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**The Afro-Caribbean Community in Britain from a Historical and
Cultural Perspective**

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Prohlašuji, že jsem práci zpracovala samostatně a použila jen uvedených pramenů a literatury.

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1. Introduction

This thesis deals with the British Afro-Caribbean community. The aim is to analyse how black culture has affected British society. A history of British colonisation will be outlined to provide context for the situation of Afro-Caribbean people in contemporary Britain. The thesis is divided into two main parts: historical and cultural. The historical part will provide a brief history of the rise and demise of the British Empire, with particular focus on colonisation in – and subsequent immigration from – Africa and the West Indies. The cultural part will look at how Afro-Caribbean communities have influenced British society and how British society has reacted to the presence of those communities. Particular consideration will be given to music, art, literature and fashion.

The first chapters of the historical part of the thesis deal with the British colonization of the West Indies and the African continent. The historical part focuses on the rise of the British Empire and its overseas policy from the beginning of colonization to the loss of colonies and the subsequent demise of the Empire. The emphasis is mainly on the strategy of colonization of the African continent and the subsequent *Transatlantic slave trade*.

British colonization began by the establishment of the first overseas settlements in the 16th century and lasted till the 20th century, when the British Empire crumbled and gradually lost its colonies and settlements. A chapter is devoted to the causes and consequences of the demise of the Empire. As an island country, Britain never made much effort to gain control of the European continent, but rather focused on acquiring and maintaining strategic overseas settlements. After the so-called *Scramble for Africa* in the late 1800s and early 1900s, when the great powers literally divided parts of the continent between themselves, Britain still maintained the status of a superpower that had no comparable rival; and it still controlled almost a quarter of the whole of the Earth's landmass, while maintaining a policy of perfect isolation. However, as explained at the end of the historic part of the thesis, subsequent events resulted in the gradual demise of the empire and forced Britain to abandon its principle of *splendid isolation* and to establish new bilateral alliances. The historical part concludes with chapters that deal with the situation in the West Indian islands that were controlled by Britain, and with the subsequent first migration from that area to the British Isles.

The first wave of Caribbean migration to Britain took place at the beginning of the Second World War, when many people from the West Indies were recruited to the RAF. These were mainly upper class from the upper classes of their respective islands. The vast majority of them did not stay in Britain, returning to their homelands at the end of the war and contributing substantially to political developments there. The principal wave of immigration from the West Indies to Britain came in 1948, when HMT Empire Windrush brought about 800 migrants from Trinidad, Jamaica and other Caribbean countries. This event was crucial in the creation of modern Black Britain. These people undertook a complicated journey across the Atlantic to seek job opportunities in Britain.

Thanks to the large representation of Trinidians among the HMT Windrush passengers, a new musical style – the calypso – arrived in Britain, from which other new musical styles gradually developed in the following decades. The aim of the thesis is to consider how the Black culture brought to Britain by Afro-Caribbean people influenced British society and culture and how British society responded to the presence of those immigrants and their cultures.

The cultural part of this thesis deals with the formation of black culture in the British Isles, its influence on British culture, and the fusion of Black and British culture. The greatest emphasis is placed on those cultural aspects, such as music, where the influence was most profoundly felt. The subsequent chapters also look at how the Afro-Caribbean community entered the mainstream and became involved in literature, fine art and fashion in Britain. The political and socio-economic situation is briefly explained across the chapters to provide context.

The key sources for the first part of the thesis were *Zahraniční Politika a Strategie Velké Británie ve 20. století, Petr Hlaváček a kol.* and *WINDRUSH: The Irrestible Rise of Multi-Racial Britain, Mike Phillips & Trevor Phillips*. The first book deals with the policies and strategies of the British Empire during colonization. The second one focuses on migration from the West Indies to Britain since the *HMT Windrush* arrival, and its chapters are interpolated with authentic testimonies of migrants.

Black British History: Black Influences on British Culture (1948 to 2016), R. Walker was the main source of information for the second part of the thesis. In this book, migration to Britain is viewed from a cultural point of view and contains information about the cultural

development of modern Black Britain, from the arrival of HMT Windrush up until 2016. The book also looks at the subcultures that developed in Britain in response to the arrival of these new cultures. Information found in *SUBCULTURE: The Meaning of Style*, Dick Hebride was also used.

2. The British Empire, with particular focus on Africa and the West Indies

England began to establish overseas settlements in the 16th century and the naval power was key both to the subsequent creation of the largest empire the world has ever seen, covering, at its height, almost a quarter of the earth's landmass. The empire consisted of many territories of different types and of different degrees of autonomy.

The colonial voyages were government-led or government-supported (as in the case of the East India Company) and were, originally, primarily commercial in nature. The two main strategies were (a) to conquer small but significant geopolitical coastal locations, such as Cape Town, Aden, Suez, Singapore and Gibraltar and (b) to colonise more extensive areas, as in Australia, New Zealand and North America. Indirect rule became the most typical tool of British colonialism. This model was characterised – especially in Africa – by a system of British officials alongside subordinate indigenous authorities. In its own terms it was both hugely effective and cheap (both in materials and labour).

The profit motive behind it all soon gave rise to a colossal slave trade, with African slaves being shipped to North America and the Caribbean. Indeed, by the end of the 17th century, African slaves comprised the largest part of the population of the West Indies.¹

2.1 Settlement of North America and the West Indies

The settlements in North America and the West Indies were established during the 17th century. (The Caribbean region was also colonised by Spain, France, Holland and Portugal at the same time.) Barbados was settled by English colonists in 1627. Jamaica was captured by a British expedition in 1655. Most of the other islands, such as Dominica, Grenada, St Vincent, Saint Lucia and Trinidad, passed through the ownership of various other European powers before the British finally took control of them.² Slave labour became the driving force behind

¹ HLAVÁČEK A KOL., Pavel, *Zahraniční politika a strategie Velké Británie ve 20. století*, p. 21

² PHILLIPS, Mike&Trevor, *Windrush, The irresistible rise of multi-racial Britain*, p. 10

the profits from extensive tobacco, sugarcane and rice plantations on the islands.

The Hudson's Bay Company³ established itself in what became north-western Canada from the 1670's onwards.

2.2 British settlements in Africa

In 1661, James Island became the first British settlement on the continent and the African possessions were made up mainly of South and East African countries. During the 19th century, Britain conquered what is now the South African Republic, Lesotho, Swaziland, Botswana, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe, in Southern Africa, and Kenya, Uganda and Tanganyika in East Africa. It later acquired Zanzibar and Somalia. Together with Egypt, the British administrated Sudan. On the west coast of Africa, they dominated Nigeria. After World War I, this was followed by Cameroon, Sierra Leone, Ghana and The Gambia.

