



1919, the Year History Forgot

**'Riot' and Interraciality in a
Decolonial School Curriculum**

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It has been slightly edited.

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Abstract

Having grown up and lived in the UK all my life, it is impossible to ignore how the First World War is an intrinsic part of how Britain see itself. But whilst the State has marked lots of its centenaries, rarely has it marked those in the interwar years. However, the year 2019 marked 100 years since the 1919 Race Riots, an early example of white supremacist heteropatriarchal violence in Britain in no less than nine seaports, including Liverpool with the Murder of Charles Wotton and further killings in South Wales. Via my experiences of the private education system and last year's (2020) Black Lives Matter resurgence, this paper uses autoethnography via storytelling to analyse how today's "Black Lives Matter" chants may apply to the lives of Black Britons over 100 years ago.

Keywords: white supremacy, racism, education, curriculum, war, history, BLM, whiteness, riot.

Introduction

In the finale of *Black and British*, 'Homecoming', local people gathered at the Docks in Liverpool to remember Black veteran Charles Wotton, murdered in the 1919 Race Riots (May and Cohen, 1974; Fryer, 1984). Motivated by his murder and that of George Floyd, I chose to do a personal dissertation whilst exposing the public to a history that has largely been erased. Firstly, I asked what 1919 may tell us about anti-racism, showing the precedent of "white terror" (hooks, 1992) in Britain. Using my school life as an 'in', I further asked how 1919 fits into a racialised context of the First World War, looking at how I was taught through a whitewashed narrative. Thirdly, does 1919 have anything to tell us about anti-Blackness or Black Lives Matter in Britain? I wanted to show how the way race structures our lives underpinned those riots, and if that is relevant now?

Without the role of 'race scientists' would white working-class men have acted in the way they did? Would they have known to see physical differences, allowing the State to write Black people as scapegoats? Has anything changed? And growing up in Britain, it's hard to ignore how this society draws on the nationalism of wartime to feel good, as what occurred in the UK Government's early messaging for Coronavirus (Rawlinson, 2020). However, 1919 has largely been written out of wartime memory. Finally, it asked me to argue for the events of 1919 to be part of the school curriculum, to show students what happened after the War following a time when Black and Brown soldiers were victims of colonial racial thinking and the British Army's policies of institutional racism.

Throughout this work, you will not find your typical "academic" project, but a thesis as storytelling. My backgrounds in creative writing and journalism told me I must write my self-narrative with the ontologies of those disciplines, including my speech patterns. I chose part-historical study part-autoethnography to combine my interests of creative writing and history together. And since I was part of the national conversations on Black Lives Matter (Mohdin and Campbell, 2020; 2020b; Humphreys and colleagues, 2020; Mohdin, 2020), it made sense to commit to an autoethnography, to present the links between recent anti-Blackness and the 1919 Race Riots.

Here, I endeavoured to have an anti-racist approach challenging the paradigm structure I elected to use because I believe critical theory doesn't do what it says. How can a paradigm that claims to analyse power and inequalities do so without an analysis of colonialism, racism, or white supremacy? Carolyn Ellis (2003) states that "qualitative methods ... refer to a variety of research techniques and procedures associated with ... trying to understand the complexities of the social world ... [that include] participant observation, interviews, life histories, focus groups and grounded theory" (p25). With my dissertation grounded in life histories, this can be what happened sixty years ago or what happened yesterday – since despite the various meanings tied to perspective-focused research, the goals of qualitative research methods "are generally directed at providing an in-depth and interpreted understanding of the social world, by learning about people's social and material circumstances, their experiences, perspectives, and histories" (Richie and Lewis, 2003: 22). I decided to use a critical paradigm which aims to combat a social problem (within education) to benefit society. With my research based in such a paradigm, qualitative methods were most appropriate.

Using a critical paradigm came at the expense of being complicit in whiteness. The Frankfurt School is infamous: the early founders of the Institute for Social Research as it was called, "such as Max Horkheimer, Theodore Adorno, and Herbert Marcuzer have had a huge influence on the study of society and culture and have secured their places on undergraduate reading lists across various subjects" (Tom Nicholas, 2020). These scholars were white. Using a critical paradigm leaves me sceptical because research paradigms taught in global northwestern universities were originally written from the positionalities of privileged cisgender white men, who did not include their positionalities in their analyses. At its nucleus, a critical paradigm is focused on power, inequality, and social change (Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017) including the concepts of white social theorists like Max Horkheimer (Calhoun, Gerteis, Moody, Pfaff, & Virk, 2007).

Dr Muna Abdi tweeted:

“Colonial paradigms would have us believe that people ... [were] not civilized or 'cultured' until they were subjected to whiteness ... not educated until they could learn from Europeans. ... did not have effective modes of communication until they were 'taught' English literacy ... not capable of having expertise in medicine, engineering, law, agriculture etc without Western Enlightenment ... not spiritual without Christianity ... Unlearn all of that” (@Muna_Abdi_PhD).

Thinking about Dr Abdi’s comments, it follows the rationale that to do my autoethnography, I had to distance myself from the binaries of so-called ‘enlightened’ colonial thinking. Critical theory’s origins in socialist revolution and anti-capitalism fail to critique the role of race in capitalism where Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour [BIPOC] are the world’s Global Majority, and yet:

“The role the Frankfurt School had upon how we critically analyse the world around us is undeniable – with regard to left-wing thought in the broadly Marxist tradition, they were a key factor in discouraging a purely economic analysis which saw capitalism’s collapse as inevitable, and the development of a more holistic study of capitalism cognisant of social and cultural forces in its maintenance” (Tom Nicholas, 2020).

Whilst Tom Nicholas laments how influential the Frankfurt School were in how we analyse the world, I challenge him to think about his own privilege in this statement. Furthermore, the School’s “institutionalization of whiteness” (Ahmed, 2006; 2007; 2012; 2014; Hunter, 2015; 2019; 2021) where their analysis excluded the racisms perpetuated by colonialism and colonial history. Despite their work being claimed as revolutionary, how forward-thinking was it when it only caters for the Global Ethnic Minority, white people? In *The End of Progress: Decolonizing the Normative Foundations of Critical Theory*, Amy Allen calls us to consider the notion of decolonising critical

theory and what subverting a whole tradition of thought may look like. Some may call this radical where “[Allen] seeks both to demonstrate Frankfurt School critical theory’s reliance on Eurocentric understandings ... [and] ask what it would mean to decolonize [something] ... that has never explicitly acknowledged colonialism or colonial histories” (Bhambra, 2021). In short, how can a paradigm be centred around power and inequalities, whilst also be embedded in a tradition of thought that has never recognised the role of colonialism? Following Allen (2016), Abdi (2021), and Bhambra (2021), I must challenge whiteness in research and distance myself from epistemologies Black and Brown people have been excluded from.

Despite knowing this, academics continue to use critical theory as a benchmark for theorising inequalities across several disciplines. Since my dissertation revolves around historic and present-day racial violence, to use a paradigm that centres whiteness (without critique) would not be appropriate. Better to critique this paradigm through whiteness where discourses “... should involve at least a double turn: to turn towards whiteness is to turn towards and away from those bodies who have been afforded agency and mobility by such privilege” (Ahmed, 2004). So, to affectively challenge the epistemicide of this paradigm rooted in white supremacy, it would be more useful to stay implicated, challenging racist epistemologies from the inside.

Epistemology is the study of knowledge (University of Sheffield). Within the University, scholars have often decided what is and what is not legitimate knowledge through their own interpretations (Hallebone and Priest, 2009). Thus, in effort to have an anti-racist approach, I stayed implicated. Additionally, though I disagree with the term ‘riot’ to describe 1919, you will find the term used in the title and through this work. I have stayed implicated in my critique, though I believe ‘uprising’ or ‘rebellion’ more suitable. And choosing to do this ‘anti-methodology’ for my want of an attempt to do anti-racism, I can see the introverted nature white supremacy often takes in education, including the normalisation of white epistemologies, where “[white people] have a deep emotional investment in the myth of “sameness ...” (hooks, 1992: 168). The repetition of those behaviours of “sameness” in an unracialised analysis of critical theory reflects the “institutionalisation of

Whiteness” (Ahmed, 2006; 2007; 2012; 2014; Hunter, 2015; 2019; 2021), while white scholars claim ignorance to issues outside of their gaze. As Charles Mills (2007) writes, “White ignorance has been able to flourish ... because a white epistemology of ignorance has safeguarded it against the dangers of an illuminating blackness or redness, protecting those who ... have needed not to know” (p35).

Whilst the 1919 Race Riots saw Black and Asian merchant sailors as victims of white terrorist violence, I have chosen to focus on the Black sailors, as this best fits within my own Black positionality as a Black British man part of the Black Lives Matter protests. In my life, the “self-narrative” has been more effective in “bringing” ‘the undecided’ over to anti-racism. In 2020, I found as much at the height of the protests where more white people engaged in my own trauma stories, and the video of George Floyd’s murder, than had previously in my reading recommendations. It shouldn’t have to be that way. However, global southern oral storytelling traditions are an inevitable inheritance from my ancestors. As Black people, we are natural orators of our stories. Though, in writing this dissertation the lack of Black British war historians was a reminder of our place in white academia. When I worked in education, I listened to many trauma stories from Black students who had reasons to hate white racists, including their own lecturers. Autoethnography reminds me that the personal is powerful, allowing us to decipher the effects of historical analysis in moving through present-day traumas. As a human being, I know we are incredibly capable of great good and great evil. However, most of us are not overwhelmed by base human instincts.

