

Creating an Inclusive Education

Through the Power of Blackness Art and Rastafarianism

SMALL AXE

The song '*Small Axe*' (1973), written and performed by Bob Marley is a galvanising message of hope and people power. The song is one of his many messages of 'inclusion,' based on the ideologies of Rastafarianism.



Fig 1

“Yo blood, yo nigger, do you smoke weed, do you work here, are you a proper teacher, should you be here, are you the cleaner, do you wash your hair.....?”

(Student, aged 13 years)

This interaction with a current pupil is evidence that perceptions of Blackness has changed very little since Sydney Poitier played Mark Thackeray in ER Braithwaite's iconic film '*To Sir With Love*,' released in 1967. As a British born Jamaican teacher, I and many others encounter the same racial abuse highlighted in this film.

Most literature in this field focuses on negative aspects of Black experiences in UK education, but few ways forward are presented besides raising awareness of inequalities and injustices. However, as a teacher of Maths, English, ICT and Art in predominantly white education settings, I have found ways forward by re-framing perceptions of Blackness by conflating pedagogic and art practices, as shown in this conversation:

P1 "You smoke weed."

KD "Do you ask other teachers if they smoke weed?"

P1 "No, but you do, 'cause you're Black and a Rastafarian."

The question was addressed and I placed my sculpture on the table (see fig 2). I invited the pupil to "Stand and touch the sculpture." P1 touched it gently with one finger. "No, feel the sculpture, there's a difference between touching and feeling," I said. I then asked him to close his eyes and tell me what he could feel; as I wanted him to understand the power the Afrocentric belief he misunderstood. He closed his eyes and clasped the face of the sculpture and said, "It feels cold," to which I replied, "Now go deeper" and he said, "It feels calm, really calm." He stood there for a moment before opening his eyes and I said, "Now that's how it feels when my anger is dealt with constructively."

Like Mark Thackeray, I calmly concluded the conversation with a discussion about Rastafarianism and the consequences of stereotyping, which led the learner to apologise for his previous remarks.

