

VOICES
FROM THE FRONT
LINE

Voices From the Front Line - Introduction

The Voices From The Front Line (VFFL) publication documents a yearlong Heritage Lottery Funded, Young Roots multimedia arts project that took place during 2017 at the 198 Contemporary Arts and Learning, established in 1988 on Railton Road, known locally as the 'Front Line'.

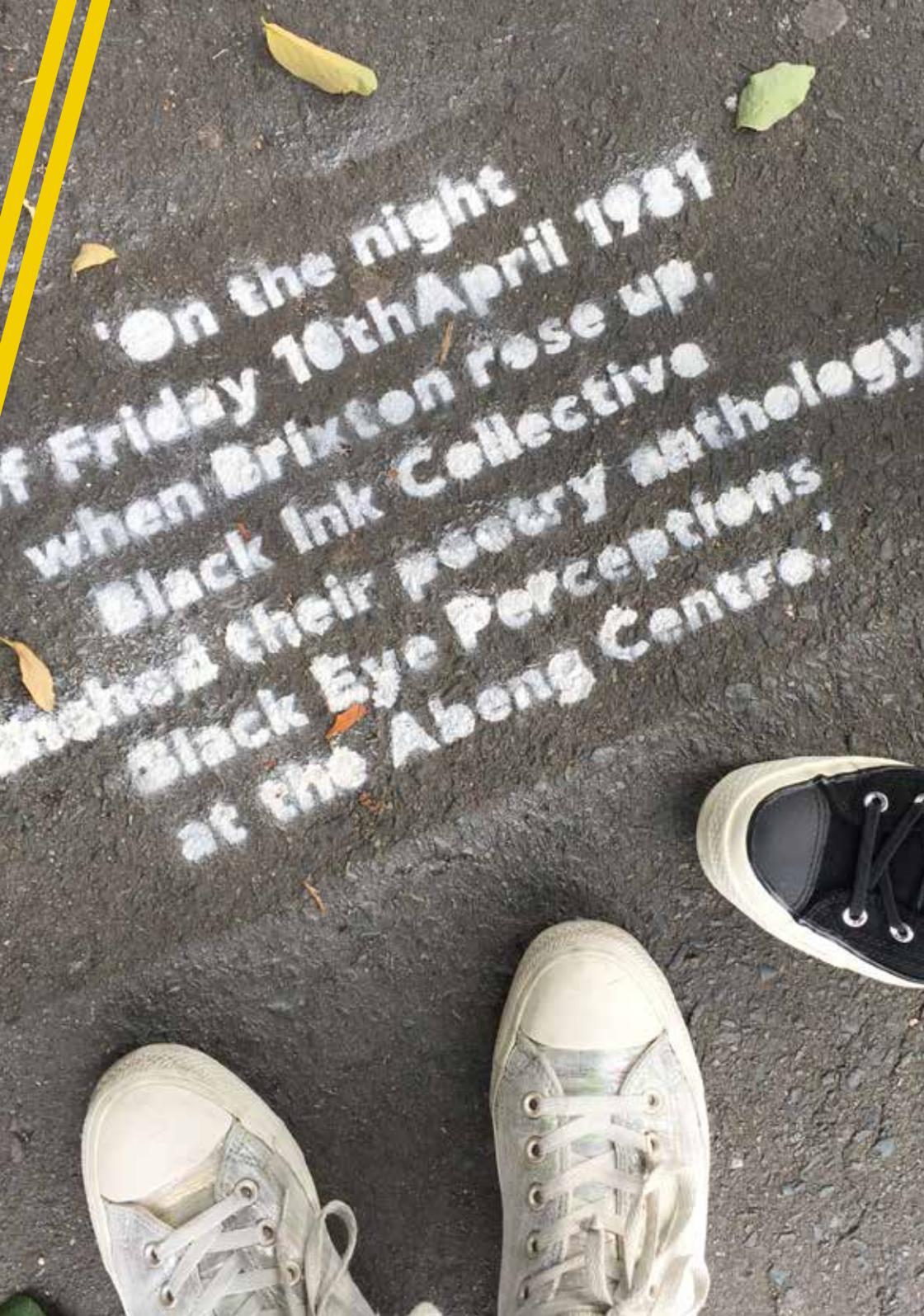
The youth arts project explores the political and social history of Railton road, known for being home to the Caribbean community in the post Windrush era and site of social uprisings in the 1980s. Against a backdrop of increasing gentrification and social change the project aimed to document the sites personalities and recount events which have shaped the area and provide participants with increased knowledge and understanding of their local heritage. Led by artist researcher Dr Sireita Lawrence-Mullings, the Heritage Lottery funded Young Roots project engaged youth participants and members of the Brixton community, to investigate the heritage of their local area through oral histories, archive visits, historical walks, filming and photography workshops, and creative activities. As part of the investigation into this once contested space the project asks community members, project participants and emerging artists, 'What characterises the spirit of Railton Road, and what does the space now mean for people who visited and lived on the road?'

The following sections present outputs based upon the project outline contained in the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) application and is consistent with the aims, objectives and methods proposed. These sections contain **Youth Arts Participants, Reflections of Railton Road** and a selection of narratives can be found in the section titled **Classroom on Road: Interviews on Railton Road**, which offer an account of the intergenerational oral history work undertaken by project participants and members of the Brixton community.

Archival Delves and Visits occur with our project partners, Lambeth Archives, Black Cultural Archives (BCA), George Padmore Institute (GPI) and Autograph, as well as our visits to the National Archives and Goldsmiths University of London. These visits enabled participants to produce **Creative Responses to Archives**. Knowledge of local heritage was gained and disseminated through project activities such as the filming and photography workshops, oral history interviews, the **Walking Tour, T-Shirt Workshop** and the development of the **Front Line Timeline**. **Emerging Artists** have developed a body of work for our February 2018 exhibition in response to some of the Railton Road archives. Examples of these project outputs can be found on www.frontline198.com and in our section titled **Social Media**.

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198 Contemporary Arts and Learning
198 Railton Road SE24 OJT
tel: +44(0)207 978 8309
fax: +44(0)207 737 5315
www.198.org.uk



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Foreword

*I don't come from Brixton but a lot of my friends do
I frequented the place with the Ghetto-tone crew
dashing down my design, time after time
to mek dem bawl rewind, on the Frontline
so remember before you condemn
take a good look at me because I'm one of them.*

(Too Blak in Brixtain, Lezlee Lyrix, 1989)

As the British Reggae Deejay, Lezlee Lyrix, many of my best moments, perhaps the highlights of my years as a performer, were spent on Railton Road; the Front-Line in Brixton during the 1980s. At the time the best place to hear and witness the innermost thoughts of the black communities was in a dancehall listening to a Sound System. This was important to us for several reasons and perhaps the most important one was that those spaces that we 'secured' become 'alternative public spheres'.

In these spaces we had autonomy and therefore controlled the narrative that spoke to our everyday experiences; good, bad, or indifferent in the womb of a scornful 'mother' country in a language we recognised as our own. For instance on Ghetto-tone, Frontline, Saxon, Ighteous, Jamdown Rockers, King Tubby's, Nasty Rockers et al, you would hear nightly tales that spoke to everyday happenings from racial violence and abuse, police brutality, intergenerational conflict with parents, romantic love, black pride and harmony, ghettoization and the ongoing gentrification that is so evident in contemporary Brixton now; to name but a few. However, what these testimonies of life 'on road' all had in common was the reality they portrayed that in many ways represent an invaluable oral, historical, resource due to their being recorded and disseminated on tapes and cassettes.

It is therefore good to know that many of those who were present then, and young people now, can be part of a project that not only recognises the worth of these 'hidden histories', but more importantly provides a platform to share these telling experiences by acknowledging this crucial aspect of their local heritage.

Dr William 'Lez' Henry
London 2018

YOUTHARTS PARTICIPANTS

Young people from diverse backgrounds, attended 198 CAL throughout the year and participated on the VFFL project through their involvement with creative workshops.

“I have really enjoyed being part of the front line project, the visits, interviews and making stuff and I have learnt lots about the road” (Jadesola, 2017)

Z E N A D A M S
J A D E S O L A A D E R O G H A
D A V I D A D E Y I N K A
M I C A N A Y R O N
B U K I B A Y O D E
S E B A S T I A N B O S K O S K I
S A L M A B E G U M
M A Y A C A M P B E L L
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G I L D A N I E L
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M A S H A N G R A Z E T T E
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J O R D Y Z A M B R A N O



REFLECTIONS OF RAILTON ROAD...

