



THE BLACK KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY

Know thyself, love thyself.

№04- 2020

**Representation:
meaning making
and
“manufacturing
consent”**

Professor Stuart Hall
(3rd Feb 1932 - 10th Feb 2014)



Issue 4, Representation: meaning making and manufacturing consent, is dedicated to the enduring legacy of [Professor Stuart Hall](#).

WHAT A YEAR 2020 HAS BEEN...

Alongside Covid-19, the global discourse on the Black identity and experience has been the focal point of the media agenda. A matter of collective social reflection and more personalised introspection, for those of us in the skin and those who spectate, speculate, and narrate what this skin supposedly represents.

In attempts to assuage the sense of outrage and dissent over what George Floyd's murder *signified* - over 400 years of unrelenting inhumane, criminal treatment, based in the warped notion of White supremacy - the response has been to 'compensate' [us with facile, pacifying campaigns](#) and sent on our merry way ... Trouble is, one swallow doesn't make a summer, just as "diversity of thought" and a Sainsbury's ad does nothing to alter the harsh, racist reality of our lived experience.

Pull back the window-dressing on all of this, it soon becomes apparent that representation, is ultimately the pilot of the vehicle called society. Destination? [Preservation of power through manufactured consent](#).

The joke is, the owners of the vehicle have many of us thinking the destination is equality and its siblings. Unfortunately, [it's been a simulation the whole time](#), designed to convince us of progress without having really moved forward in real terms.

No sooner had BLM UK got out of the starting blocks, that the media and ruling elite appeared to be stoking racial tensions: [stories](#) that in previous years wouldn't have been given the oxygen of publicity, are now considered newsworthy; the sudden '[over-representation](#)' of Black Britons in the media ... All [deliberately engineered](#) to denigrate and undermine, not only the movement, but what the movement supposedly stands for?

All the social indicators spell out loud and clear that a level playing field *this is not* - neither will it be. For every society, every species, observes hierarchy and as Professor Lez Henry crucially concludes in his interview (page 4), if we are positioned at the bottom of this social hierarchy, the only way to "extricate ourselves from [mental *and* material] poverty" is through group cooperation.

If meaning is produced - 'constructed through identifiable processes of signification at work in *all* representation' (Kuhn; 1985) - *we must be concerned with who is producing the normative meaning of Black*, served up by the media to wider society and the destructive, self-hate it has the capacity to produce within our community. Dr. Ladi Fagbola explores (page 3) who the "net beneficiaries" of today's media representations of the Black identity are.

We have been consumers far too long. Only when we occupy the position of resource producers, can the dominant narratives and normative representations of the Black identity in the mediascape and society begin to look different. And by then, it shouldn't matter...

Even if we have started to disavow the falsehood of the Black phenotype being inferior to the Eurocentric beauty ideal, through the wave of '*melanin poppin*' style posts that saturate the social media feed - what next? [We must realise that the meta-narrative at play here \(by the 'ruling minority'\) has already "checkmated" whatever the ambition of these campaigns of resistance are.](#)

Using the social media space to resist, and ultimately reject, racist myth ought to be our starting point. There is still so much work to do in the reclamation of our economic, political and social power. Where our expectations of our community are concerned, let's be sure to set the benchmark in view of Kush, Carthage, Aksum, Mali, Songhai - representations of the Black identity that we *defined* when *we were producers*.

... Nation-building begins with a change of mind. Let's stop biting the media bait of distraction and turn our efforts and energy towards Black nationhood in 2021.

Every blessing, abundant life & love to you,

The Editor.

OPINION: FOOLS GOLD: THE SPOILS OF AN INEQUITABLE BATTLE

By Dr. Ladi Fagbola

I remember watching Sky news UK with my mum and she was very happy to see, Gillian Joseph, a relatively dark-skinned, Black woman in her 40's as the news anchor. A very visible position for a Black person to hold.

We both celebrated at how far we have come in media representations of Black people. Having more representations of Black people in the media is worth enjoying and celebrating. It's a simple source of joy, but that should not be mistaken as liberation of Black people.

After enjoying the warm feelings, questions begin to surface: Who decides, what news is read, the salary and work conditions? Who is the editor?...We must not just stop at being visible; there is more to gain by asking where the power really lies. Who are the net beneficiaries? Does the power exist in the hands of the Black models, actors and media personalities on our screens? Or is it in the hands of the out of sight CEO's, producers and editors? Who are the decision-makers? Who decides which form of Black qualities to be on screen? Do they knowingly support White supremacy? And to what extent?

The reason I emphasised earlier that Gillian Joseph is middle-aged and relatively dark-skinned, is that these representations have the power to introduce another problem of colourism and ageism. Most media representations of Black women are typically young and light-skinned, many appearing mixed-race; a more subtle extension of the eurocentric view of "superior" human beings as "fair-skinned".

We can't have a situation where we celebrate having more Black people on TV, only to start campaigning on making visible disabled Black people, trans Black people and all the various manifestations of Blackness. This can sometimes lead to in-fighting within the Black community - of those privileged by White supremacy, attempting to preserve their status against

their less-privileged kin. We need to control these narratives in our own right, without needing permission or having to explain how Blackness is not a monolith.

This often leads into conversations about having a seat at the table, we want Black people making these decisions. Here Obama easily props up, regardless of how you feel about him, the Black lives matter movement came to its full stride under him. More often, when the celebrated 'first Black such and such' starts to ask uncomfortable questions the full force of white power is wrought on them.

