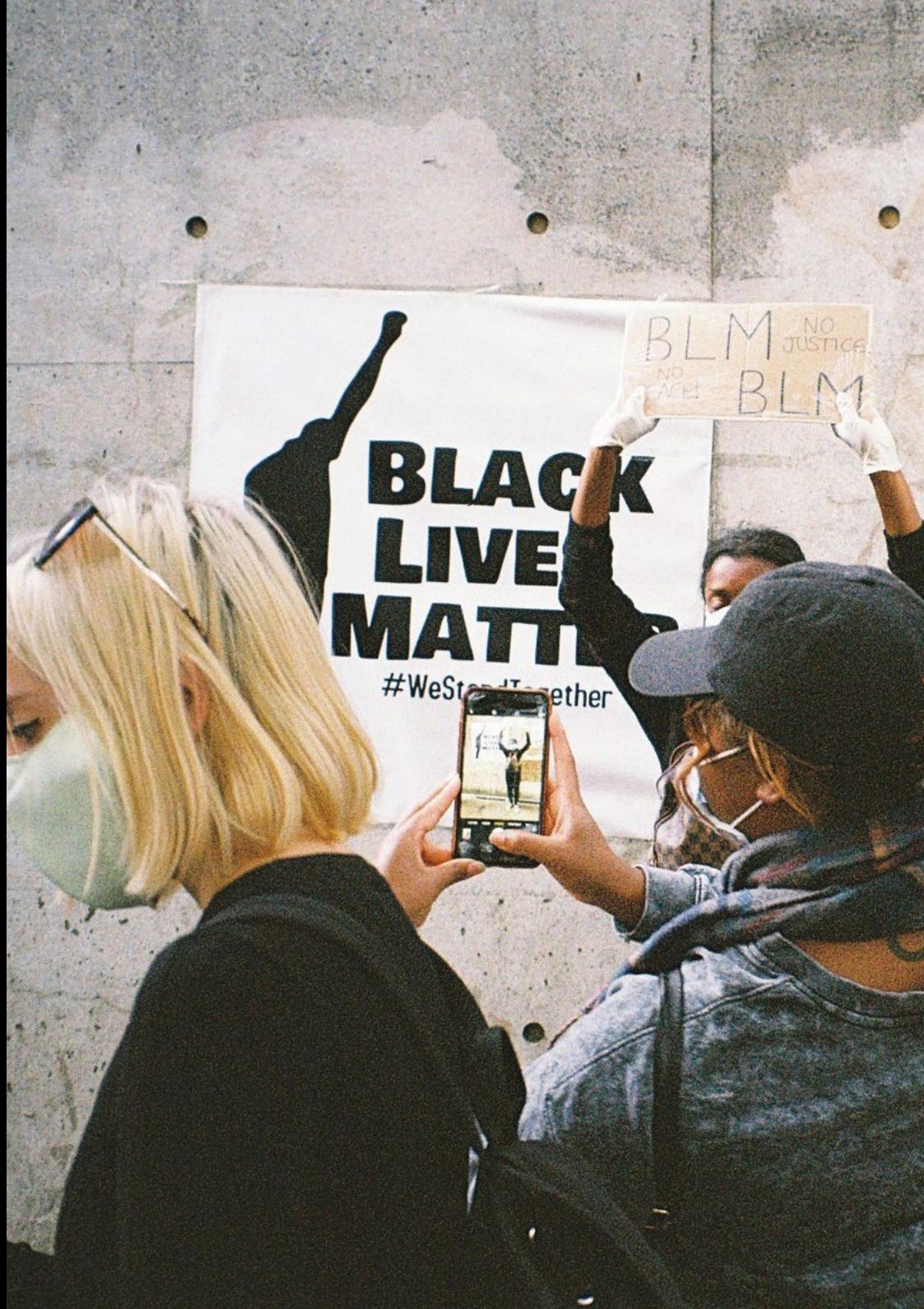
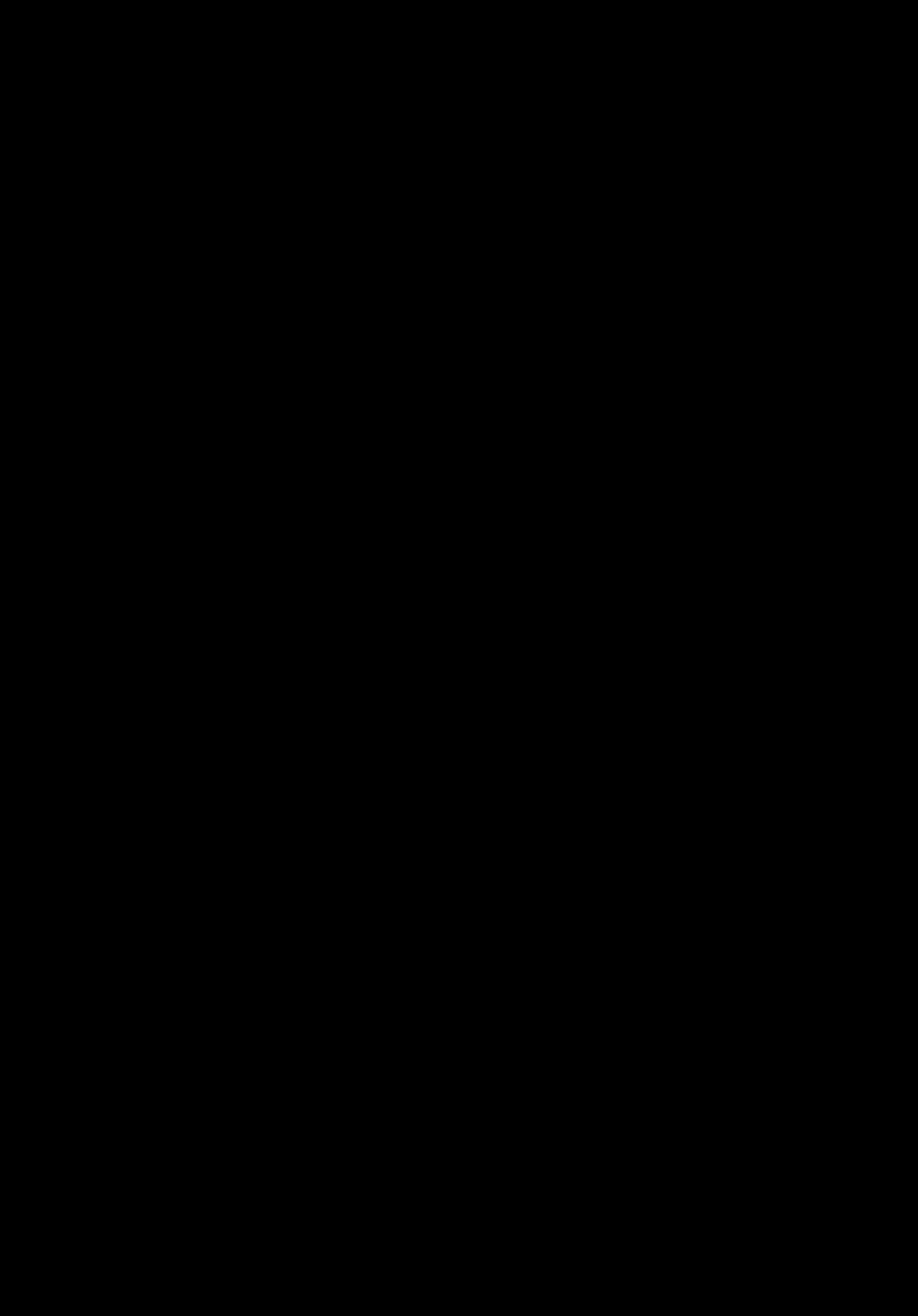