The role of ‘race scientists’ taught **that** society Black people are the worst of the human condition, and that our lives could be discussed in increments. Now, in the present, whiteness stereotypes us as criminals and aggressors. Writing a “self-narrative” entwined in 2020’s Black Lives Matter reinterest is a reminder that white people have often walked that dark path towards hatred, yet we, with greater reasons to hate, have only ever asked to live.

In chapter one I will discuss my approach, rationale, and relationship with the First World War.

Walter Tull and Me

Autoethnography as a research method has been used by academics to understand how humans engage with the world, because “[it] is an approach ... that seeks to describe and systematically analyze ... personal experience ... in order to understand cultural experience” (Ellis, 2003). As an artist-educator, lots of my work has followed social justice. If writing does not elevate those around us, what is the point? Following in the footsteps of others, this research aims to be a socially conscious act (Adams & Holman Jones, 2008) in effort to be “... a self-narrative that critiques the situatedness of self with others in a social context” (Spry, 2001: 710). Furthermore, Chang (2008) writes how autoethnography “is a combination of cultural analysis and interpretation with narrative details” (p46). However, I agree most with Ngunjiri and colleagues (2010) in their assertion of autoethnography as “a qualitative research method that utilizes data about the self and context to gain understanding of the connectivity between self and others” (p1). I think how we interpret meaning is subject to our exposure to culture and countering positionalities tethered to the ontological framings we bring, including experiences and beliefs that underpin bias.

Etymologically – via ‘auto’, self; ‘ethno’, culture; and ‘graphy’, study process (Wall, 2006; Ngunjiri, Hernandez, & Chang, 2010; Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011) – I can see how human beings as social actors in society may be studied as individuals within culture. Some academics may focus more on the self, some may hyperfocus on traditional canons (i.e methodologies and theory), and others may become fixated on the research process. However, in my experience, homing in on ‘the self’ has been argued as illegitimate research – though, many have argued in its defence (Spry, 2001; Ellis, 2002, 2004; Jensen-Hart & Williams, 2010; Muncey, 2005; Thomas, 2010). Yet, not presented as traditional academia, *Brit(ish)* and *Why I’m No Longer Talking to White People About Race* by author-journalists Afua Hirsch and Reni Eddo-Lodge may be viewed as autoethnographic writing.

On the precipice of autoethnography sits inside the subgenre of nonfiction, ‘autobiography’, a first-person narrative of an individual’s story incorporating a study (graphy) of the self (auto), with

less focus on the cultural elements (ethno). The meaning of ethnography is the study of culture, or as communication scholar Carolyn Ellis (2003) states “writing about or describing people and culture, using first-hand observation and participation in a setting or situation. The term refers both to the process of doing a study and to the written product” (p26). In the past, ethnography scholars have conducted research on cultures outside of their lived experience “... out of the depths of European culture, by writers who actually believe themselves to be speaking on behalf of that culture ...” (Said, 1978: 253). Regularly, white scholars have conducted studies on the experiences of racially oppressed communities without any analysis of their own privilege (Milner IV, 2007). In this context they enter that space with a “psychological wage” (DuBois, 1935) in how white institutions continue to purport white emotions (Hunter, 2021). Author-journalist and critic Reni Eddo-Lodge builds on the work of earlier scholars, in writing “... white privilege is an absence of the negative consequences of racism ... structural discrimination ... your race being viewed as a problem first and foremost ... 'less likely to succeed because of my race'” (p53). Whilst scholars try to be objective, the idea of ‘objectiveness’ is unattainable when we all bring ontological framings to social settings, – after all “no individual speaks apart from a societal framework of co-constructed meaning” (Wall, 2006: 9).

Drawing from my earlier statement about factions of academia believing autoethnography to be an illegitimate research technique – in conversation with colleagues in my time working in higher education, I saw qualitative research presented as inferior to quantitative. Denzin and Lincoln (2017) state that the politics of people-focused research creates stresses that inform traditions of thought, “... constantly being re-examined and interrogated ... in the meantime, battles between the ... quantitative and ... qualitative camps continue” (p50). According to Carolyn Ellis (2003), autoethnography encapsulates numbers of techniques including life histories and interviews while psychiatrist Viktor Frankl said “Each person’s unique position relative to their disposition and situation means that [they] will perceive and represent internal and external phenomena only in particular ways. This of course means that no human being has access to universal truth” (*qtd in*: Esping, 2010: 207-208). Criticisms from quantitative researchers against autoethnography are

therefore null and void in my opinion, where to be objective, one would need to be free from all prejudice and emotion. Whilst my autoethnography centres the self in historical and contemporary settings, my rationale is biased, as its origins stem from my own observations of the world. Whether my intentions are good or bad I know these biases exist ... because I exist.

The rationale for this dissertation is rooted in my life history as a child of the private education system. My first exposure to the First World War was through photos of white soldiers in a school history lesson. But at ten years old, my mother tasked me with a project on Walter Tull and this was the first time I saw myself in histories of that conflict. Now as a artist-public historian, I'm often called "anti-Britain" for wanting to show that British history is not as white as we are taught it is. Writer-journalist Ash Sakar says that she finds it "...funny when people accuse [her] of hating this country and its culture and its people" (Double Down News, 2021). Just as she studied English at university, I studied Creative Writing reading the homogeneity authors of dead white men (Ventour, 2020c). To study an arts or humanities subject at a UK university, I must have some love for "homogeneity culture" (@braveenk), having the determination to suffer through these white schools of thought. Remembering Walter Tull and his significance to my home county Northamptonshire, I see how his story fits into the political class of the day's reliance on racial hierarchies, regardless of how individuals treated him. Those hierarchies speak to a society that never tried to understand Black-racialised people, where white people experienced life at the top of enjoying their "... skin privilege ... conditioned into oblivion about its existence" (McIntosh, 1988).

It was as that ten-year old I first saw photographs of Black soldiers in a period of history that has so-often been likened to one of Britain's greatest moments. And the term 'Black' is one I have been familiar with since childhood, referring to those that look like me racialised as such by the global society where discussions about the capitalisation of 'Black' continue in the contexts of politics and linguistics (Allen, 1994; Kinouani, 2021). In learning about Walter, this is a relationship I am still in over fifteen years later where in 2018 I worked on a theatre show telling the story of his

life, from football to France and the racisms between. It is only now I can think of the British Army's institutional racism, where at fourteen years old my introduction to it was through a lived experience of stop and search. Popularised by the *Stephen Lawrence Inquiry* (Macpherson, 1999), the term 'institutional racism' was first coined in the early Black Power Movement (Reena and colleagues, 2005: 28) written as "both overt and covert ... individual whites acting against individual blacks, and acts by the total white community against the black community. We call these individual racism and institutional racism" (Hamilton and Carmichael, 1967: 20). Whilst Macpherson is often cited in popularising the term, I would further say Elizabeth I's 1603 Royal Proclamation could be considered the second act of institutional racism on British soil, where she demanded that all 'Blackamores' be expelled from her kingdom (Fryer, 1984: 12). This was only preceded by the 1193 expulsion of the Jews, where in the context of Leicester, the earl Simon DeMontfort (from whom the University gets its name) expelled the Jews from the city (DeMontfort Students' Union, 2021).

In relation to the First World War, we can apply hindsight to the experiences of Black soldiers in describing them as victims of institutionally racist acts via the Army's policies and practices. According to historian Phil Vasili (2010), the Army had policies "restricting the entry of recruits of darker pigmentation ... as outlined in the *1914 Manual of Military Law*" (p187) where racially marked recruits and soldiers would be barred from reaching the rank of officer. In essence, this was to protect white prestige where to be "naturalised British subjects" was to be racialised as white and "Commissions in the Special Reserve of Officers are given to qualified candidates who are natural born or naturalised British subjects of pure European descent" (H.M Stationary Office, 1914: 196). Furthermore, Phil Vasili also writes "joining a 'pals' battalion' of fellow footballers, [Tull] also bypassed and short-circuited the numerous obstacles faced by men of darker pigmentation when trying to enlist ..." (p139). However, historian David Killingray states how this may not always have been the experience for all Black recruits where individual recruiting officers may be ignorant to the institutionally racist policies and practices in existence ... "not to mention Colonel Abdy, a commissioning officer ... chose to ignore [them]" (Costello, 2015: 67).

With the First World War existing in the colonial society, Britain was still a dominant colonial power at the time. And in maintaining colonialism, the role of so-called 'race scientists' endured with racial hierarchies as an important factor in determining how Black soldiers were treated by the British establishment (Das, 2014). To understand what made the 1919 Riots possible, we must look at how Black people were thought of in the Army. Ray Costello (2015) tells us that the phrase "'The White Man's War' was first used at the beginning of the Boer War" (p17) when there were qualms of British forces allowing Africans to fight. In 1914, the Government were nervous of allowing African and Caribbean troops to fight white troops in Europe (Costello, 2015: 18). Moreover, author-academic Emma Dabiri tells us how Black soldiers were excluded from the 1919 victory parades where she says, "the army claimed they could not afford to transport foreign soldiers to London for the celebrations, but the reasons ran much deeper than this" (BBC Stories, 2019b). The violent legacy of racial theories still permeated the establishment, scared of damaging white prestige "with white Europeans at the top and black [diasporic] Africans at the bottom, and any encouragement of 'lesser breeds' to fight Europeans was difficult to countenance" (Costello, 2015: 18).