M A Y A C A M P B E L L

I spent a lot of my childhood on Railton road, I attended St. Jude's Primary school and spent most afternoons hanging out at the 198 Gallery, and as I have grown into womanhood I have realised that Railton Road holds more significance for who I am than I ever truly could understand as a child. It stands as one of the few frontlines of Black knowledge and culture production in Britain; where many Jamaicans called home after leaving the MV Empire Windrush and where the 1981 riots started over biased stop and search laws.

Railton Road holds more significance for who I am than I ever truly could understand as a child.

Over the years it has been called home by prominent Black British creatives and community leaders, for many reasons Railton Road is a critical site of Black British history and it should be celebrated.

My class in Primary school was an atypical demographic of minorities for a British school and as a result our education reflected that. I grew up thinking that to be surrounded by children from so many different ethnic backgrounds was the

normal experience, learning about black history far more regularly than one month a year and if anyone was to ask who my role models were I would likely reply with Mary Seacole or Olaudah Equiano. We joked about dry knees and the correct way to pronounce plantain, we had a steel pan band, drumming workshops and learnt about the history of Railton road and Brixton, to which we all had a connection. We felt part of a community that validated and accepted the cultures of people who looked different, and though eight year old me couldn't articulate it, I felt accepted.

At the heart of our school there was the spirit of Railton Road, creating an atmosphere where different didn't equate to lesser and acceptance was the standard. Once school finished for the afternoon I'd usually run over to the 198 Gallery where my mum worked, grabbing a drink and some sweets from the circle shop or Hamilton's on the way, passing by the old Jamaican dudes consistently posted outside. Going to the



gallery was always pretty fun, but the best bit for me was the after school art club for kids from my primary school!

Although I have now grown up and only visit Railton Road a few times a year, it's a place I think of often.

The 198 Gallery serves in many ways as a platform for Minority artists to share their art but over the years it has been so much more than that. From its beginnings as a dominoes club, before I was even born, to a space where those disillusioned with mainstream education could learn about graphic design and photography, it has always been a place for the community. Although I have now grown up and only visit Railton Road a few times a year, it's a place I think of often. Whilst at university a friend told me about an extraordinary



woman named Olive Morris, a relentless black activist who did much to transform the lives of Brixton's black and homeless communities, she squatted at 121 for many years transforming it into a community hub. Whilst reading into her I discovered that Linton Kwasi Johnson, who I had known for his hard-hitting poems on Race and class and often seen walking on Railton Road as a kid, had been a British Black panther alongside Olive Morris and Darcus Howe, the late civil rights activist and national broadcaster. They worked to co-ordinate demonstrations and provide education and legal advice to people of colour in Brixton, based on Shakespeare Road.

Linton went on to be a founding member of the Race Today Collective, along with Darcus Howe. The works of the Race Today Collective, at 165, are important to understanding the anti-racist struggles of the Black British community at that time. Going back further, 165 Railton

Road was home to C.L.R James, a pioneering postcolonial theorist and Trinidadian intellectual whose diverse works had international impact during his lifetime and are still discussed with

**Through the 198 Gallery
I learnt about
Sam the wheels,
a Jamaican Film-maker...**

great relevance; from cricket to Shakespeare to socialism, he really was a jack of all trades.

Through the 198 Gallery I learnt about Sam the wheels, a Jamaican Film-maker who came to the UK with the first generation, who has painstakingly built one of the largest archives of Black British history on film from his living room, all whilst being the go to guy for your bicycle related needs! I discovered the art of Rotimi Fani- Kayode, a Nigerian artist

who used photography to explore queerness at its intersection with Blackness, using his own experiences to create discussion around black masculinity and sexuality. Rotimi lived at 151 Railton Road, his contribution to the art world is thought provoking and powerful not only in the context of differing attitudes towards homosexuality in the West and in Africa

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Nigerian artist...**

but also in relation to how Brixton and the Black British community fits into that discourse. Growing up I learnt about Winifred Atwell, a classical and ragtime pianist who was the first black recording artist to sell over a million records in the UK and became an international artist known for her pioneering sound, she also opened one of the first Black women's hair salons in London at 82a Railton Road something which, as the proud owner of a stubborn Afro I will forever be grateful.

Learning about all of these inspirational people who walked the same roads as I did, is a very powerful reminder of how much work has gone into preserving our unique experiences as ethnic minorities in the UK and I fear that our London may become stale without the continued efforts of people of this variety. The frontline isn't just about the physical place, it's the tenacious spirit that protects what we stand for as a community, whether it be the art or music we produce, the way we style our hair or fight for better rights. In 2017, there



are now more people leaving London than moving to it, particularly with young people, working class people and ethnic minorities most at risk of being priced out. It is imperative that we protect our sites of cultural heritage and pride and continue to create, for the next generations of the frontline, wherever they may be.

IF you asked around five years ago what Railton Road meant to me, I would have simply replied: "It's the road where my mum's yard is innit." Well, depending on who you were, I might have toned down the slang, but you get my point. Railton Road was simply the road I grew up on for most of my life. At times, I was proud because it was close to my primary school and at others, I would be annoyed as to why it was such a long ass walk back from Brixton Station.

My pride in my road came after being sparked by a conversation I had with the then manager, Gavin, a 40-year-old Scot, of my local Oxfam bookshop, which I was volunteering at. I was applying to be Head Girl at my sixth form and as a part of the process I was required to write a speech and was insisted the speech mention one of my role models and why. If you know me, then you know I love to be extra, I wanted to be different, as a young black woman with new found pride in myself and

The road where my mum's yard is innit!

my identity I was going to choose a black woman. But, not an African American one, no Oprah, no Beyoncé, not even Michelle Obama. I expressed this to Gavin, and he flatly replied, "Olive Morris", to which I then replied "Who?". I remember Gavin smirking and saying, "How can you be from Brixton and not know Olive Morris!?"

Being older, I found myself learning new things from Gavin Saturday afternoon while volunteering, this was once again the case, so we did the usual. He would turn to the computer and google whatever we were talking about and give me a mini-lecture on the said topic. I would then decide whether I go home and dive further, luckily, that day I did.

Fast forward, a few weeks later and I was learning a lot about Black British history, the Black Panther Movement, Brixton's Black Women's Group, and Organisation of Women of Asian Descent (OWAAD). I was learning about the racist atmosphere black people in Britain were living in. I was also learning about how a lot of things were based in South London, in Brixton and on Railton Road. I was fascinated, I couldn't believe that in an article or book, I was learning about these people who had amazingly courageous things, were doing a lot of them, on my road. I remember watching a documentary of some people going to South Africa and



Imagine going to see Akala talk about the Haitian Revolution and how C. L. R James was the first person to give an accurate account of what happened...

visiting the prison where Nelson Mandela was held. They were all in awe and felt emotional, even though Mandela had left that cell years ago. Although not equal, the situations were similar, you could imagine how mind-blown I was. The way I saw it, my current state of living, me being able to walk freely on the road, go to school and not be openly discriminated against and to live where I live (privileges many black people still don't have in this country and across the globe) was thanks to work of these people, a lot which was organised on my road. Imagine going to see Akala talk about the Haitian Revolution and how C.L.R James was the first person to give an accurate account of what happened,



an amazing writer who lived and died on my road. Olive Morris famously climbing on top one of the houses on Railton Road to protest for squatter's rights. I could go and go.

