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Style–Fashion– Dress: From Black to Post-Black¹

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Abstract

This article examines terms that are central to critical thinking on dress associated with the African diaspora. Through a series of case studies produced and/or used in the UK, the USA, and South Africa, notably London, New York, and Soweto, the terms style, fashion, dress, black, and post-black are considered with regard to specific use, contemporary relevance, or past–present connections. Such multi-faceted links projected from the clothed black body are to be expected in diasporic practices. A key aim of this article is to expand on this and to think about these terms in relation to garments

and black bodies of the African diaspora as networks of ideas and concerns.

KEYWORDS: style, fashion, dress, African diaspora, black, post-black, networks

The title of this article is an amalgam of terms that are in need of reconsideration to progress critical thinking on dress associated with the African diaspora. Style, fashion, and dress, as we know, reference the breadth of dress studies, whilst the concepts of “black” and “post-black,” that include “blackness,” denote positioning around “race” and ethnicity at different moments in time. The combined presentation here of these sociocultural and political terms reflects the interlocked character of these entities that has emerged through the study of dress and the African diaspora.

Thinking about Terminology

Terminology is about precision. It belongs to a “system of terms” that is “the linguistic representation of a system of concepts” (Picht and Draskau 1985: 97). Terminology orders thought, transfers specialized knowledge, and helps to structure information. As Teresa Cabré has summarized: “[T]erminology is based on semantics and terms are units that relate language to the real world and represents objects in the real world. Specialists use terms to express themselves and exchange thoughts and organize the structure of their disciplines” (Cabré 1999[1992]: 39). Cabré’s clarification on terminology provides a new basis on which to reconsider the terms “black” and “post-black” within the current explorations of dress and the African diaspora that will be discussed below. But Cabré’s explanation prompted me to wonder why I chose to use all the dashes between style–fashion–dress in the construction of the title for this article. Heribert Picht and Jennifer Draskau explained that the dash between words to create a term signifies the relationship between one part and another refining “whole-and-part relationship” (Picht and Draskau 1985: 80–1).

In the systems of concepts, the use of the “–” is connected to “ontological relationships” which depends on “the contiguity ... the spatial and temporal contact of the concepts which make up a system.” Therefore, there exists vertical and horizontal relationships in concepts that lead to subdivision, that is, “whole-and-part relationships” (Picht and Draskau 1985: 79–81). I take this to mean that regardless of how these terms are used, as long as the precision of their meanings are clear, they are always connected as part of the overall purpose of a subject of study. Additionally, for Cabré, an extension to the meaning of ontology as

the study of being, the being or essence of things, or to being in the abstract, ontological relationships can also be either “the analysis of objects, how they are ordered in the real world, and the relationships between objects” (Cabr  1999: 42).

“Style–fashion–dress” in this format, then, is a term that constitutes a system of concepts that signifies the multitude of meanings and frameworks that are always “whole-and-part” of dress studies. But in the issue of black people and their construction of self, and/or the use or production of garments and accessories in that process, there is a need (as it would be for any close study of a specific group or subject area) to appropriate the correct term from this triumvirate to explore this.

The terms style, fashion, dress, “black,” and “post-black,” being indicative of their diasporic relationship, provide the critical framework to consider new research directions on dress associated with the African diaspora.

Style–Fashion–Dress: Which, When, How?

When talking about the clothing, accessories, and beauty contributions used and/or created to construct individual or group identities, various questions arise: is this style, fashion or dress? Often the terms style, fashion, and dress are mixed, used in place of one another. In such instances, reference is being made to the culture and/or associated processes of clothes, garments, and accessories, but without delineation of the meanings of “style,” “fashion” or “dress” within a given context. For example, within the generally congenial environment of the first workshop of the Dress and the African Diaspora Network (DaDN) held at the University of California Davis in 2006, the terms fashion and style provoked a lengthy debate. This led to a key acknowledgment in DaDN’s discussions that “Terminology was ... an area that had to be addressed. It was interesting to note that the members were using terms from different perspectives” (Tulloch 2006).² This was illustrated by the differing approaches to the term “style” by some of the workshop members.

In 2006, for example, core DaDN member Van Dyk Lewis objected to the use of the term “style” in connection with the African diaspora; his critical framing is informed by fashion, what Lewis calls specifically “African diaspora fashion,” and in turn “diaspora fashion” (Lewis 2003). This terminology is a source of expression for the black image as a collection of diverse metaphors where the associated “diaspora fashion objects” used are “continually linked to a search for identity signified through renewal and innovation ... of space and history, [as well as] sociological and cultural referencing” (Lewis 2003: 179). Lewis argued further that “Even though occasional forays are made toward the dominant center, fashion development is conflicting; some wearers and

designers claim to be representative of the center. But, no matter where black fashion is found there are beliefs and behaviors which distinguish Diaspora fashion from the mainstream” (Lewis 2003: 179). More recently Lewis has broached the term “style” and “styling”: “[with] reference to actual garments and the way they are put together on the terrain of the body, in this I am thinking of the way professional fashion ‘stylists’ configure/contrive narratives on the body. This is quite different to ‘style’ as an irretrievable component, which like creativity cannot be reduced to formula or description or can be repeatable.”³ I am more prone to use the term “style” as agency—in the construction of self through the assemblage of garments, accessories, and beauty regimes that may, or may not, be “in fashion” at the time of use. And whilst Lewis refers to professional fashion stylists, I see the styling practices of a layperson’s articulation of everyday life through their styled body as equally valid. For me this is part of the process of self-telling, that is, to expound an aspect of autobiography of oneself through the clothing choices an individual makes—what I have come to call style narratives.

To explore these various interpretations of the concept of “style” and the African diaspora, the work of David Phillips comes to mind. Phillips, who is African-Jamaican, emigrated to Paris in 1979, where he lived until 1983 when he moved to London, where he still lives and practices as an architect. During the 1980s and early 1990s, Phillips was known for his hand-painted textiles. He created work for fashion designers such as Joe Casely-Hayford, Whitaker Malem, the shoe designer Emma Hope, and Marthe des Moulins, owner of the Parisian boutique Absinthe. Phillips also took private commissions. In 1990 he was asked to design and produce a hand-painted silk scarf as a birthday present for me (Figure 1). Over the last twenty years I have worn the scarf in a variety of ways: as a headscarf, around my neck, and as a traveling talisman, carried in my hand luggage, to counter my discomfort of flying. Through its long use and careful hand washing, the vibrancy of its rich hues of cerise, deep turquoise, aqua blue, and mustard, have not faded, and the silk square is a treasured personal fashion accessory.