The colonies were, in fact, self-ruled enterprises of particular companies and magnates. The English Crown itself did not make much effort to manage and control them. The slave trade acquired a unique importance to Britain's colonial economy in the Americas, and it became an economic necessity for the Caribbean colonies and for the southern parts of the future United States. Movements for the end of slavery came to fruition in British colonial possessions long before the similar movement in the United States; the trade was abolished in 1807 and slavery itself in Britain's dominions in 1833.⁴

British colonialism reached its peak during the 19th century. It became clear that Britain had no adequate rivals. British dominance was confirmed during the *scramble for Africa*. However, events such as the Boer War passed off, in which neither the United States nor any other European state expressed their support. The period of British dominance successively ended. In the early 20th century Britain abandoned the principles of isolation and began to establish bilateral agreements with some states (Japan, Russia, France).⁵

2.3 The Triangular trade

The Transatlantic slave trade was the part of the global slave trade which transported almost twelve million enslaved Africans across the Atlantic Ocean to the Americas. This process took

³ The Hudson's Bay Company was an English company chartered in 1670 to trade in all parts of North America drained by rivers flowing into Hudson Bay (<https://www.collinsdictionary.com/>)

⁴ <https://www.britannica.com/place/British-Empire>

⁵ HLAVÁČEK A KOL., Pavel, *Zahraniční politika a strategie Velké Británie ve 20. století*, p. 22

place from the 16th to the 19th century, comprising the shipping of: (a) arms, textiles, wine and other goods from Europe to Africa; (b) slaves from Africa to the Americas; (c) commodities such as sugar and coffee to Europe.⁶

Slavery was abolished by the UK parliament in 1834, the slave trade having been declared illegal in 1807. (The Caribbean population of Africans and European settlers was subsequently augmented by labourers and traders from India, China and the Middle East.⁷)

3. Situation in Caribbean in the first half of the twentieth century

Throughout the first half of the 20th century the West Indies produced a wide variety of tropical fruits, such as coffee, cocoa, sugar and spices. Industries included sugar, rum, tobacco and fruit processing, textile manufacturing and mineral extraction. In the circumstances, labour was cheap and unemployment rates high. Within the Caribbean it became traditional for people to travel abroad to get seasonal labour. For active and enterprising West Indians a high level of mobility was a fact of life. At the same time, the domestic life of colonial society was stratified and dominated by traditions inherited from the slave regimes.⁸

3.1 War time and the Caribbean recruits

The experience of Caribbean servicemen during the Second World War was complex and variable, but it was largely instrumental in determining the structure and pace of Caribbean immigration to Britain. Over a period of six years, there were two very distinct strands of recruitment from the Caribbean.

The first group travelled to Britain to enlist at the beginning of the war and came from what could be described as an existing officer class. These were the children of the administrators, who, a decade later, were going to create the pressure for independence. They were among the most talented and enterprising elements of the Caribbean populations. Most of them joined the Royal Air Force.

This elite group of recruits would have been best suited to deal with post-war conditions in Britain. This was also the group which was the least likely to remain in Britain because they really wanted to return and change the political landscape at home.

⁶ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/transatlantic-slave-trade>

⁷ PHILLIPS, Mike&Trevor, Windrush, *The irresistible rise of multi-racial Britain*, p. 10-11

⁸ PHILLIPS, Mike&Trevor, Windrush, *The irresistible rise of multi-racial Britain*, p. 15

The second wave of recruitment was very different in composition. During 1943-1944 the nature of the conflict changed. Britain needed support staff to service and maintain the front-line fighters during the gradual build-up to D-Day – the allied invasion of continental Europe, which began on 6 June 1944. Ground crews were recruited in the colonies and came from a broader social spectrum, including from rural communities. Many of them saw this as an opportunity to travel abroad.

This second wave was in response to an open invitation from the British government. Unlike those in the first group, who came in their hundreds, these came in their thousands. By then life in Britain had settled into a grim routine, but the new recruits were greeted with the same warmth as their predecessors had been. There was no formal contact between the two different groups of West Indian servicemen. Even after the conflict ended the members of the first group were noticeable by their absence in public perception of what was to become the black community. This was largely due to high casualty rate among the first group, and that most of those who survived wanted to carry on where they had left off on their career path back home.⁹

4. HMT Empire Windrush and the beginnings of Modern Black Britain

After the war, the economies in the Caribbean worsened. European reconstruction was the number one priority of the major economic powers. Shipping was increasing and there was a high demand for raw materials. Meanwhile returning West Indian soldiers found life at home even worse than it had been before. There were hardly any opportunities for advancement or self-expression. They had seen the new possibilities in Britain, but passenger travel between the Caribbean and Britain was expensive and difficult. The *HMT (Hired Military Transport) Empire Windrush* was the first to pass through the Caribbean in 1948.¹⁰

Modern Black Britain is considered to have begun in 1948 after 800 West Indians, mostly men, arrived at Tilbury Docks in Essex as passengers on that ship. The majority were Jamaican, three hundred came from other Caribbean countries and Guyana, and two hundred were white.¹¹

⁹ PHILLIPS, Mike&Trevor, Windrush, *The irresistible rise of multi-racial Britain*, s. 26-29

¹⁰ PHILLIPS, Mike&Trevor, Windrush, *The irresistible rise of multi-racial Britain*, s. 45

¹¹ <https://www.bl.uk/windrush>



Figure 1: West Indians arrive in Britain on board the Empire Windrush – archive, 1948; source: <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/jun/23/immigration-windrush-west-indians-jamaica-britain>

There was a severe labour shortage in Britain as a result of the war. These people had come to England to help plug it. They were housed in buildings that were originally air-raid shelters under Clapham Common (a large triangular park in Clapham, south London). As soon as they found a job, they had to leave the shelter. The majority of them remained in London, whilst others moved to Manchester or the West Midlands.

In 1956, London Transport started to recruit people from Barbados to work on the buses and the underground. The organisation hired 3,787 Barbadian workers. The Barbadian government had published an *Information Booklet for Intending Emigrants to Britain*, with advice for emigrants about what to expect of life in Britain. Recruitment programmes elsewhere in the Caribbean and in Guyana recruited people to work for the National Health Service and British Rail. Black females mainly worked in hospitals, cafes and as bus conductors, while black males mainly worked in factories, on the buses, the railways, the underground and for the Post Office.

Black staff made a huge impact on British Rail and London Transport. The biggest impact was, however, made on the National Health Service (NHS). A 2016 BBC documentary called *Black Nurses: The Women Who Saved the NHS* tells the story of the thousands of African and Caribbean women who came to Britain 70 years ago to help the ailing NHS. It is a tale of

their fight for career progression and for national recognition. The black nurses faced racism from white patients and administrators. But an effective way to advance their careers that many of them found was to specialise as midwives.¹²

At the time, there were already substantial black populations in Liverpool, Bristol and Cardiff, as a result of earlier waves of immigration. Perhaps the best-known person from amongst those earlier populations is Shirley Bassey, a singer of Welsh and Nigerian descent who was born in Tiger Bay, a multicultural area near Cardiff docks, in 1937. A forerunner of the pop music divas who emerged in the final decades of the twentieth century, she was one of the first black British entertainers and gained both national and international fame. After leaving school at an early age she worked in a factory, sang in men's clubs and also performed in touring revues. She made her breakthrough at a Christmas show in London in 1955 and came up with her first British hit in 1957, with the *Banana Boat Song*. Among her successive chart hits were *As I love you* (1959), *Reach for the Stars* (1961) and *Climb Every Mountain* (1961). In 1977 she won the Britannia Award for the best female solo singer of the previous 50 years.¹³

The Windrush passengers saw England as 'the Mother Country.' They had arrived with great hopes of starting a new life in Britain. Although the *HMT Windrush* had left from Jamaica, many of the passengers were Trinidadians, who had a huge impact on British musical culture. Among them were popular calypsonians, such as Lord Kitchener, Lord Beginner and Lord Woodbine. On arrival at Tilbury Docks in Essex, Lord Kitchener (real name Aldwyn Roberts), who was later called the 'Grand Master of Calypso,' sang the first two stanzas of his calypso *London is The Place for Me* for the main news outlet Pathé News.¹⁴

¹² WALKER, Robin, *Black British History – Black Influences on British Culture (1948-2016)*, p. 16

¹³ <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Shirley-Bassey>

¹⁴ *Pathé Reporter Meets*, British Pathé news, June 1948



Figure 2: The young Lord Kitchener, King of Calypsonians, *source:* <https://i.guim.co.uk>

5. The Calypso years 1948–62

The Caribbean migrants not only brought help to Britain in the form of the physical work that was badly needed at the time, but also musical styles that transformed the British musical scene. In addition to calypso, these eventually included ska, blue-beat, reggae, rap, dance-hall, jungle, techno, house and afro-beat.