I'll share, what I think one of the most influential instances that comes to my mind at the thought of someone asking me about my relation to Railton Road. After learning about the Black Panther Movement, I quickly tried to learn the life stories of its more prominent members like Olive Morris. Another was Linton Kwesi Johnson, a Jamaican -born British dub poet, reggae artist and activist. The art he produced, his poetry reflected the experiences of African-Caribbean community in Britain. Unlike Olive Morris, Mr. Johnson is still alive. Like most people I admire, I assumed I'd meet him at some event in relation to Black History Month. I had researched him at school (during my free time and after I had done my coursework) and made my way home and decided to walk

home up Railton Road. As usual, I passed many Afro-Caribbean elders, some I was more familiar with than others. When I got home, I googled him thoroughly and upon seeing his face, his goatee and his distinctive hat I swore that I had passed him on the road coming home. I quickly asked my mum and dad if they knew a "Linton Kwesi Johnson", to which they replied "no". I had faith in my parents for a little while, they knew all the Jamaican elders that lived locally, but the face looked so familiar it started to bug me. I decided

...having young people learning the history they don't teach in schools, Railton Road did that.

to show my mum a photo of him to which my mum replied, "I know him, he lives down the road and knows so and so..." At that point, I stopped listening and when

into shock. He wasn't just any old person living down the road. He was The Linton Kwesi Johnson and he was my neighbour. My mum promised an introduction which happened about three weeks later. I completely fanned out and asked him to speak at my school. Sometime later at the eagerness of the Head of History, he did and it was fantastic. People often talk about bridging the generational gap, living on Railton Road, educating myself on the history and sharing it with others is a way of doing that. About having young people learning the history they don't teach in schools, Railton Road did that. About young people being grateful for the work done by those before them, for me Railton Road did that. Every time I walk up this road, I feel at peace, I feel proud, I feel grateful. I step on an important history embedded in this road which no matter how gentrified it gets will always be there.

It will always be, The Frontline.



CLASSROOM ON ROAD

INTERVIEWS ON RAILTON ROAD

35 oral history interviews were conducted, offering the Youth Arts participants the opportunity to learn interview techniques, photography and filming whilst engaging with local heritage and intergenerational dialogue. To listen to the full interviews please visit www.frontline198.com

MELBA WILSON

THE Youth Arts Participants interview Melba Wilson outside 121 Railton Road, where she and other women would attend the Brixton Black Women's Group (BBWG) every Sunday from 3pm – 5pm. 121 is said to be one of the longest running squats in Britain. Spread over three floors, the space was known to be an anarchist social centre. To get to 121 she tells us, "we had to run the Gauntlet of the brothers on Railton Road" and the significance for the meetings was that "we were trying to carve out a third way of being in the world".

Buki: What happened at 121?

Melba: We came together every Sunday and studied Marx and Leninism. We published Speak Out and planned activities that would take us beyond 121 because we were about making links, not only with other solidarity movements, but also other womens groups.

We worked with groups that were supporting independence for Palestine, groups fighting for South African independence such as South West African People's Organisation (SWAPO). We worked with Irish groups who were fighting for Irish independence and those kinds of initiatives.

Like those movements, we were trying to create change in the status quo. It was about joining forces with the anti-imperialist struggle and anti-capitalist struggle. It was about creating a different kind of movement whose basis was about a more egalitarian and equal way of distributing wealth. Also, acknowledging the diverse political groupings that existed at the time.

Actually, what we were doing still feels very relevant today, connections can still be made in terms of fighting for independence and solidarity with many oppressed groups around the world, including Palestinians.

Buki: How does standing on Railton Road make you feel?

Melba: The sun is shining for a start.... It feels odd...it makes me feel that I am a part of history and I am proud to be a part of the Brixton Black Women's Group. It makes me feel some sadness for the way things have changed. Brixton during the 1970s and 1980s was almost forgotten in a way, but some of the same issues remain, I also feel frustrated that some things haven't changed.

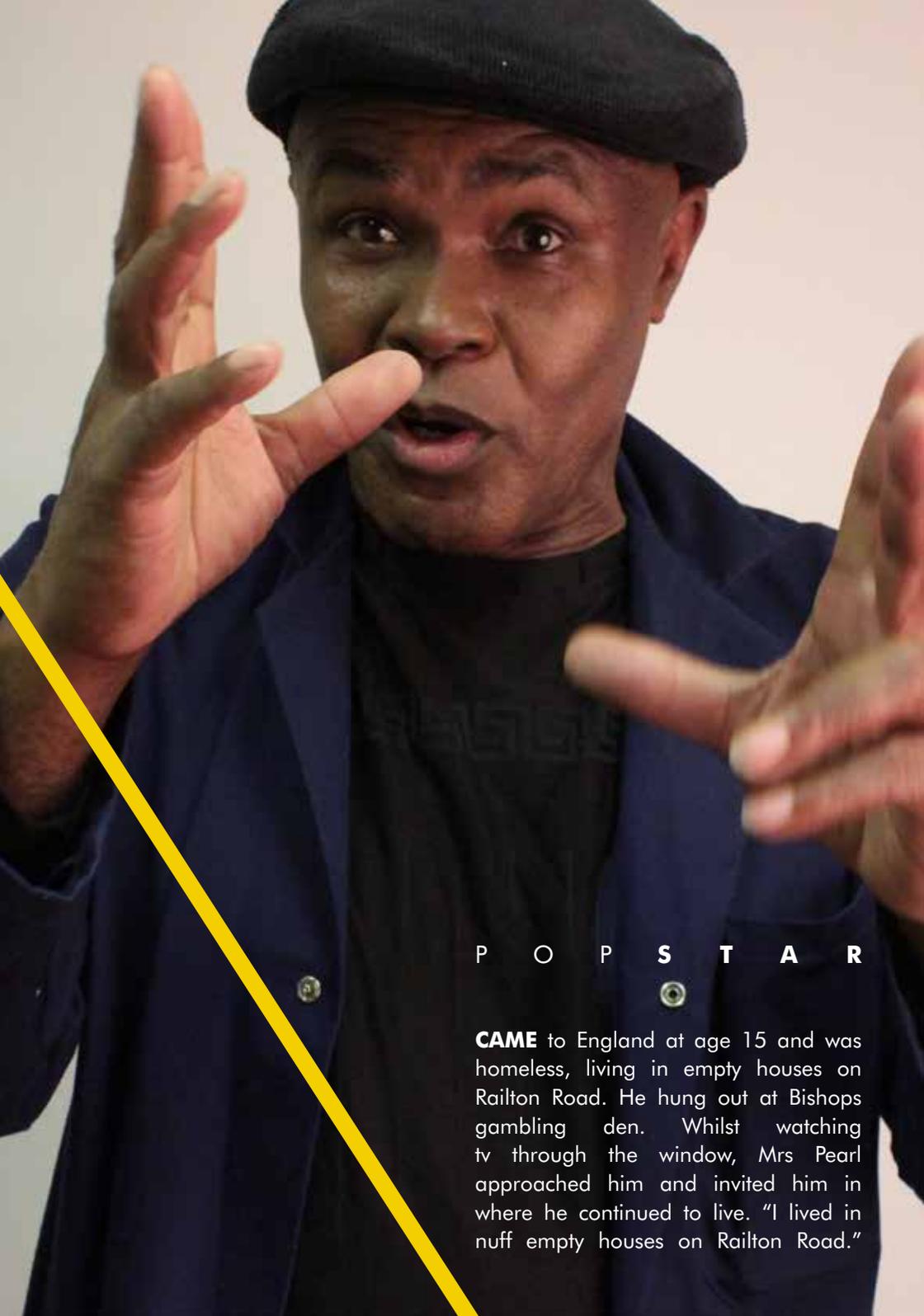
Buki: What was the most effective change that happened?



Melba: The creation of the Brixton Black Women's Group was probably the most effective thing for us because we created black socialist feminist thought, which had not existed before. Out of our determination to organise autonomously from the Black Power movement and also from the women's liberation movement, which was mainly white led, we understood that we needed to create a different path and so what we created was black socialist feminist thought which I think survives to this day and has stood the test of time despite the fact that BBWG finished during the mid 80s and we went through a period of dormancy.