A significant project in Phillips’ textile design period was his collaboration with the British-born “mixed race”⁴ couturier Bruce Oldfield. In 1991 British *Vogue* celebrated its 75th anniversary. Oldfield was commissioned by *Vogue*, alongside forty-seven of “the world’s top designers to make a one-off outfit especially to celebrate *Vogue*’s 75th anniversary” (*Vogue* June 1991: 111). Phillips was invited by Oldfield to collaborate on this. Together they created a yellow and black silk jersey unitard and organza skirt of black, golden yellow, royal blue, red, and shades of brown. The outfit, photographed and illustrated by Horst P. Horst, was the lead image of the fashion feature on the anniversary: “*Vogue*’s eye view GREAT DRESSES, GREAT IMAGES [sic]” (*Vogue* June 1991: 111). As part of *Vogue*’s anniversary celebrations, the designs were exhibited at Harrods department store, London, in

Figure 1

Silk scarf, 1990. Design by David Phillips. Photograph: Syd Shelton.



September 1991, and at the Fashion Museum, Bath, in November of the same year. The forty-eight designs were donated to the museum to fulfill *Vogue's* desire that the pieces “In the future ... will stand as a record” (*Vogue* June 1991: 112) of this fashion collaboration between world mediators of the fashion industry.

The ability to examine closely the Oldfield/Phillips gown at the Fashion Museum reinforced this celebratory moment in *Vogue's* history. The gown, its very fabric, is an attestation of this. The skirt is the central plane of textual narrative evidence of *Vogue's* longevity with hand-painted statements such as “*Vogue* 75 Years,” “*Vogue* 1916 ... 1991” (Figure 2), and the designer–maker partnership of Oldfield and Phillips in the hand-painted epithet “hand painted by David Phillips for ... Bruce Oldfield 1991” (Figure 3).

This union between a fashion and textile designer in 1991 was one of a growing number of such coalitions at this time. The exhibition *Fabric of Fashion*, held at the Crafts Council, London, in 2000 marked the emergence since the 1980s of a “distinctive characteristic of British fashion—the collaboration and in some cases coalescence of the textile and fashion designer ... provoking us to look anew” (Rogers 2000),⁵ a relationship characterized by “simple, uncluttered shapes which give prominence to the fabric” (O’Mahony and Braddock 2000). The latter explanation of this form of coalition is evident in the Oldfield/Phillips

Figure 2

Unitard component of the Bruce Oldfield/David Phillips *Vogue* 75 Years ensemble. 1991. Fashion Museum, Bath. Photograph: Carol Tulloch. With kind permission by the Fashion Museum, Bath & North East Somerset Council.



Figure 3

Skirt component of the Bruce Oldfield/David Phillips *Vogue* 75 Years ensemble. 1991. Fashion Museum, Bath. Photograph: Carol Tulloch. With kind permission by the Fashion Museum, Bath & North East Somerset Council.



gown. The shapes of the unitard and overskirt provide a strong silhouette bolstered by the sumptuously frothy organza skirt, that allows the glorious billowing surface designs by Phillips to dominate—and create a romantic custom-made ensemble.

The hand is a prominent feature of this design. The hand-painted nature of the textile design reflects the skills of the designer–maker, of giving something of themselves through the personal execution of creating by hand (Ufan 2010[2004]: 548–9). The very dominant feature of fourteen pairs of hands in different skin tones of “pale/white,” light brown, and dark brown—some unadorned, others festooned with elaborate jewelry—accentuate the splendor of the gown. These can be read as representations of the different ethnic groups that should be connected with such an unabashed celebratory garment. Indeed, they reflect the wide range of royal, wealthy, and celebrity clients from across the world that patronized Bruce Oldfield couture eveningwear, an aspect of his design practice that “was a perfect vehicle for my self-expression” (Oldfield 2004: 213).

So, how to contextualize the work of Phillips in the differing creative frameworks suggested by Lewis and myself above? Rereading Lewis’s thinking on “The Black Designer’s Dilemma” and his idea that “the question of what territory the black designer occupies remains troublesome” (Lewis 2003: 178) has led me to ask if the territory Phillips and Oldfield occupied in 1991 was the center rather than in the margins of cultural impact, as they were a significant component of the *Vogue* 75th anniversary—and their design was added to the collections of the Fashion Museum? If this is so, then what place does this commissioned gown have in “diaspora fashion?” Or should this gown even be discussed within the context of “diaspora fashion?” Leslie Rabine’s ingenious term “diaspora reversal” (Rabine 2007) helps here. Rabine created the term as a more reflexive understanding of diasporic movement, how people move in and out from the center to the periphery. In the case of Phillips, the inspiration for this case study, he produced an item—the scarf—for an individual/me that has contributed continually to their/my shifting style narratives over two decades, *and* with Oldfield played an important role in a significant fashion mediation moment. On the one hand, it is notable that this act by Phillips with Oldfield marked the lineage of “black” fashion designers. Whilst on the other hand, this epithet signals marginalization (Tulloch 2002: 110); an epithet clearly a secondary motivation to Phillips in pursuit of good design to a specific “fashion” brief.

It should be noted that following the lengthy discussions around the term “style” amongst the core DaDN members, they reached the consensus that the title of the network should remain “Dress and the African Diaspora Network” as “dress” incorporates all aspects of the subject—fashion, style, production, consumption, textiles, and beauty regimes in which the group was interested.

Black to Post-Black

The terms that have come to inform critical positioning—notably black and blackness—are currently undergoing reconsideration within visual studies, particularly art practice and theory. For example, the exhibition *Afro Modern: Journeys through the Black Atlantic*, shown at Tate Liverpool in 2010, and its accompanying conference, *Global Exhibitions: Contemporary Art and the African Diaspora*, had as a subtext examination of these terms' relevance now, when the concept of “post-black” has been proposed as an alternative understanding of the practices of artists of the African diaspora. These projects are just two of many over the past decade that have grappled with what the terms black, blackness, and post-black can do for critical thinking and art practice connected with the African diaspora.

Times have changed irrevocably since the 1960s when the term black became the nemesis of the destructive term “negro” to redefine people of African descent in America. “Black people” along with “African-American” or “Afro-American” was used, according to Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton “because that is *our* image of ourselves ... The black community will have a positive image of itself that *it* has created” (Carmichael and Hamilton 1969[1967]: 51). This reconceptualization of the so-called “negro” identity was central to the agenda of the Black Power Movement. Thus the term black was seen as a rallying call for self-redefinition “to reclaim our history and our identity from what must be called cultural terrorism, from the depredation of self-justifying white guilt. We shall have to struggle for the right to create on our own terms through which to define ourselves and our relationship with society, and to have these terms recognized. This is the first necessity of a free people, and the first right that any oppressor must suspend” (Carmichael and Hamilton 1969[1967]: 49).

