our past, present, and future. And also what I call emancipated spaces, whether they're conferences or institutions or activist homes, where we are free from a white supremacist gaze, and in that freedom, we can begin to construct different understandings of the possibilities of Black liberation. So that's a diaspora underground. It's transnational and it's something that tends to become more vibrant during periods of Black insurgency.

Dr. Robin J. Hayes ([17:42](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=ojcdcJWeBKnw9YN4lVcnYxXJDw9eu2HfsCJK1n9_LycuwrTXXdveZ9oajFETrk6XlpT8G-hvCIap8wspmYom90UJ5Jw&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1062.06)):

In my book Love for Liberation, I talk about the diaspora underground that emerged during both African independence movements in the mid-20th century and the Black Power movement here in the United States. What's interesting as you're thinking about that in terms of the Black film archive, there is actually a film by Agnès Varda, who is a French woman director, is very well beloved, a documentary called Black Panthers that is in the public domain but is also available on HBO Max here in the United States. It's just Agnès Varda hanging out with the Black Panthers in Oakland in 1968, about two years after they were founded, when Huey P. Newton was falsely incarcerated, falsely accused of murdering a police officer. Huey P. Newton was one of the co-founders of the Black Panther Party for Self-Defence, someone who graduated from the Oakland public school system unable to read and began teaching himself by reading Plato's Republic.

Dr. Robin J. Hayes ([18:47](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=XC5AFCBpit1apWaOkEnpNOUQfkIeNtC43RalNcV2Kk9BrFwtXTfgAYLKqkCN64wZekbfsusDxrkdMQT-nQ2As_o5q3w&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1127.82)):

To me, it's something... Just about every account of the Black Power movement or the Black Panthers, you will see clips from Black Panthers and you will see interviews with Huey P. Newton. You will see footage of Kathleen Neal Cleaver, who was the communications director. And in this film, I'm going to guess because it was directed by a woman, there's also a focus on women's participation and how the Panthers were a bit distinct from the civil rights movement in that they were very open and encouraging of women's leadership from the beginning.

Dr. Robin J. Hayes ([19:23](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=maIKVeIuaHYi1276VPo_svsyATXc6Y2LTvW1a7HSA6zYAvBmYMkHh4Lk56ho7VFBU0qlToX1TlyP-8pDgtLm9zZACZI&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1163.25)):

It's a half hour long. It's clearly a third cinema piece, a gorilla cinema piece. It's not high budget. And just that 30 minutes tells us so much about the organisation, how the community of Oakland was experiencing the organisation at the time. And it's a resource for documentarians and historians now, what is it, 50 plus years later. The extent to which archiving our experience is so significant and how impactful content creators can be and filmmakers can be in that work, I think, is difficult to underestimate.

Akinola Davies Jr. ([20:05](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=KlsbmTQnYfKTncqNv-qoXvliKqigO9QavL248dNkqOVZRoOdV4gusxKWUOMm-3Ft_NtqHoinwm_1bvjOLV0CC0PcYxk&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1205.58)):

Well put. I always tell people... Unfortunately, I don't have any grandparents left, but I say to people, "You should record your grandparents telling stories," because I think there's definitely a disconnect with the young, at least here in the UK, because we live in cities and the cities are so fast-paced and we're just trying to live hand to mouth or whatever, that maybe there isn't this constant dialogue and communal living that we used to engage in before, where these stories can be shared and remembered and grounded.

Akinola Davies Jr. ([20:37](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=vX097vrsKduNTR-O62yYwBk9_FhOiAcFfNTELA0FEHml_YNpSUHzZpkTivB0sgjHD-XjtYnK52QuyqaEQgA_IDCVV3c&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1237.02)):

I always say it's really important to archive, at least for me, to archive... I record my mom a lot. I record our conversations a lot, with her permission now. Before, initially, it wasn't, but now it's with her permission, in the event that I have children or my children have children or my nieces and nephews want to hear what their grandmother sounded like or the sort of stories she told and retold. I always think for families it's... I think that at least oral archive, video archive even better, but at least oral archive is super important because it kind of... Again, it's giving yourself agency and permission to say that this is of value. I don't know what I'm going to do with it immediately, but it's of value.