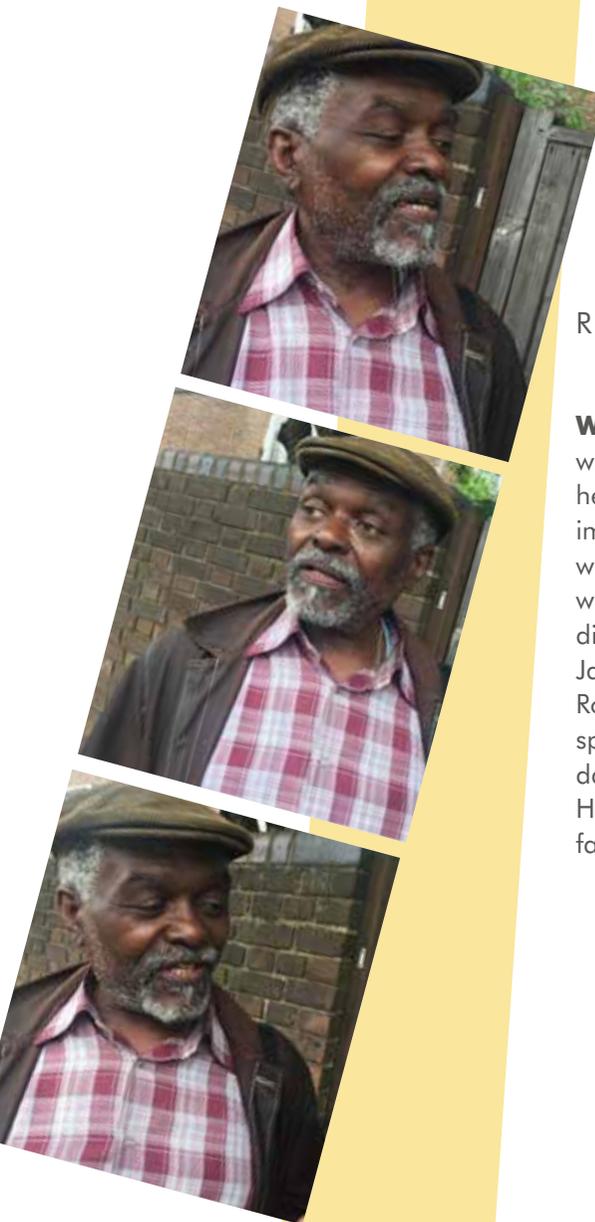
I feel encouraged by lots of young black women embracing the kinds of ideas and ideals that we helped to create. That feels to me like our greatest achievement. The fact that you are all standing here and interested in what we did all these years ago means that was an important contribution.





P O P S T A R

CAME to England at age 15 and was homeless, living in empty houses on Railton Road. He hung out at Bishops gambling den. Whilst watching tv through the window, Mrs Pearl approached him and invited him in where he continued to live. "I lived in nuff empty houses on Railton Road."



R O O T S M A N

WHILST talking to Roots Man, an actor who performed in the film Babylon, he shared how he broke the rules of imposed ideas about staged language when he challenged the request to read with a Bajan accent. He explains his difficulty as a Jamaican, who speaks Jamaican and tells how he left Railton Road one night and went on the set and spoke his mind. He recalls some of his days of Railton Road saying: "It was like Hollywood", reminiscing on the style and fashion of the time.

F O L A M I B A Y O D E

FOLAMI shares memories of home, anti-racist activism, squatting and Railton Road Methodist Church Youth Club with her daughter Buki Bayode and discusses the importance of the squatting community.

“The spirit of railton road... I think the spirit/energy of railton road is about the activism I remember in my early teens, the anti-racist activism, dub poetry squatters. I think that’s the overall thing; it was difficult but it was also really positive. I wasn’t fully aware of the impact of what was going on at that time. I know there was something of some significance but looking back on it now, it was really special. There are pretty important historical landmarks in terms of events and people that existed along Railton Road... It is getting gentrified now, practically every shop front is getting turned into a cottage house... and that’s all good because people need housing. But the whole gentrification thing, to me, started in the 80s.

Because I moved out of the area I’m more of an observer of this phase of the gentrification. But the gentrification as far as I’m concerned started after the Scarman inquiry when they built this building up, when they demolished the other housing and then all the yuppies started moving in and property prices went up in the area. So for me what’s happening now is phase 2, and it’s probably going to continue, and it’s a shame that it is happening at the

expense of the... I wouldn’t say the death because I don’t think it’s died, but the suffocating and the squeezing of the cultural history, of the people’s history that is in these streets and within the walls of these buildings and homes. If it’s not recorded in things like this, with the work 198 is doing with archiving people like the photographers and filmmakers, who else is gonna do this, then we will literally fade away like ghosts.”



R O S S G R I F F I T H S

AN urban geographer and community leader reflects upon her launching of Brixton Splash at 64 Railton Road, the home of Brixton’s first internet cafe - MetroShak. Ross tells us that MetroShak introduced technology to the community via the introduction of the employment cafe. She says it was, “a home not just for Brixton Splash but for many other projects, such as those that involved children out of mainstream schools.” Ross goes on to tell us that the community redefined itself. Railton Road in the 80s was reclaimed by a people who were prepared to fight for their rights.



LINTON KWESI-JOHNSON

ESTHER Hooper shares her interest in wanting to know more about the community she lived as a young child before leaving for Dorset. Now that she has returned to Brixton as a young adult she seeks answers from Linton Kwesi Johnson.

Esther: What does Railton Road mean to you?

Linton: "Railton Road has significance for me, because when I was young a lot of my socialising happened around Railton Road. First of all there was the Methodist Church which used to be, Railton Road Methodist Church and Youth and Community Centre. We had our youth club there. We played Dominos twice a week, there were discos and sound systems. Suprano B was the resident sound. There was also Neville King and various other sound systems..."

Esther: Why was it called the Front Line?

Linton: "Its called Front Line in reference to liberation struggles that were fought in Africa. They talk about the Front Line in places like Angola, Mozambique, South Africa's national struggles for independence. Because we were experiencing our own struggles here... it was obvious to me and my generation that the police had declared war against us."

LEE LAWRENCE

LEE reflects on the many trips to Brixton with his mum Cherry Groce, who first introduced him to the community's supportive spirit and came to understand the significance of Railton Road on his own terms.

"It was the place to be seen, the place where people went and showed off their fashion, clothes, car, jewellery. If you wanted to be seen you go on the Line. It was a safe place for people to hang out and see who you needed to see, because at that time there was no mobile phone or social media, so the way you connected with people was via a spot.

The Front Line was the spot to connect, to catch up on the latest gossip. People would meet people. If there was a guy or girl you fancied you could go to the Line to meet or see that person. You could also find out about the latest parties or what sound system was playing out and where. It felt more like a space for people to network, socialise, and express themselves. The Line was a place that young people at the time felt that they owned. The Line was theirs, it was ours, it was the place where we felt most comfortable in terms of being amongst your own people. Although it was a space where anything could happen, it was also a space where you felt constantly guarded, watched and protected. There were always guardians out here. They may have been community leaders or youth workers like those from Dexter Play Centre or business people who