This thinking and activism spread, and inspired members of the African diaspora. It helped to assess what actions were needed to redefine their identities and positions in the mother- or homeland. Such activism in, for example, the anti-apartheid movement of South Africa, or the anti-racist actions from the 1950s in Britain reverberated throughout the decades. But contemporary artists, cultural commentators, and academics wonder whether these original meanings have relevance in the twenty-first century, when so much persistent resistance to black inequality has borne some redress.

In 2007 the conceptual artist, Fred Wilson⁶ related in a statement that he has

been more and more thinking about the notion of blackness and what is black and what really does that mean? And should that be something in the 21st century? Should blackness have as much

meaning as it does and how negative and how positive is it? And what are the other connections to this term and to this color and is it something that is so reductive that it's a problem; or, it is so reductive that it sort of makes blood rush in a certain way so that it's positive, or can it be all these things at once?⁷

This thinking is a continuation of Wilson's ideas around blackness that he has explored for some time in such ground-breaking exhibitions as *Mining the Museum* at the Maryland Historical Society in Baltimore in 1992–3.⁸ Through his work Wilson has tried to salvage and reappropriate the terms “black” and “blackness” to make visible people of the African diaspora, to challenge cultural institutions and media that have been complicit—consciously or not—in maintaining that invisibility, such as museums or “white” writers who have only one black character in their work. Wilson has also been concerned with the reductionist use of the color black by “whites” to define black people “in stereotypical and degrading ways,”⁹ that has resulted in the invisibility and commodification, as well as the slipperiness of meaning, which for Wilson inevitably comes back to the “black” individual, the “black” body and their representation, their sense of historical, cultural, and social value.¹⁰

This issue of the invisibility of black people has long been discussed in, for example, postcolonial studies. Despite their extensive range of activities in the public gaze that has snowballed over the centuries, the issue of invisibility remains a caustic point in need of address in the twenty-first century. For example, in the book *I Am Black/White/Yellow: An Introduction to the Black Body in Europe* (2007) the editors Joan Anim-Addo and Suzanne Scafe explained that the need to “speak for a silenced black body” (2007: 10) was particularly relevant in 2007 with the rise of racial tension in the media and public spaces of the UK and other parts of Europe, in light of the remembrance of the bicentenary of the abolition of the slave trade. Unfortunately, it remained at the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century that “the black body” was still “usually recognised in Europe as problematically visible in the guise of immigrant, prostitute, deviant aggressor, or as paradoxically invisible” (Anim-Addo and Scafe 2007: 10).

More optimistically, Paul Goodwin, the urban theorist and cross-cultural curator at Tate Britain, London, has argued that blackness has a place in the twenty-first century.¹¹ But rather than as a multifaceted framing mechanism for individual or group identities, blackness should be seen as a trope in the shaping and construction of a city's communal spaces. Goodwin has approached “blackness” from the perspective that it is not about deviance, but about creativity. Goodwin's position, which he has applied to cities such as London, Paris, and New Orleans, evokes a channeling of the power of invisibility—a presence that can be felt but supposedly not seen, to sense its spectral quality—to pervade the fabric of the society and cultures of such cities. This form of channeling is

something that people from different parts of the African diaspora have been doing for some time.

In these three examples, of the possible many, are different renderings of the terms “black” and “blackness” as perspectives on significance, belonging and contribution. Despite the fact that they remain contested terms that reference, on the one hand confusion, and on the other encourages one to take control, the terms “black” and “blackness” have proved their need for continued exploration, as they maintain considerable contextual prowess to explore presence and meaning of individuals and groups, historical and cultural activities, objects, and spaces connected with the African diaspora. “Black” and its suffix “-ness” form a substantive that expresses a state and a condition. As the *Oxford English Dictionary* clarifies, a substantive infers separate and independent existence, and denotes substance; a character that underwrites the need for the continued critical use of the terms “black” and “blackness.”

In tandem with the above thoughts on “black” and “blackness,” the term “post-black art” was coined in the late 1990s. Thelma Golden, the curatorial director of the Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, and the African-American artist Glenn Ligon, created the term, which is now known as post-black. Golden explained “that the term was a means to framework the young generation of African-American artists who recognized and valued their black heritage across various cultural and historical fronts, but also wanted the freedom to exist without categorization,”¹² without being labeled as a “black artist,” and Golden has recently added “how artists were moving beyond a place in history and to the present moment” (Copeland 2010: 78). For Ligon the use of “post-black art” was a means to understand, for example, how young artists have “a different relationship to images and history than my [Ligon’s] generation or the generation before me” (Copeland 2010: 79). This was the concept within which the exhibitions *Freestyle* (2001), *Frequency* (2005), and *Flow* (2008) were organized at the Studio Museum from 2001. For Golden, in response to the myriad writings on what post-black means, post-black is a concept that “is not about erasing the past, but to restart and reset, an attitude, a stance, a positioning, a way to enable expansive questioning to see culture in a broader sense. A space in which to look backward in order to look forward.”¹³ The unraveling of what post-black means is in its early stages. Shirley Anne Tate has commented on this in her study on “Black Beauty and Melancholia” (2009: 53–77). For Tate, “black beauty” is about

both *becoming* Black and *being* Black are framed by hegemonic Blackness and whiteness. Becoming/Being Black occurs when one accepts and identifies with racializing Black anti-racist movements’ beauty philosophies—for example, Rastafarianism, Brazilian anti-racist movements and Black Power—and their race-ing stylizations and accompanying technologies as the norm. (Tate 2009: 53)

After the procession of anti-racist activities channeled through Black beauty, Tate wonders what now for “black beauty” in the post-black era?:

We are in a post-Black is beautiful discursive space where “post” points to the waning of old paradigms without their supersession by anything new. As we are still living and developing this space we cannot say what its outcome will be. What we can say though is that the “Black” in Black beauty has become part of the axes of difference which provide overlapping lines of identification, exclusion and contestation over beauty paradigms. (Tate 2009: 66)

We might do well to bear in mind that “post-” is not just about what comes after something, or about time and order, but it can also mean “heir.” My current understanding of the term post-black in the context of style–fashion–dress and the African diaspora, is that it is not just about assuaging historical burdens, but also about enabling. Post-black positions individuals of the diaspora who seek exploration of what it means “to be” *now* through style narratives and who place themselves in the center of a vortex of historical, social, and cultural renderings of “black” and “blackness” and the constituent “tropes of meaning,”¹⁴ alongside the enormous range of other cultural and historical references beyond blackness, to exercise the agency to make choices that an individual needs to construct a “sincere self”: the “genuine feeling” an individual expresses in an autobiography as the way that individual wishes to present themselves to the public. Lionel Trilling saw this as a presentation of the self “to our community” and the latter only feels this presentation is sincere “when we play the role of being ourselves, we sincerely act the part of the sincere person, with the result that a judgment may be passed upon our sincerity” (Trilling 1974: 11, 25, 119).