Calypso itself was created by West African slaves, who brought it to the Caribbean. Originally the lyrics mocked their slave masters and were recited at the harvest festival of Canboulay, a precursor to the Trinidad and Tobago carnival. Percussion instruments were banned by the British colonial authorities in 1881, which resulted in the innovation of steel-pan music, consisting of frying pans, dustbin lids and oil drums. Calypso music is regarded as light-hearted and carefree. It combines serious topics with joyful cadences.¹⁵ Kitchener and Woodbine introduced the style to Britain. Lord Kitchener, who was already a star in Trinidad and Tobago, performed for African and Caribbean audiences in London and also became popular with music hall and variety show audiences. Whereas his song *London is the Place for Me* speaks of hope, others – such as *White and Black* and *Africa My Home* – complain about the racism Afro-Caribbean migrants faced in Britain. Lord Kitchener also wrote a song dedicated to Ghana, the first African country to become independent of British rule in 1957.

¹⁵ <http://www.bbc.com/culture/story/20171010-the-surprising-politics-of-calypso>

In 1962 he returned to the newly independent Trinidad and Tobago.

Edric Connor was a Trinidadian singer and actor who starred in a West End musical called *Calypso*. The 1948 show was the first London play based on a Caribbean subject and with an Afro-Caribbean cast. In 1954, he recorded *Songs from Jamaica* and *Songs from Trinidad*, which were the first recordings of Caribbean Folk Music in Britain.¹⁶

While Britain was still recovering from the turmoil of the war years and their aftermath, a *Festival of Britain* was opened to the public in London on 4^h May 1951, celebrating British arts, science and industry. It was intended to inspire thoughts of a better Britain. And it also brought the *Trinidad All Steel Percussion Orchestra (TASPO)* to the attention of the public. TASPO was a government-supported ensemble, which brought together prominent players from different neighbourhood bands. Its performance at the festival received enthusiastic reviews from the British newspapers, and the band became particularly popular amongst stylish and wealthy English people in Oxford and Cambridge.

Winifred Atwell, a Trinidadian pianist, was an excellent music student, who studied at the Royal Academy of Music in London. She specialised in the Afro-American musical styles of ragtime and boogie-woogie, rather than Calypso, and became very popular in the 1950s. She starred in three TV series in 1954 and 1955, played at a private party for Queen Elisabeth II and was the first black person to have a number-one hit in the UK singles charts and is still the only female instrumentalist to do so'.¹⁷

5.1 Notting Hill Carnival

Claudia Jones, a Trinidadian human rights activist based in London, was instrumental in planting the seeds of carnival in Britain. Born in Trinidad in 1915, she moved to New York at the age of eight. By 1948 she was an editor of *Negro Affairs*, which came under the aegis of the American Communist Party, campaigning for social equality and offering a voice for those fighting for civil rights. She was eventually arrested for her political activities and served four prison terms. She was granted asylum in England in 1955.

In London she became a leader of the emerging Black equal rights movement and spent years working with the Afro-Caribbean community. In 1958, she founded The West

¹⁶ WALKER, Robin, *Black British History – Black Influences on British Culture (1948-2016)*, p. 12

¹⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Winifred_Atwell

Indian Gazette and Afro-Asian Caribbean News, which was back then the only newspaper printed in London for the Black community. It provided a forum to discuss civil rights and equal opportunities for Blacks in Britain. It campaigned against racism in employment, education and housing.

She helped to launch the first Caribbean carnival on 30 January 1959 in St Pancras Town Hall in London, with the intention of it becoming an annual showcase for Caribbean talent. The early celebrations were held indoors and were epitomised by the slogan: *A people's art is the genesis of their freedom.*



Figure 3: The first indoor Caribbean carnival held at St Pancras Town Hall, North London, 30 January 1959;
source:
<https://www.theguardian.com/culture/gallery/2014/aug/24/notting-hill-carnival-the-early-years>

The world's largest annual carnival is held in Trinidad and Tobago and is rooted in Calypso music. The Trinidadian format was copied in many cities around the world, as in the Notting Hill Carnival in London, which was the first outdoor carnival in England. It took place in the streets of Notting Hill in 1966.

Nowadays it is still a proud, community-led event and is thought to be the largest street event of its kind in Europe¹⁸.

6. The Rock-n-Roll years and the Teddy Boys, 1950-60

The arrival of the Black migrants was a cultural shock for many English. The Caribbean arrivals faced discrimination when they attempted to find work and homes. Another challenge came from Teddy Boys – a tough working class subculture, which gained a bad reputation for anti-Black violence, gang activity and flick knives. Teds were heavily influenced by Rock-n-Roll, which originally came from Black America and developed from styles such as Rhythm & Blues, Gospel and Boogie Woogie in the early 1950s. African-Americans, such as Ike Turner, Fats Domino, Little Richard and Chuck Berry, were among those who started this new music. White American singers such as Bill Haley and Elvis Presley imitated this style, and their music became very popular in Britain. It may be the case that the Teds believed Rock-n-Roll came primarily from White Americans and were largely unaware of its Black origins.

Rock-n-Roll influenced fashion and attitudes and was popular among both White and Black teenagers. Rock-n-Roll replaced an earlier form of Pop and Folk music in Britain called Skiffle. Tommy Steele was the first White British rock-n-roll star. His hit *Singing the Blues* (1957) enjoyed high popularity, and Steele became the equivalent of Elvis Presley and a teen idol in Britain.¹⁹ The first known appearance of Rock-n-Roll on BBC television was a performance by the Southlanders in 1955. They were a Jamaican vocal group based in South London.²⁰

As already mentioned, the Teds turned Rock-n-Roll into a subculture. Teddy Boys (or “Teds” as they preferred to be called) were mainly white working-class teens, whose culture was built around jazz and skiffle music. Nevertheless, they found their true sound when Rock-n-Roll entered the American scene. Teds glorified both Edwardian fashion style and the style found in early American gangster films; they wore dark-coloured drape jackets, narrow ties, velvet trims on high collars and pocket flaps, and high-waisted trousers that often exposed socks and polished Oxfords or 'creepers'. Their hair was typically brushed back, using copious amounts of hair cream. This subculture apparently inspired *The Beatles*. Stuart Sutcliffe, their

¹⁸ <https://nhcarnival.org/nhcs-story>

¹⁹ <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/entertainment/music/news/tommy-steele-youth-will-always-rebel-like-i-did-38671533.html>

²⁰ <https://www.allmusic.com/artist/the-caribbeans-mn0000901197>

original bassist, adopted the style and influenced the rest of the band as well.²¹



Figure 4: Teddy Boys, London, 1954;
source: <https://allthatsinteresting.com/teddy-boy#14>

Some Teds held racist views. Hostility towards Black people escalated in the hot summer of 1958 in Notting Hill, West London, and in Nottingham. Black British faced terror as gangs of White youths attacked them and even threw petrol bombs through their windows.

In May 1959, in Nottingham, some Teds stabbed to death Kelso Cochrane, an Antiguan carpenter. This racially motivated killing made headline news, and around 1,200 people – both Black and White – attended the funeral. However, no one was ever found guilty. In response to this violence,

Claudia Jones started the Carnival, to highlight Black culture and bring Black and White together.²²

²¹ <https://allthatsinteresting.com/teddy-boy#26>

²² WALKER, Robin, *Black British History – Black Influences on British Culture (1948-2016)*, p. 18



Figure 5: The Beatles displaying their early Teddy Boy style; *source:* <https://allthatsinteresting.com/teddy-boy#10>

7. Mersey Beat and British Rhythm & Blues 1958-65

Afro-American R&B and Soul records were brought from America to British port cities – particularly Liverpool, Belfast and Newcastle – by White merchant seamen. These Blues and Soul records brought a new vein of life to British music in the late 1950s and 60s. Many White people who listened to this music were inspired to copy it. Amongst other things, this led to the Merseybeat scene and the Beatles, in Liverpool. Other musicians – principally the Rolling Stones – created a British R&B scene across the UK. British R&B bands sold their music all over the world and topped the charts.