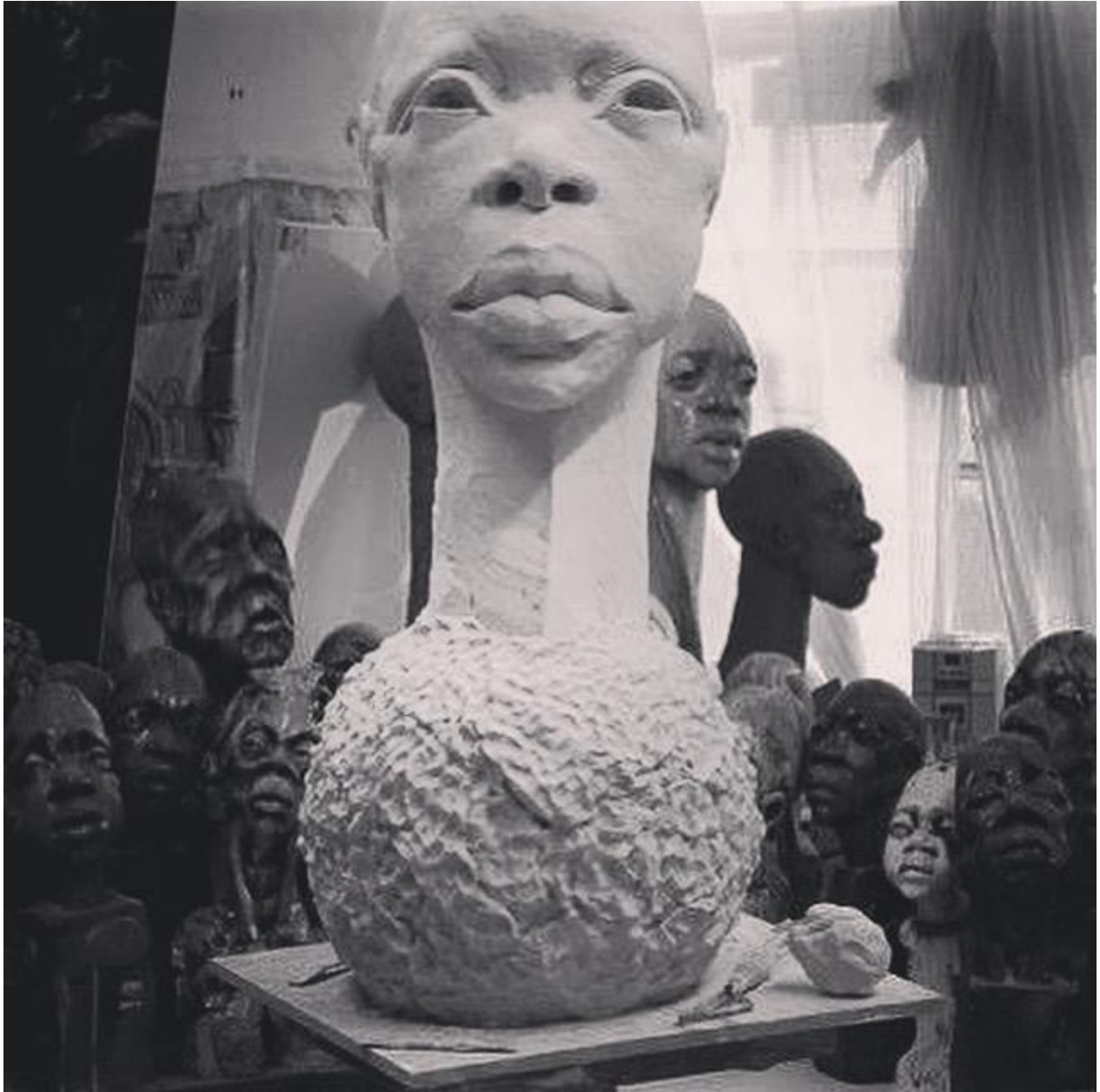


Fig 2

Literature review - Black professionals: a crisis

According to the NASUWT *Big Question Annual Review Survey* (2016) and my experiences, black professionals are invisible, over qualified, underpaid and dis-satisfied. Recent figures show that most Black professionals are barred from leadership roles, revealing evidence that as a highly visible committed workforce, we face the inescapable burden of an “invisible glass ceiling” that excludes us from higher level debates on inclusion. The 2013 government report on *Permanent and fixed Period Exclusions* shows that Black Caribbean exclusions are three times more likely to be excluded. And, the *Lammy Review* (2018) reported an over-representation of Black Asian Minority Ethnic (BAME) individuals in the criminal justice system, with the proportion of BAME young offenders in custody rising from 25% to 41% between 2006 and 2016. My installation ‘*Welcome to Kevin’s World*’ (see fig 3), as well as expressing my annoyance at these injustices, reveals the motivation for my research.



Fig 3

My Arts-Based Approach

The motivation for this research comes from my experiences as a Black professional, who has observed how the failure of inclusion in mainstream, special educational needs, universities and offender learning where I have taught. Therefore, my aim is to improve inclusive practices in education by 'informing white teachers and pupils, whilst empowering Black teachers and pupils,' through art. Why? Because I believe in the transformative power of Black professionals, as we are the '*Small Axe*,' that can challenge the colonial giant and art is the vehicle to 'open' dialogue. Conflating my crafted pedagogic skills with art allows me to transform negative perceptions of Blackness, reaffirming my hypothesis that Black teaching professionals, as invisible and undervalued as we are, have the power to reform inclusive practices in the UK.