The following case studies of garments connected with the black body consider the points raised above, partly as a process of reflection on research I have conducted, in order to connect with new areas of inquiry that test the critical relevance of the terms black and post-black.

Your Statement Here: Black to Post-Black T-Shirts as Critical Texts

In the essay “Resounding Power of the Afro Comb” (Tulloch 2008) I surveyed the range of Afro combs in use and designs submitted to the US Patent Office from the 1960s to 1980, to examine the historical and cultural relevance of this hair tool.¹⁵ The Afro comb, simple though it may appear, *was* an axial power in the practice of Afro hair creation, and *the* tool that in theory would liberate black hair into a hairstyle that encompassed black self-determination and self-definition. As the point of exploration of the cultural meaning of the Afro comb in the twenty-first

century, the essay used a viridian green T-shirt with the image of an Afro comb with a fist as the handle underscored by the word “beautiful” (Figure 4). It is a limited edition “Afro Pick T-shirt” commissioned by the Studio Museum in Harlem from the designer David Hisa. Note the T-shirt was produced in the so-called post-black era, by the institution under the curatorial stewardship of Thelma Golden. This is not a criticism, but it adds to the complexity of black material and visual objects in this discussion of black and post-black. In taking this approach I wanted to illustrate how an object can provide a contemporary narrative on a previous pivotal moment in African diasporic political and cultural history, as graphic design is, according to Syd Shelton, “the visualisation of ideas in two dimensional form” (Tulloch 2008). Therefore, the black-fist Afro comb on this T-shirt reflects a further meaning of what a comb can be—to be proud, to hold one’s head high—“I am black, therefore I am,” as Stokely Carmichael, a key leader of the Black Power Movement, said in 1969. In 2004, the Studio Museum in Harlem recognized that this needed to be commemorated (Tulloch 2008: 136).

As pointed out earlier, according to the ideologies of the Black Power and Black Consciousness Movements, the only way forward for black Americans was to become



Figure 4

Limited edition “Afro Pick T-shirt,” 2004. Designed by David Hisa. The T-shirt was commissioned by the Studio Museum in Harlem to underwrite the identity of the museum. The Black Fist Afro Pick and the word “Beautiful” were chosen because of “their iconic status in the community—Black *is* Beautiful, Black Power, Black hair are Harlem,” Ali Evans, PR Manager and editor at the Studio Museum in Harlem. Photograph: Carol Tulloch.

part of a larger international community of black-skinned, kinky-haired people who have a beauty of their own, a glorious history and a great future. In short he [and she] can replace shame with pride, inferiority with dignity ... The growing popularity of this viewpoint is evidenced by the appearance of “natural” hair styles among Negro youth and the surge of interest in African and Negro culture and history. (Browne 1968[1967]: 231)

Therefore, to promote and protect the fact that “Black is Beautiful” was to acknowledge and protect black presence in America. The “natural” Afro hairstyle became part of this orthodoxy, made possible with the use of the Afro comb.¹⁶

Meanwhile, in Britain in 1967, C. L. R. James, the Trinidad-born, London-based historian and a champion of black politics, celebrated and redefined the term Black Power as “a banner” rather than a political slogan (James 2008).¹⁷ Such a reclassification of what Black Power can be brought my study of the Afro comb back to the graphic meaning of this 2004 viridian green T-shirt as a rallying call: a flag and a standard. In light of this, I argued that the black fist/Afro comb/“beautiful” T-shirt commissioned by the Studio Museum in Harlem is a banner that symbolizes the crystallization of African-American political and cultural heritage under the ideologies of Black Power in the 1960s and 1970s (Tulloch 2008: 135–6).

I also suggested in the essay (Tulloch 2008) that this banner T-shirt be viewed within the fashion context of “Struggle Chic.” This term has been given to T-shirts produced by South African fashion designers who depict “past political heroes” including South Africans Steve Biko and Nelson Mandela, and the African-American former heavyweight boxing world champion Mohammad Ali. This genre of popular culture comes under the fashion term “Afro Chic”—clothing and accessories produced by black and white South African designers who want to reflect, for themselves and their customers, who they are and their heritage (Kerkham Simbao 2007: 66). The Afro comb, the black fist, and the word “beautiful” as depicted on the Studio Museum in Harlem T-shirt, is part of this acknowledgment of African diasporic cultural and political heritage. The anti-apartheid movement used the fist as part of its activism. And who can forget the raised fist of Nelson Mandela on his release from prison on February 11, 1990? These historical moments, marked by the raising of a fist alongside the transnational meaning of the Afro comb as a symbol of self-determination, solidarity, activism, and general Black Pride, have also been drawn on by the black South African designer Themba Mngomezulu (Figure 5; Tulloch 2008: 136).

But it was an early-twentieth century postcard of “blacked-up” male actors (Figure 6) that was the main inspiration for the essay “Resounding Power of the Afro Comb.” There was not sufficient space in that essay to incorporate the discussion of the meaning of this image

Figure 5

T-Shirt by Themba Mngomezulu, 2006. The T-shirt was produced under Mngomezulu's "Darkie" fashion label. The black South African's design approach is partly influenced by the history ingrained in fabrics and objects, and his T-shirts often feature the Afro comb and/or fist. Photograph: Carol Tulloch.



and its connection with black activism in the mid-twentieth century projected from the bodies of African-Americans and others across the African diaspora. No less significant in this activity was the use and cultural potency that marked these black bodies as being different from “whiteness” than through the use of an Afro comb to create the “natural” Afro hairstyle. The postcard is a fortuitous, obviously disturbing, construction. It is based on the popular American song *Bill Bailey Won't You Please Come Home*, by Hughie Cannon, which was first published in the USA in 1902.¹⁸ Through this visual interpretation of the lyrical narrative of the song, a giant comb hangs from the body of Bill Bailey, the comb being the object of love presented to Bailey from his lady-love as she sent him from their home. The image, with its bright central motif of a giant comb was the inspiration, for me, to inquire how a comb can be a signifier of racial tension.

Obviously “blackness” has a very different meaning here. Blackness is disempowered, ridiculed and despite the grotesque, inappropriate use of the color black to “black-up” a white face, this mocks the reality of the various experiences of valued black lives as being invisible—literally blacked out. And as the main figure foregrounded in the postcard is a man, then it had the theoretical effect of the emasculation of black men.