Merseybeat originated in Liverpool, with a small club called The Cavern at its hub. The Beatles, The Swinging Blue Jeans, The Undertakers, The Searchers, The Merseybeats and Cilla Black were amongst the performers. It is notable that Liverpool is the home of the oldest Black community in Britain, dating from the early 18th century.²³

²³ <https://www.udiscovermusic.com/stories/the-birth-of-mersey-beat/>

8. The Ska years 1959-65

The music style Ska, which originated in Jamaica in 1959, was a Jamaican variation of Afro-American R&B and soul. Jamaican musicians were influenced by Afro-American shuffle beat. Ska bands consisted of saxophonists, guitarists, bass players, drummers and trumpeters. Ska also gave rise to a type of dance, which was later called the *Skank* or *Skanking*.

Afro-American music was very popular in Jamaica in the 1950s. The dominance that Trinidadian music had was soon replaced by ska, which helped to build a sense of national pride in Jamaican cultural identity. Ska was brought to England by Jamaican migrants and was played alongside Trinidadian Calypso. Generally, Ska was preferred by young Black people in Britain, while Calypso was popular among older Blacks. A new youth subculture called Mods was created in Britain. The subculture was influenced by Ska and the Mods adopted it as their own.²⁴

Mods is short for the term *Modernist*, which derives from *Modern Jazz*. Unlike the Teds, a tough white working class subculture, the Mods were baby boomers, youngsters, who were born into wealthier British families. They wanted to distance themselves from the way their posh families lived; therefore, they created their own dress style. While the Teddy Boys sought inspiration in America, the Mods looked to Europe, in order to move away from the Teds' style. They met in night cafes and jazz clubs, wearing Italian and French-style clothes. The male dress code was sharp and slick. Men wore narrow ties, suits with narrow lapels and pork pie hats. The fashion was also influenced by Jamaican styles, which were brought to Britain by Caribbean arrivals. Although the Mods culture was male dominated, teenage girls later started joining it later on. A Welsh fashion designer, Mary Quant – the designer of the mini skirt –, had a massive influence on female Mod styles.²⁵

By the early 1960s, “Mods” was already a nationwide subculture, regardless of social class or race. Their style changed and a new casual look was created – the iconic Parka Jacket with long sleeved Polo shirt, tailored trousers or jeans. This style no longer required a tie. The early Mods did not like wearing ready-to-wear clothes or pieces with logos on, as they thought off-peg-clothes represented the lifestyle they were trying to distance themselves from. By 1965, one branch of Mod subculture evolved into *Northern Soul*, which became the first

²⁴ WALKER, Robin, *Black British History – Black Influences on British Culture (1948-2016)*, p. 14-24

²⁵ WALKER, Robin, *Black British History – Black Influences on British Culture (1948-2016)*, p. 28

all-night clubbing scene in working-class Northern British cities. Thousands of young White Mods came to dance at this underground scene, often fuelled by drugs.

The popularity of Mod culture decreased in the early 1970s due to the Hippie movement. Nevertheless, the singer-songwriter Paul Weller, from Woking, is credited with bringing about a “Mod Revival” in the late 1970s. He soon became a new Mod icon. Mods have influenced many other subsequent subcultures, such as Skinheads, Soulboys, (Football) Casuuls and Rave.²⁶



Figure 6: Young Mods with their scooters, *source:*
https://modernistphotography.tumblr.com/?amp_see_more=1

9. The Rocksteady years 1966-69

Rocksteady evolved from Ska around 1966 and was a style of Jamaican music. The music was slower and had a relaxed and calm mood with more romantic lyrics than Ska. Many artists sang about culture and love. Some lyrics were on political or social issues. Many believe that Rocksteady was the Golden Age of Jamaican music, and it was also the mother of Reggae.

After Jamaica became independent in 1962, Kingston, the island’s capital, started

²⁶ <https://www.johnsmedley.com/discover/community/mod-culture/>

attracting new people. Poverty and violence spread throughout the country due to social problems and unemployment. Rocksteady lyrics thus became less about romance and more about crime and social issues in Jamaica. This music had an equivalent in Black America – Afro-American Gangsta Rap. Many youngsters joined gangs and became *Rude Boys*.

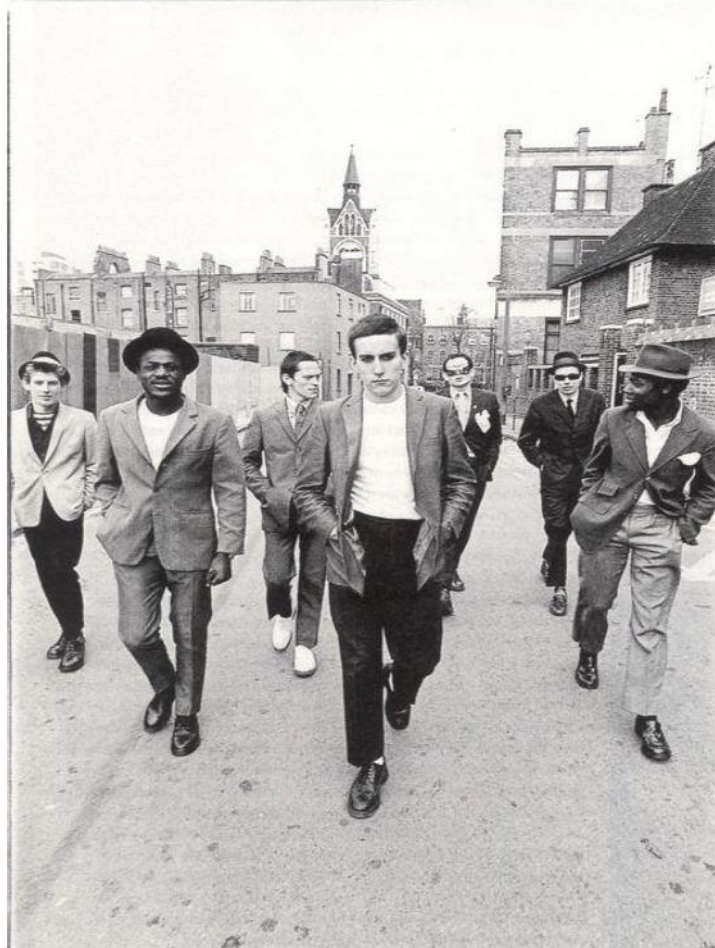


Figure 7: Rude Boys; source:
<https://shannonmossualfad.wordpress.com/2015/04/14/subculture-research-continued/>

Rude Boy was an early Jamaican subculture of young street gangsters and unemployed youths. The newly independent country was faced with many social problems, relating principally to housing, unemployment and over-population. As a response to these conditions, a new subculture emerged: Scufflers. Its members turned to unofficial economic activities such as stealing, begging, drug dealing, pimping and prostitution in the towns of West Kingston.

During this time, many Rocksteady artists left Jamaica to seek new opportunities overseas. Thus, the music style was brought to other countries, particularly Britain, Canada

and Belgium. The Rude Boys helped spread Jamaican music to another youth subculture – the skinheads – after they emigrated to Britain.²⁷

The skinheads were a tough, working-class White subculture, which came into existence in the late 1960s. Some people saw them as the younger brothers of the Teds. Their style was influenced by Mods (tight trousers) and Black youths (shaved heads, white ankle socks, trousers worn a few inches above their shoes, and mohair suits). The football “boot boys” also had an impact on the Skinheads’ style, especially through their threatening presence at football matches, which often erupted in violence. They created their own dress code. Men’s style included Levi jeans, American Dr Marten boots and shoes, Ben Sherman shirts with button-down collars, and Harrington jackets. Females wore two-toned skirts and black patent-leather shoes.