AN
OTHER
EXPLORATION
OF THE BLACK
UTOPIA
EXPERIENCE



WMO MADE BY THE WMO

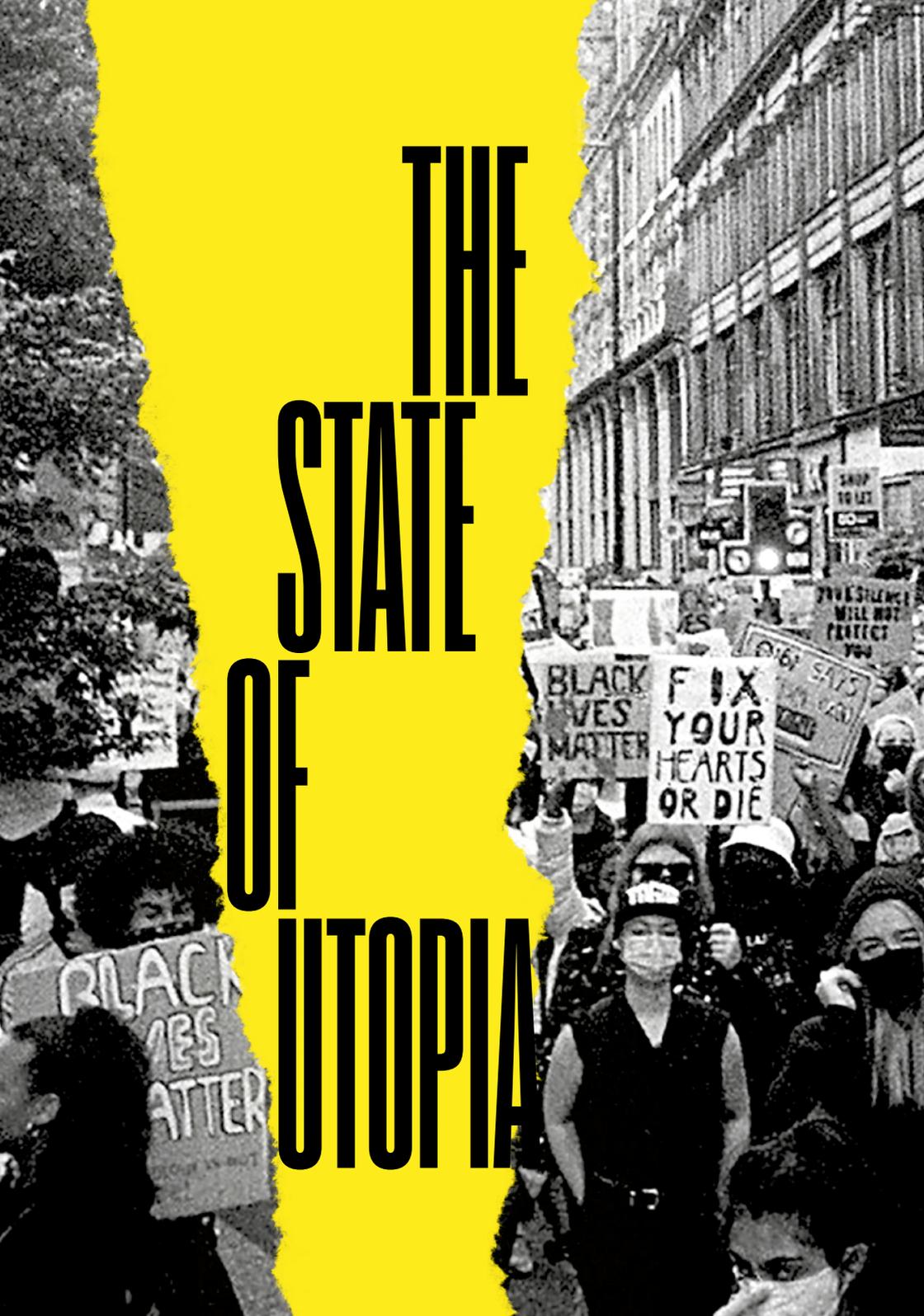
This zine has been made by the Whitworth Young Contemporaries (WYC) with contributions from our friends. WYC is a group of young people who met weekly at the gallery (and now online) to connect art, ideas and communities.

Earlier this year we curated an exhibition at the Whitworth that explored the theme of Utopia. We created a space that uses the Whitworth's collection to start a conversation on what utopian-thinking looks like for young people today.

While curating the show we realised that there wasn't much diversity in the Whitworth's collection and the story of Utopia we were telling was from a very white perspective.

Then lockdown and the Black Lives Matter Movement happened and we wanted to do more to counter this singular narrative. We met weekly on zoom to discuss BLM and the role of places like the Whitworth to change things.

This zine is formed of the conversations we have had and the artworks that we have made in response to Black Lives Matter. We have included some work by black artists that inspire us and a reading list at the end so you can find out more.



THE STATE OF UTOPIA

utopia
an imagined place
a state of things
perfection

the need for change
a wanting for the
better
a greater good

vague in concept
push millions
to ask for more

hope

voices
fighting for justice
centuries of oppression
turn to action

a want for change.
a change is wanted.