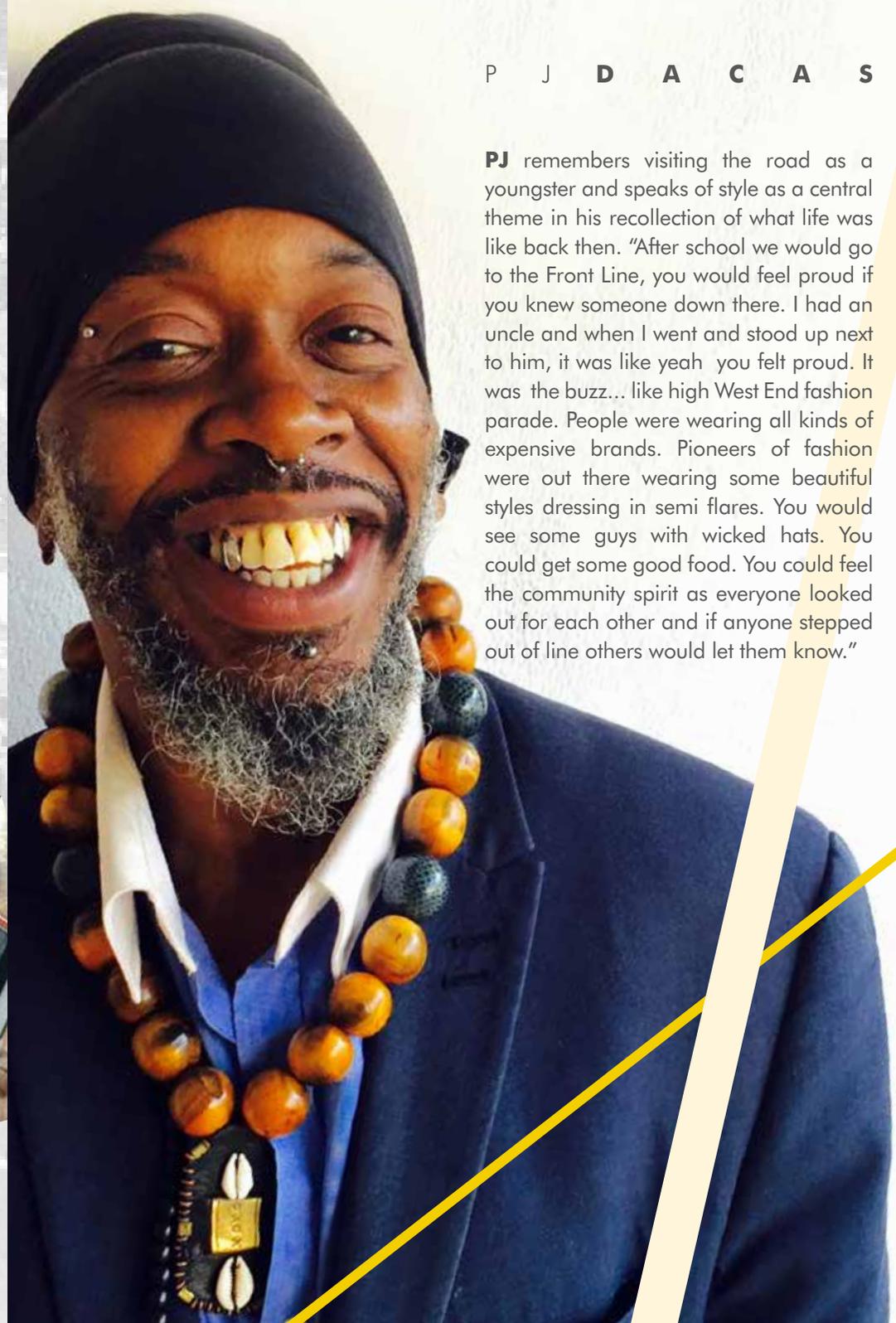


owned some of the shops on the road, to the street guys. Everyone had a sense of responsibility to the youngsters.

My personal experience of the Line is in relation to what we went through when my mum was shot in the house whilst we were present, and the subsequent uprisings as a result of that. The Line was so significant because the word about what had happened got people gathering... It was like sending a bird with a message to the Front Line and that message was dispersed far and wide. On any one day you could have 100 people on the Line. The Line was so significant to how you would get your message out; in a sense the Line was our line of communication."

BRIDGET CHIN
& CECIL RUBEN

AS Bridget remembers her Chinese grandparents' wholesale shop on Railton Road she also remembers a number of businesses run by people like Cecil Reuben. Bridget brings us to meet Cecil who now runs one of Brixton's hot spots - Hootananny. It was at Cecil's cab office where she met and made friends with many of Jamaica's popular reggae artists who would later come and perform at Hootananny, two minutes walk from Railton Road. She asks Cecil what does the Front Line mean to him? He shares an image of the original Front Line location taken during an 80s Brixton insurrection on his phone and explains; "Brixton Front Line was a meeting place for the Jamaicans especially the men that came up from all over Jamaica to meet with their friends. Instead of going to each others houses, everybody would meet on the Front Line to chat and discuss."



PJ remembers visiting the road as a youngster and speaks of style as a central theme in his recollection of what life was like back then. "After school we would go to the Front Line, you would feel proud if you knew someone down there. I had an uncle and when I went and stood up next to him, it was like yeah you felt proud. It was the buzz... like high West End fashion parade. People were wearing all kinds of expensive brands. Pioneers of fashion were out there wearing some beautiful styles dressing in semi flares. You would see some guys with wicked hats. You could get some good food. You could feel the community spirit as everyone looked out for each other and if anyone stepped out of line others would let them know."

ARCHIVAL DELVES AND VISITS...

LAMBETH ARCHIVES

LAMBETH Archives is the first archive we visited, and for some of us, the first archive visit ever! We learnt about the importance of archives, what an archive is, how to behave when you're in an archive, and how to handle them. We were given archival material that related to Railton Road such as maps, newspaper clippings and publications all of which will contribute to our timeline. "It helped us put into perspective how different Railton Road was viewed in the 1980s by the police and the media. A favourite archive was the Squatters Handbook with the picture of Olive Morris climbing on top of a roof as the front cover" (Buki, 2017).

"We visited seven different places that had archives relating to Railton Road" (Joshua, 2017)



BLACK CULTURAL ARCHIVES

SARAH Buntin, the facilitator of the BCA education workshops, discussed significant individuals who used Railton Road as a space to organise or socialise. She also provided oral history training to the participants, followed by a living archive workshop that explored the work of the Brixton Black Women's Group through the perspective of founding member Melba Wilson who told her story to the group.

This is the first time we met our living archive Melba Wilson, an activist who worked from 121 Railton Road along with Olive Morris and others. We also saw her publication, Organisation of Women of African and Asian Descent (OWAAD) and asked her questions about life on Railton Road in the 80s (Daniel, 2017).



A U T O G R A P H

ALI Eisa, the facilitator of the Autograph workshop, used various techniques to engage the participants with archive material relating to Railton Road. It was the first time to Autograph for most of the group where they discovered Autograph began on Railton Road with founding member Rotimi Fani Kayode. The group examined and made hands-on responses to two archives relating to the history of Railton Road - Clovis Salmon aka 'Sam the Wheels' film footage of seminal events in Brixton during the 1960s to 1980s and the late Rotimi Fani Kayode's photographic works, produced during his time as a resident of Railton Road.

Through visual analysis, handling and discussion of the photographs we examined how personal identity and political difference is represented in similar and contrasting ways through documentary and fine art images. Participants drew inspiration from the archive to make their own compositions, playing with masquerade, tableaux and portraiture.

"We learnt that the films on exhibition belonged to Sam the Wheels, the man with the bike repair outside his house on Railton Road and that Rotimi lived a few doors up from Sam" (Esther, 2017).



SARAH Garrod from the George Padmore Institute engaged participants with some of what is held at GPI as a means to break down barriers to accessing records. She delivered a basic archival workshop that highlighted varying storage systems and temperature control. She demonstrated how archives are stored, used and donated. "It was good to touch one of the Race Today Collective publications and see the old school, as well as the typed list of slogans used for protests" (David, 2017).

"I enjoyed the design bit of the day when we were asked to create a political slogan for a T-Shirt using the slogans found on one of the archive documents." (Hassan, 2017)



THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES WITH DECOLONISING THE ARCHIVES

“**THE 198 CAL**, Railton Road Project group visit was an inspiring day for us at The National Archives. The tour of the repository opened up new ideas for doing more tours especially designed for SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) audience groups. To that end we are extremely grateful for the enthusiasm and energy from all the project participants. We look forward to seeing the culminating exhibition featuring the infamous ‘Salt Spoon Spreader’, a copyrighted design registered 100 years ago attributed to a Brixton Railton Road resident!” (Sandra Shakespeare, 2017)

An introduction to The National Archives, and tour of the repositories was led by Sandra Shakespeare, Eleanor, Tom, Ela and Emily. The group discussed why archives are important and were encouraged to explore how they can be used to trace family history. The visit featured an applied theatre session led by DTA practitioners Connie Bell and Kefiloe Siwisa. A re-interpretation of archive material relating to Brixton and Railton Road led groups such as Joshua and Hassan to re-enact written archived communication requesting a meeting with Lord Scarman between Rass Napthali and P.J.C Mawer in 1981.



13 **DEAD** NOTHING SAID -
GOLDSMITHS UNIVERSITY
O F L O N D O N

THE visit to the 13 Dead Nothing Said exhibition of Vron Ware, documenting the Black People's Day of Action on 2 March, 1981 at Goldsmiths University of London was the first visit to the university for the participants. Links were created between the political figures they came across at the George Padmore Institute, and those involved in the New X fire demonstration such as Darcus Howe and Linton Kwesi Johnson. Interesting questions were asked about the images seen such as; "Why did white people march?" and "Would people march if that happened to one of us today?"



CINEMA MUSEUM

ROBERT Holden, a local Herne Hill historian from the Cinema Museum, gave participants a different perspective of London during the mid 1900s. There was a specific focus on the cinema at 222 Railton Road as one of the early silent film spots and last cinema to convert from silence to sound. Intrigued by the history of a Lambeth workhouse and local resident Charlie Chaplin who may have been a frequent visitor to the area, Hassan asked "Did Charlie go to the cinema on Railton Road?"



CREATIVE RESPONSES TO ARCHIVES:

YOUTH SKILLS DEVELOPMENT/OUTPUTS

COLLAGES

THE Youth Arts Participants drew from the resources gathered during the archive delve visits. They produced snapshots of personalities who have contributed to the social and political histories of various communities associated with Railton Road. Their responses to the archives resulted in a public art piece. The production of digital collages served as visual references to what participants have gathered.