Arts-based approaches to research

For too long we have been silent and invisible, so it is time for a new undeviating approach to the crisis encountered by Black teaching professionals in the UK. For countless educational policies and government reports, have yielded little change. For me, decolonisation through the arts, Rastafarianism, the Black Art Movement (BAM) and Black theorists have supported my resilience. For example, cultural theorist Stuart Hall in his publication '*The Triangle of Nations*,' offers hope when he dismantles hierarchies of difference and identity. Post-qualitative and visual research methods are also imperative to this mode of inquiry, as they provide greater access to important possibilities yet to be explored (Hickey-Moody, 2017). Such approaches help to reveal 'the nuances and gritty

truths' of the binary imbalances that inhibit the progression of Black communities in British institutions. Which is why arts-based methods are increasingly being used in educational research as a platform for recording and analysing data.

Aims

1. Explore art as a vehicle to politicise narratives, convey experiences, decolonise, inform and emancipate.
2. Create an installation informed by government documentation, fieldnotes and interviews.
3. Enable art to undertake micro-political work, reaching community groups outside of academia through a touring installation.
4. Develop innovative ways to collect data from participant reactions and capture affective responses.
5. Undertake a diffractive approach (analysis) to the arts based work.
6. Move forward in the wider macro-political aim to emancipate Black communities and inform white communities by presenting Black narratives in the installation.

Choosing methodologies and methods

Many Black political activists have inspired me to use art as a political platform in my professional practices (fig 3). This is imperative, as in teaching I am invisible and powerless to speak, but the installations I create give me a voice to challenge audiences and convey

my experiences, as shown in my biography (<http://www.themojogallery.com/asitis/artist-Kevin-Dalton.php>).



Fig 3

Creating a touring installation enables the research to reach audiences beyond the immediate academic context. An installation facilitates affective relays for the public to interact with the issues identified in scientific data, together with interview narratives that I will collect (Manning, 2015). Sociologist and Black rights activist William Edward Burghardt

“W.E.B.” Du Bois’ achieved this in 1890 with his ‘Propaganda’ installation for the Paris exhibition. Du Bois presented the crisis of Black Americans through beautiful, prophetic infographics, photographs and text that made visible Black experiences (See Figs 4-6).



Fig 4

CITY AND RURAL POPULATION. 1890.