POEM
WYC member Savanna Goldman





WYC member Savanna Goldman Collage, Paper and Ink



WYC member Maira Rabnawaz interviewed a number of young people to find out what it was like growing up black in Manchester.

How was your experience as black and queer person? And what challenges you have faced?

I went to a predominately white primary school where there were only a few black and Asian people. I remember feeling so ashamed and embarrassed about my culture and heritage. I wanted to assimilate and fit in with the rest of the kids.

In high school I was the only feminine black boy and I didn't play football. I watched shows like RuPaul's Drag Race, Glee, How to Get Away with Murder, Legendary and so many more. It was through these programmes that I came to understand that there were other people who were like me who also existed outside the predominantly heteronormative space I had grown up in.

These TV shows gave me so much courage and confidence to feel proud of who I am. There were many, many times where all I wanted to do was be normal, but with all the struggle and pain that comes with being both black and gay I don't think I would trade it in for anything. There is so much beauty and strength with being black and gay and I'm finally at a place where I can truly say I'm proud to be both.

THE

POEM

Soria Nichols

BLACK

PHOTOGRAPH

WYC member

Abdimalig Ibrahim

BIRD

To X,

The black bird cries.

Why does the black bird cry?

Isn't it strange? Such a divine bird with such power and such indescribable beauty.

A forgotten masterpiece. Magnum Opus.

What a delicate assortment of inky feathers.

Of modest humility.

For the black bird knows little of its charm. Not quite the English rose. No...

...Something else. Something further. As the rose knows nothing of the daily toils of the bird.

The constant strives for love and acceptance.

Appreciation and veneration.

In a land where they are shunned by those who so blindly live. They attempt to denounce its innate excellence and steal its treasure for their own bulging chest.

A vision blurred by the conventions and tainted by the traditions as they are so willingly led down the grey path of injustice and immorality.

And so, the black bird is forced to live a life with an empty heart and a crowded mind whilst the rose prevails...blooms.

An antithesis.

Black and white. Less and more.

And yet who are we to decide who is less than or more than?

For when the day dawns and the sun ascends.

The black bird will be draped in the golden veil of life and it will recognise its own true worth. And the black bird will soar.

Yours, faithfully Y

UNTITLED IDENTITIES

‘what seems a potionless rambling at times’

Written by Mercy HendersonScarlett

Photograph by Abdimalig Ibrahim

I think about the myth that somewhere we have transcended racism. This ‘we’ I use loosely, I mock the idea of a unification and the idea that this is fact. I also smirk if ‘you’ consider ‘me’ in the equation of ‘us’ in ‘our’ fight against white supremacy. Most may associate the violence of racism as a sea of far-right patriots, marching through the streets, yet you should not. It is the aftermath of this explicit violence which soaks through the cracks to suburbia, the mundane, that is the real threat. Perhaps the focus (of what seems such a pointless rambling at times) is a certain cognitive dissonance. It is impossible to believe Britannia’s legacy of colonialism has evaporated from British soil. Somehow fascism is an exclusive explicitness in which the majority of our ‘progressed’ population are not attached to through ideology. Yet, because of the un-comfortability when addressing internalised racism, you subconsciously

assimilate into this violent structure. You indulge in practices of white supremacy to avoid psychological distress. A door which unknowingly you open and escape at times to feel comfortable..., protected. Most of my life I have been aware of the detachment my race brings before facts and statistics were tangible. I remember a certain anxiety lingered constantly in the air from primary school. I navigated through predominantly white spaces trying to unravel my own identity through such a skewed lens. Now those who used slurs against me are showing support for movements with a lack of transparency. Ego of course is at the forefront, to be confronted and criticized removes pride even when my humanity is regarded. I can’t quite articulate a black utopia, but I can envision the foundation of one beginning. You purge the weeds which have grown untroubled in your suburbia, in your own garden.



THE OTHER STORY

THE OTHER STORY IS THE NAME OF AN ART EXHIBITION THAT OPENED in 1989 at the Hayward, and toured to Wolverhampton and Manchester Art Gallery in the 90's. This show included 24 artists of colour who depicted "The Other Story" of Britain.

We decided to focus on 10 black artists featured in this show, who have been very influential on the art scene regarding race in the UK. We feel like they are important names that maybe not everyone knows about.

There were many themes explored in the exhibition, and the artists were grouped together where they had similar themes. One idea explored was the idea of non-white artists having their own section within modernism. *"Realising that the country they had adopted was not sympathetic to their modern aspirations and ambitions, they incorporated the values and sensibilities of their own cultures in their work."*

Another idea within the exhibition was that art is a by-product of the bourgeoisie, and that it was the artist's duty to connect art back to "normal" life, and while doing this recognise *"making art objects was no longer necessary; art was a process or an intellectual discourse."*

There is also a theme of political change in the show, as artists were impacted by the Women's Movement and Black Power. These pieces have themes of "displacement and loss". *"The voice which emerges is the voice of the 'Wretched of the Earth'. But it is also a voice of hope, a belief in a future from which the inequalities of racism and sexism are eliminated."*

Artworks in the show revolve around the artists' dilemma, of expressing their cultural identity in their work and highlighting its importance, but not allowing that to be all they were seen for. *"not merely re-establishing one's cultural identity, but how to incorporate it into a critical practice that recognises difference and confronts cultural stereotypes."*

^The quotations are from the wall text in the exhibition.^

Here are a few organisations that have been integral to the progression of black artists in the uk. The artists we focus on are connected to these organisations in particular.

WPAC

Working people's art class, 1948 was the first art organisation created in Guyana, whilst under British rule. It nurtured many great artists and made art accessible.

Donald Locke

Aubrey Williams

CAM, The Caribbean Artists Movement, 1966 was a movement that allowed Caribbean artists to meet and express artistic ideas to each other, first privately but they then in public sessions.

Ronald Moody

Eddie Chambers

Keith Piper

Lubiana Himid

BLK art group, 1979

Created by 4 art students in the midlands, Chambers, Piper and their classmates Donald Rodney and Marlene Smith. They share a theme of politics in their art, all drawing attention to the issues they feel being black in the world. BLK was integral to the creation of *INIVA*.

Sonia Boyce

Institute of International Visual Arts, 1994 INIVA was made to combat the way culturally diverse artists and curators were shunned in the art world. It was funded by the Arts Council, and is based in London.