“It was nice to see all of our collages outside on the wall of 198 CAL” (Jordy, 2017).



PHOTOGRAPHY

AND FILM

CLAPHAM Film Unit assisted during the early stages of our Classrooms on Road session. Participants were taught filming and photography techniques as a means to engage members of the public to contribute to the documentation of Railton Road's history.

Quiet Voice directed the young people to participate in intergenerational dialogue with Railton Road's commuters by way of oral history interviews. Stephen Rudder taught and assigned the group camera crew roles, and discussed varying filming styles and techniques. These earlier sessions were followed by filming and post production workshops as a means to up-skill participants.

Hassan is one of our keen interviewers who doesn't hesitate to politely stop and invite passers by to be interviewed. With a little help, he quickly gets his request across. He asks; "What memory would you like to share about Railton Road?" Depending on how much time the passer has he would ask, "What would you want others to know?" and "What characterises the spirit of the Road?" Likewise Zen Adams punctuates the work of the others with his beautiful background shots of the Road's atmosphere and the group at work.



MERCHANDISE

T-SHIRTS, CUPS, BAGS,
XMAS - MARKET

CREATIVE digital skills were developed during the design and production of visual merchandise inspired by the archives. The Youth Arts Participants learned how to use industry standard design software and printing equipment.



S O C I A L M E D I A

During our youth steering group sessions at the start of the project, we set up and used social media platforms to share our project process (Stephanie, 2017)

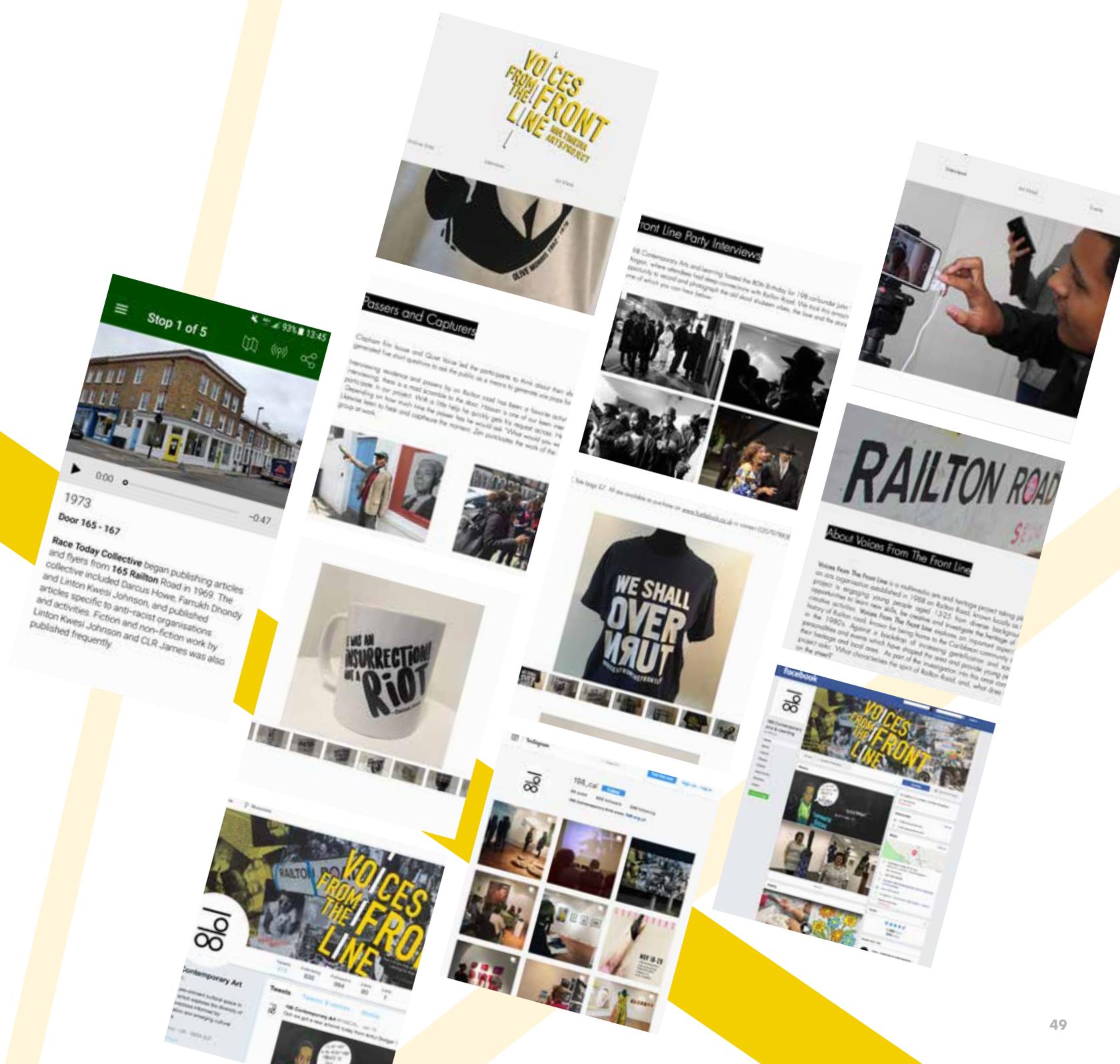
M O B I L E A P P

DESIGNED and developed by Sebastian assisted by Stephanie Yates and Bozeana and realised by George Fort and the Gonzola app.

“Gonooza invites non-traditional tour guides - scholars, artists, writers & musicians - to create audio tours around London. These place-specific communications allow listeners to experience the city in radically new ways. We invited 198 to create a tour with us because of their reputation as a progressive arts organisation, their long history, and their standing within the local community.”

WEBSITEFRONTLINE198.COM

We created the website as a digital archive of not only the project but also the contributions made by local people who have helped to shape the history of the Railton Road. It is through their stories that we have been able to reflect on what life was like and why the everyday happenings have become key moments in British History. Explore our audio recordings, photographs, art work, merchandise and archives that we have given us insight into the history of Railton Road and its people.



T-SHIRT WORKSHOP

M E M O R Y O N
A T - S H I R T

Families engaged with copies of archive material gathered from our project participants. They were asked to walk around the archive table and glance their eyes at documents and take note of the ones that jump out at them. They then selected those that stood out. We discussed the significance of each doc and developed a series of reflective slogans i.e "I am not a member of the Renegades, I am a Renegade" (Darcus Howe). We later developed sketches with text and image based designs as a part of the memories on a shirt collection.



WALKINGTOUR

THE WALKING TOUR AND MOBILE PHOTOGRAPHY EXCURSION ALONG RAILTON ROAD.

17 Participants
Multiple age range 12-60+

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES :

Engage community members with knowledge about their local histories.

Explore the cultural, political and social history of the road.

Connect the significance of the road to the History of Britain.

Explore archives behind doors.

Bring local archives to local people.

Have intergenerational conversations through memories.

Capture the spirit of the community.

The afternoon began at 12.30pm I headed to the gallery to assist Buki, 198 Contemporary Arts and Learning Youth Curator and administrator, as she helped to prepare for our participation in the Lambeth Heritage Festival afternoon walk. She was filling 198 CALs youth social enterprise, HustleBucks bags with arts information and community goodies for give away to the participants who would join the session. After setting up the projector for Robert Holden, who simultaneously spread out his book collection on the history of Railton Road and Herne Hill in general, Robert and I headed up to 212 Railton Road outside The Commercial Pub, which is where the tour began.

As we stepped into our time capsule the group introduced themselves to each other and we did a run through of how the day will flow between the dates 1870 – 2017 and asked participants to respond to the shooting on the frontline, mobile phone photography exercise by

responding to clues that relate to the sites we visit. We mentioned our viewing of Roberts presentation through slides at 198 CAL, as well as our final stop to share our thoughts and photos at the Black and White or Brixton Pound Café on Atlantic Road.

After introducing our timeline project, Voices From the Front Line to give context to our walking tour activity and its meaning, which is to revive the voices of Railton Roads community, Robert Holding began to share the narratives that characterise this part of the city through the telling of a beautiful history of Herne Hill. After learning about what took place at 222 Railton Road - The Cinema Grand, which is the last cinema to convert film from silence to sound, we headed to 198 to view archive samples of a street. The archive samples that relate to life on Railton Road were gathered from The National Archives, The George Padmore Institute, Black Cultural Archives, Autograph and Lambeth Archives. We also



took in Roberts Presentation with details about the construction and culture of the cinema. A brief history of the gallery and its emergence from Roots to 198 CAL revealed some of the founding members such as Zoe Lindsay, John Morgan and Clarence Thompson. Arriving at 179 Railton Road the house of Clovis Nelson also known

From: Keith Hill...