The role of Black soldiers in British history goes back centuries to at least the Roman Conquest (Olusoga, 2017; Adi, 2019), however, Black soldiers in an imperialist context meant there were questions whether Black and white men should fight with and each other because "this was the era of the British Empire and people believed in racial theories" (Emma Dabiri *qtd in*: BBC Stories, 2019b). So, for Black men to kill white men in European theatres of war disrupted white supremacy. Whilst Britain perpetuated racial theories, Germany also did the same mocking Britain and the Allies for allowing Black people to fight, suggesting that these soldiers conducted heinous acts of violence against Germans when they were taken as POWs (German Foreign Office). Yet, in Britain, journalist and future Labour MP E.D. Morel wrote "France (was) ... thrusting her black savages still further into the heart of Germany" (Daily Herald, 1920 in Gopal, 2019: 285), with further headings stating, 'Sexual Horror by France let Loose on the Rhine; 'Disappearance of Young German Girls'; 'A Deliberate Policy' (Daily Herald, 1920). So, in allowing Black men to kill white men, racial

theorists and those that held like-views, believed that this damaged white supremacy. Walter Tull was Mixed-Race but racialised as Black, and for him to reach the rank of officer and in his service kill white men, he was in fact interrupting the hierarchies 'race scientists' had created to keep Black people down.

Sprouting from the theories constructed to justify colonialism, this racist ideology outlived the emancipation of enslavement and the late nineteenth century's 'Scramble for Africa', following Black recruits into the First World War and thus onto the streets in 1919. Ray Costello (2015) further writes "the return of black and white soldiers set the scene for conflict only months after the end of hostilities, with demobilised black servicemen facing competition once again with poor whites, many of whom considered black settlers as aliens or at the very least latecomers despite being British-born" (p140). Meanwhile, Stephen Bourne (2019) discusses the resentment from local white people against Black people for "taking jobs they [white Englishmen] were coming home to ... [with] ... violent riots ... [in] Barry, Glasgow, London's East End and South Shields. The most violent outbreaks took place in South Wales – Newport and Cardiff" (p194) – whilst John Belchem (2014) writes "those [riots] in Liverpool were particularly intense, reflecting tensions beyond the local waterfront. What happened [there], the gateway of empire, reverberated across the globe" (p3-4).

In the next chapter, I will start to detail my experiences of the Black Lives Matter reinterest and English racism, while also introducing readers to the 1919 Riots and its place in history.

It Takes a Riot

After the end First World War, race riots took place in no less than nine port communities between January and August 1919 (Jenkinson, 1996: 92). Yet, footage and photos of pre-1950s British riots have seldom been seen by the public but “...individual memories of civil disorder in the first half of [the twentieth century] are surprisingly widespread” (*Forbidden Britain*). However, when they did, “governments often denied they had, and censored the newsreel pictures” (*ibid*). Following Armistice in 1918, one would think the survivors who came home would have arrived into open arms and *thank yous* from the State. Yet, what they met was mass unemployment and uncertainty, while the British underbelly was also unofficially segregated via faith, race, and class (*ibid*).

Whilst Britain and the Allies won the conflict, this country had also been hit hard economically. “When millions of soldiers, sailors and airmen returned from the frontlines expecting a hero’s welcome and to settle into their old lives, they were met with job shortages and mass unemployment” (Gaika in BBC Stories, 2019). Public discussions of Black-white race relations in the UK have scarcely analysed society prior to the arrival of the Windrush Generation, however, Black people have lived in Britain for centuries. May and Cohen (1974) state the Liverpool Race Riots in particular, “vividly demonstrate the intimate link between the origins of racism in Britain and the world-wide involvement of the metropolitan country in her colonial Empire” (p112). Whilst the events in Liverpool were reciprocated in other communities including Cardiff (Begum, 2019), Manchester (May and Cohen, 1974), and Barry Island (Belchem, 2014: 3), this comes after evidence of constructed pseudoscientific racial theories (see chapter 3) being utilised to violently discriminate against Black people during the so-called Great War for Civilisation (Costello, 2015).

1919 is a year often left out public discourse of the First World War, verily a linchpin of the interwar years and the civil unrest that took place in Britain and many of its colonies following the conflict (Phelps, 1960; Kumar, 1971; Martin, 1973; Fitzpatrick, 1980; Wolcott, 2008; Butler-Brown,

2017). Historian Jacqueline Jenkinson (2009) writes “the trigger for the violence in many of Britain’s seaports was dissatisfaction among sections of [the] working class at a range of unsatisfactory peacetime circumstances, the chief of which were severe post-war competition for jobs, especially in the merchant navy, and local housing shortages” (p1). Yet, I feel it is necessary to address how the social issues following the War influenced thinking on the ground. Maslow (1943) illustrates how people are influenced by attaining their basic psychological needs. In what Jenkinson states as “severe post-war competition”, poor white people were not living by their basic psychological needs to feel safe. Naturally, they looked for a scapegoat for their woes and found it, targeting ethnic minorities including Black Africans and West Indians (Jenkinson, 2009: 1).

Local white men may not have been racist to begin with, (irrespective of the role of ‘race science’ – see chapter three), but the assault on their basic needs provoked racism. Like now, to understand racism we must understand capitalism. Between the wars, the speed in which the State were able to implement deportation schemes (Jenkinson, 2012) or deploy police to Black spaces in Liverpool for example (Miles, 2019), whilst simultaneously allowing economic violence to ravage the working-class, shows where their priorities were. Despite the State’s actions, local white men still blamed their Black neighbours for job shortages. Author Gary Younge says, “riots are polarising, they are often hypermasculine ... people aren’t racist for fun; they aren’t even necessarily racist because they don’t like Black people ...” (Double Down News, 2020). By the start of the twentieth century, ‘race science’ had taken on a material force (Coleman, 1963: 152). Combined with the state-sanctioned assault on basic needs, local white populations organised and treated the ‘Black threat’ as “space invaders” (Purwar, 2004) in the image of a ‘white nation’ (Hage, 1998) where “... [white people’s] actions reflect the primacy of whiteness as a sign informing who they are and how they think” (hooks, 1992: 167). Following this “Psychosis” (Andrews, 2019: 193-201), we may begin to think about what Gustave Le Bon (1896) wrote as ‘the collective mind’ (p2) whilst one scholar further wrote “the natural crowd is the open crowd; there are no limits ... it does not recognise houses, doors, or locks and those that shut themselves in are suspect” (Canetti, 1962: 16). What

became known as crowd theory was also developed on by psychologist Neil Smelser who analysed American 'race riots' in the first half of the 20th century (Smelser, 1962: 253, 260-261).

Whilst contemporary and historical public discussions name this historical event as the 1919 Race Riots, the term 'race riot' falls short of naming what it was – a grandiose display of white terrorism. However, despite being a white terrorism, built upon in my opinion, not only on racist colonialist ideology, but also socioeconomic desperation – the impact of racial theories cannot be stricken from the record. By January 1919 these “[racial theories] had assumed a material force in their own right ... used to legitimize relationships of dominance ... within the Empire” (May and Cohen, 1974). Writing about then British colony Nigeria, sociologist James Coleman states (1963) how:

“Color discrimination was the product not only of preconceptions regarding African inferiority, reinforced by a magnification of the faults of educated Africans, but also of firm conviction that peaceful colonial administration and the perpetuation of the imperial rule were directly dependent upon the doctrine of white superiority” (p152).

In both colony and metropole, I think his statements hold weight where the British Army's racist policies were built off the backs of racist pseudoscience. With racial theories assuming a material force in the early twentieth century, is it surprising race riots occurred? Very much so in response to the economic violence of the State (Jenkinson, 2009) and the white male disdain against interraciality (Bourne, 2019) – in the actions of specifically white men revisiting the colonial binaries of white masters and Black enslaved people “where black folks associated whiteness with the terrible, the terrifying, the terrorizing” (hooks, 1992: 170). Reports in 1919 implicate white patriarchal violence against their Black neighbours where *The Times* write “White men appear(ed) determined to clear out the blacks who have been advised to stay indoors ... whenever a negro was seen he was chased and if caught severely beaten” (*qtd* in May and Cohen, 1974). Moreover, to

grasp further insight, news articles are imperative to our understanding. The *Liverpool Daily Post and Mercury* reports three white men robbed an Indian man of £100 and were then sentenced in Manchester (*qtd* in May and Cohen, 1974). Furthermore, media discourses from the *Manchester Evening News* also blame Black men labelling them as antagonists, with headlines such as “Thirteen Negroes Brought to Justice” and “Down with the White Men” (June 6, 1919).

News media aside, white hierarchies also took shape that year where the whiteness of the Scandinavian sailors was overlooked in the Charles Wotton murder. When the police arrived, Gaika tells us “they only arrested the Black sailors” (BBC Stories, 2019), which could only be defined as ‘white privilege’ (Allen and Ignatiev, 1967; McIntosh, 1988; Wise, 2007; Eddo-Lodge, 2017; Bhopal, 2019) where today, Black men still experience police harassment (Dodd, 2020) further to how in Britain, 92% of police officers are white (Police Workforce, 2021). With the racial theories that existed in 1919, it would be irresponsible not to say how police of the day acted in the same ways they do now. With Black people seen as “space invaders” (Puwar, 2004) in the Global North, there is historical relevance for ‘implicit bias’ (Greenwald, 2006; Ross, 2014; Charlesworth and Banaji, 2019).

Despite the term being non-existent in 1919, applying this historically would force us to consider how UK police officers worked for the Colonial Government, just as they still are in service to the Queen while “White ignorance has been able to flourish all ... because a white epistemology of ignorance has safeguarded it against the dangers of an illuminating blackness or redness, protecting those who for “racial” reasons have needed not to know” (Mills, 2007: 35). In 1919 it benefited the State to allow Scandinavians inside whiteness for the time of arresting Black men, thus allowing white supremacy to protect itself where “some ... are 'whiter' than others, some are not white enough and many are ... cast beneath the shadow of Whiteness” (Nayak, 2007: 738).