Gavin Jantjes

Eddie Chambers was born in Wolverhampton to a Jamaican family. He created the BLK group with fellow "the other story" artist Keith Piper in Wolverhampton. He became successful while making political work about the UK in the 80's.



Keith Piper was born in Malta and raised in Birmingham. He met Eddie Chambers at Lancaster polytechnic. He makes art where black culture comes into contact with western culture. This painting is an example of

of his practice: it's in **Manchester Art Gallery**.

Ronald Moody was born in Jamaica and moved to the UK at 23, where he first became interested in pursuing a life as an artist. He formed CAM with Aubrey Williams.

His brother, Harold Moody, is a famous anti racist campaigner. Ronald Moody has a crater named after him on Mercury!



Aubrey Williams was a part of WPAC when he was a teen in Guyana, with Donald Locke. He was displayed at the Whitworth in 1964! This is around the same time he began CAM.

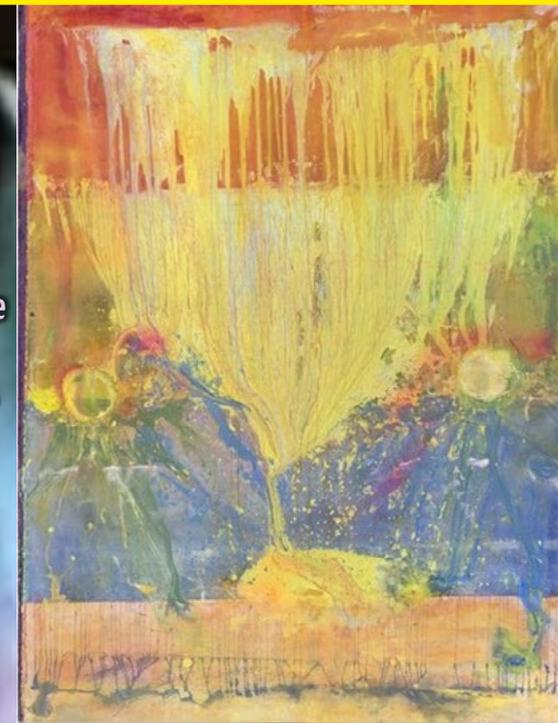


Uzo Egonu was born in Nigeria, and moved to the UK young. He only returned once in his life to Nigeria. His work "placed Africa as the touchstone of modernism. In combining the visual languages of Western and African art, he helped re-define the boundaries of modernism, thereby challenging the European myth of the naïve, primitive African artist."



Donald Locke is an artist who was born in Guyana while the country was under British reign. His work is largely about his experience of British sovereignty in the country. He was part of WPAC in Guyana, experimenting with materials like concrete and molasses. He moved to Edinburgh when he was 29, working with ceramics.

Frank Bowling was born in Guyana. He started making work with political undertones, but came to the realisation that he wanted to pursue abstraction instead. He trained with David Hockney, the two competing for achievements throughout but he never reached the same level of recognition as abstraction wasn't popular in the UK at the time.



Gavin Jantjes is a South African artist who left during the apartheid. His work revolves around the obsession with colour in South Africa. He was involved with the creation of INIVA.



Lubiana Himid moved to the UK as a baby. She has played a huge role in the exposure of Black female artists to the UK art scene since the 80's. She was one of the first artists to join the BLK



She makes colourful theatrically staged work with political themes. She's on the board at the [Lowry Gallery](#)



Sonia Boyce was born in London and makes work about being black. She often collaborates with other artists with a shared perspective and has been involved with [Manchester Art Gallery](#), making decisions about their shows.

THE 10 ARTISTS YOU SHOULD KNOW STORY

RESEARCH BY
WYC member [Roisin McAuliffe](#)



WYC member Maira Rabnawaz interviewed a number of young people to find out what it was like growing up black in Manchester.

How was your experience in higher education as black person?

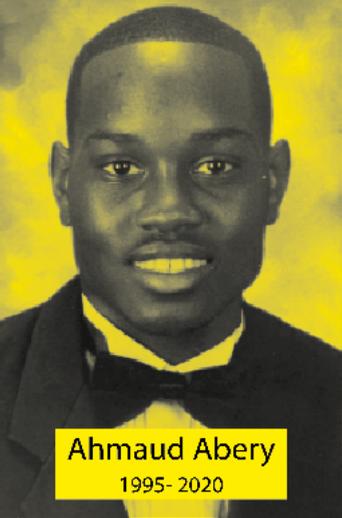
My experience in college was definitely affected by my skin colour. When I was finding my subjects difficult I always felt there wasn't anyone to help me. One time I was struggling with a biology assignment and therefore I went to seek help from the teacher. I was told that she didn't have time to see me and that instead I should use the internet to find out more. The next day my friend, who was white asked the same teacher for help and she was invited to stay behind after lessons for extra support. I felt disappointed and hurt. This made me see my skin colour really was a problem.

How did your identity effect you in your career?

At work I haven't affected any problem with my identity and as a black Muslim woman, so far so good.