Date: 23 September 2017 at 19:38:51 BST

To: sireita@198.org.uk

Subject: Time-lining the Front Line

Dear 198,

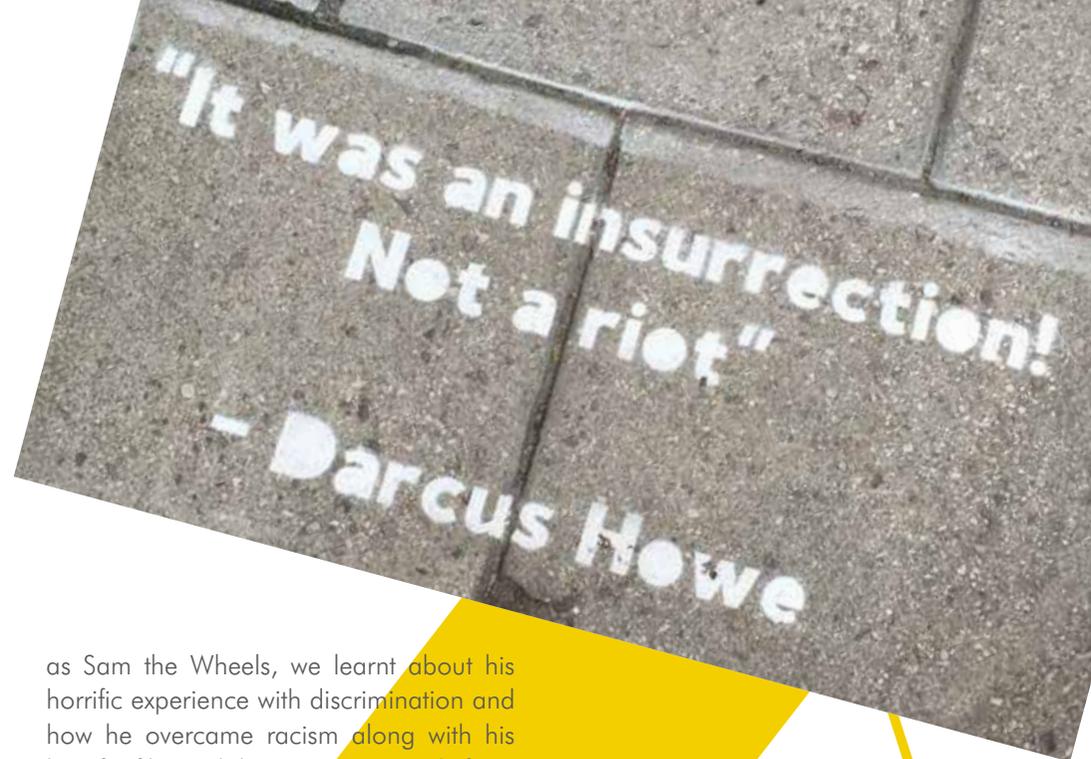
I wanted to let you know how much I enjoyed - and learnt from - today's walk along Railton Road.

I think I knew that Railton Road had been a centre of various aspects of black activism (and I certainly knew about CLR James). But I really appreciated the greater detail - the names, the addresses, and the types of activism - I got today. It wasn't all activism, of course - Winifred Atwell, for example - although I would not underestimate the impact of an immensely popular and attractive black entertainer on British social attitudes in the period. (I was the member of the walking group, by the way, who got Winifred Atwell's 'Black and White Rag'.)

What was new to me was the significance of Railton Road in gay history. But what I learnt today helps to clarify a memory my wife and I have carried from the 1970s. At some stage in the 1970s (before we moved to Streatham from north London), we went on an Anti-Nazi League march which finished up in Brockwell Park. This was the first time we had ever been in Brixton. We always remembered marching down a terraced street where the demo was welcomed by huge banners saying 'Gays against the Nazis' and most spectacularly 'Queens' in full drag leaning out of upstairs windows and even sitting on the top of downstairs windows waving to the marchers.

This must have been Railton Road, and today in my mind I finally confirmed the connection! So thanks from me, and this is my little contribution to the memory project. By the way, Robert Holden on the cinema was great as ever, but the walk was the star event!

Yours Keith Hill



as Sam the Wheels, we learnt about his horrific experience with discrimination and how he overcame racism along with his love for film and documenting people from his community.

Participants on the walk contributed their knowledge of Railton Road as they knew it. This was one of the key highlights to the walk. Participatory knowledge sharing offers an interesting way for people to learn from each other and get a broader scope of the embedded value that is within the communities they have a vested interest. As one of the activities on the walk was to identify and photograph the clue in your hand, Henry Rodriguez was the clue to the George, Mingles and the Harmony pub. The first building to be attacked during the riots and according to the South London Press, it was seen as an act of revenge to racist attitudes from the owner. Ironically the pub hosted the works of prominent artist such as Linton Kwesi Johnson and Roderiquez.

We remain standing outside 82a 'Black and White Rag' was the clue to Winnifred Atwell who we learnt was one of the first Black Women to have a hit single as a solo instrumental female artist. She had a prestigious hair salon on the same cite. The clue bearer Keith Hill after the walk sent an email sharing his experience and memory of Railton Road.



The following texts and emails were also sent.

"Good morning. The walk was very informative. I did not know about the cinema opposite Herne Hill station. I also see the walk as an excellent tour for tourist visiting Brixton. Found lots of historical first that happened along Railton Road regarding squatters rights etc. Lots to talk about. Hope that all is good with you. Bless." – Ladrick Lemonous

*"Thank you it was a day well spent I hope we can do it again."
"I have learnt some interesting things today." "We enjoyed that, thank you."*

"I really liked how people got involved along the way and added their own memories and experiences of Railton Road and the front line to the guided tour; it brought things to life in a nice way. I also liked the quotations and facts that the project group had painted on the pavement; a great idea!" Good to see you again, Sireita. I also liked the way you handled the walk. Good luck with everything!

*Best wishes.– Anders Steinvall
Swedish journalist and writer*

Additionally young people from 198 CAL were enabled an intergenerational experience through the exploration of community voices and archives



EMERGING ARTISTS



ARTISTS DREW INSPIRATION FROM THE ARCHIVES HELD AT 198 CAL AND PRODUCED THEIR OWN RESPONSES.

H A Y L E Y A . R E I D

A documentary filmmaker and video artist with ten years experience working within film production. She was recently commissioned to make short films using archive material from Sandi Hughes' archive as a part of the Rewind Fast Forward project, which was funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund as well as British Film Institute (BFI). Reid's film *Auld Lang Syne* was screened nationally at various venues including, the BFI, New Art Exchange (Nottingham) and Manchester Art Gallery.

Reid has a strong interest in archive and heritage projects, which was first ignited by her involvement in the Black Cultural Archives project, *Heart of a Race: Oral Histories of the Black Women's Movement* initially participating as an interviewer. She went on to produce her first film about the Black Women's Movement with support from the Media Trust and Channel Four as a competition winner of the First Shots: *Identity Uncovered*, which premiered at Ritzy Brixton and broadcasted on the Community Channel and Sky Anytime in 2010.

A D A M A J A L L O H

Adama Jalloh is a documentary/street photographer living and working in London. Her work mainly focuses on themes such as identity, race and culture. Adama's main aim is to capture moments and tell visual stories in a genuine way. She draws inspirations from her surroundings and the flow of everyday life.



L A U R A R U S T O N

Laura Alston is a New York based multidisciplinary artist best known for her photography and creative direction. Her work centers black experiences & engages with themes of self-care and introspection. Translating her interest of nature, travel & artistic exploration, Laura aims to create pieces that prompt reflection, a moment of stillness, and celebrate blackness.





J A C O B V . J O Y C E

Jacob V Joyce is a non binary interdisciplinary artist that disrupts commercial and community spaces with queer and anti-colonial, creative interventions. Currently Joyce is facilitating the Queer Anarchy Summer School as artist in residence at Tudor Heritage site Sutton House in East London. Joyce also works as a freelance illustrator working for Global Justice Now creating the art work for international human rights campaigns as well as comic books and zines addressing personal and global instances of systemic oppression.