Starting with the Glasgow Race Riots in January, Black veterans and merchant seamen found themselves at the centre of numbers of racial riots that also dispersed to other port communities including Liverpool (May and Cohen, 1974; Fryer, 1984), Cardiff (National Library of Wales; Begum, 2019), and London (Bourne, 2019). The lynching of Bermudan Black sailor Charles Wotton in

Liverpool is a sombre footnote that reflects images of whiteness in the Black imagination, a picture that seems as familiar as the lynching of George Floyd in 2020. In Britain, many Black people have been brutalised by white civilians and police officers. After the Murder of George Floyd, I thought of the so-called “lawful killing” of Mark Duggan (Elliot-Cooper, 2021). I was also drawn to other Black-racialised victims of police such as Joy Gardner and Sarah Reed forcing me to internally reflect how “...the terrorizing White people were regarded as terrorists, especially those who dared to enter that segregated space of blackness” (hooks, 1992: 170). Here, bell hooks is writing about the US but her ideas are as relevant to Britain, which I have called home all my life.

Whilst 2020 saw a wave of insurgency in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter protests happening across America, 1919 saw waves of rioting primarily in response to widespread unemployment. The Government commissioned a deportation scheme to send two thousand Black veterans and merchant sailors and their families to the Caribbean (Hunter, 2018), to somewhat ‘thin out’ the competition. However, even employed white men revolted and there were mass strikes (Sherry, 2012). Amongst them, were the police themselves. In that same year, Liverpool’s entire police force were on strike (*Forbidden Britain*) in addition to half of British police in general (Bourne, 2019: 228). With “I can’t breathe” as a rallying chant in 2020, 1919 also saw many struggling to breathe under violent economic tensions and the Spanish Flu Pandemic (1918–1920). In a time of politics and pandemics further combined with job competition, 1919 is a year that ought to be part of not only how we think about the First World War, but further taught on the national curriculum.

In Britain, how we think about 1918 is in Armistice as the finale of that saga, arguably an early example of a “contradiction closing” event (Bell, 1985). The fighting stopped, but 1919 brought other problems. With Derek Chauvin convicted in 2021, his trial was a reminder of how big media cases help the system maintain the image of justice where “contradiction-closing cases ... allow business as usual to go on even smoothly than before, because now we can point to the exception case say, ‘See our system is really fair and just. See what we just did for the minorities and the poor’” (Delgado, 1998). And in Britain, we fall back on Macpherson (1999) as the “contradiction closing

case” (Gillborn, 2008: 118-145), where until recently we had a London Met Police Chief that stated it was not helpful to label the police as institutionally racist (Osbourne, 2020). Policing is one example, and in my experiences of discussions about racism since June 2020, I am disappointed many of my colleagues still individualise racism as “bad apples”, not the trees that bore strange fruit.

Interwoven with the protests, I was privy to discussions criticising rioting. Namely, these were British people judging America, but it got me thinking how little we know about Britain’s history of rioting. Earlier, I discussed how the Government censored Britain’s histories of rioting in the first half of the twentieth century (*Forbidden Britain*). Perhaps, this is why there is so much amnesia. In those criticisms, I found people challenging ‘protest’ as well, so I wrote two articles thinking about histories of insurrection (Ventour, 2020; 2020b). I found myself epistemologically exploring the term *violence*. In my circles, I saw many capable of relating football hooliganism to violence but not poverty, deportations, or disproportionality (DDN, 2020). The evident disproportionality in poverty (Stroud, 2020) ushered me to consider the racism of the economy, revisiting this historically, which also had relevance in Black experiences of the interwar years.

In 1919, Black merchant seamen and veterans had fallen into poverty after fighting for King, country, and Commonwealth (BBC Stories, 2019). Simultaneously, on the surface, the 2020 protests were in response to Black victims of racist policing. Yet, living in Northamptonshire, Black people are five times more likely to be stopped than their white counterparts (Police UK, 2021). The issues with American policing seamlessly transition to Britain, Black deaths in police custody included (Inquest, 2021), and most UK police officers do not carry firearms. Disproportionality during the pandemic also show how anti-Blackness pervades through every facet of British life including violence against Black women and girls (Sistah Space), economic violence (Ward, 2021), and illegal deportations (Petter, 2021; Bloomer, 2021) all of which you will not see filmed on camera. With historic deportations (presented as repatriations) tied to economic violence in job competition, 1919 has meaning today. Britain has seen over 150,000 deaths from Coronavirus-related complications (GOV.UK Coronavirus, 2021) many of them in care homes – showing the crosspollination of “I can’t

breathe” with the Black Lives Matter chants and people suffering in hospitals. But rather than deal with the economic crisis of 1919, the Government of the day found ways to deport Black people, both those born here and those that came from the Empire. Now, over one hundred years on, the pernicious tactics of the State have not changed. Living while Black myself as a survivor of racism, I can put myself in the shoes of those Black people back then gaging the fear they would have felt.

Also considering the Tottenham Riots of 2011, 1919 really set the precedent for the uprisings we see now. Have you ever been frightened to unclench your jaw? I was only six years old at my first up-close and personal racist attack, playing in the school field, as was common for children who attended private school. This was when I first I arrived in Northamptonshire from my birthplace Newham in the East End. At a school in rural West Northamptonshire, at this point in my life I was ignorant to racism in the world, and the role of whiteness in society. However, more importantly, the destructive violence, (still introverted nature) white supremacy takes in English education where:

“Questions of ‘racial’ equality, discrimination and harassment have become a familiar part of late twentieth century life. The ethnic diversity of society has consequences for every area of social policy, not least education. The ‘race issue’ cannot be adequately met by actions in any single area. Alone, the education system cannot provide all the answers, yet it does have the opportunity, and obligation, to make a significant contribution towards the creation of a more just society” (Gillborn, 1990: 1).

My first encounter with whiteness ended with a white boy’s foot on my neck, a memory etched into the Black diasporic consciousness. In 2020, I thought how my childhood experience also compared with George Floyd. These were also supported by racist symbols in colonial statues but more critically, the still celebrated Honours system. Here, the Order of Saint Michael and Saint George presents its insignia with “... an enamelled painting ... the angel Saint Michael standing on

the neck of the devil [drawn as a] Black man (George Monbiot *qtd* in: DDN, 2020b) – underpinning what allowed Charles Wotton to be killed by a white mob (Liverpool Echo, 2005). Tied to my first encounter, you could say my relationship with white people has been a challenging one where simply looking at them the wrong way has given me a shortness of breath. Discussing Black childhood, bell hooks (1992) writes about ‘the oppositional gaze’ stating “I remember being punished ... for staring, for those hard intense direct looks children would give grown-ups, looks that were seen as confrontational, as gestures of resistance, challenges to authority” (p115). Thinking about Charles, I have often wondered if he was punished for looking. That although he was a man, colonialists viewed us as ‘childlike’ (*Britain’s Forgotten Slaveowners*) and bell hooks’ ideas about “looking” have agency in 1919, where Black people’s bodies were still viewed through white gazes (Yancy, 2007). And in Britain between the wars, the rights of Black colonials to be seen as British (regardless of their status under the 1914 British Nationality and Aliens Act), was contested (Belchem, 2014: 56), like today (Gilroy, 1987; Hirsch, 2017). Since even in the image of contemporary so-called multiculturalism’ in the UK, I know that despite being British-born my Britishness has qualifiers attached:

“They ever ask you, ‘Where you from?’

Like, ‘Where you really from?’

The question seems simple, but the answer’s kinda long

I could tell ‘em Wembley, but I don’t think that’s what they want

But I don’t wanna tell ‘em more,

‘cause anything I say is wrong” (Riz Ahmed, 2020).”

Growing up, the right to a legitimate and full British identity was still as argued as it was in the 1980s (Christian, 2008). In the finale of *Black and British*, 'Homecoming', David Olusoga says "... there is one barrier that confronted the Windrush Generation that we have largely overcome, and that's because there are few people these days who question the idea that it is possible to be both Black and British" (54:46-55:00). In my own experience as a child raised in the UK in the 2000s, further tied to the experiences of many of my Black and Brown friends and work colleagues in this country, we have all felt that racial microaggression entrenched in the question "where are you from?" It is underpinned by an epistemic racism that frames whiteness as local or indigenous, while Blackness is continually defined as interloper; foreigner; outlander; immigrant – where that question is:

"... asked by ... the interested, curious, polite and open-minded ... reserved for people who look different ... told that they are different, and asked for an explanation, every single day, often multiple times ... a symptom of the fact we don't really know what it is to be British. Is someone like me included?" (Hirsch, 2017: 32-33).

Hirsch's comments are applicable to my experience, especially when I moved through Northamptonshire's country spaces during my school years. Even in the UK's green and so-called pleasant land, I was treated as a "space invader" (Purwar, 2004). David Olusoga continues in discussing how the Britain at the start of the twentieth century couldn't have predicted the UK's diversity: "... that we could or would become the multiracial society we are today. [...] If we look at the ... more nuanced history ... that begins ... with the Afro-Romans, ... we find a history that shows ... the lives of Black people and white people have often been entwined" (56:00-58:03). His statement strikes me as naïve, showing he is out of touch, where "The BBC had a whole series dedicated to 'Black Britishness' [Olusoga's], which essentially amounted to propaganda for the idea that we are now accepted as part of the nation ..." (Andrews, 2019: xiii). Tying it back to 1919, the white State's

actions tell me they did not see us as British – further to what one historian criticises as ‘cultural brainwashing’ because “... by the First World War, black West Indians had come to see themselves as black Englishman, in spite of the existence of a hierarchical class system based on race in the Caribbean” (Costello, 2015: 69).