Akinola Davies Jr. ([21:26](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=8zY4HmuQjKTS4aQUATt2ENaU7Em-b1JCHZO8muXuZfsqiJm7hcD6aA8OKNuDWAmORwuzgBYqQnj3ZcVyjLw3g0xfA7Q&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1286.04)):

I also think, in addition to what you said, that there's also a service to be made by revisiting archive and almost repurposing archive and seeing how... For example photographs. Back in the day, everyone would get a lot more dolled up, in their Sunday best, for photographs and generations before, and digitising a lot of those images and using them to tell stories. If you don't have a camera or an iPhone, for example, if you have access to images, you can take pictures of them or whatever and create narratives around them.

Akinola Davies Jr. ([22:06](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=e5YsnB4u02uZwoJH2A8_F-sxZKVpIF0cZiggxTwiFJpE7KhmArPV818rDikP7lYwMJwcDExAAPUd2ZKWvy8kK0e7O7o&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1326.36)):

I've recently come in contact with a huge archive, which was shot, predominantly by white people, over a long period of time, across the African continent. It's so vast, but I'm super curious to see what... Because from that, things were made to suit a particular narrative. So I'm curious as to what was discarded, and actually going in there to see what becomes a value to me or someone who grew up in Nigeria. Like how do we take the things of value that were maybe discarded in some of that footage and actually tell stories that were happening at that same time that maybe weren't seen as these forefront stories? Like how do we bring those stories to the front again?

Akinola Davies Jr. ([23:02](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=eJ4w6UmmT-iVPGUMKBoIoaL_wwx-bpQZSJSGDuc3UIZT6H8Tmznp6-3_Nff2NOGqe24djwKAydKpb6j2E5rkSlTjpd0&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1382.01)):

And that has equally spurned this other idea of, within practises, to create ethnographic films of Black people in the UK. Because I think, over here, we have... It's interesting to hear Black Americans, Anglophiles, I would say. Here we are very obsessed with Black Americans. Most of our cultural leanings, especially growing up in Nigeria and here in the UK, more so now there's a confidence about Black British culture, but we still look towards Black America. That's still probably the lead in a culture that we assimilate and identify with.

Dr. Robin J. Hayes ([23:43](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=Ivexmq2Y8xoSDFlp5J3wSEsqv4lvPpVxEY_Boey4FUH7oDK9EgAEfQ1JLjILiMzkYvT8WMBF1d6r1uKtf2bLGx4VlJo&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1423.14)):

I think also for Gen Z, engaging the practise of archiving, as you were saying, it's so heartfelt to me, recording your grandparents, talking about your grandparents. I think it's especially important because you all are coming up in the flat-screen era. It's not just that your screen is flat against the wall or flat on your phone or flat on your computer, but that you don't have a way of having a tactile experience that helps you understand the passage of time.

Dr. Robin J. Hayes ([24:21](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=U4Y-1-ZwFolifCFCJOj-u_FbPUCBr-YWa1qo8owROmKWf2a_XBQjrXGqNEYP32kY586af0B3xVhyZgpCkVumlELXkVM&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1461.87)):

In my day, and I'm officially middle aged because I say in my time, my youth, back in the day, back in the day, you went from an 8-track, to a cassette tape, to a CD, to an iPod, to Spotify. Sorry about it, Apple Music, or whatever streaming music app platform you like to use. You had that understanding... And then you also, maybe your parents or your... My grandparents had a whole bunch of albums in the basement and my mom had albums. So I understood... I went from paper and what we used to call ditto machines, the old heads will understand what I'm talking about with that, to copiers, to scanning, to now, we just don't really even use paper, you're going to get a PDF and DocuSign, right?