ALL PROTEST PHOTOGRAPHY
WYC MEMBER ABDIMALIG IBRAHIM



Ahmaud Abery
1995-2020



Breonna Taylor
1994-2020



Sandra Bland
1989-2015



Tamir Rice
2002-2014



Belly Mujinga
1972-2020



Elijah McClain
1996-2020



Shukri Abdi
2002-2013



Layleen Polanco
1992-2019



Mark Duggan
1982-2011



George Floyd
1973-2020



Stephen Lawrence
1974-1993



Tony McDade
1982-2020

DON'T FORGET THEIR NAMES

AHMAUD ABERY

BREONNA TAYLOR

SANDRA BLAND

TAMIR RICE

STEPHEN LAWRENCE

TONY MCDADE

BELLY MUJINGA

ELIJAH MCCAIN

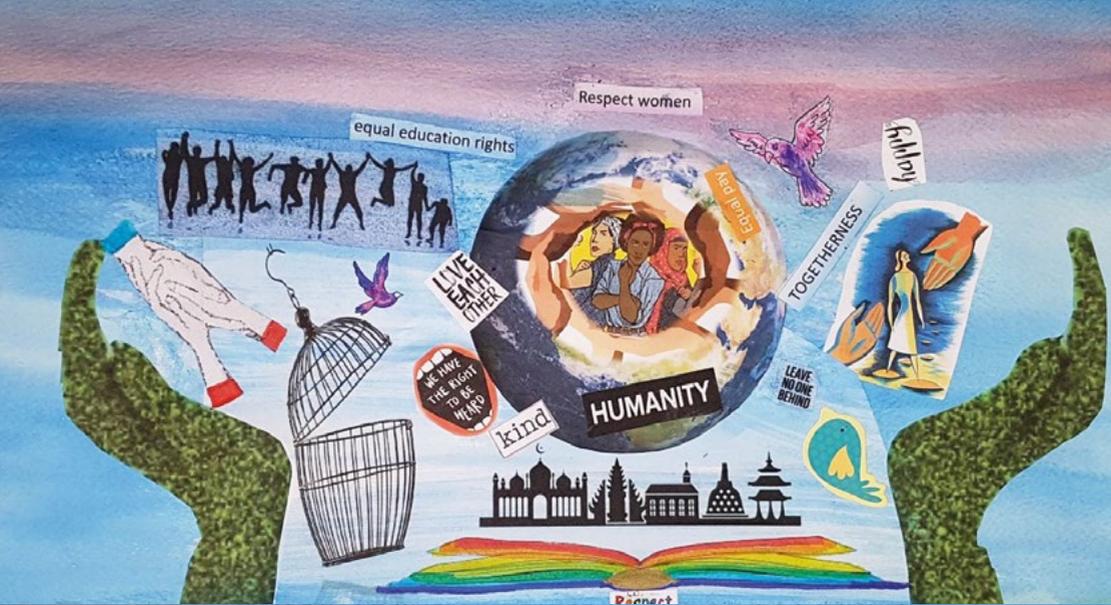
SHUKRI ABDI

MARK DUGGAN

GEORGE FLOYD

KAYLEEN POLANCO





ART
LET
IS
ME
THE
BREATHE
AIR

WYC member Maitra Rabnawaz Collage, Paper and Ink



WYC member **Maira Rabnawaz** interviewed a number of young people to find out what it was like growing up black in Manchester.

How was your experience in high school as black person?

It feels normal to be a black person in high school because I believe we are all created the same. At the end of the day, we are all human no matter if you're white or black.

However sometimes we were treated differently because of our skin colour. There were some teachers at school who just never liked me and I knew it was because I was black.

How did your identity effect you in your social life?

My skin colour has affected me in so many ways. People make assumptions about me and tell me I can't do this or that because of my background. They say it as a joke but it hurts and makes me feel bad about myself. After all, my colour and gender does not mean anything because I am human. We are all human.

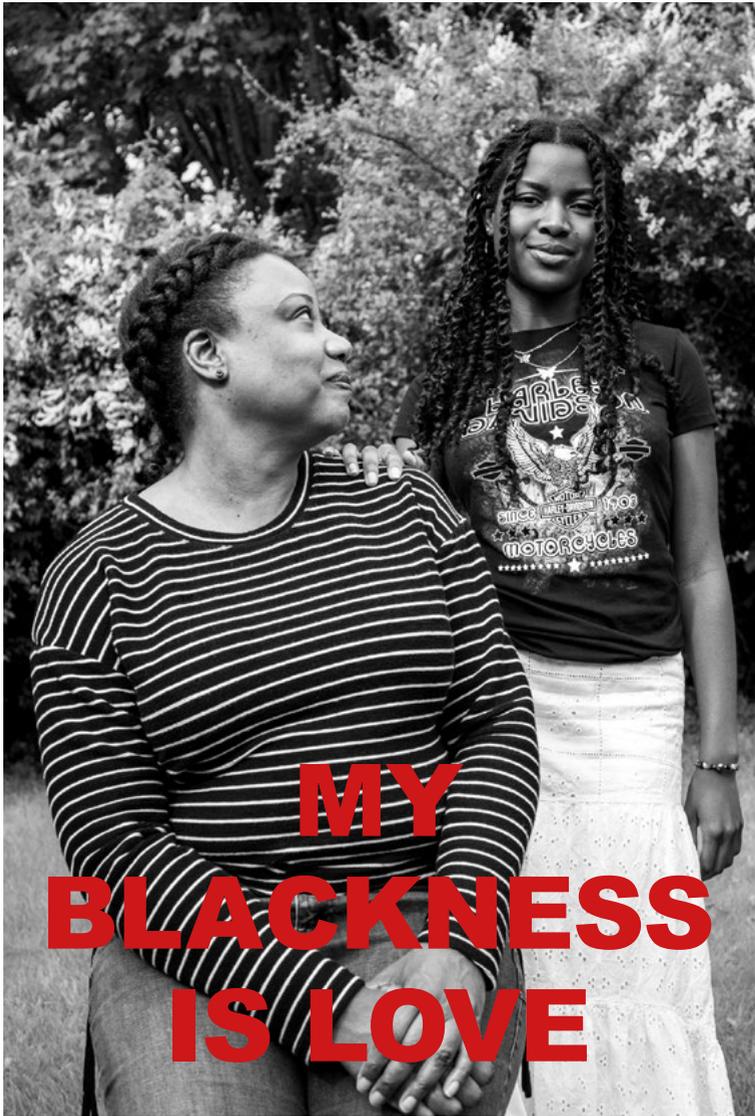
In your opinion what is the importance of education about diversity in schools?

In my opinion diversity is important in schools, because we are all coming from different backgrounds to get education and become better people. I wish every school could educate children about equality and diversity. The world we live in is tough and we see kids stab or get stabbed, bully or be bullied and stand in judgement of each other.