1919 is not really talked about. Do people want to forget, or do they just not know because we have not been exposed to it? With more Black people in the public eye, it is easy to think we have made it, but ‘diversity’ will not solve systemic problems, especially with the gaps in curriculum including 1919 as part of the teaching of the First World War, and the race science that underpins it.

In the next chapter I will give a background to colonial racial thinking as a subtext to racism between the wars, and further the role of ‘race science’ to show what allowed the riots to happen.

'The White Man's Burden'

To many scholars, race is socially constructed (DuBois, 1897; 1897b Haslanger, 2012; Machery and Faucher, 2004; Mills, 2007; Coates, 2013; Gannon, 2016; Onwuachi-Willig, 2016; Tom Nicholas, 2020b). However, so-called 'race scientists' in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries argued race as purely biological, placing those outside of dominant whiteness as inferior to those inside of it (White, 1799; DeGobineau, 1853). Now, whilst I believe racial groupings to not be scientifically viable, the social meanings attached to them have power where an "effort must be made to understand race as an unstable and 'decentered' complex of social meanings constantly being transformed by political struggle" (Omi and Winant, 2002: 123). In the days of colonial expansion and enslavement, some thinkers presented views in an attempted to justify white supremacy (Bernier, 1684; Linnaeus, 1735 in Taylor, 2013: 64-5; White, 1799; Rush, 1799). Following early racist science, nineteenth century scholars reaffirmed these ideas (Clark and Giddon, 1854; Vogt, 1864; Haeckel in Jahoda, 1999). 'Race science' came into existence to justify colonialism, but today we know everybody shares 99.99% of their DNA structure with everybody else (Highfield, 2002; Payne and Brookman, 2015; National Human Genome Research Institute, 2018). By saying race is socially constructed I mean it has meaning because of the definitions society has attached to it. Now, we know human differences change across time as well as geography since "while the Ancient world was for many of its inhabitants a world of multiple peoples, often enough these peoples were sorted into two sets: Us and Them" (Taylor, 2013: 62). Whilst these peoples saw differences, it was not in the sense of racial formations as we know them now.

How we think about race in recent times is most in-part due to colonialism (Dabiri, 2021) when colonisers were "discovering new lands" in order to justify "bringing civilisation to uncivilised people" (Tom Nicholas, 2018). The concepts of colonialism and empire predates British colonial projects by many years. When I was a child, I was taught about the Romans while similarly, the archaic Greece era practiced like but also different methods of establishing colonies around the Mediterranean and the Black Sea (Tom Nicholas, 2018). However, in the context of 'race science' I

emphasise modern colonialism that we are more familiar with. As early as the sixteenth century, there were technological gains in shipbuilding and navigation that allowed European nations to think more widely about exploration. This included lucrative economic benefits of trade routes where “it was the new routes rather than new lands that filled the minds of kings and commoners, scholars, and seamen” (Mitchell, 2018). On these routes, so-called explorers (such as Francis Drake and Walter Raleigh) arrived in these lands. Soon, ‘explorers’ (as they called themselves) saw that rather than establishing partnerships with these newfound societies (at least newfound to the explorers), it would be more profitable to gain political dominance over them and exploit them economically. This period of history also saw the dawn of early human trafficking expeditions to West Africa where in the British context:

“... the first Englishman to line his pockets by trafficking in black slaves was an unscrupulous adventurer called John Hawkyns. On that first English triangular voyage, in 1562-63, he acquired at least 300 inhabitants off the Guinea coast. [...] He took these people to the Caribbean Island of Hispaniola (now Haiti and the Dominican Republic), where he sold them to the Spaniards for £10,000 worth of pearls, hides, sugar, and ginger. His profit ... was about 12 per cent. Queen Elizabeth I is said, on rather slender authority, to have warned him that carrying off Africans without their consent would be ‘detestable’ ... however that may be, she was quite happy to lend [him] for his second slave-hunting voyage (1564-65), the *Jesus of Lubeck*, a 600-ton vessel with a complement of 300 men ...” (Fryer, 1984: 8).

David Olusoga tells us that on one of these voyages, these seafarers encountered five African men in what is now the Ghanaian village of Sharma. They were brought to England as translators to assist in future negotiations (First Encounters, 55:22-56:05) between what became known as the Gold Coast, and England. Furthermore, Peter Fryer (1984) implicates Elizabeth I in

early human trafficking expeditions with John Hawkins (p1) whilst she also “assisted early merchant adventurers in 1561 by supplying ships and provisions” (National Archives). Not only did these voyages return with inanimate commodities, but also human beings, in the image of Black Africans where some became pirates. With this ‘success’, the Queen saw “the economic value of ... overseas trade [granting] a patent to eight merchants ... to trade exclusively with Senegambia, between the Senegal and Gambia rivers, for a 10-year period” (National Archives). These early trade missions predated modern British colonial exploitation, vital in showing the relationship England had with Africa(ns) before racist colonial ideology was allowed to take shape in the frameworks of British society, but:

“Just as the first seeds of an equal trading relationship were taking root, a devastating new chapter was about to open. Seven years after the ... men from Sharma were brought to London, a trader ... called Sir John Hawkins set sail Hackluyt tells us that once off the coast, Hawkins got into his possession 300 negroes. [...] Through that one expedition, Hawkins made himself an enormous personal fortune but more than that – he had demonstrated that the trade in human beings was just as profitable as the trade in gold. He had become a pioneer of the English slave trade ... that in the coming centuries, would consume the lives of millions of Africans” (First Encounters, 56:52-57:46).

Whilst colonialism was a political system, what is more useful in the context of ‘race science’ is the ideology that underpinned it. The purpose of this ideology was to legitimise colonialism in the minds of the coloniser and colonised (Tom Nicholas, 2018). For me this is personal, since by being members of the Windrush Generation my great-grandparents/grandparents were born into colonialism as British subjects. So, it draws me to contemplate how “family history is colonial history” (Goffe, 2021) and how my relatives were victims of colonial ideology. Margaret Kohn and Kavita Reddy (2017) write about this in the Stanford Encyclopaedia for Philosophy. They describe how early colonialism happened in political and religious contexts. And in talking to my grandparents, I can see the role Christianity played in their lives in the Caribbean and the role it

continues to play in Black British people's lives now (Coman, 2021) – further to how back then “nonbelievers had legitimate dominion over themselves and their property, but dominion was abrogated if they proved incapable governing themselves according to principles that every reasonable person would recognise” (Kohn and Reddy, 2017). Tom Nicholas (2018) says “colonialist nations began to brand their conquering enterprises, not as attempts to take control of foreign lands and indenture indigenous people for material gain, but instead as some kind of mission to civilise the uncivilised peoples of the world.” This violent ideology of control can be seen in the work of late Georgian, but especially Victorian nineteenth century ‘race scientists’ (as they were called) that thought people outside of dominant whiteness, especially Black people, as inferior, where one critic wrote:

“... till the European white man first saw them, some three short centuries ago, those islands had produced mere jungle, savagery, poison reptiles and swamp malaria. Till the white European first saw them, they were, as if not yet created; their noble elements of cinnamon -- sugar, coffee, pepper, black and gray, lying all asleep, waiting the white Enchanter, who should say to them, awake! (Carlyle, 1849)

John Stuart Mill (1885) recognised the barbarity of colonial violence, but simultaneously believed that the paternal hand of the coloniser was needed to keep the colonised in check who one day may ‘earn’ the right to self-government. With the Spanish attempts to ‘civilise’ the indigenous peoples of Paraguay, he states “the real difficulty was the improvidence of the people; their inability to think for the future; and the necessity accordingly of the most unremitting and minute superintendence on the part of their instructors” (p163). These academic underpinnings were further developed after the release of *The Origin of Species* (1859) and *The Descent of Man* (1871) by Charles Darwin, with men like Karl Pearson trying to repurpose social Darwinism in society (Pearson, 1905). These ideas sat parallel to pseudoscientific racial theories. So, differences were drawn upon to differentiate between the coloniser and the colonised, where “what Europeans saw as cultural

shortcomings in other populations in the early nineteenth century soon became conflated with how they looked” (Saini, 2019: 11). Moreover, earlier thinkers like Johan Blumenbach (1795) claimed humanity could be dissected into racial groups – Caucasians, Mongolians, Ethiopians, Americans, and Malays. ‘Caucasian’ was not in reference to only White people, but also encompassed Indians and North Africans (Tom Nicholas, 2020), where Blumenbach writes “I have taken the name of this variety from Mount Caucasus, both because of its neighbourhood and ... its southern slope produced the most beautiful race of men” (Kitson and colleagues, 1999: 205). In these readings we can see how race was invented, albeit with social ramifications for those impacted by the racism that sprouted out of it. In short, it was constructed to provide a rationale for colonial brutality and thus to the economic advantage of white people, where “in the history of humankind ‘white people’ ... have only existed since 1661 ... the idea that different features, hair textures or complexions have any intrinsic value or meaning ... constitute *racial difference*, did not exist before then” (Dabiri, 2021: 43).

And whilst British enslavement concluded in the 1830s, colonialism under different guises still endures today, including the ongoing ethnic cleansing and other acts in Palestine (Double Down News, 2021). Colonialism won the war on race where ‘race science’ went on to underpin the Army’s policies of institutional racism (Olusoga, 2014) and took root in the minds of white veterans that would rise up in violence against their Black neighbours from January 1919.