Their identity was based on appearance and music. They listened to the Jamaican Rocksteady – an early cultural icon for the Skinhead subculture being Desmond Dekker. Most of the early Skinheads in the late 1960s had no apparent prejudice against Black people. The skinhead culture became popular countrywide in 1969, and Slade, a rock band, adopted the look as a marketing strategy.

However, the situation changed when Asian immigrants from India and Pakistan, and people from African countries, such as Kenya and Uganda, started to come to Britain in large numbers in the 1970s.²⁸

The skinhead movement spread to other countries, such as Australia, USA and west European countries, especially Germany, during the 1970s and 80s. Many skinheads became extreme nationalists, and some became members of anti-immigrant groups. Moreover, many skinheads were persuaded to join the *National Front*, a racist, Nazi-inspired political movement. Gangs frequently attacked immigrants and minorities, such as Afro-Caribbeans, Indians and Pakistanis in Britain. Their racism was expressed in their music and their street violence.²⁹

²⁷ <http://www.rootsworld.com/rw/feature/rudeboy.html>

²⁸ WALKER, Robin, *Black British History – Black Influences on British Culture (1948-2016)*, p. 34

²⁹ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/skinhead>



Figure 8: The Skinhead subculture;
<https://shannonmossualfad.wordpress.com/2015/04/14/subculture-research-continued/>

From the late 1970s till now, the Skinhead movement has been divided into non-racist *Traditional Skinheads* and *Nazi Skinheads*.

10. The Reggae years 1968-78 and the Punk subculture

Haile Selassie I, the Emperor of Ethiopia, visited Jamaica in 1966, which was an important moment for Rastafari, a religious movement. They perceived him as the messiah. Reggae was a style that reflected the new Jamaica during the late 1960s – a country suffering from political unrest and poverty, and which was on the edge of civil war. Reggae music developed out of Rocksteady. Its sound was more electric, with a strong bass-and-drums sound. The whole vibe was more ‘rootsy,’ and lyrics contained words of protest. By the 1970s, Reggae

had become popular all over the world, particularly in the whole of the Caribbean, the United States, Britain and in African countries. Bob Marley, the leader of The Wailers, a Rocksteady group, became the global face of Reggae and Jamaican music. The Wailers eventually reinvented themselves as a Reggae band. Marley also made a huge effort to popularise Rastafari around the world. He sang of future hopes and unity and of the past oppressions of slavery.³⁰

Reggae influenced the Punk Rock subculture of the 1970s. Both American and British punks listened to reggae. The Roxy, a nightclub in Covent Garden in central London, held the first British punk nights in 1976, although, the DJ at the club was a Black Rastafarian called Don (Rebel Dread) Letts. Reggae music was identified as rebel music and consequently, very little of this kind of music was played on British radio back then. Furthermore, people who wore dreadlocks (as Rastafarians did) or spiked hair (as Punks did) would be identified as militants or outlaws by British society.

Punk Rock was a subculture that started in New York in the early 1970s and which came to Britain around 1975. The unemployment rate was very high at that time, and many White youths felt they had no future. Punk became a new outlet for the White working class, speaking to their isolation and anger.

The music was harsh and had a raw, heavy guitar sound. The songs were short and fast, with shouty lyrics. This sound was accompanied by an anarchic DIY look – spiky hair, safety pins and torn clothes.

The Reggae and Punk Rock styles came together in a British campaign called Rock Against Racism, which originated in 1976. Young Black and White musicians came together to object to racist statements made by Eric Clapton, an R&B and Blues musician. They also opposed the rise of the National Front. The campaign subsequently involved many Reggae, Punk, Pop and Rock bands, which performed together at concerts to reunite mixed crowds of Black and White British youth. The campaign exposed Black British youth to Punk and also exposed even more White youth to Reggae.³¹

³⁰ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/teach/bring-the-noise/the-rise-of-reggae/zdkxqp3>

³¹ WALKER, Robin, *Black British History – Black Influences on British Culture (1948-2016)*, s. 36

11. The 2 Tone Years 1978-83

The 1970s turned into the most depressed period in Britain since the Second World War, both economically and politically. The country was severely hit by the 1973 oil crisis, which led to steep rises in both unemployment and inflation. The social fabric became increasingly frayed, and racism became significantly more prevalent. At the same time, however, a remarkable cultural response emerged when a musical movement in the most affected areas encouraged many young people to take a stand not only against social conditions and the government, but also against racism.

The 2 Tone sound was started by White and Black young people from Coventry in the West Midlands, who grew up listening to 1960s Jamaican music.

Rock and roll expressed rebellion against parents, Punk represented anarchy, 2 Tone demonstrated solidarity and togetherness between Black and White people while the far right was active across the country. At the beginning of the 1980s, the 2 Tone movement became the most politicised musical/cultural phenomenon to pop up during the latter half of the 20th century. It inspired disaffected and disadvantaged young working-class people across the whole of Britain.³²

The 2 Tone sound was based on Ska mixed with Punk, and the name came from a record label founded by Jerry Dammers, a White musician from Coventry. He was a founder member of *The Specials* band in the late 1970s and a significant figure in the whole 2 Tone scene. Many original Jamaican Ska, Rocksteady and Reggae records from the 1960s were covered by several of the early 2 Tone hits in the late 1970s.

The Specials, The Beat, Body Snatchers, Madness and The Selector were bands associated with this genre, and they were all in the 2 Tone record label. The Specials came up with the first 2 Tone single, *Gangsters*, which hit the top of the charts. A “Rude Boy” was on the record label - a man dressed in black suit, narrow black tie and white shirt, black loafer shoes and a pork pie hat. A black&white checked pattern symbolising the 2 Tone genre was added to it. The logo was apparently slightly copied from an early Ska album cover photo, *The Toughest*, by Peter Tosh.

Hence 2 Tone fashion was influenced by Rude Boy, Skinhead and Mod dress codes. 2

³² <http://www.thepointhowever.org/index.php/culture/226-the-dawning-of-a-new-era-a-brief-history-of-2-tone-and-the-specials>

Tone bands were mostly mixed. *The Selector* was predominantly black, with a lead singer, Pauline Black, who was of Nigerian and Jewish heritage. *Madness* was, on the other hand, all White. *Body Snatchers* was all-female. 2 Tone was, in addition, the first youth subculture that became popular among the British Asian community.

Britain was still quite a racist country in the 2 Tone years.³³ Despite the fact that 2 Tone originated and was influenced by Black culture, the success of the 2 Tone bands was negatively affected by the group members' colour. *Madness* was an all-White Skinhead band and had the greatest success, followed by *Bad Manners*, nearly all members of which were White as well. On the other hand, the groups with more Black members were not as popular. Furthermore, the live concerts and performances of many groups were ruined by Sieg-heiling Skinheads.³⁴

12. The Lovers Rock Years 1975-83

Lovers Rock is a music genre which was created out of the sound systems in South London and came into existence and became popular, in the mid-1970s. The genre is a product of the British Reggae scene and was created by the second young Black British generation. Lovers Rock is a romantic, soul-influenced form of Reggae. The style recreated the vocal elegance of Rocksteady from nearly a decade earlier, and its artists presented a sleeker image, in contrast to the rootsy cultural look of hardcore Reggae.

The production of Lovers Rock records has, in fact, been dominated by women. A teenage vocalist, Louisa Marks, hit the charts with her song *Caught You in a Lie* in 1975, when she was only 14. She was followed by other successful performers, such as Carol Thompson, Jean Adebambo, Sandra Cross and Janet Kay. Kay's single *Silly Games* was released in 1979 and reached number 2 in the British Singles Chart. Lovers Rock was popular among Britons living in inner-cities as they looked for an alternative to political Reggae.