Fig 5

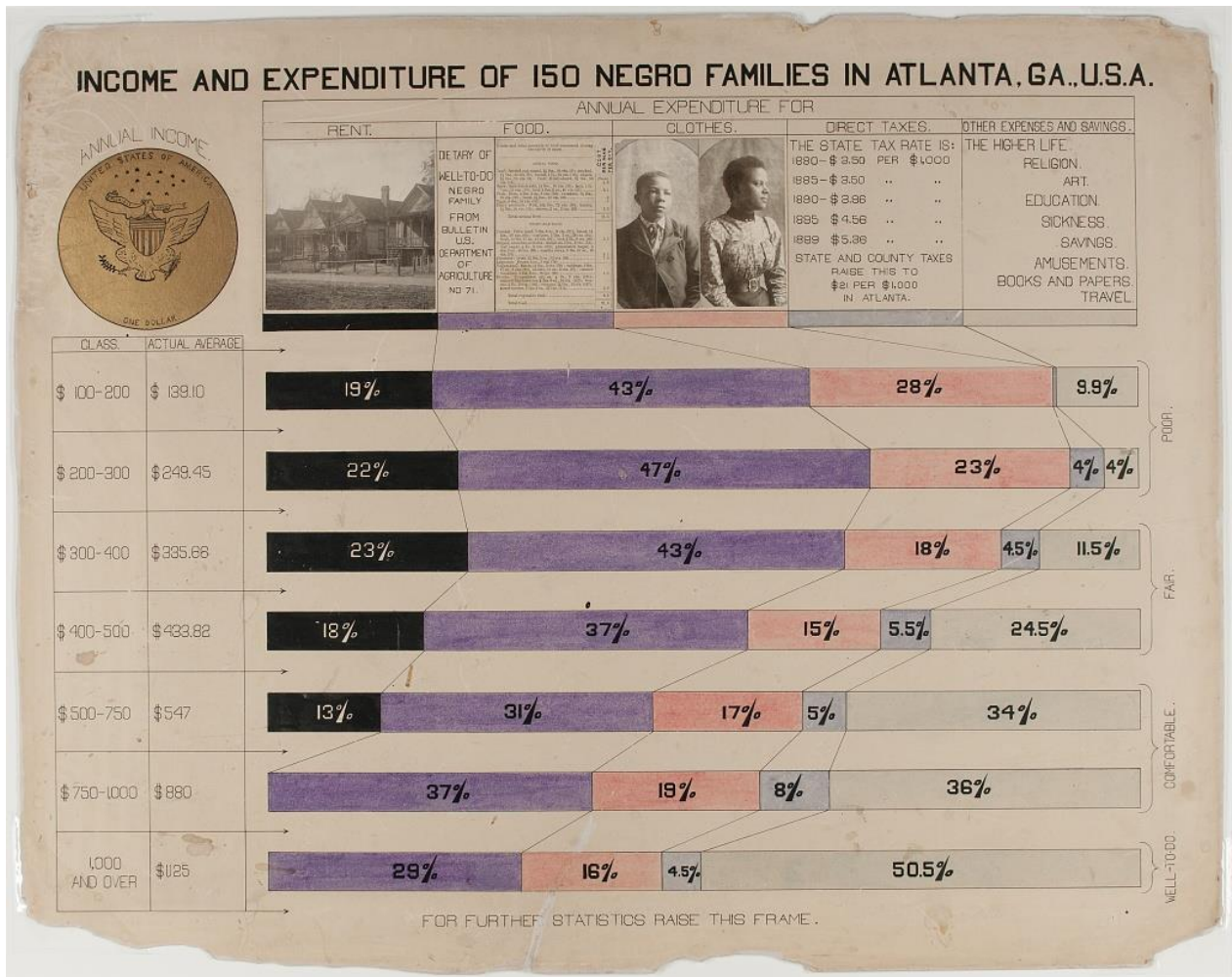


Fig 6

By presenting current quantitative data, on the inequalities in education as visual data, I intend to emulate the achievements of Du Bois.' And, like Du Bois the installation design will be in collaboration with international Black artists I have collaborated with previously (Felix De Rooy, Mansour Cis Kanakassy, Sithabile Mlotshwa, Teresa Maria Diaz Nerio, SuAndi, Nelson Carrillo, Bill Ming).

Creating/ designing the Installation

The installation will be created in my studio, informed by government reports that highlight inclusive failures in education, my experiences (field notes) and interviews. Inspired by DuBois (see Figs 4-6) I intend to present the statistical infographics, with my sculptures, words, clips, texts, visuals extracted from interviews and music.

The Installation will be an interactive game called '*Glass Ceiling, Fire Next Time, In The Upper Room*' with emancipation as the goal, which is similar to the puzzle game commissioned for the Whitworth Gallery, Manchester (see fig 7).



Fig 7

The installation will comprise of 3 levels:

Level 1 <i>Glass Ceiling</i> -	Inequalities and injustices
Level 2 <i>Fire This Time</i> -	consequences and reactions to inequalities and injustices (thoughts, feelings)
Level 3 The Upper Room	Emancipation

Interviews

Narrative interviews will be conducted to gain broader insights into Black experiences of British education with a pilot work to consolidate this adopted method. Approximately 20 Interviewees will be identified from my network of Black professionals (teachers, academics, non-teaching professionals) educated in the UK who have already indicated interest in contributing to this research.

Analysis of narrative interviews

The diffractive approach will have at least two processes. The first will involve my artistic sensibilities to choose phrases, words and Ideas that 'glow' from interviews (MacLure, 2013). The second process will follow a narrative analytical approach and will become material for the thesis (Riessman, 2012). This da(r)ta will become part of the installation with elements from policy documents, Black theorists and professionals (Renold, 2017).