Thinking about the conversations around Black Lives Matter in 2020, ‘race science’ was overlooked, even though the legacy of colonial racial thinking can be seen today, verily in how we group people by race and ethnicity, especially in education. Whilst calls to decolonise *curricula* in the national debate have been frequent, my experience of this in Northamptonshire is one where many white so-called anti-racists respond to those calls either with silence, or ‘white defense’ (Lewis, 2000; Gunaratnam, 2003). Scholar-feminist bell hooks (1992) writes that since enslavement, “black folks ... have shared in conversation with one another “special” knowledge of whiteness gleaned from close scrutiny of White people” (p165). In scholarship about the 1919 Race Riots by academics, I did not find any discussions that also implicated white supremacy. Arguing that 1919 should be part

of the curriculum is only part of the discussion. The other tells me the ways the First World War (and its aftershocks) are taught, should also have sociological underpinnings that not only look at the conflict through a racialised lens, but also apply Whiteness Studies lenses to these events including the role of white terror under white supremacy as a sociopolitical system (Mills, 2004). 1919 follows a conflict where 'race science' dictated how especially Black people were treated (Vasili, 2010; Olusoga, 2014). So, educators must also learn to see white people as racially marked thus implicating educators into teaching history through a Whiteness Studies lens as well.

In the next chapter, I will discuss my experience of learning about the First World War in private education system and tether this to 1919 and current discourses on Black Lives Matter.

Mourning of the Chalk

Learning about the First World War, my teachers did not expose us to the battles that were fought in the Middle East or even in Africa (Olusoga, 2014). Furthermore, they taught it through a white gaze. They did not think about colonial binaries in using Black people from Britain and the Empire, nor the relevance of white supremacy where “officials used pseudoscience to explain their disinclination to use black soldiers in Europe. ‘Negro’ soldiers, they explained, were best suited to fighting only in tropical climates [...] This attempt to explain military deployment as determined by biology was the essence of racial thinking at the time” (Siblon, 2019: 54). And in our media, culture, and generally through society, whiteness as a racial formation is presented as the norm, as “... at a level of representation, whites are not of a certain race. They are just the human race” (Dyer, 1997: 3). With national feeling of the War built on the premise of ‘universal freedom’, why would my teachers have drawn divisions across racial lines? For white people, whiteness is in that “myth of sameness” (hooks, 1992: 167) and for my schoolteachers, they were oblivious, because “Whiteness is only invisible to those who inhabit it” (Ahmed, 2004). But for me, a Black person, “it’s hard not to see whiteness; it even seems everywhere” (*ibid*). However, here, one must ask oneself if soldiers of empire being called to fight chose to fight of their own volition. Further to how MP David Lammy reminds us how over 100,000 Africans that fought were buried in mass grave sites (*Unremembered: Britain’s Forgotten War Heroes*). This reminds me of my own ‘otherness’ in British history books, where even in addition to the British Army’s policies of institutional racism in life (Vasili, 2010; Olusoga, 2014; Costello, 2015) Black people faced racism in death, where the dignity of an honourable burial after their service had been denied them because of the racial theories in place.

Studying history at school while Black, the dearth of Black history in a topic that was supposed to be about the world (re: World War) provoked this internalisation of “double consciousness” (DuBois, 1903: 1). After doing my project on Walter Tull, to learn about the War without any racial element showed that Black-racialised contributions were not part of the “official history.” However, whiteness as sameness (Hunter, 2015: 12) was presented as ‘The Experience’

since “There is no more powerful position than that of being “just” human. The claim to power is the claim to speak for the commonality of humanity” (Dyer, 1997: 2). In my classes, I vividly recall this so-called “commonality of humanity” where the whiteness of white European soldiers was never spoken about. Under the pretence of ‘universal freedom’ race was an afterthought. Following the work of race and whiteness scholars, I can put my experience into a wider context in writing about myself (auto) in relation to the dominant cultural (ethno) elements of the school curriculum.

And in hindsight, my private school experience followed colonial-style teaching methods of missionaries (Ezeanya-Esiobu, 2019) in the image of schoolchildren, pontificating teachers, and chalk/blackboards. Here, educators lived in the shadow of colonialism. My education was conducted through blackboard pedagogy whilst “unfit” language was policed by teachers (including my accent and colloquialisms), and as one scholar writes “Berlin of 1884 was effected through the sword and the bullet. But the night of the sword and the bullet was followed by the morning of the chalk and the blackboard ...The bullet was the means of physical subjugation. Language was the means of spiritual subjugation” (Thiong’o, 1986: 9). Colonial soldiers dominated through brutality, whilst teachers ruled through chalk. In discourses of education today, we can observe how lots of teachers are institutionalised by whiteness where “arguments for how our educational institutions are governed by such marginalizing colonial practices rooted in white supremacy have been rigorously explicated” (Jamila Lyiscott for Heinemann Publishing, 2017). If the way school taught children shifted, I may have seen World War One through different gazes, but as Tom Nicholas (2020) tells us, “our cultural texts, our media discourse, and our educational curricula ... tacitly encourage us to view Whiteness as the absence of race ... other people have racial identities, we [white people] don’t.”

School aside, the War and hence Remembrance are part of our national story. The actions of the State and members of the public in protecting statues and war memorials in 2020 from protesters (Bullmore, 2020; Canton, 2020; Kreft, 2020) reminded me how Britain thinks. However, the erasure of Black soldiers showed me people like me did not fit the story those that wrote the history books wanted to tell. Hew Strachan (2001) suggests that more than two million Africans

served and over 200,000 died or were killed (p497). However, the death rate amongst the Carrier Corps was higher than those of regular soldiers where over 50% of the deaths of Carriers was due to dysentery, rooted in badly prepared food (Hodges, 1987: 143). In *The Unremembered: Britain's Forgotten War Heroes*, I saw that just as in life, there was racism in death where Major George Evans (in charge of grave registrations) suggests, that the erection of individual graves for the estimated 54,000 East Africans would be a 'waste of public money' in his own words stating "most of the Natives who have died are of a semi-savage nature, and do not attach any sentiment to marking the graves of their dead" (*qtd in Barrett, 2014: 82*).

As private schools do not have to abide by the same rigorous codes as state schools in terms of their curriculum (Department of Education), why did my teachers not include any global Black history? Global northwestern knowledge production is locked in an intimate relationship with power where we might argue "there is no power relation without correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations" (Foucault, 1975: 27). My teachers taught me history as a set of unarguable truths that exist in a void. The phrase "history is written by the victors" often attributed to Winston Churchill, reminds me that the way I was taught is not divorced from the student-teacher relationship built on power. Simply, they taught me to think of knowledge (especially in subjects like history and science) as an unchallengeable notion. However, this memory reminds me how no knowledge exists outside of the value-driven society it was produced in – be it politically, socially, or economically. In knowing this, Michel Foucault believed knowledge and power relations to be inextricably linked, as "knowledge that exists at any given time, the facts that are deemed incontrovertible, and the discoveries that it is possible to make, are in fact heavily influenced by that same era's power relations" (Tom Nicholas, 2019).

Now reflecting on those years, I view my teachers' actions to be racist, embodying Foucault's ideas about knowledge and power further "...through the positing of some bodies rather than others as the subjects ..." (Hunter, 2021). Talking to my Black friends, their experiences in the state system

were not much different to my private education. The 2020 coveting of war memorials by the State shows how much Britain looks to those years. So, if we are to teach this to children, it needs to be as accurate as possible including the contributions of Black people and thus what happened afterwards in 1919. The return of Black Lives Matter in June 2020 forced me to think again of the role race plays in the construction of my life. As an historian, dissenting opinions about statues of Winston Churchill in London (BBC London, 2020) and Toronto (Smith, 2020) made me again revisit whiteness in not only discourses tied to both world wars, but also how we remember them. Just like the no-response of police in condemning the violence of the far-right brawls in 2020, police departments in 1919 were more eager to incarcerate Black civilians (Walvin, 1973: 207). The consensus from the media in 1919 and 2020 did not condemn these acts of white heteropatriarchal violence. However, if these were Black and Brown men committing these acts, we know the response would have been mighty – as Guilaine Kinouani writes on Windrush:

“The deportation of Jamaican siblings is a threat to everyone ... part of a psychological warfare against black people ... remember it always starts with black bodies, what history shows is that it has never stopped with us. I make the point in *Living While Black* ... and I make it here often. Your baseline is how the most devalued bodies are treated. Raising that baseline increases everyone’s level of safety, peace & security” (@KGuialine).

How the media reported the 1919 Race Riots is a mandate to how the media still write about the treatment of Black people today, with the onus or blame placed on us either as passive victims or aggressors with little discussion on white terror. The treatment of Black-racialised people is the baseline of human dignity in the UK and is a mandate for everyone, as we saw in the police brutalising white women at the vigil of Sarah Everard (Double Down News, 2021). However, the term *riot* is frequently contested. Often ‘rioters’ are reacting to state-sanctioned violence and in 1966, Dr Martin Luther King said, “a riot is the language of the unheard ... riots are self-defeating and socially destructive” (60 Minutes, 2018). And on the tenth anniversary of the Tottenham Riots in

August 2021, poet Haroon Khan describes “[Britain as] a country that refuses to recognise its own children” (@haroonspeaks). According to Gary Younge “... riots are often justified ... saying the riots are justified is different than saying they are equipped” (Double Down News, 2020). When I think back to the Tottenham Riots, little did that fifteen-year-old know what this would come to signify for many my age. These sorts of rebellions normally take place when societal stress is caused by social, economic, and / or even political factors built up over a time period to create a watershed moment culminating in violence that spills out onto public streets, settlements, and neighbourhoods (Moore, 1978; Scarman, 1981; Perrot, 1987; Polletta, 1998; Biggs, 2005; Polletta, 2006; Braha, 2012). In relation to 1919, these built up over a period of time following the First World War, after white British veterans had risked their lives, and were frustrated at the mass unemployment they had returned home to. They found an easy scapegoat in the Black veterans and merchant sailors. Whilst scholars have labelled these as “race riots”, other socioeconomic factors contributed, and in my opinion, are examples of white terrorism where:

“... between January and August, [the riots] involved crowds of whites (often in their thousands) and dozens of Black men. As a result of the clashes, five men (three white and two Black) lost their lives, dozens were injured, and over two hundred arrests were made” (Jenkinson, 1986: 3).

