

ViệtSpeak X Small Axe

Forum Notes

The title of the film anthology, *Small Axe*, comes from an African proverb popularised in the Bob Marley song (1973) of the same name, “If you are the big tree, we are the small axe.” The films were 11 years in the making and was a very personal project for director Steve McQueen, who has spoken of the importance that *Small Axe* was a BBC production and given a national platform, despite their relative uncommon knowledge.

The forum will feature a screening of key scenes to act as a springboard for discussion from panel members and audience. Speakers will be invited to reflect from their own experience, insights from the petition, also screened, to save the Footscray Primary Vietnamese-English bilingual program and the formation of ViệtSpeak.

Panel members

Session 1 - Kim Kruger, Jorge Jorquera, Anh Nguyen Austen

Session 2 - Helen Ngo, Lew Zipin, Marie Brennan, Joe Miranda

Moderator - Hoang Tran Nguyen

Session 1 Voice 12:30 – 2:15pm

The *Small Axe* films are set from the late 1960's to early 1980's. Beginning with *Mangrove* (1968) depicting gains for marginalised communities, the series is bookended with *Education*, and a rising Margaret Thatcher. The films were first streamed in 2020, a year of pandemic. What does the gap between the era depicted in the films and the time they were screened represent?

Session 2 ViệtSpeak as a Node 2:45 – 4:30pm

The films *Alex Wheatle* and *Education* chart the evolution of its central characters from cultural identification to politicisation. The online petition to save the Footscray Primary Vietnamese-English Bilingual Program featured signatory comments that mapped the interweaving of diasporic and de-colonial concerns. What are the small axe/acts that resonate between the films, the context of ViệtSpeak and Melbourne's western suburbs?