Figure 6

Postcard by James Bamforth,
Holmfirth, c. 1903. Carol Tulloch
Collection.



Additionally, this postcard links with Fred Wilson’s articulations on the color black and its negative historical meanings that have permeated through to the present touched on above.

The photographic postcard was produced and published in about 1903 by Jas. Bamforth, Limited, in Holmfirth, Yorkshire. James Bamforth was a photographer, lantern-slide maker, and pioneer of silent film-making in Britain.¹⁹ The identification of this postcard as early 1900s fits squarely with the popularity in England of minstrel shows, which were also known as “Ethiopian Opera” (Pieterse 1992: 134). In 1905, for example, an American minstrel show was presented at the Palace Theatre, London. Equally the characters in the postcard are descendants of the “minstrel” figure. From the 1820s African-Americans were parodied and ridiculed through this medium, particularly in North America. White Americans “blacked-up”—that is blackened their face and painted an exaggerated broad mouth—what they believed “accurately” represented black people. They then performed shows using a broken English ascribed to black Americans, a language labeled “negro dialect” to ridicule their dress and hopes on

slave plantations, at church or in the city. This character was given a defining style of tailored jacket, waistcoat and slim cut trousers, and generally unkempt hair. The period between about 1890 and 1910 saw this form of “racial stereotyping got to ... vituperative extremes” (Linn 1994: 50). My chance discovery of this c.1903 postcard featuring a giant comb pinned to the chest of a “blackened-up” white man was a sharp reminder that the cultural history of hair tools, such as the Afro comb, cannot be divorced from the legacy of unsettling racial discourses.

Although I was unable to include and discuss this image in the essay “Resounding Power of the Afro Comb,” I retained the image and its associated cultural and historical references at the back of my mind whilst writing it; I carried the various images that signify the differing levels of black visibility, consciousness, and power. Therefore, the 1903 *Bill Bailey* postcard, the 1960s to 1980 Afro combs, and the 2004 black fist/Afro comb/“beautiful” T-shirt bring to life what Michael Hanchard calls “racial time,” wherein the inequalities of race are articulated by either the dominant or subordinant group at specific moments in history (Hanchard 2001).

In light of all this, what is the meaning of the historically potent Obama “The First Family” T-shirt? (Figure 7). Is it diaspora fashion or potentially the component of a style narrative? How does one plot it along the black to post-black lineage?

I bought the T-shirt on 125th Street in Harlem, New York on February 15, 2009. I wanted desperately to have some of the memorabilia attached to the historic moment of the first black president of the USA and the first black family of the presidential White House. But as a visitor to New York this was also a souvenir of my visit in the month that Barack Obama was inaugurated. It was purchased from the “President Obama Memorabilia Central of Harlem” stall. The T-shirt cost US \$9.99, size “Juniors” and is therefore designed for a child’s body.²⁰ At present I do not know if the designer of the T-shirt is black, but I know the stallholder is. This is important to understand the cultural dynamics of the T-shirt, the female stallholder, and the location of her stall in Harlem, “a world of its own operation, on its own frequency.”²¹

If this T-shirt is to be memorabilia of this historic moment, then it is something that will be required in the future to gain a broader understanding of the place of black Americans in 2009, and as another gateway into viewing the place of black people in the past. And what exactly will we be remembering? Will this image, which was originally a photograph featured on the front cover of the September 2008 issue of *Essence* magazine, block memories or become a counter-memory according to Roland Barthes (1993[1980]: 91)? Geoffrey Batchen has extended Barthes’ thinking on photography to infer that a photograph “replaces the unpredictable thrill of memory with the dull certainties of history” (Batchen 2004: 15). Additionally, this T-shirt as memorabilia of

Figure 7

“The First Family” T-shirt.
 Purchased by Carol Tulloch from
 the “President Obama Memorabilia
 Central of Harlem” on February 15,
 2009. Photograph: Carol Tulloch.



the inauguration of the first black presidential family in the White House, helps to remind us of this fact, if that needed to be reiterated due to the exhaustive global media coverage of this family, that this T-shirt is “less about the detailed recall of appearances and more about the extended act of remembrance, more about a state of reverie” (Batchen 2004: 14). That reverie is expressed overtly in the term “The First Family” and in the colors of the American flag: red, white, and blue, respectfully.

As an adjective, first can mean “highest, absolute; before all others, foremost in position, rank, importance; In regard to time: Prior to all others in occurrence, ... happening, with emphatic force, where it is implied that the first event or occurrence is the only one to be regarded or waited for; preceding all others, in dignity, rank, importance, or excellence” (*Oxford English Dictionary*). Whilst the portrait, according to John Tagg, is “a sign whose purpose is both the description of an individual and the inscription of social identity. But at the same time, it [the portrait] is also a commodity, a luxury, an adornment, ownership of which itself confers status” (Tagg 1988: 37). This links in with the notion of “The First Family” and inscription of their historical and global status, as well as what it means for black people who believe in, and support Barack Obama, whether because he his black and president, and/or extraordinary

and president, and/or a democrat and president, and/or he is part black and part white, due to his black Kenyan father Barack Obama Senior and white American mother Ann Dunham.

“The First Family” portrait T-shirt, to be worn on a child’s body, and one would hope regardless of race or ethnicity, clearly has intense significance, or in linguistic terms is “a highly-valued text” where “meaning lurks in the void that is set ‘between the lines’” (Halliday 1987: vii)—in this instance the lines between “The First Family,” the portrait of the Obamas with their clothing digitally manipulated in the colors of red, white, blue, and black, underlined by their first names in white—Barack, Michelle, Malia, Sasha—set dramatically against the black background of the T-shirt denotes familiarity and connection. It was momentous for black and white Americans to wear this T-shirt in 2009 and marks a historical moment in their lifetime history, a shift in black/white relations and perceptions that had been marred by chronic reactions to difference and segregation since slavery. As the African-American artist Clarissa Sligh, remembered:²²

As a young Black Child, before I could even think, I was told how bad things are out there in the world for us. It was a fear put into me to prepare me for the real world. Since we couldn’t talk about it, since no one could relate to our hurt or pain, we learned to be silent, to hide our disappointments, to hide our anger at the distortion of our identity and the exclusion of our reality. (Willis 1999: 111)

“The First Family” T-shirt and its surrounding meaning and relevance to Barack Obama as President of the USA offers a counter-narrative to such experiences, as the black bodies represented on this memorabilia T-shirt are tangible power in a familial, political, and cultural context. More specifically, to wear the T-shirt on the black body suggests diasporic connectivity, the connectivity with “real” things, events that have had an impact on black place, black lives, black identities, and their visibility in the African diaspora. Notably, I have referred to three images that are placed on the chest of either adults or children, an area of the body “regarded as the seat of the emotions and passions” (*Oxford English Dictionary*). Marjorie Kelly has observed that T-shirts in Hawaii “[A]lmost all ... meant for local consumption have the design printed on the back, not the chest” to avoid confrontation (Kelly 2003: 197). But fundamentally, Kelly relays “[T]he great thing about the designs is that they make people talk and pass ideas on” (Kelly 2003: 198). I would add that the unavoidable eye-to-chest encounter of an image on the chest of a T-shirt cajoles viewers to question.