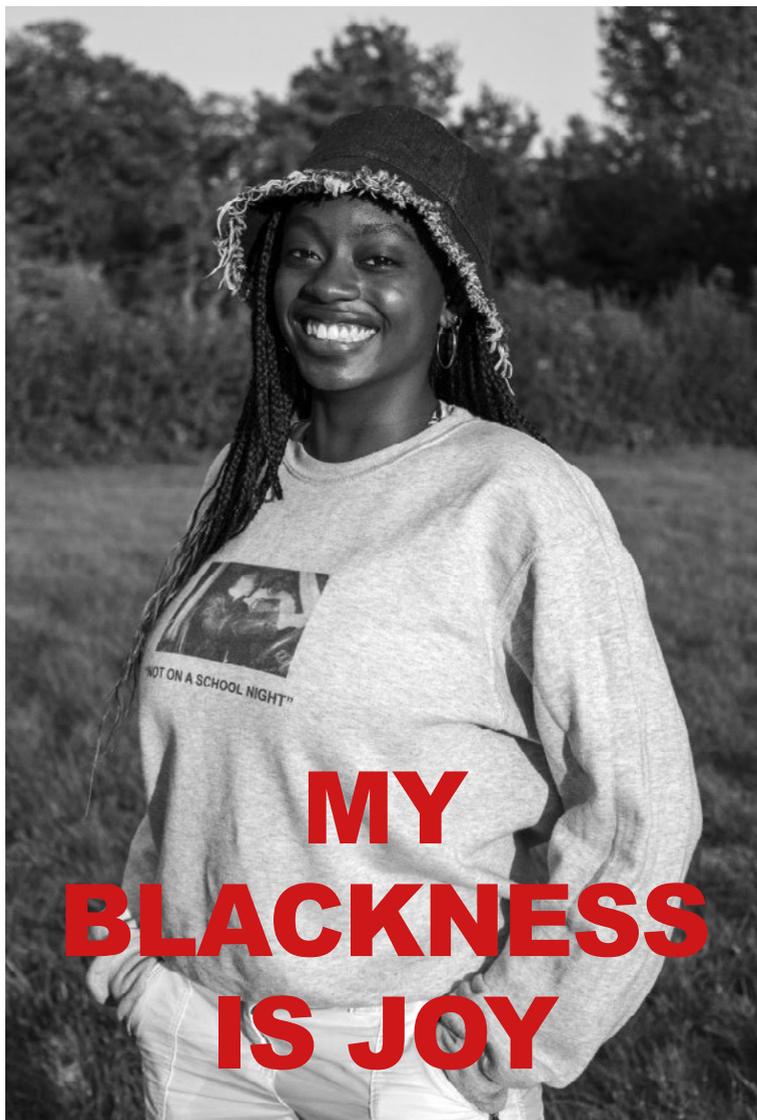
We are all human.