Historically, riots have sprouted out of social grievances or dissenting against the state, verily in response to poverty and unemployment. In-part, these socioeconomic factors are what spurred the 1919 Race Riots built on the already established undercurrent (via racial theories) across the breadth of Britain. There are many types of riots. e.g. food riots are instigated by crop failures, poisoning, or even insects attacks with the threat of mass starvation and thus poverty being a catalyst. Motivated by the threat of poverty, homelessness, or even death, groups may attack shops and other structures to acquire food where “the turbulence of the colliers is, of course, to be accounted for by something more elementary than politics: it was the instinctive reaction of virility to hunger” (Ashton and Sykes, 1967: 131). The riots that occurred that summer (2020) in the United

States amongst the anti-racism protests may be described as police riots with disproportionate force being used to curb the so-called threat of Black Lives Matter. Other types of riots include political riots, prison riots, religious riots, and even sports riots. Reading earlier writings either directly about the 1919 uprisings (May and Cohen, 1974; Jenkinson, 1996; 2008; 2009; 2017) or simply texts that feature them (Brown, 2006; Bourne, 2014; Belchem, 2014), it reflects the aura of public thought that I see now in relation to contemporary racism in Britain. In essence, the focus is firmly placed upon the victims not the perpetrators. Whether those critiques have been more historical or sociological, the role of whiteness or white supremacy has been relatively overlooked with more emphasis on the economic tensions brought by class divides or racialised undertones.

In this case, the term 'racial' means racialised outside of whiteness since as Richard Dyer (1997) states, "whites are not of a certain race, they are just the human race" (p3). If anything, critics write Black people of the time as victims / aggressors without naming white supremacy as the overarching system, where in relation to arrests and imprisonment by police and the justice system (very similar to the present) Black people "were subjected to scandalously biased treatment. Those arrested [during the Liverpool Riots] were removed from the gaols and 'placed in an internment camp pending repatriation', despite the fact that their actions had been simply to defend themselves ..." (Walvin, 1973: 207). In present-day Britain, we continue to be disproportionately stopped and searched by police whilst 51% of young people in prison come from a Black or ethnic minority background increasing since the 2017 *Lammy Review* (Lammy, 2020). And as one Black Studies professor writes "if you are Black and in Britain today you are up to eighteen times more likely to be stopped and searched by the police. You are more likely to be charged if arrested, and subject to a longer prison sentence if found guilty" (Andrews, 2019: xxiii).

The treatment of Black merchant sailors and veterans by police shows the longevity of racist police violence against Black people in the UK, pointing to a pre-Windrush Generation state of racism. This worryingly comes after knowing that half of British police forces were on strike that year (Bourne, 2019: 228). However, the 1919 Riots looks at a Britain before "contradiction closing cases"

(Delgado, 1998; Gillborn, 2008) and British racisms beyond benchmark legislation like the Race Relations Act (1968). In my community, I often see educators and activists claiming anti-Blackness in the UK came with the Windrush, but history tells a different story. 1919 is one chapter of a longer subtler British history of anti-Blackness. The necessity for Black Lives Matter builds on these histories of violence and trauma looking at events like 1919 as “histories of racism as histories of the present” (Ahmed, 2004) where we are still living in the remnants of these unresolved histories today.

In the next chapter, I will briefly look at what happened after the 1919 Riots to these new Mixed-Race communities, what this meant for post-1918 Britain, and how that links to now.

Looking Ahead: 'Britain's Brown Babies'

When thinking about Charles Wotton, I'm left asking, 'what if he had lived?' pondering the many Black people that have been killed by white terrorism (hooks, 1992), an ancestor to the numbers of Black people killed by whiteness and in UK police custody (Inquest, 2021). While we mourn loss, the term *ancestor* denotes connections through literal bloodlines and spiritual ones to all Black people that have passed on. Although as Jacqueline Jenkinson (1986) claims, the riots were in-part motivated by job competition, they were also instigated by white male jealousy of white women choosing to procreate and start families with Black men (Bourne, 2019; BBC Stories, 2019).

Whilst Britain becomes an increasingly Mixed-Race nation today, I still hear murmurs of anti-interracial prejudice, especially from other Black people in the context of Black people having white partners. Today, about half of Britain's Mixed-Race population is of Black-white parentage (Adeokya, 2020: 11). To identify as Mixed-Race is still contested which is why Meghan Markle's decision to identify as a "biracial woman" perplexed many (Markle, 2015; Henderson, 2021) while "... if Barack Obama had asked to be called the 'first biracial president of America', the world would have frowned in confusion, some even in hostility" (Adeokya, 2020: 1). In the American context, some Black people follow a separatist thought of disappointment when a Black person chooses a white partner (Sailer, 1997; Kennedy, 2002; Childs, 2005; Coates, 2010; Skinner, 2018) where Black-white relationships in America are also looked on most negatively in comparison to others (Davis 1991; Frankenberg 1993; Rosenblatt, and colleagues, 1995; Ferber 1998; Feagin 2000).

As a Black man, I grew up around a familial unease to Black-white relationships. That is not to say my relatives and family friends hated white people, simply they would imply that there is a risk when Black boys bring white girls home. Now, I see it as a trauma response to the roles white girls and women have played in histories of racism (Ware, 1992) tracing that history back to white women as slaveowners (Jones-Rogers, 2019). Recently, these situations have taken shape through labels such as 'Becky' or 'Karen' (Williams, 2020; Shand-Baptiste, 2020) revisiting scenes of white

terror via emotions as tools of anti-Blackness (Hamad, 2018) even white people going as far as to harass Black neighbours (@Sistah_Space), treating Black people as “space invaders” (Purwar, 2004).

Juxtaposed to that anti-interracial fear, I read how one street in 1919 Stepney was colloquialised by locals as “Draughtboard Alley” (Bourne, 2019). This was due to its interracial community. Interviewing Linda Lewis, (whose grandfather was caught in the riots), Stephen Bourne writes “in spite of the prejudice, ... Linda says that in the old days all the black and mixed-race families lived ... and looked out for each other: ‘That’s how Crown Street came to be named Draughtboard Alley...’” (p206). Whilst the Windrush Generation that arrived from 1948 are often claimed as the UK’s first Black community, this is inaccurate. Really, what we need to do is look prior to their arrival, as Black people had been in the East End as far back as the early 1700s where Michael Banton writes :

“... [Black] men were to be found in Stepney ... According to local tradition, there were two inns by the river in Wapping which made a market for the sale of young slaves ... At the same time [Black] seamen were coming into the port and spreading into the nearby parishes” (p22-23).

Meanwhile, in relation to economic tensions Jacqueline Jenkinson (2008) describes during the riot in Glasgow Harbour, Black seafarers were assaulted by the seamen’s unions and their local delegates: “chased out of the merchant marine hiring yard by white sailors when they sought jobs, beaten in the streets, attacked in their boarding house, and then targeted for mass arrest by police called in to halt the disorder” (p30). I reiterate that what occurred in Glasgow was reproduced across Britain blaming the so-called ‘aliens’ for their lack of jobs. The Merchant City was followed by others including South Shields, Hull, and South Wales. Like what happened after 1945 – following 1918, Black colonials were attracted to the imperial centre for employment. With jobs reverting to their peacetime norm, competition threatened white working-class lives and 1919 hosted “nine seaport riots, hostile crowds of white working-class people abused and attacked ... predominantly [Black] British colonial sailors” (Jenkinson, 2008: 30). After the War, Black men were hated, violence

triggered by not only job tension but also sexual competition for the attention of local white British women. Post-Armistice, "... war-time boom for black labour fizzled out ... shipping companies chose to sign on white foreign seaman rather than black British seamen" (Fryer, 1984: 303).

By 1914, Black families and seamen could be found dwelling in the Royal Group of Docks in the East End (Bourne, 2019: 200) with one historian further commenting that "some black men chose to make new homes in London while others, because of the downturn in world trade, and the colour bar, found it difficult to obtain passage home" (Bloch, 1996: 5). Michael Banton (1955) writes "trade unions insisted upon the prior employment of Englishmen and large numbers of [Black] men were unable to get work" (p33). Whilst job tensions in London were strained, Black men who decided to make roots also married local white women with "mixed marriages and the employment they secured [causing] resentment from the local white population (Bourne, 2019: 201). In 'Alt History: A British Lynching', talking about Liverpool Gaika says, "white workers began to demand changes, Blacks were sacked because whites refused to work alongside them." Economic violence was compounded by 'sexual competition' where he further states "that some people didn't like the idea of racial mixing." In South Wales, the press described interraciality as "repugnant" and "produce a state of violent resentment on the part of the relatives of the misguided girls and women" (Daily Mail in BBC Stories, 2019b). Reading between the lines of what happened in both South Wales and London, it brings me to consider how some Edwardian white women believed Black men to be superior to white men, thus interrupting white supremacy.