R A B Z L A N S I Q U O T

Rabz Lansiquot is a filmmaker, programmer & DJ. She received the Silverstone Award from the University of Sussex for her MA thesis 'On the Liberatory Implications of Documenting James Baldwin'. Her work is informed by Black liberatory thought, Black queer studies, and lived experience, seeking to highlight the nuances of marginalised experience, and move beyond representation, to liberation.



M O N I Q U E J A C K S O N

Monique Jackson is an interdisciplinary artist working across print, photography, moving image and participatory projects, producing work around key themes such as the psychological implications of the built environment, identity politics and contemporary cultural analysis.



R O S A - J O H A N U D D O H

(b.1993, Croydon) is an artist living and working in London. The aim of her artistic practice is to reach maximum self-esteem. She does this through making performances, ceramics, video and sound, exploring spatial agency, collective memory, and radical self-love. She studied Architecture Ba at Cambridge University and is currently studying MA Fine Art Media at Slade School of Fine Art as a Sarabande scholar.

www.rosajohanuddoh.com



L I N E T T K A M A L A

(b.1970 - Harlesden) is a London based visual artist of Jamaican heritage, whose paintings merge abstraction with expressive hand script. She is unique as an artist, having progressed to the top of the education profession in an executive position for a multi-academy trust whilst still working as a creative.

Presently she is creating work as part of her 'State of Education' project which speaks to the unprecedented changes taking place across the English education system and wider cultural discussions. Her typical week is a mixture of painting in her studio, training headteachers to work successfully in some of the most challenging schools in England and inspiring the next generation of artists through her company Lin Kam Art. It is this mixture of interaction which informs and makes her work so relevant.

Linett studied at University of Arts London and University College London. Her studio is based in Kilburn, northwest London.

For me the characteristics of courage, resilience, determination and cooperation sum up the spirit of Railton Road. When researching the archives for this project I choose as my starting point Olive Morris, the inspirational community activist of 1970s Britain, who died at the young age of 27 leaving behind a significant legacy of activism. Morris was a member of the British Black Panthers, as well as a founding member of the Organisation of Women of African and Asian Descent (OWAAD) and the Brixton Black Women's Group. The breadth of her political work spanned from her pioneer role in the local squatter campaigns in South London; to organising with Black women and the student movement in London and Manchester, and supporting liberation struggles throughout the world (Source: The Olive Memorial Awards 2011).

Morris was an activist campaigning on many social justice issues who would often say "Don't just criticise – organise!" She was passionate about education and volunteered at a supplementary school in the Abeng Centre which was at the heart of Brixton.

It is Morris's campaigning for education and Achiampong Unnecessary Homework from the 198 Archives which made me consider what are the current dominate issues in the English education system? In my view this is mental health and wellbeing. Interestingly, when applying the 2004 national survey to Lambeth, the borough which the 198 Gallery is situated in, it shows that the estimated rates of mental ill health in Lambeth children and young people are higher than in London

Olive Morris © Brixton Pound Currency
Hierarchy 2017 © Linett Kamala
Need to be strong 2016 © Linett Kamala

and England. However, there is also much ground breaking work taking place across the borough which is reversing some of these figures.

The Voices from the Front Line exhibition runs during part of the consultation period for 'Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health Provision Green Paper' launched by the Department of Health and Department for Education. My artwork is a response to the themes raised in paper, in the context of educational issues brought up by Morris and Achiampong. To support my paintings, I propose to run a series of workshops in the 198 Gallery on seeking the views of young people to the Green Paper consultation and work collectively with them on a creative visual response to an otherwise 'wordy' document focusing on the characteristic of resilience. I am also keen to see whether there are any possibilities to create a product for Hustlebucks to raise awareness of Mental Health and encourage positive wellbeing.



Lastly, I intend to capture memories from those who attended the Saturday Schools in the post Windrush period and time leading up to the social uprisings of the 1980s through an interactive part of my artwork.

www.linettkamala.com
[@linett_kamala](https://twitter.com/linett_kamala)

CO CURATORS AND PRACTITIONERS



K E R E E N W I L L I A M S

I have been working at the 198 Contemporary Arts and Learning as Head of Learning in the creative media program, for the last 17 years. I take a holistic approach that fosters creative synergies between young people and professional artist in a unique learning environment. My work focuses on creating a safe place for marginalised young people to express themselves through photography, illustration, graphic design, and film. Many of the young people I work with are marginalised, at risk or have special educational needs. I have 20+ years youth work experience, and I am trained as an Arts award assessor in Bronze, Silver and Gold and I have completed a 7407 Certificate in Further Education level 5 teaching.

M A T T I E L O Y C E

Mattie Loyce, currently based in London, UK is the founder/director of Project Mission Gallery and co-founder of The Art of Life After, a community based healing project for survivors of sexual violence. She was born and raised in San Francisco, CA but has spent a large part of her life living nomadically. Her experience traveling, building chosen family, being immersed in different cultures, and finding common threads between spaces all have taken part in the inspiring the creation of Mission Gallery. She playfully refers to Mission Gallery as a 'Guerilla Art Gallery'; to date completing exhibitions across both the east and west coasts of the U.S.A. and the city of London. She is deeply inspired by community building, expressive arts, sharing ancestral and contemporary histories, and organizing for healing and justice through the arts.





B U K I B A Y O D E

Buki Bayode is a self taught visual creative living and working in south london. Buki has strong interest in capturing narratives of her local environments using a range of mediums to bring the audience into the world as she sees it.

SIREITA LAWRENCE-MULLINGS

Dr Sireita Lawrence-Mullings is an artist and visual sociologist who completed a B.A in Art, Design and Education at the University of the West Indies (Mona, Jamaica) and Edna Manley College of Visual and Performing arts, where she majored in photography and graphic design. She later returned to the UK to study an MSc in Multimedia at the University of Westminster. It was during this period she began working as an arts practitioner in Brixton where she was raised until her early teens. She has completed her PhD at Goldsmiths University of London, where she conducted an ethnographic study, which interrogates how postcolonial legacies of marginalisation are rendered in the visual works of multiethnic young people living in Lambeth.

Sireita draws upon the arts to engage young people with sociological concepts and as a tool to render their subjective realities, which characterise the often-misunderstood positions of young people through her project Rendering the Real. Theoretically her work draws upon postcolonial studies, race and representation and she uses participatory and visual research methods of digital creativity, community arts, youth, social enterprise, marginalisation, migration, safety and danger.



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BUKI BAYODE, **CHARLOTTE** BILL - CLAPHAM FILM UNIT, **BOZENA** SCHEIDEL
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MATTIE LOUIS, **KAREEN** WILLIAMS, **LUCY** DAVIES, **LADRICK** LEMONIOUS
THE BLACK AND WHITE CAFE, BRIXTONPOUND CAFE, **ROBERT** HOLDEN
SIREITA LAWRENCE-MULLINGS, **NEIL** LAWRENCE, **ANDERS** STEINVALL, **KEITH** HILL
STEPHEN RUDDER - QUIET VOICE, **WALKING TOUR** PARTICIPANTS
T-SHIRT WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS, **BRYAN**, **HORRACE**, **BERNARD** HEART
BRADLEY MULLINGS L.B, **BRIAN** FRETTEWELL, **BRIDGET** CHIN, **CECIL** REUBEN
CHRISTOPHER OKONJO, **CLARENCE** THOMPSON, **CJ**, **CLARENCE** THOMPSON
CLOVIS, **DANIELA** GALLENTI, **DARKY**, **JEAN-MARIE**, **HURLEY**, **HORACE**
HERNE HILL FLOWER SHOP, **JESSICA** KIERA LYNES, **KRISTIEN**/SVETULE
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MELBA WILSON, **MARILYN** ROGERS, **MARTINA**, **MICHAEL** GROCE, **PJ** DAUCAS
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PARTNERS

AUTOGRAPH, (**BCA**) **BLACK CULTURAL ARCHIVES**
(**GPI**) **GEORGE PADMORE INSTITUTE**, LAMBETH ARCHIVES.

WEB REFERENCES FOR RESOURCES

MIKE URBAN OF URBAN75 - WWW.URBAN75.NET
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PUBLICATION DESIGN

MS.DDLEWIN@GMAIL.COM

PUBLICATION EDITOR

SIREITA LAWRENCE-MULLINGS