A PHOTOGRAPHIC SERIES BY WYC MEMBER ABDIMALIG IBRAHIM

MY BLACKNESS IS
LOVE

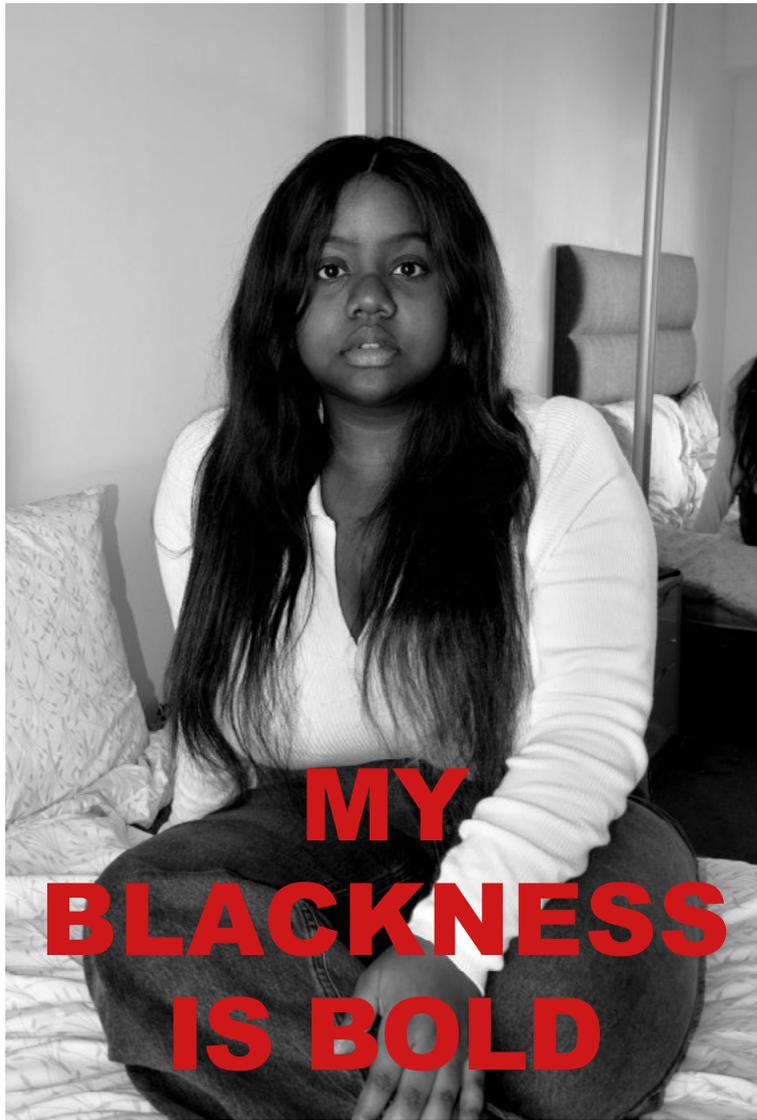


Nicola Miles & Desireé Miles
by Abdimalig Ibrahim, Manchester
2020

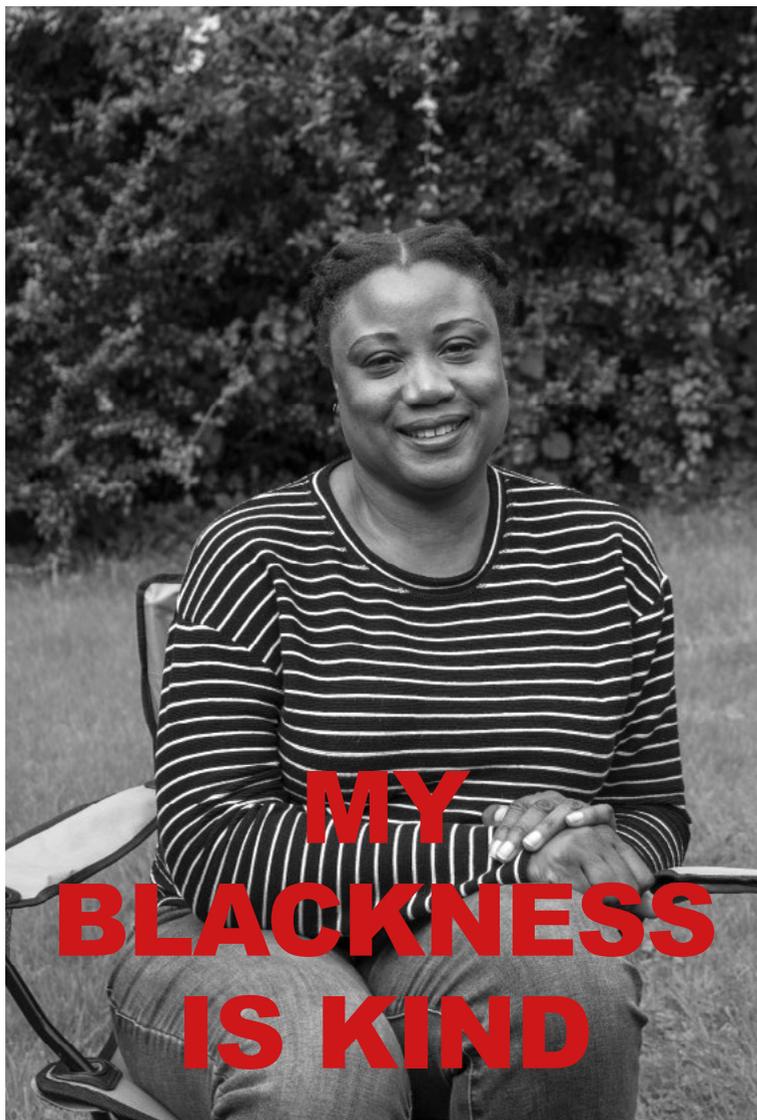


Soria Nichols

*by Abdimalig Ibrahim, Manchester
2020*



Zeynab Hassanali
by Abdimalig Ibrahim, Manchester
2020



Desireé Miles

*by Abdimalig Ibrahim, Manchester
2020*



When the color of your skin is seen as a weapon, you will never be seen as unarmed.

BASED ON THE LIFE BLACK ONE EXPERIENCE

① Wishing You Weren't 'The Other'



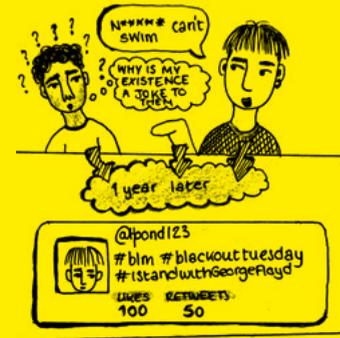
② Being Judged By Your Skin First



③ The Oreo Insult



④ The "Of course I was Never racist"..roast



⑤ People treating you like a pet...again.



⑥ White = default option



⑦ Being treated like a exotic "pet"



⑧ Using black freinds to make you seem cool /less racist.



⑨ Feeling forced to go along with racist jokes to fit in



⑩ Growing up mixed race = never really fitting in



BY VIRTUE WYC
Nicola Miles
Abdi Ibrahim
Soria Nicholson

Alia Lowers
Millie Sheppard
Miles Pillanger
Marianne Storer

MEMORIES OF

ILLUSTRATIONS
Marianne Storer

WORDS
Pearline Storer

My Memories of Discrimination
Growing up in England

DISCRIMINATION

I can't really say that I had a lot of discrimination growing up in England. But when I look back and think upon the subject, there were quite a few, however, at that time we took it as normal.

My earliest memories was living in a room with Mom, Dad and my brother in Handsworth, Birmingham. This was the first place that Dad and later Mom lived when they came to this country. It was owned by a Black couple who let rooms to three other Jamaican families. Dad was lucky enough to get a room there, as he had a friend who had sourced it for him, so his accommodation was sorted prior to docking in South Hampton. Unlike some of his friends, Dad didn't have to endure the 'No Irish, No dogs and No Blacks' signs. Mom and I joined Dad later, Mom was heavily pregnant with my brother. She was met at Heathrow by Dad and his friend on December 31st and my brother was born 20th January.

My parents came to this country so that we, their children and future generations, could have a better life. At that time England wanted people from the colonies to help bolster up their work force. It was supposed to be the mother land, flowing with milk and honey. However, this was found to be untrue, many Jamaicans worked on the buses, in factories or as nurses. Dad was lucky as he was employed by the Midlands Electricity Board (MEB) as a Joiner. Dad was a gifted cabinet maker and if he had stayed in Jamaica he would have inherited his bosses business. Mom was a gifted seamstress who could just look at a dress and replicate it without a pattern and it would fit the person it was for perfectly. However, in those days she only earned a pittance at home and sometimes wasn't even paid for the hours she worked.

So what are my memories? We were lucky to get a two bedroomed house in Water Street which belonged to the MEB. It had originally been a 3 bedroomed house with an outside toilet and back yard, however, they had converted one of the bedrooms into a bathroom. My parents had 5 children there, me, my brother, twin boys and my sister. I remember being very happy there. We were right next to the electrical generating station and surrounded by warehouses.

I remember my first day at infant school and crying for Mom and my siblings. The teacher was very kind. I was the only black child in the school at that time until my brother was old enough to go to the school. I remember some of the children touching me to see if my colour would come off on them, which it didn't. I know that some children called me names, not because of my colour but because Mom always made sure we were clean and nicely dressed for school. However, some of the children weren't very clean and their clothes were dirty which of course resulted in them smelling. One thing I hated was the fact that their parents would rub my hair. If Mom saw them do it she would tell them not to and ask them if they would like it if she rubbed and messed up their children's hair.