Dr. Robin J. Hayes ([25:13](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=bv21Hm4ZIngc29HmVYfblOWB4dn-NGkUWb1cKbCUUitt99pS-j8pcmzyA3YNZ72k6uIZXDFlgC5HlCVC-MxYkEJWfgE&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1513.26)):

I have experienced in my life these changes of how I interact with objects, and that helps me understand different periods and what different periods are. When I would go to the archives as a graduate student, I would see how things were expressed differently. It was different types of paper, different kinds of fonts, different... And now you all are interacting with everything digitally. Everything is just on a flat screen. I think it's much harder to understand where you are in lived experience without that. It's like I'm watching Lil Nas X's video, I'm looking at a Langston Hughes' poem, I'm watching a John Akomfrah film, you're interacting with it all in the same way.

Dr. Robin J. Hayes ([26:06](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=Pc3YkKw68twmCjvD2ZnuE_YJ3DvvyJ0RcEMe9qnr3qNVPTGfJEO0Nb80iiNg-avQ3QW8w_mkW2S2EFALEbvORe4_2J4&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1566.93)):

When you have in-depth conversations with your grandparents, for example, your grandparents have stories to tell and their perspective will really help you understand what you have learned in school. How the actions of elites have impacted your family, your neighbourhood, your community. I think, even if you have all of the impact, all of the access to cultural studies or in the United States called Black studies, ethnic studies, even if you have all that access, having that understanding of what your family's journey has been and how it's been impacted by decision making, much, much larger than your family, is super helpful to your self-understanding and your self-esteem.

Akinola Davies Jr. ([26:59](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=sa8s4y6y2YhCAuAxWVu2Z65i3SxC3DlhAvDTL08SzvJ_VcXy3bsNBLXwh75SMZmU2Fd7maahZ-7IX_IpvCgJDBKuVUM&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1619.04)):

I quote Haile Gerima who taught at Howard quite a lot. He's one of my favourite filmmakers and theorists, I guess. But he's extremely militant, which is why I love about him, and he talks about the camera being a weapon and saying that when you use the camera, there is repercussions in the foreground and in the background. I think in this conversation around humanising the Black experience, showing it's not monolithic... I mean, I think, in relation to my work, at least, and my life, in terms of trying to travel and have communion with Black experiences around the world, that's my version of learning. I'm not an academic, but in being in situ with people and hearing their story and listening to them, I just get vestiges of information and it's the easiest way for me to learn. I think, in making film, I hope my sensitivities can leverage the way I like to learn and put that on film for other people who see the visual, moving image as a place of liberation, as a place where you can obtain that sort of informations.

Akinola Davies Jr. ([28:35](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=Q1w5mgqcvbQiDL992rXA1z370ErhFvNRt5sXJlfB5UXRZP_wJfQGUxRdbq_Hb3v0Et3KoQ8aoYkPUfy7tC3I2agGIp4&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1715.19)):

James Baldwin said, in addition, is that he was saying during the civil rights movement he felt like he wasn't... I can't remember how he said it, but he said at some point he felt like he wasn't doing enough, and someone said to him, "We need witnesses." Being a witness is incredibly important to all these movements. I think film almost falls very well into that criteria of allowing people to be witnesses, and equally allowing us to tell stories that attest to Black liberation, I guess.