Engaging publics: touring the installation

The installation will tour like my previous installation ['The Distance We Have Travelled'](#) created for the 'Race Relations Archive,' Manchester,' and will reach educational settings where I have observed many inclusive failures (fig 8). The headteacher at my current school has agreed to show the exhibition and I am awaiting responses from the 'Race Relations Archive' and HMP Manchester. The installation will be shown for a one-week period at each venue, generating data from audiences over a 2-month period. It is intended for all teaching professionals, pupils, parents, prisoners and officers. I will develop innovative ways to capture the affects that circulated in the places where the installations will be exhibited.

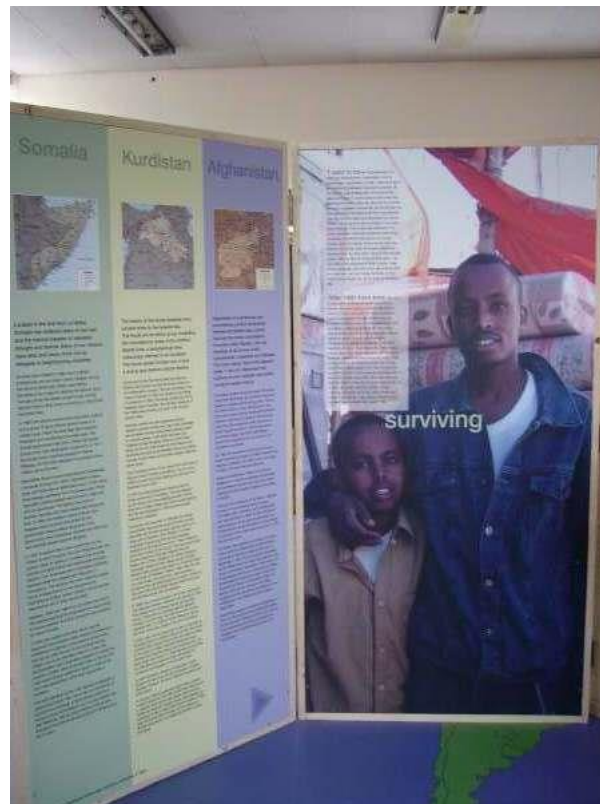


Fig 8

Capturing Affective Responses

This performative installation event is designed to provoke reactions. Therefore, viewers need to be recognised as active participants in this art event. The challenge will be how to capture the affective responses of viewer-participants. This is why I have drawn inspiration from Teresa Maria Diaz-Nerio's *Homage to Sara Bartman* performance (fig 9) and Brett Bailey's *Exhibition B* performance (fig 10). Both used video to capture audience participatory responses. I will be present as a performer/observer at all performances and my affective sensibility will be part of what becomes 'data' (MacLure, 2013). My active presence along with the video footage will become material for my diffractive approach, a more speculative way to work than data analysis (Barad, 2007).



mention obligatoire photo: kleinfenn

Fig 8



Fig 9

Ethics

All participants will sign consent forms on entry (other ethical considerations are discussed in further detail in my Ethos application). The data extracted from the video footage will be analysed in terms of how different audiences react to the installation theme and content.

Bibliography

Barad, K. (2007) *Meeting the Universe Half-Way: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*. London: Dukes University Press.

Hickey-Moody, A. C. (2017) 'Arts practice as method, urban spaces and Interactive faiths.' *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 21(11) pp. 1-15.

MacLure, M. (2013) 'The Wonder of Data.' *SAGE*, 13(4) p. 5.

Manning, E. (2015) *Against Methods. Non-Representational Methodologies*. London: Routledge.

Renold, E. (2017) "'Feel what I feel!': making da(r)ta with teen girls for creative activism on his sexual violence matters.' *Journal of Gender Studies*, 27(1) pp. 37-55.

Riessman, C. K. (2012) 'Narrative Analysis.' *SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*,