The authenticity of the style was originally questioned by Jamaican Artists. It was, however, adopted as an alternative style by several major, well-established, Roots-reggae artists. The most successful was Sugar Minott, a Dancehall vocalist, who relocated from Jamaica to Britain, with his hit *Good Thing Going*. The hit reached number 4 in the British Singles Chart in 1981. John Holt, Dennis Brown, Gregory Isaacs and later Freddie McGregor

³³ <http://www.specialkindamadness.com/index.php/2-tone-is-35-years-old/>

³⁴ WALKER, Robin, *Black British History – Black Influences on British Culture (1948-2016)*, s. 44

used the style to broaden their repertoires and appeal to wider audiences.³⁵

Apart from the Lovers Rock genre, the second Black British generation produced several high-quality Reggae bands, such as Steel Pulse and Aswald, during the late 1970s and early 80s. Both bands were producing politically-oriented music and performed in London and Birmingham, respectively. Lovers Rock kept its popularity with the urban audience into the 1990s.

13. African influence on British culture

Black culture was brought to Britain by migrants from the Caribbean and was initially Trinidadian, and subsequently Jamaican influenced. By the 1970s, a new culture had emerged amongst Black people born in Britain. In addition, new Black arrivals, particularly Nigerians, Ghanaians and Somalis, brought their cultures to the country. Africans had been coming to Britain during the Windrush period, but in lower numbers than Caribbeans. There was a major social-class difference between Caribbean and African migrants – Africans were coming to Britain from higher social-class backgrounds, while the Caribbeans came from lower social classes.³⁶

Patti Boulaye became a significant and inspiring figure of the African diaspora. She left Nigeria for London at the age of 16 in 1970 and began her career as a West End stage actress, starring in the musical *Hair* and *Two Gentlemen of Verona*. She was also a dancer and a singer, and recorded several singles as a member of a female group, *The Flirtations*. Boulaye performed in *Jesus Christ Superstar* and then got a starring role in *The Black Mikado*.³⁷

With her style, she made a massive impact on Black women. Colourful make-up, braids and hair extensions and outfits made her a fashion icon. As a result, many Black women abandoned their *roots and culture* look and started copying her. This was the start of a huge wave of African influence.

In the early 1980s, there were 700,000 Black people living in Britain, of which 550,000 were Caribbean. Around 123,000 were Africans. A decade later there were around 872,000 Black people, of whom under 500,000 were Caribbeans. The African community

³⁵ <https://www.allmusic.com/style/lovers-rock-ma0000004430>

³⁶ WALKER, Robin, *Black British History – Black Influences on British Culture (1948-2016)*, s. 42, 46

³⁷ <https://www.allmusic.com/artist/patti-boulaye-mn0001421621/biography>

increased to 203,200 and the growth has been continuing since.

There was a boom of African music scene in the 1980s. A massively commercial jazz, funk and soul trend was introduced by Sade, a Nigerian British-born singer. Her debut album *Diamond Life* (1984) earned her and her bandmates a Grammy Award for best new artist. *Promise*, her second album, which was released in 1985, enjoyed much popularity as well.

Seal, an artist of Nigerian and Brazilian heritage, appeared in the British house-music scene in 1990 and became the most popular British soul vocalist of the decade. He created a highly distinctive fusion of pop, soul, folk and rock that brought him much success, both in Britain and abroad.³⁸ MCs³⁹, such as Skepta, his brother JME, and Tinie Tempah became popular on the Grime scene.

Skepta, born Joseph Junior Adenuga to Nigerian parents, is an MC and a veteran of the British grime scene. He started his career performing at MC slams and on the pirate-radio circuit, and his production is inspired by both British and American hip-hop. Skepta formed the grime label *Boy Better Know* with his brother JME, a DJ and Grime MC.⁴⁰

Tinie Tempah, born Patrick Chukwuem Okogwu, Jr., is a well-known British rapper, songwriter and singer of Nigerian heritage. He grew up in South East London, started recording at an early age and soon appeared on various TV channels. His single *Pass Out* topped the British charts. Tinie Tempah has won a number of awards, and apart from being a popular artist he is also committed to many charities for young people and supports UNICEF UK. He became an inspiration for many young people in Britain and abroad.⁴¹

Fela Kuti is particularly significant. A Nigerian musician and activist – full name Olufela Olusegun Oludotun Ransome-Kuti – was an artist who launched the modern Afrobeat style. It is a music that fused jazz, American blues and funk with traditional Yoruba music.

During his studies at Trinity College London, he played piano in several jazz and rock bands. He returned to Nigeria in the mid-1960s and reconstituted the band, Koola Lobitos, he had played with in London. The Afrobeat sound accrued from the experiments of the music group. He and his band soon became well-known in Nigeria and other African countries.

³⁸ <https://www.allmusic.com/artist/seal-mn0000576718/biography>

³⁹ MC is short for “Master of Ceremonies,” a word for “rapper,” but it is not limited to hip hop style only. It also embraces Drum and Bass, Grime, Garage etc.

⁴⁰ <https://www.allmusic.com/artist/skepta-mn0000558243/biography>

⁴¹ <https://www.thefamouspeople.com/profiles/tinie-tempah-34361.php>

Kuti's politically charged lyrics, together with the controversy caused by his promotion of polygamy and drugs, provoked the Nigerian authorities. His political activities resulted in exile to Ghana in the late 1970s. Once back in Nigeria, he was twice arrested. After being released, he distanced himself from active political protest. His son, Femi, followed his footsteps in Afrobeat music.⁴²

Ghanian artists, too, have had a massive influence on the Black British music scene. They brought in many new styles, from traditional African music to Afrobeat, Grime and Garage. Musicians such as Lethal Bizzle, Sway, Dizzee Rascal and Tinchy Stryder, became very popular in the Grime scene. Stormzy, a young British rapper of Ghanian heritage, has been making a significant impact on the British Grime scene in recent years.

A huge impact on the Black British scene was also made by Somalis, many of whom entered Britain in the 1990s. They were the first group of Black migrants to Britain from an Islamic, rather than a Christian, culture.

14. 1980s – The Black British Soul Years

In the 1980s a British soul scene was created in Black Britain. Americans called it “the British soul invasion” due to the success of British artists in the USA. Black British soul was heavily influenced by Afro-American soul. However, the style had a slightly different flavour and was less Gospel influenced. In the main, British soul, like Lovers Rock, was created by the second generation of Windrush-Era Blacks. Thus, while American soul was directly linked to its African roots, British soul was heavily Caribbean influenced.

The music was more aspirational than the Reggae of the same period. Black British soul artists adopted a polished, classy look, which their fans readily copied.

Junior Murvin became the first Black British singer to appear on America's legendary *Soul Train* TV programme, and his soul anthem *Mama Used To Say* became a transatlantic hit. Furthermore, his song brought him a *Best Newcomer Award*, presented by James Brown, a famous American singer, bandleader, record producer and the “Godfather of Soul.” Junior Murvin's song *Do You Really Want My Love*, which featured on *The Beverley Hills Cop* film soundtrack in 1984, earned him a Grammy. A pioneer in soul music, he was one of the first artists to bring British-based Black music to the attention of audiences abroad.

⁴² <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Fela-Kuti>

The previously mentioned soul artist of English and Nigerian heritage, Sade, became highly popular in the USA as well. She came up with her song *Smooth Operator* in 1984 and appeared in the film *Absolute Beginners*, combining jazz with soul, in 1986. All her albums went Platinum in the USA, and she became one of the most successful British artists at all time.

Loose Ends was a successful band that formed in the early 80s in London. Their single *Hangin' on a String* (1985) reached number 13 in the British chart and number 1 in the US Billboard R&B chart.⁴³ Artists, such as Lynden David Hall, Beverley Knight, Rick Clarke, Don-E, Omar, Jaki Graham, Mica Paris, Mark Morrison and Andrew Roachford were also significant figures in the Black British soul scene.