Dr. Robin J. Hayes ([29:08](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=SeUPHx6ajOLJxkrDjco69Q-JNLSgBbN6bz6zc01pvNvuRPJymL60fs0nXs4iPIvevtA9iVMt4xy2s73qCVICS9kI4f8&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1748.61)):

Yes to all that. And we live much more diasporically than a lot of times we even understand. I think if you're a first generation immigrant, like you are, Akinola, it's more prescient, the distinction is more vibrant in your experience. But I talk about in my book, my grandmother, may she rest in power, every year... She was African American from North Carolina, she immigrated to Brooklyn as a teenager. Her grandmother, yeah, was born a slave, was born enslaved in North Carolina. At her church in Bed-Stuy, every year they would have Africa Day. When it was Africa Day, she would go to the Senegalese tailors on Fulton Street in Brooklyn and get her little outfit custom made with the coordinating head wrap and be like, "Take my picture. It's Africa Day." It's exciting. And then when I showed her my dissertation, I was like, "Yeah, it's about the African diaspora." She's like, "What's that?" And I'm like, "Um, what?"

Akinola Davies Jr. ([30:08](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=zMAZZtBpETUeDHdYXJ4IxEXr1giFAw_CYBbw7VjceX0QLIcdj8ymAW-lZGxKU82mgdMgt3yUugKAdrgExwUmv9cKofg&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1808.91)):

You, really?

Dr. Robin J. Hayes ([30:15](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=R6VYlwpr2Jci_-nBocKvi5rd23hJa9OlgMm0LkAcHV98I6sgUxp8iEdxfa9vCg4ecaG7LfUYO-elQ-MVnIK1xw2rgRc&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1815.24)):

You are living this. You can't wait for Africa Day every year. What are you talking about? That's it. You are not from Africa, but you understand that you are descended from it and it's a part of your heritage and that you get it, but you don't necessarily articulate it in that way. So I think, because now we have more and more awareness of the transnational nature of our identity and our experience, more and more people are relating to that.

Weyland McKenzie-Witter ([30:44](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=jzuv9NfJWr_7l6NmIvTT7FTxbl_jR3w41i_nn42ysvlu81jzYFDzVYxG5qEps7wGedrr3vXK_wl8IHTXfcYnEKITUns&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1844.67)):

We began this episode discussing the onscreen experiences Akinola and Robin had in their past that ignited their passion to tell stories on the screen. It's only right that we end this episode looking into the future. So I'll ask them what stories from the African diaspora do they think still need to be told and archived in film?

Dr. Robin J. Hayes ([31:05](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=80fnJzmGAY-s2LQHBDDmu7obE2P_62Xcwl3ywBu47kHCIl4gebBQjn3ZCQt99yj3_mLbxKtoP66b84fWpsX2FUynIPs&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1865.13)):

There are so many stories that have not been told that are absolutely fascinating. I'm really grateful to my education in black studies because I think I understand not only how many stories there are that have not been told, but also the ways in which the classics can be remixed to tell stories that centre Black women, queer women, et cetera.

Dr. Robin J. Hayes ([31:34](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=AaqlIw11d2boPdULIL9T7aTeZQOPXDKGW8-2uaHUBCJTbHeCxnCbC8oJtzzrAMbKzgFxu4M6ntBwtB4FB_5-yyhMTNY&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1894.29)):

I just finished a script that's an adaptation of Dante's Inferno that has an all women of colour and queer cast as leads. I want us to see ourselves as we have been, but also as we have not been seen in Western classics. It's something I'm working on all the time, but I think there, unfortunately... But the bad news is, for the most part, we have been excluded, not just in front of the camera, but behind the camera. The good news now is that there is an understanding that that exclusion has taken place, that there is room for a lot more, there's an audience appetite for a lot more diverse voices, not just in terms of, "Let's tell more Black stories," but let's tell different types of Black stories, from different parts of the world, in different settings, representing different cultures and traditions and histories. I think we're going to see a lot more of these stories that have not yet been told, hopefully my book adaptations being one of them, but we shall see.