However, thinking back to my own childhood, I did not ponder much about 'interraciality' in discourses of Black history. Yet now, Britain seemingly has adopted America's one-drop rule (Bradt, 2010). Previously, I talked about Walter Tull. Celebrated in Black History Month campaigns every year in the UK, his mother was a white working-class woman from Kent, while his father was a Black from Barbados (Vasili, 2010: 27-30), otherwise part of the Black Victorians. Between the late nineteenth century and the start of the War, there were Black people existing across many facets of British life where:

“Edwardian Britain’s widespread population of African birth or descent was resident at the centre of the world’s largest empire, participating in affairs of the leading industrial nation. Some knew no other land and others were self-motivated migrants. There were ambitious professionals, youths anxious for education, parents concerned about the future, adults seeking tranquillity and workers seeking more money, as well as the descendants of earlier generations” (Green, 1998: xiii).

In those years that foregrounded the 1919 Riots, there were public concerns about “racial mixing” where increasing numbers of Black men chose to marry local white women. Chamion Caballero and Peter Aspinall (2018) tells us that by 1918, interracial families lived in port settlements such as London, Liverpool, and Cardiff. In congruence with other works (Fryer, 1984; Jenkinson, 1986; 2008; 2009; Bourne, 2019), they also tell us that the events of 1919 rose from the employment of Black seamen at the docks “culminating in the ‘race riots’ ... that first brought [their] existence to the wider attention of the British population” (p54). The years that followed shaped a debate on race that stigmatised “the social position of ... interracial unions and their children ... in a number of ways” (p66). Firstly, Jaqueline Jenkinson (2009) describes the State’s efforts to deport unemployed Black men as a “numbers game” (p182) where ‘poverty’ was debated by politicians well into the 1930s. Caballero and Aspinall (2018) also further describe biases in news and police reports “... in the racial statistics of arrests ... partially remedied in acquittals in the courts. Such biases were to plague British race relations in the interwar years ...” (p66).

Whilst the Black Lives Matter struggles weren’t about ‘anti-interraciality’, I must consider the erasure Black-racialised Mixed-Race Britons face in discourses around Black Lives Matter. With panels rising in response to interests in race equity, I saw few of them had any Mixed-Race representation. And beyond my lifetime, I must think how in Britain, we are becoming more multiracial since Mixed-Race is the fastest growing racial group (Caballero and Aspinall, 2018: 483) as one scholar further writes “... there are already two million mixed-race Britons today, according to some estimates. [...] Paradoxically, however, the greatest-ever interracial mixing is happening in a

world that is becoming more racially polarised” (Adekoya, 2021: 2-3). For the ‘race scientists’ that cherished ‘ethnic absolutism’ in the early twentieth century, they thought white women procreating with Black men was a “scandal and disgrace to English womanhood ... a real and direct threat to the control of empire and the preservation of racial hierarchies” (Olusoga, 2016: 413). To that era’s great and the good, discourses to hybridity and métissage “would be a litany of pollution and impurity” (Gilroy, 1993: 2). And by the end of the 1920s, the children of Black seamen and local white women in Liverpool (specifically) are stated to be a “real social menace” (Fletcher, 1930).

Following 1919, the public would witness the so-called “consequences of interraciality, including the threat to economic and social stability...” (Caballero and Aspinall, 2018: 18). The intersections between race and geography show themselves in how Black so-called rioters were named as ‘aliens’ simply for their visible differences, looked at as “space invaders” (Puwar, 2004) where many of the Black defendants “were shown to be British subjects, a labelling that was to have significant implications for their nationality and rights of citizenship once legislation on ‘alien’ seamen was enacted” (Caballero and Aspinall, 2018: 66). In the mid-1920s, the Coloured Alien Seamen Order 1925 was passed as “the first instance of state-sanctioned [racism] inside Britain to come to widespread notice” (Tabili, 1994: 56). As my own grandparents/great-grandparents were born British subjects in the Caribbean, this hits eerily close to home, since the 1925 Coloured Alien Seamen Order lays the basis for Immigration legislations of 1948, 1962 and 1971, and thus the Windrush Scandal (Gentleman, 2019) a precursor to the hostility to Caribbean arrival in 1948. Here, even when PM Clement Atlee wanted to divert the ship to East Africa so the Caribbeans, who he called “an incursion”, could “pick peanuts” (*The Unwanted*; Ventour-Griffiths, 2021).

The language of the 1925 act is as such that it contests the Britishness of Black people either born in Britain and those born in the colonies. In the present day, we are subject to such scrutiny “every day often multiple times” (Hirsch, 2017: 33). Contested Britishness compounded in the 1930s where “[Muriel] Fletcher did not concern herself with the biological effects of race mixing but was outspoken on its social consequences, particularly for what she termed the ‘Anglo-Negroid Cross’

(Caballero and Aspinall, 2018: 69). The children that came out of Black-white unions were young kids by the 1930 *Fletcher Report* with many of them growing up in the city going on to raise families themselves. Like after 1918, during and following the second global conflict starting in 1939, Britain had another boom of British Mixed-Race children (Bland, 2019). These stories of Mixed-Race families allow me to think of my own Mixed-Race heritage. Though racialised as Black by the world outside, my paternal grandmother is Mixed-Race (whose grandfather was white) implicating me. Though, I did not grow up with one parent looking different to the other, this also tells me that ‘a person cannot look Mixed’ (Ventour, 2020d) and “Mixed-Race has its own history” (Ventour, 2020e).

Reflecting on my relationship with Black history, I have a long-standing rapport with Walter Tull, his family were not engulfed in the riots (that I know of) but were entrenched in a British tradition of multiracial communities going back to Roman times (Fryer, 1984). In teaching a racialised conflict of the First World War, I would push educators to look at the histories of the Black Victorians and Black Edwardians. Furthermore, the social and racial underpinnings of 1919 leading to the Brown Babies of the 1940s in the unions between Black American GIs stationed here in Britain during the Second World War and local white women (Olusoga, 2017; Bland, 2019).

The year 1919 is the year history forgot holding a mirror to twenty-first century Britain that still struggles to discuss race, whilst ignorant to how to include Mixed-Race people in that conversation. Additionally, current British populations have sometimes blamed mass unemployment on immigrants (Goodfellow, 2019), and the police continue to treat Black people with disgust (Agnew-Pauley and Akintoye, 2021), as they did in between the wars– while further refusing to reframe present conversations about racism into one about white supremacy as a sociopolitical system (Mills, 2003). In 1919, the media blamed Black people using headlines like “Thirteen Negroes Brought to Justice” (Manchester Evening News, June 6) with Liverpool’s so-called “COLOUR RIOT” (June 6). Historian James Walvin (1973) disagrees with these reports writing “All neutral observers agreed that the black community was on the defensive and yet its members, in trying to defend

themselves were arrested and prosecuted for their attempts at self-defence, while all but a handful of the white aggressors went unchallenged” (p207).

The experiences of Black people in 1919 was a Black Lives Matter issue of that time and it continues to be one now. Reflecting on my own experiences of the Black Lives Matter struggle, I am angry at the lack of analysis on whiteness. The breadth of the ‘race conversation’ focuses on racism (the symptom), not white supremacy (the problem). Instead of focusing on racism both now and historically, it would be more fruitful to analyse and critique white supremacy. The focus on racism upholds white supremacy to continue as the unnamed aggressor. The violence against Black people in 1919 by local white people, and the stigmatisation of Mixed-Race children in the *Fletcher Report* (1930) are both racist acts underpinned by ‘race science’ and enabled by white supremacy.

And whilst what happened in 1919 was understandable in the response to unemployment, their frustration was misdirected. In 2020, anger was aimed at the State, but Edwardian white men acted with hostility to their neighbours. With uprisings happening in not just Britain but further across Europe and in the United States too, if I may use a metaphor: the State shook a jar containing red ants and black ants knowing nobody would look for the hand. Yet, in any society there is always a power imbalance in play, and it would have been more effective for Black and white people to be united in this world of binaries: freeman and slave, patrician and plebian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman; in a word, oppressor and oppressed (Marx and Engels, 1848: 1).

In my conclusion, I will reflect on this work and give my final thoughts.

Conclusion

My choice to use storytelling conventions rather than bow to white academia allowed me to relax, analysing myself via diaspora. Like Black people in 1919, I also experience a society that consistently says I am unwelcome. In this work, I was forced to consider how racism entered my mind because as Guilaine Kinouani writes “... from the treatment of our ancestors to enduring race inequalities and ... hostility, we are deeply affected and shaped by racial injustice and what happened in the past, and this includes the violence and shame our forebears experienced” (p56).

Through my dissertation, both in my reading and then writing, I was reminded how Black Lives Matter also applies to the lives of the Black Edwardians who toiled in European theatres of war. Yet, the first time I saw a photo of a Black soldier I was ten years old, innocent to the roles of ‘race science’ in creating the Black baseline for human treatment. The First World War was known as ‘The Great War for Civilisation’ but Black soldiers did not meet white definitions of human, and were treated with such inhumanities in life, as they were in death, indignities rooted in white supremacy.

After serving under colonialism in this global event, Black people were also met with a state-sanctioned hostile environment. The resistance of the Black Edwardians paved the way for the Windrush, and revisiting this history in tracing my education, I was reminded as one scholar tweeted, “diaspora is a place of mourning [and] mourning is not always sorrowful” (@taoleighoffe).

“Never in the field
of human conflict has
so much been owed by
so many to so few.”

Winston Churchill (1940)

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