But is “The First Family” T-shirt post-black? Perhaps it is in the extent to which it crushes the notion of African-American invisibility: a notion that emanates from the long struggle of black activism, and

thereby undermines the “dull certainties of history” (Batchen 2004: 15) and that, in theory, this garment is heir to more enlightened, multidimensional times.

Kicking Back: The School Blazer

In 1976 Syd Shelton took a photograph of a young black male teenager in his school blazer (Figure 8). He took the photograph at Tulse Hill Comprehensive School, a working-class area of the South London Borough of Lambeth.²³ Shelton captured the school boy as he walked passed him, the teenager looked straight at the camera, that is at Shelton, with no fear of either. It was an attitude Shelton had observed as being part of the character of the pupils that attended the comprehensive.²⁴ The photograph forms part of Shelton’s photographic approach during his anti-racist activism as a member of Britain’s Rock Against Movement (RAR) of 1976–81. He recalls,²⁵ “I ... used my photography during that period as a graphic argument, enabling me to be a subjective witness of



Figure 8

Tulse Hill Comprehensive School
pupil in school uniform, 1976.
Photograph: Syd Shelton.

the period which could, hopefully, contribute to social change” (Shelton 2008).

In 2008 the photograph featured in the exhibition *A Riot of Our Own* that I co-curated at the London gallery CHELSEAspace. The show revisited the energy of RAR through the personal archive of the design agency Graphicsi—Ruth Gregory and Shelton who were key graphic designers, and in the case of Shelton photographer of the movement. RAR, which originated in London, was a collection of black and white political activists, reggae and punk musicians, artists, graphic designers, photographers, actors, writers, fashion designers, and fans who came together to pool their energies and talents in the fight against the growth of racism and the National Front (NF) in Britain, the xenophobic organization that was publically virulent about their opposition to the presence of anyone who was not “pure English.” Whiteness here was about superiority, and for the NF black people were inferior. Through the formidable collaboration of RAR members they took on the orthodoxy through five carnivals and some 500 gigs throughout Britain. Whiteness in RAR was what Richard Dyer called being “sensitised to racism and the history of what whites have done to non-white peoples” (Dyer 1997: 11). In the example of RAR between 1976 and 1981, and the curation of the exhibition *A Riot of Our Own*, tension and entanglements between black and white were energizing mechanisms for creative political activity to think outside the box of how to produce effective, far-reaching counter-narratives to whiteness as superior and blackness as alienated. Whiteness and blackness as practiced during RAR was a particular creative treatise on belonging in Britain.

The image of this working-class black teenager in his school blazer tugs at the historical and social meanings of school uniform in Britain. It was initially introduced in the charity schools for poor children in the sixteenth century. In the nineteenth century it was adopted by fee-paying schools to counter the supposed anarchy of “young aristocrats.” School uniform was then adopted by grammar schools following the 1870 Education Act. Eventually secondary and comprehensive schools’ “wish to be associated with the grammar school tradition prescribe a blazer in the school colours. Having started as a badge of poverty; school uniform became a mark of social ambition” (Rae 1990: x). Therefore to wear school uniform is to project the educational desires and status of a school and its pupils. In this example of a black lad at a South London comprehensive school the sense of difference, whether that be class or ethnicity, is heightened by the formality and ideas of privilege. This difference is magnified through the styled narrative of the young man in the regulation Tulse Hill Comprehensive School blazer and heraldic badge, and an Afro which was still a popular black hairstyle in 1976 London. The combination of these elements—regulation comprehensive uniform and black hairstyle—placed him as a Brixtonite, that is, belonging to Brixton (the geographical area Tulse Hill is part of), which for many

during the mid- to late 1970s meant *being* black. Alexander Davidson, in his survey of the history of school uniform in Britain, noted that “As a general rule, the only time children wish to stand out from the crowd, sartorially speaking, is when they belong to a racial minority group that must safeguard its own rules” (2000: 49).²⁶

But could the Afro as worn by this London-based teenager, in his comprehensive school blazer, be seen in this context “of safeguarding its own rules?” Davidson has also inferred that school uniform “feeds [his] self respect” (Davidson 1990: 10). I read this image as reflecting these sentiments for this schoolboy. Whether the Afro is worn as a fashion statement or black-self narrative amongst black people of the diaspora at this time, and/or that he was aware of the political references in which the Afro emerged, nonetheless his “styled self” in Afro, blazer, and what appears to be a jumper “feeds his self-respect” as a Brixtonite school pupil of Tulse Hill Comprehensive.

As a graphic designer, Shelton was commissioned by RAR member and musician Tom Robinson to produce the record sleeve and flyer for his 1978 social-critical, anti-racist single *Up Against the Wall* (Figure 9). Robinson formed what he described as the “overtly political Tom Robinson Band (TRB) in 1977.”²⁷ The group were fixtures of RAR gigs and carnivals. Shelton’s use of this image for the Tom Robinson Band



Figure 9

Record sleeve of single *Up Against the Wall* by Tom Robinson, 1978. Photograph and graphic design: Syd Shelton.

single pulled the image of this schoolboy into the mediation of anti-racist politics and stance.

The biography of this photograph from the mid-1970s to its display as historical and social contextual material in the exhibition *A Riot of Our Own* in 2008, made a transnational diasporic connection for me. In 2006 I visited the Hector Pieterse Memorial and Museum in Soweto, which opened in 2002 (Figure 10). 2006 is a poignant date. It was the thirtieth anniversary of the June 16, 1976 uprising against apartheid educational policies by school students in Soweto. A display at the museum in remembrance of this moment featured a photograph by Sam Nzima of Soweto male, that is black, students in school blazers retaliating against the attacks by South African police (Figure 11). The photograph was displayed alongside a local metal dustbin lid. Both contributed to the curatorial narrative of a historic moment of political activism. Some 10–15,000 students took to the streets in response to their growing anger to the rule that from 1975, black African students should be educated in Afrikaans, the language of apartheid that became known as the “killer language.” As the unarmed school students marched to the Orlando stadium, they were fired upon by police in Orlando West,



Figure 10

Hector Pieterse Memorial at the Hector Pieterse Museum, Soweto, June 16, 1976. Sam Nzima took the photograph of Antoinette Sithole running alongside Mbuyisa Makhubu who is carrying her mortally wounded brother Hector Pieterse. Photograph: Carol Tulloch. With kind permission of Antoinette Sithole.