Akinola Davies Jr. ([32:51](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=Mfaa1wQGZykSjPDNZYrJw40pnUkaRuQKniERTgRoDo274ICh7W5E3tdgCUQYwJBEZ2MJYrJp7AiCcyJpM-sIQ4XaRrs&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1971.63)):

Amazing. Yeah, again, as Dr. Robin says, where do you even begin? I think what's really exciting is that there is a humongous archive from which to draw from, from period, to contemporary, to... And just the characters are so... There's so much intersection in a lot of the character stories, whether it's a Caribbean story, or Black Mexican story, or Afro Mexican story, there's just so many stories that exist and are out in the world, whether it's Aboriginal... These are all Black people with different Black experiences across the world, to a point where, some of it, you haven't even really considered. I remember when I got told there was Black Mexicans, I was like, what? It's completely fascinating.

Akinola Davies Jr. ([33:49](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=C_Sr4vLZys-lCuxYcPYoBdcfqF7EbtUry5jIDWni-BAHPPmsRzZRwWfHm-leaYUmW9Q1pfwMkSxmLDPKbFLW4A1KRxo&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2029.62)):

But, I guess, to answer that question more directly, there's two stories I'm super fascinated with. I'm not necessarily, at the moment, invested in being the one telling those stories, but there's stories I'd love to see. One is that of Brother Thomas Sankara, who's one of my heroes. He was Burkina Faso president in the early '70s, I want to say. He was very progressive at the time. He did a lot, basically.

Akinola Davies Jr. ([34:21](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=CXQ3JcVTam9tXYXZipwxO7zFoT1ekV0B9b_mRViesImf1El3fAG5mkuJITWmU9IhvDYuEAbS1ZLVlMLB2ysRRnQt0Sg&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2061.15)):

I have to list a lot of what he did, but basically he rebelled against French imperialism, which ultimately caused his demise. In a country that didn't have a lot of resources, he created programmes for immunisation, which led to Burkina Faso being one of the first African countries to be totally immunised from, I think it was, polio at the time. He led the charge for having 50% female representation in his cabinet. He changed the name of the country from Upper Volta to Burkina Faso. He did so many things in terms of restoring a lot of value and a lot of humanity to the people of Burkina Faso. He's kind of earmarked as the Black Che Guevara, basically. He was also best friends with Fela Kuti and he was quite a keen musician as well. I think his legacy is something that really needs to be honoured as best as possible, because he was young and he was a revolutionary and his service to his people ultimately cost him his life, as it did a lot of revolutionaries.

Akinola Davies Jr. ([35:35](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=209_aERO5GCHKANUtKvd8uOCGFNTqykuO9iXAEyD1m1U1RvApZ3M1l0sYOPi9whD5U6DA9kD7hqAv9xEBGtjYJH9sfA&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2135.37)):

Another is even further back, it's queen Amanirenas. I remember hearing about her such a long time ago. She was a Nubian queen who fought Julius Caesar and won, basically, numerous times, with guerilla tactics. She was a complete brilliant strategist. I think, similar to what you said about Agnès Varda, I think there's a lot of... The way she presented the Black Panthers, I think there's a lot of, obviously, histories told by the victors, but within that, even the victors have an agenda, right? So a lot of the organisation, a lot of the facilitating strategy was... Within all of our communities, women were, and as proved through social liberation movements even in the United States, that Black women, queer women have always been at the forefront of a lot of these movements. And I think even in pre-colonial Africa, that would've been the same. I think stories like hers are extremely powerful.

Akinola Davies Jr. ([36:41](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=EDdwpPaqzA6K7eLUCiUulPJ0X405IdanvfWREhJxlFo52zxG_5wENwNuRGq6O6SJSuyquiQDldwN9n2cNIegQg2ZkqE&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2201.91)):

But yeah, that's two. I could name another 15, basically. But I think those two are the ones that live rent-free in my mind, basically. Let's put it that way.

Laurent John ([36:54](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=r4CNBnYJ1Av7RFS_BJxr1x5IDb-xbyHQmS0rz8OP2kWngByFPFnXqEe60lTtLoUEVqk9yX0tg8H-3TDQKt8sLxoh9gc&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2214.42)):

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