Soul II Soul was a highly popular and successful British rap, soul and R&B band that flourished in London between 1987 and 1997. Their single *Back To Life* became a UK No. 1 hit and reached No. 10 in the US. The band was founded by Jazzie B and initially attracted attention as a sound system, playing records at house parties.⁴⁴ In addition to their musical success, they came up with a new hair style called Funki Dred (Funky Dreads) and also created a line of clothing that went by the same name. The style immediately became popular among many young people. Those who imitated the style often wore their hair in locks (a type of dreads) at the top of the head, whilst shaving around the sides. This fashion phenomenon also quickly reached the USA and influenced youth culture there.⁴⁵

15.1981 – Year of confrontation

The 80s in Britain were a time of rising prosperity for a minority, but not for the majority of the population. The election of Margaret Thatcher – the first female PM – in 1979 had ushered in a long period of Conservative Party dominance. The country suffered a recession in the 80s, with unemployment reaching record levels, resulting in a decade of deep social disunion. As well as White British working-class people, the Black British community was severely affected, having to face profound socio-economic issues and racial tensions.

⁴³ <https://www.allmusic.com/artist/loose-ends-mn0000827760/biography>

⁴⁴ <https://soul2soul.co.uk/>

⁴⁵ WALKER, Robin, *Black British History – Black Influences on British Culture (1948-2016)*, s. 60

Nineteen eighty-one, in particular, was a confrontational and even traumatic year in Black British history. It was defined by two main events – the Brixton Riots and The New Cross Massacre.⁴⁶

With Thatcher's strict policies worsening current problems, riots broke out in several neighbourhoods in British cities. The Specials reacted to the situation by recording and releasing a new song, *Ghost Town*, to call attention to the political and socio-economic situation. The riots first started in Brixton in April 1981, as a reaction by some of the Black community against what they perceived as heavy-handed policing. The relationship between the Black community and the authorities was generally poor, in a context of high unemployment, racial tension and isolation. The Brixton riots lasted three days and subsequently spread to other cities. Many young Black people felt they were treated unfairly by police officers. Under the *Stop and Search Law*, police were allowed to stop people at random and search them in case they thought they were about to commit a crime. Many young Blacks, in particular, felt they were targeted for these searches purely on the basis of their skin colour.

Overall, 282 people, most of whom were black, were arrested, and 125 were reportedly injured; many vehicles were damaged or destroyed, and the total damage was estimated to amount to £7.5 million. Afterwards, a public investigation took place. It was led by Lord Scarman, who said in his report in November 1981: "No doubt racial disadvantage was a fact of current British life".⁴⁷

⁴⁶ <https://www.retrowow.co.uk/80s.html>

⁴⁷ <https://www.blackpast.org/global-african-history/brixton-riots-april-10-12-1981/>



Figure 9: Brixton Riots, 1981; source: *Morning Star Photographic Archive, Bishopsgate Institute* (<https://www.timeout.com/london/blog/on-this-day-in-1981-the-brixton-riots-reached-their-peak-041117>)

Alex Wheatle, a teenager of Jamaican descent, was involved in the Brixton riots. He was arrested and spent six months in prison, where he managed to educate himself through reading. He later became an author and has written many outstanding books. He currently teaches creative writing, encouraging children to read, and has become an inspiration for many disadvantaged young people.⁴⁸

On 18 January 1981, few months before the Brixton Riots, thirteen young Black people were burnt to death during a party in New Cross. The authorities stated that the fire was an accident, but the Black community thought the fire was a racially motivated arson attack, in which the National front was involved. Darcus Howe, a Black activist, criticised the police investigation and organised a *Black Peoples Day of Action* as a protest. Later that year, Swamp 81, a mass stop and search campaign against the Black youth was launched by the police, which resulted in 943 people being searched and 75 people being charged with robbery. The situation escalated four days after Swamp 81, and several major riots between Black youth and the Metropolitan Police took place. Other violence emerged in other British Black areas, in particular Moss Side (Manchester), Handsworth (Birmingham), Chapel Town

⁴⁸ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/50035769>

(Leeds) and Toxteth (Liverpool). The media began to demonize Black youth in around 1976 and carried on doing so after the 1981 events. Margaret Thatcher's Conservative Party was generally unsympathetic to the Black community.

After the conflicts, Black and Asian activists started entering local politics, winning control of many local councils in Britain and encouraging minorities to vote. These activists helped Black and Asian people find work, and encouraged them to work in jobs connected to the local councils. Black and Asian people worked mostly for services such as the NHS, London Transport, the Post Office, British Rail and in factories before they started to work in middle-class council jobs. The activists also financially supported various community civil rights groups and organisations and sponsored cultural festivals. A leading Labour activist of Nigerian and Jewish heritage, Linda Bellos, became the Vice Chair of the Black Sections campaign, to select Caribbean, African and Asian candidates for the Labour Party. She became a leader of the Lambeth local authority in South London, and her team sponsored the first *Black History Month* in Britain in 1987. The concept actually started as *Negro History Week* in the USA in 1926, and the US government officially recognised Black History Month in 1976. The British concept was started by Akyaaba Addai Sebbo, a Ghanaian activist, who wanted to celebrate the African contribution to world civilisation. The idea was supported by another activist, Ansel Wong, and Linda Bellos implemented it.⁴⁹

16. The Jungle Years, 1989–95

Jungle is another genre that influenced young British society. It is a musical style that originated in Hackney, East London, around 1989. This genre of electronic music developed in the Black British communities, out of a fusion of Reggae, Soul and Techno, with break beats. Its techniques were similar to those used by Hip Hop DJs. Old records were mixed into fast dance beats and had heavy Ragga (a Jamaican style of dance music) baselines. Most of the early Jungle music was produced by young people on their own computer systems. The years 1994 and 1995 became Jungle golden years when some tracks became top 40 hits in Britain. Jungle was influenced by Jamaican vocals and Ragga baselines. DJs and MCs used a turntable and drew heavily on the Jamaican sound system⁵⁰.

⁴⁹ WALKER, Robin, *Black British History – Black Influences on British Culture (1948-2016)*, s. 48, 50

⁵⁰ <https://www.globaldarkness.com/articles/history%20of%20jungle%20drum%20and%20bass.htm>

Jungle remained an underground music and was mainly played in night clubs. The tough, ghetto, Jamaican Dancehall Reggae look was adopted by Jungle clubbers. Jungle music acquired a bad reputation, and by 1994 it had become associated with Black youth crime and gangster activities. In consequence, a new name was sought for it, and eventually top producers, such as Goldie, settled on “Drum & Bass” (D&B). Jungle continued, however, differentiating itself from D&B in its greater use of vocals, whereas D&B became more instrumental and had simpler production. Young people enjoyed listening to records such as *Incredible*, *The Burial*, *Lighter*, *Helicopter*, *Sweet Love* and *Super Sharp Shooter*.⁵¹ There is a parallel between Jungle and 2 Tone music – both styles particularly appealed to Asian youngsters. Indeed, Jungle music has maintained its popularity among people of various origins, all over the world, right up to the present day.

17. The Garage and Grime Years, 2000-20

Black British musicians pioneered Garage, which emerging from Jungle and was influenced by American Hip Hop and American Garage music. The Garage genre eventually evolved into Grime. UK Garage beat was created by Jason Chue (aka DJ Wookie), and the group So Solid Crew achieved mainstream success in the early 2000s. Grime became popular within the underground music scene through pirate radio stations, independent records, clubs and sound clashes (MC battles). Crews, such as The Roll Deep, started forming themselves to provide the training ground for many artists.