Figure 11

Soweto Uprising, June 16, 1976. Photograph: Sam Nzima. With kind permission of Sam Nzima.

where this memorial and museum has been erected (Kerkham Simbao 2007: 52–3; Newbury 2005: 274–8).

Antoinette Sithole, currently a guide at the museum, is the sister of Hector Pieterse and also the young woman featured in one of the iconic photographs of the Soweto Uprising (Figure 10). The haunting image, also taken by Nzima, is of the fatally wounded twelve-year-old Hector Pieterse carried by Mbuyisa Makhubu, with a visibly distraught Antoinette running alongside. With regards to the photographic documentation of the two school-uniformed boys in the exhibition and the part that school uniform played in the events of June 16, 1976, and apartheid in general, Antoinette related that “[I]t has taken us so long to understand the importance of our heritage. Most of the schools participated in the uprising. We are trying to get school uniforms connected with that period to go on display. It showed the students were participating. The dustbin lid is very important because they showed retaliation, and using them as shields” (Antoinette Sithole, personal communication with Carol Tulloch, May 13, 2009).²⁸

Jennifer Craik reminds us that “[O]ften, anecdotes about uniforms involve formative moments of self-hood, especially associated with breaking out or away from normative codes, rebellion or subversion,

about individual interpretation or difference in sameness” (Craik 2005: 4). These Soweto students were no longer “acting like a good student” or “being a good student” (McVeigh 2000: 98), they were being politically active pupils and individuals who employed subjectivity and agency to secure their self-hood and future as black South Africans, and thereby confronting the “official gaze” (McVeigh 2000: 99). It was supposedly “adult-only” issues in South Africa that dragged school-uniformed black bodies into confrontational, and sadly fatal, situations as in the deaths of Hector Pieterse and the many other Soweto students killed between June and December 1976.

One could argue that the school blazers discussed here were connected through different degrees of anti-racist activism and became, to borrow Annie Coombes term, “the recalcitrant object” (1994)²⁹ “‘kick-ing’ against constraint or restriction, to be obstinately disobedient or refractory” (*Oxford English Dictionary*). The question is, do these two examples of school uniform used by black teenage boys become “black school uniform” with a particular identity and history connected to specific moments in political activism and social history? What can be said of these two examples of a relationship between a black body and school uniform in London and Soweto in 1976 is that they illustrate the traceable associations of objects–people–geographies–activism–histories, that is a network of ideas and concerns that connect Africa and its diaspora.

A point raised within the discussions of DaDN was that we had to decide whether we were looking at Africa, or the African diaspora, which for some the latter did not include Africa. For me it has always been Africa *and* its diaspora. Subconsciously this stance informed my connection between the London and Soweto teenagers in their school uniform. I am comforted by the fact that in 1965 George Shepperson in his paper “The African Abroad, or the African Diaspora” (Shepperson 1968)³⁰ argued for the study of “African diaspora,” that is the study of Africa *and* the groups that formed outside of Africa following the Atlantic slave trade and imperialism. He saw this approach had potential for an expansive understanding of Africa and its diaspora, and the contributions to universal history. The legacies of the Atlantic slave trade and imperialism are the frames for the African diaspora and their impact on the development of the different groups of the diaspora (Shepperson 1968). For Shepperson “diaspora” is a “flexible term” that “can be considerably extended, both in time and space, and part of the use of the concept is precisely in its extensions” (Shepperson 1968: 152). The rich mix of articles in this special issue of *Fashion Theory* make reference to, for example, Jamaica, Senegal, the USA, Rwanda, and Britain, reflect Shepperson’s beliefs that have been expressed more recently by Avtar Brah (2004) and Katharina Schramm (2008).

Summary

In April 2009 the British National Party (BNP), the contemporary manifestation of the National Front mentioned above, supported their statement outlined in *The BNP Language and Concepts Manual* that Black and Asian Britons “do not exist” and that the term used should be “racial foreigners,” regardless of whether one is born in Britain or not.³¹ Clearly in Britain (and of course in other parts of the world), the past still haunts the present. Therefore the black body, whether in a headscarf, T-shirt or school uniform, still projects a sense of being black and blackness in this supposedly post-black era—an era that recognizes the breadth of cultural references that inform individual lives and their style narratives. These examples show that the terms black and blackness are still very much in the fore of the considerations of visual, design, and critical studies. But the ongoing negotiations of the value and place of black lives, the ongoing issue of racism, and how that is negotiated through style narratives could still be framed by groundbreaking critical thinkers such as Frantz Fanon, who in 1952 said of himself “O my body, make me always a man [and a woman] who questions!” (Fanon 1986[1952]: 232).³² Thus, style–fashion–dress, from black to post-black encompasses myriad routes and connections, flows, and tensions that derive from the analytical frame of Africa and its diaspora. What needs to be considered is how, when, and where these terms come into play.

Notes

1. This article is an extended version of papers given at the *Fashioning Diasporas Conference*, V&A Museum, May 15–16, 2009, and the “Ethnic Costumes and Non-Material Cultural Heritage Preservation Panel” at the *Humanity, Development and Cultural Diversity Conference*, the 16th International Congress of the Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences, Yunnan University, July 27–31, 2009, Kunming, China. It has been inspired by the erudite dialogues of the Dress and the African Diaspora Network (DaDN) workshops, reading group, and the papers contributed to the *Dress and the African Diaspora Tensions and Flows Symposium 2007*.
2. The issue of terminology and their contemporary meanings with regards to fashion, style, and subcultural groups was raised in a question and answer session of the *Subculture and Style Symposium*, held at the Fashion Institute of Technology, New York, February 13–14, 2009.
3. E-mail correspondence between Van Dyk Lewis and Carol Tulloch, December 16, 2009.