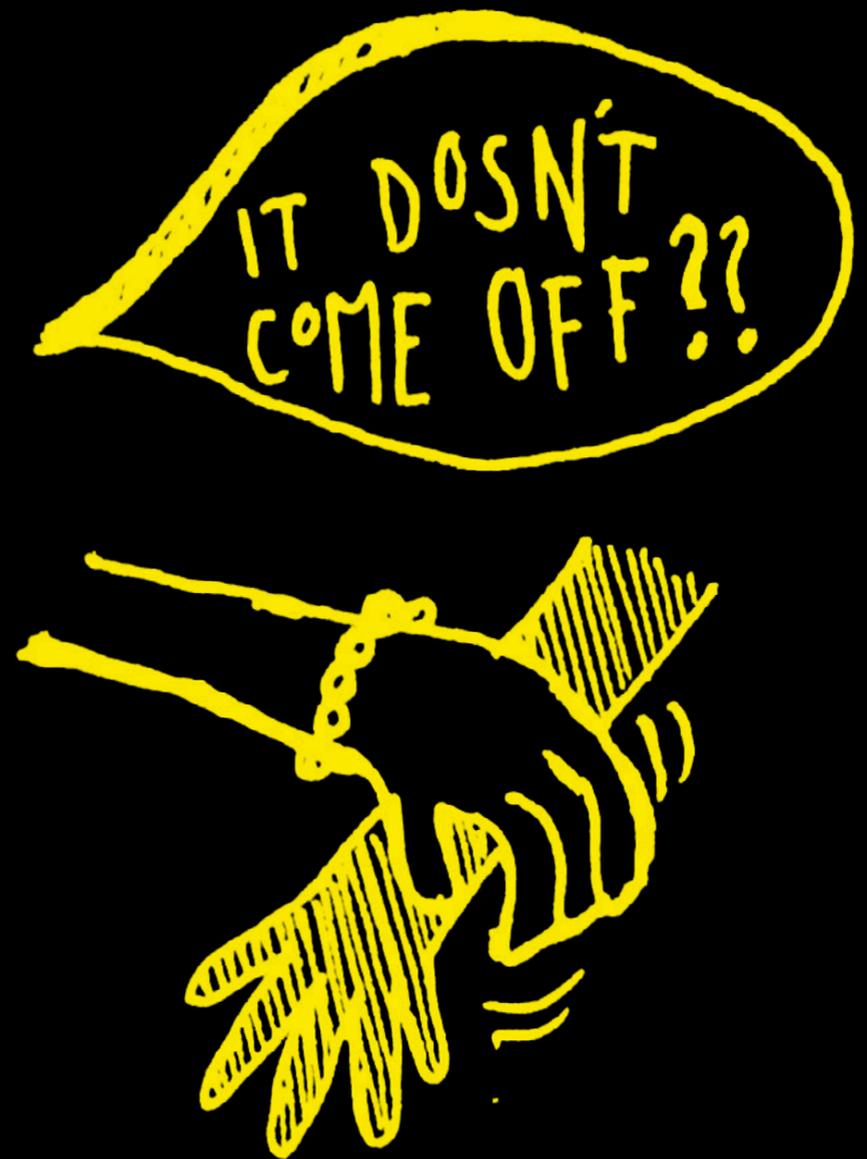
We moved when I was nine, as the council agreed that we needed a house with more bedrooms as I shared a bedroom with my three brothers and my sister. We moved to a 4 bedroomed top floor maisonette near the city centre. For the first time there were other Black people living around us who attended our school. We were the only Black people in our block and this is when we experienced prejudice. There was a much older boy who would call us names and pick fights with my brothers. However, this stopped when he attacked me and my three brothers came to my rescue. When his parents came to complain, Mom asked how old he was in comparison to my brothers? They never bothered us again.

I was put into the wrong year group at school as the Head didn't believe Mom and Dad about my age. It was only when I was due to move up into Secondary School that they realised their mistake. Throughout Junior school I had been in the wrong year so when we returned after my peers had moved up to secondary school I was the only child standing in my year group in Junior school.

When I moved to Secondary School I was put into one of the lowest classes in the first year 1:4. This year group was made up mostly of Black children. Mom wasn't having it and showed up at the school to get the situation rectified and had arranged for the Head of my Junior School to phone at the time. I was moved from 1:4 to 1:2 at the end of the year after doing our year exams I was moved to 2:1. I remained in the top class throughout the rest of my school years and vied for first and second place each year with another girl. Because I worked hard and had some white friends I was called 'coconut' by the Jamaicans in the lower classes.

I remember Mom waiting in the queue in Birmingham market. The man kept on serving all the white people who came after us. Mom waited patiently and when the man asked her what she wanted, Mom got him to cut, weigh and wrap several pieces of meat. When it was time for her to pay Mom told him that since she wasn't good enough to be served when it was her turn, because of the colour of her skin, her money wouldn't be good enough for him to take and turned around and went to another stall. The man wasn't happy and was swearing at her and called her names. Mom went back, looked him in the eye and said 'I am brown skinned, and my parents were married so I know I'm not a b.....d, however, I'm not sure about you'. At that, all the other black people left his stall and none of them ever brought from him again. Apparently his white customers weren't enough to keep him going as he disappeared shortly after. Mom always taught me to never be ashamed of being Black and to stand up for myself.

A major prejudicial experience for me was when I went for an interview at one of the big teaching hospitals for a place as a student nurse. I was told that I hadn't got the necessary qualifications.



I had worked hard to pass my GCSE's CSEs and A levels, so was surprised to be only offered a place as a pupil nurse to do my SEN. Especially as another candidate I had spoken to had been offered a place on the Student nurse programme to do SRN despite having poorer results than me. I was a upset, but glad I had been given a place for SEN. When I went home Mom was angry and said there was no way I would do SEN and I had to refuse the offer as she knew I was good enough to be a SRN. I did, crying all the time I was writing the letter of refusal as I really wanted to be a nurse and didn't really know the difference.

I was interviewed at another more prestigious teaching hospital closer to home. I was shocked when they instantly offered me a place as a student nurse and told them about my previous experience. They said that my qualifications were more than adequate and couldn't understand why I had been offered pupil nurse training. I went on to not only qualify as an SRN but also a midwife.



RECOMMENDED

READING, LISTENING, & LEARNING

Black feminist
literature

I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings Maya Angelou
Beloved Toni Morrison
Bad Feminist Roxane Gay
Black Feminist Thought Patricia Hill Collins

Black queer
literature

The Black Flamingo Dean Atta
Giovanni's Room James Baldwin
The Queer Art of Failure Jack Halberstam
Zami: A New Spelling of My Name Audre Lorde

Anti- racist
literature

White Fragility Robin Diangelo
So You Want to Talk About Race Ijeoma Oluo
Sister Outsider Audre Lorde
The New Jim Crow Michelle Alexander

Black & British
literature

Black and British: A Forgotten History David Olusoga
Brit(ish): On Race, Identity and Belonging Afua Hirsch
There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack Paul Gilroy
Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People About Race Reni Eddo-Lodge

Podcasts

Code Switch Shereen Marisol Meraji
Truth Be Told Tonya mosley
Ear Hustle Nigel Poor and Earlonne Woods
Noire Histor Natasha McEachron
The Diversity Gap
Still Processing Jenna Wortham & Wesley Morris



Proud to be part of

MANCHESTER
1824

The University of Manchester

the **Whitworth**