Within the UK, Diane Abbott is the most successful Black politician, yet see how horribly she has been treated by British society as a whole. First, the constant abuse and disrespect she gets from the



Photography by: Avel Chuklanov

media, traditional and social. Many will justify this because she has been found lacking in some respects. Please! Is she as corrupt as the average conservative? Or was she involved in the expenses scandal that a considerable number of Labour MP's were implicated in?

But the one that gets me the most is the way she has been treated by her own party. [In leaked WhatsApp discussions](#), senior Labour party organisers were directing racist abuse at her and fellow Black female MP, Dawn Butler. I imagine the White racist rationale by the culprits would read along the following lines: the insolence and audacity of both women for daring to operate within their authority! They should be grateful for being elected MP's

and should stop asking for more: more justice, more power and more equity.

A good way to view these attempts at Black visibility and representation is as bribes, [to discourage and distract us from reclaiming real change and power](#). To keep us occupied with the good feelings of seeing a familiar face on television. The only reason we have been afforded relative civil liberties, results from sustained struggle and activism. Millions of Black people, prominent and non-prominent, have been fighting for their respective concept of Black liberation. Visibility and representation was never the end point.

And on the part of powerful people controlling these institutions, this was not an act of kindness on their part, rather an act of self-preservation, to lull us into a false sense of triumph. At the same time, these incremental gains indicate that resistance remains the most potent weapon in our struggle towards Black liberation and self-reliance.

If such a prominent and visible Black person as Diane Abbott can be treated with utter disdain, I don't need to elaborate on how the rest of us within the Black community experience racism in the schools, street, online, work, supermarket etc.

Regardless of the number of Black people on Sky or in a Sainsbury's ad, we are still battling racism on every front and we must combat it in like manner - on every front: supplementary schools to offer tangible education to our kids; Black-owned charities to help our vulnerable people and even consider neighbourhood watch programs to discourage police brutality.

All this essentially is a call to action: to redouble our efforts in building power within our community.

It does not matter how many Black people are [winning Oscars](#) or MOBO's, when majority of the profits are used to advance White supremacy ideology and racism. Remember, when they do offer us crumbs, we can only do one thing: demand due equity, our power and freedom!

SHIFTING PERSPECTIVES ON THE CONTINENT

By Rudie Masukume

This edition of Shifting Perspectives invites you on a tour of Chimanimani National Park, courtesy of Afronomads.

Located on the Eastern Highlands of Zimbabwe, Chimanimani Mountains offers not just picturesque views and exotic sights, but a chance to rejuvenate without technological intrusions. Nature proves she is the ultimate host, with naturally formed caves and pools to explore.

Accommodation in Chimanimani National Park is mostly self-service, so be sure to come prepared with all the food you need.

Haven lodge is a small slice of paradise, whether you are looking for a chance to immerse yourself in the outdoors experience or opt for camping on eight acres of land overlooking glorious mountains.

A trek on the mountains provides some breath-taking little-known treasures, such



Chimanimani National Park, Zimbabwe

as rock paintings on cave walls and the opportunity to hike through Skeleton Pass, a narrow route for canoes to pass through, neighbouring Mozambique.

Bridal Veil Falls is a must-see waterfall located four kilometres from the village. It is a tranquil site with a 50 metres drop, not to mention other swimming sites such as at Moha Waterfall and Digby's Pool, to abate familiarity.

Unfortunately, tourism has dwindled partly due to the country's years of unrest. Take advantage of this generally tourist-free part of the world and observe heaven on earth.

For more information on ethical adventures in Chimanimani visit,

[Black 'Re-presentation' Clearing the Smoke and Shattering the](#)

[Mirrors:](#)

[Join TBKS' Zoom Live Sun, 27/ Dec/2020](#)

[Click here to join Sunday's meeting](#)



INTERVIEW

By Esther Ademosu



Professor Lez Henry is a university lecturer in the disciplines of criminology, sociology, anthropology, race, education, ethnicity, youth crime and cultural studies.

What the above fails to capture, is the fierce heart, mind and spirit possessing this grounded being, who remains firmly rooted to his heritage and devoted to "Blak" self-reliance, in true "Ubuntu spirit". In this interview, Prof. Lez expounds, in impassioned detail, his reasonings on why we find ourselves seemingly represented

in the mediascape, yet disproportionately bottom of the barrel where all social indicators on equity are concerned:

"If you overstand where you are structurally placed [within society's hierarchy], then you are less likely to be shocked, perturbed or disturbed when you get this treatment that is meted out to people who look like you."

Press play.

RESOURCE DIRECTORY

Five links to...

By Aletha Simpson

VISIT: [Black Cultural Archives](#) who have pioneered a digital space to showcase exhibitions comprising artists that speak to your psyche, with relatable notions of Black culture and events that highlight the evolving faces of the Black community. Pieces by Felix Taylor and Ufuoma Essi are uniquely inspired, with themes on history, comfort, theory, film and coexisting subjects of race, gender, and class et al.

SUBSCRIBE: Deep dive into true reflections of our innate excellence and ingenuity through the rich, free online educational resource from the [Boukman Academy](#).

BUY: [Stuart Hall's book Essential Essays Vol 2](#), to find out how his valuable contribution to cultural studies is destined to heighten your knowledge of political and sociological influences in society. Head on over, to meet the man with a legacy of controversial truths.

VISIT: Despite being privy to the representations of the Black culture in television, we are able to revisit the moments of nausea and nostalgia, through [Collection 4 at the BFI](#): a scheme for media s-tudies students, to explore how the portrayal of Black British life on TV has "progressed".

SUBSCRIBE: [Reelblack](#) YouTube channel.