4. Bruce Oldfield described himself as “mixed race” on the dust jacket flap of his autobiography *Rootless: An Autobiography*. The book was published in 2004, which marked Oldfield’s thirty years in the fashion business.
5. The exhibition catalog *Fabric of Fashion* has no page numbers.
6. Fred Wilson’s familial heritage has been described as “African-American, Euro-American, Cherokee, and Caribbean” (Brown 2010).
7. See <http://museumofglass.org/blogs/visitingartists/2007/06/fred-wilsons-artist-statement/> (accessed April 19, 2009). This statement, originally published on June 13, 2007, was in support of Fred Wilson’s period as Artist-in-Residence at the Museum of Glass, Tacoma, Washington, in 2007. Wilson produced a series of pieces that explored the color black in glass for the exhibition *Mining Glass*, held at the museum.
8. *Mining the Museum* critiqued the collection and display policies of museums to illustrate “institutional racism.”
9. “Fred Wilson at Crown Point Press,” YouTube. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bN5PGCZqAv8> (accessed January 8, 2010).
10. “Fred Wilson at Crown Point Press,” YouTube. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bN5PGCZqAv8> (accessed January 8, 2010).
11. Paul Goodwin, “Paradoxes of Black Urbanism” in the *TrAIN Open Lecture Series*, Chelsea College of Art and Design, London, February 10, 2009.
12. Thelma Golden, “Post-Black Art Now” in *The Status of Difference Lecture Series*, Tate Britain, London, March 11, 2009. I am incredibly grateful to Eleanor Clayton of Tate Britain Learning for sending the recording of this lecture to me.
13. Thelma Golden, “Post-Black Art Now” in *The Status of Difference Lecture Series*, Tate Britain, London, March 11, 2009.
14. I am grateful for discussions with Oriana Baddeley and Ope Lori around tropes of meaning.
15. This study of the Afro comb was a continuation of research I have conducted on black hair tools that began with the exhibition *Tools of the Trade: Memories of Black British Hairdressing* I curated at the Black Cultural Archives, London, 2001.
16. “Natural” is in quotes, for although the Afro was supposed to reflect the natural state of black hair, in reality it required plaiting and conditioning with oils, to help expand its length. Additionally, some of the thirteen Afro comb designs and inventions that were granted patents by the United States Patent Office between 1970 and 1980 included Afro combs with heated mechanisms or “blow-out” facilities that could help to soften, lengthen but not completely straighten the curls of black hair. See Mercer (1995: 256), Morrow (1973: 62), and Tulloch (2008: 131–2).
17. C.L.R. James viewed the 1960s Black Power Movement as the culmination of political thinking amongst black men in America, the

- Caribbean, France, and Britain, such as Book T Washington, W.E.B. Dubois, Marcus Garvey, Frantz Fanon, and George Padmore.
18. The original song sheet illustration is a “good” example of the use of minstrelsy and blacking-up practiced by white actors and singers in North America and England at this time. The image of the supposedly “sharp” “black-face” Bill Bailey, and his “mammy-like” wife are grotesque exaggerations of black man and womanhood. The song has an iconic place in popular music history. Since its publication in 1902 it has been performed by, for example, Ella Fitzgerald and Bobby Darren. Such music luminaries cannot detract from the songs problematic origins and complicated cultural position.
 19. James Bamforth, born 1842, engaged in visual media through photography in 1870. The postcard aspect of his work began in 1903 and continued until 1913. Katina Bill, curator of the exhibition *Secrets of the Saucy Seaside Postcard*, which is based on the Bamforth Postcard Collection, believes the *Bill Bailey* postcard was produced towards the earlier date range of 1903–10, when Jas. Bamforth Ltd became Bamforth & Co. Bill also believes that the *Bill Bailey* postcard was a Holmfirth production, as by about 1906 Bamforths had opened an office in New York. James Bamforth and his children, Janie, Edwin, and Frank, who worked with him “blacked-up” local people to be characters in their visual narratives. Indeed, Bill confirms that surviving family members of those who underwent this transformation for the Bamforths recall this (Katina Bill in conversation with Carol Tulloch, October 11, 2007).
 20. I partly chose this design out of the many options available at the stall as familial images have interested me for some time, notably the intra-familial relationships between parents and children through domestic crafts (see Tulloch 1997).
 21. Thelma Golden lecture, “Post-Black Art Now,” Tate Britain, London, March 11, 2009.
 22. Clarissa Sligh creates work that reconstructs the images or texts of “white” children’s books published from 1935 to 1965 by incorporating images of black children, and other aspects of black family life, often from her own family album, as a critique of segregation in the USA.
 23. Tulsa Hill Comprehensive School had a radical approach to teaching boys from 1956, when it first opened, to its closure in 1990. It was seen as a brave experiment in comprehensive education. Famous pupils include formidable cultural-political contributors such as the Jamaican-born, British-based poet Linton Kwesi Johnson, and ex-London mayor Ken Livingstone.
 24. Syd Shelton in conversation with Carol Tulloch, May 1, 2009.
 25. Syd Shelton photographed performers and members of the audience at RAR carnivals, gigs, and demonstrations, and contextual

- social and cultural images that informed the politics of the movement, across England and Ireland.
26. Alexander Davidson's example of this so-called rule is that "[B]radford schoolchildren may wear traditional dress, provided it is in the school dress, and religious jewellery, provided it is removed from PE lessons or for other physical activities" (Davidson 1990: 49). Juliette Ash has provided a far more nuanced reasoning for the production of non-white school uniforms through the creation of Muslim school uniform amongst London-based Asian school girls (see Ash 2002: 90–3).
 27. <http://www.tomrobinson.com/pages/biog.htm> (accessed April 24, 2009).
 28. The Hector Pieterse Museum and Memorial has an internal courtyard dedicated to the students killed in Soweto between June 16 and December 1976. They are represented by bricks, some with names, others without, which are "Laid like corpses. They give you an idea of how bodies were laying around Soweto. You feel a chill in there" (Antoinette Sithole, personal telephone communication with Carol Tulloch, May 13, 2006).
 29. I am grateful to the seminar discussion on Annie Coombes' essay "The Recalcitrant Object: Culture, Contact and the Question of Hybridity" (1994) with students of the MA Theory and Practice of Transnational Art, Chelsea College of Art and Design, London, March 11, 2009.
 30. George Shepperson is credited for the introduction of the term "diaspora" into the study of black cultural politics and history. He presented the paper "The African Abroad, or the African Diaspora" at the *International Congress of African Histories*, University College, Dar es Salaam in 1965.
 31. Murkal Devichand, *The Report*, BBC Radio 4, April 23, 2009, 8.00 p.m. At the end of the profile on the British National Party (BNP) and its chairman Nick Griffin, Asian Briton Devichand summarized that the recent election bids by the BNP "at a time of recession, will be a watershed moment of the politics of race and racial division. History suggests that, if victorious, the BNP would gain a platform to build legitimacy and respectability, as well as entering a growing European far right alliance. Today's BNP is a changed political animal, but its racially defined vision for Britain remains as stark as ever." Unfortunately Griffin was elected as a Member for the European Parliament for North West England in 2009.
 32. I agree with Immanuel Wallerstein, who in his essay "Reflections on Fanon" (2009), argues that Frantz Fanon's critical thinking on blackness is still relevant to understanding the social and political issues of the twenty-first century.

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