

LINTON KWESI JOHNSON



Linton Kwesi Johnson is a Jamaican-born reggae poet and recording artist. He travelled to London in 1963 to attend secondary school and later studied Sociology at Goldsmiths College, University of London. In 1977 he was awarded a C Day Lewis Fellowship, and went on to work at the Keskidee Centre as the Library Resources and Education Officer, the first home of Black theatre and art.

His poetry is largely political, focusing on topics like the difficulties of being an African-Caribbean in Britain and British foreign policy, as well as topical political developments. Linton Kwesi Johnson was the first Black poet ever to be published in the Penguin Modern Classics series with his collection *Mi Revalueshanary Fren*.

Claire Armitstead, *The Guardian's* associate editor for culture and a trustee for human rights organisation English PEN, was on the judging panel that awarded him the PEN Pinter Prize earlier this year. The prize celebrates freedom of expression and the artist's ability to accurately portray an honest look at society and political policy. She said: "He is a poet, reggae icon, academic and campaigner, whose impact on the cultural landscape over the last half century has been colossal and multi-generational. His political ferocity and his tireless scrutiny of history are truly Pinteresque, as is the humour with which he pursues them."

political

ferocity

reggae poet

distinctive

voice

NOMINATED BY: CAROL KILGANNON

"For Linton Kwesi Johnson writing was a political act and poetry was his weapon. He wrote in a distinct Jamaican voice that spoke proudly and directly to the Windrush generation in Britain. His poetry charts his own journey of thought and experience through time as a Black, ex-colonial, Jamaican, working-class, British man. It maps a voice and experience of a generation that rarely were given a voice and it has preserved and raised that voice up, carefully sheathed within the cultural scabbard of prose and poetry. I'm Irish, I get the importance of that."