Roll Deep is a crew of DJs and MCs from East London. Wiley, “the Godfather of Grime,” gathered the Crew together and was also a pioneering Grime MC. He created a new sound in the context of the East London housing estates and released a series of influential eskibeat instrumentals in the early 2000s. (“Eskibeat” was a raw, bleak sound that was a sub-genre of Grime.) Musicians such as Skepta, Dizzie Rascal and Tinchy Stryder were also members of the crew and achieved commercial success. Tinchy Stryder has topped the British pop charts on two occasions so far. The work of Kano and Wretch 32 also achieved considerable success.

So Solid Crew released their debut single *Oh No* in 2001 – the first British Garage recording of consequence. The Crew performed in various combinations of DJs and Mcs,

⁵¹ WALKER, Robin, *Black British History – Black Influences on British Culture (1948-2016)*, s. 62

including: Swiss, Romeo, Asher D, Megaman, MC Harvey, Oxide & Neutrino, Lisa Maffia and even Mystique, a more commercial group. Ms Dynamite, an artist of Scottish and Jamaican heritage, was one of the finest MCs. She occasionally performed with the So Solid Crew and was known for her great ability to rhyme in a Jamaican style with complex rhythmic and lyrical patterns⁵².

The UK Garage and Grime styles were eventually adopted by White fans. This was the sixth time White youths had borrowed a style from the Black community. White youngsters who listened to Garage and Grime music also copied the dress code: designer sportswear, hoop earrings and a bling look. They became known as “Chavs.” Chavs are White youngsters living in urban areas who originally adopted the Garage and Grime style from Black British youths. The term chav (probably from the Romany word for “boy” – *chavo*) is associated with less-educated working-class people who are often long-term unemployed. They hang out in groups in public areas, often abuse alcohol and drugs, vandalise, mess around, attack people verbally, litter and generally lead a bleak life. They have their own language based on poor grammar and lexis, using short sentences and a specific slang that includes lots of swearing and rude words.⁵³

18. Entering the mainstream

The Afro-Caribbean community has influenced not only the British musical scene but also other cultural fields, such as fashion and clothing, literature and fine arts. Over the past century, many significant Black artists and intellectuals have emerged and their work has been crucial to both the Black community and White British society. The following chapters will be devoted to literature, arts and fashion, and to the key people in those fields who have made a huge contribution to building contemporary Black British culture.

18.1 Intellectuals and authors

Cyril Lionel Robert James (1901–89) was an outstanding writer and thinker of Trinidadian heritage. He believed that young people should understand the importance of culture, race and social class and thus be able to interpret their history. James became the first Black British intellectual of the twentieth century and one of the most important political theorists. He was

⁵² WALKER, Robin, *Black British History – Black Influences on British Culture (1948-2016)*, s. 72

⁵³ <https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-13626046>

a political activist, historian, literary critic, novelist and journalist, much influenced by Karl Marx. James also studied the theories of Engels, Lenin and Trotsky and fused them with his own interest in Black politics. He wrote *A History of Negro Revolt*, originally published in 1938, in which he told the history of problems Black people, with particular focus on the successful Haitian anti-slavery revolution in the 18th century and the revolts in apartheid South Africa in 1980s. According to him, the revolts by enslaved and colonised Black people were the main force that shaped Caribbean, African and American societies. In *Haitian Revolution* he detailed how enslaved Africans defeated their French masters and freed themselves. James spent his life moving between Trinidad, the USA and Britain, where he spent most of his last years.⁵⁴

Prof. Stuart Hall (1932–2014) was another distinguished Black British intellectual. Of Jamaican origin, he is considered one of the founding fathers of Cultural Studies and has been called “The Godfather of Cultural Studies.” Cultural Studies expanded the social and cultural ideas of Marx to study culture in its wider sense. Hall co-wrote *The Popular Arts* (1964), which applied sociology to Jazz, Westerns, advertising, television and popular novels. He also co-edited *Resistance Through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-War Britain* (1975). The book deals with Teddy Boys, Mods, Skinheads and Rastas.

Hall became the director of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in Birmingham and a professor of sociology at the Open University.⁵⁵

There have been many excellent writers of Caribbean or African origin whose work has made a huge contribution to contemporary British society. The poet, novelist and playwright Benjamin Zephaniah (1958–) is one of the best known. Of Jamaican descent, he grew up in Birmingham before heading to London. He was included in The Times 2008 list of Britain’s top 50 post-war writers. His first book of poetry, *Pen Rhythm* (1980), was written with the intention of fighting “the dead of poetry in academia.”⁵⁶ In *The Dread Affair: Collected Poems* (1985) he attacked the British legal system. In addition to his literary publications, he has also produced numerous music recordings.⁵⁷

Malorie Blackman (1962–) is a popular author of both adult and children’s novels. Her

⁵⁴ <http://www.open.ac.uk/researchprojects/makingbritain/content/c-l-r-james>

⁵⁵ WALKER, Robin, *Black British History – Black Influences on British Culture (1948-2016)*, s. 52

⁵⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benjamin_Zephaniah#Life_and_work

⁵⁷ <https://literature.britishcouncil.org/writer/benjamin-zephaniah>

best-known books include: *Not So Stupid!*, *Knife Edge*, *Checkmate* and *Naughts & Crosses*. She also writes television scripts. From 2013–2015 she was a Waterstone's⁵⁸ Children's Laureate. She has won many book awards.⁵⁹

Andrew Salkey (1928–95), a Panamanian author, came to Britain to study in the 1950s. More than 30 of his books were published. He was a prolific writer and editor and wrote novels (for both adults and children), poetry collections, travelogues and anthologies.⁶⁰

E.R. Braithwaite (1912–2016), of Guyanese heritage, was unable to find work in Britain as an engineer because of racism and reluctantly became a school teacher instead.⁶¹ He wrote the Anisfield-Wolf Book Award-winning *To Sir, With Love* (1959), which was later adapted into a film.

Another Guyanese writer who established himself in Britain is the author, poet and playwright John Agard (1949–). He writes in Guyanese Creole and uses a Caribbean style of speaking when performing his poems. He and his wife, Grace Nichols (1950–), have won many awards for their contribution to poetry.

Me not no Oxford don
me a simple immigrant
from Clapham Common
I didn't graduate
I immigrate

But listen Mr Oxford don
I'm a man on de run
and a man on de run
is a dangerous one

I ent have no gun
I ent have no knife
but mugging de Queen's English
is de story of my life

I dont need no axe
to split up yu syntax
I dont need no hammer
to mash up yu grammar

⁵⁸ Waterstone's is a UK's leading specialist book retailer

⁵⁹ <https://www.malorieblackman.co.uk/category/books/>

⁶⁰ <https://www.peepaltreepress.com/authors/andrew-salkey>

⁶¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/dec/14/to-sir-with-love-author-er-braithwaite-dies-aged-104>

I warning you Mr Oxford don
I'm a wanted man
and a wanted man
is a dangerous one

Dem accuse me of assault
on de Oxford dictionary
imagine a concise peaceful man like me
dem want me serve time
for inciting rhyme to riot
but I rekking it quiet
down here in Clapham Common

I'm not a violent man Mr Oxford don
I only armed wit mih human breath
but human breath
is a dangerous weapon

So mek dem send one big word after me
I ent serving no jail sentence
I slashing suffix in self defence
I bashing future wit present tense
and if necessary

I making de Queen's English accessory to my offence⁶²

Andrea Levy (1956–2019) was a British-born Jamaican award-winning author of five novels. *Small Island* won the 2004 Orange Prize for fiction, the 2004 Whitbread Book of the Year and the 2005 Commonwealth Writers Prize.

Linton Kwesi Johnson (1952–), who was born in Jamaica and came to Britain in 1963, is a poet, journalist and author, whose poems were influenced by the racial disturbances of the 1960s and 70s. He is a leading figure of Dub Poetry – a type of performance poetry that evolved out of Jamaican dub music. Its lyrics often included protests against racism and police brutality, as well as celebrating marijuana and sex. Dub poetry originated in Kingston, the capital of Jamaica, and was brought to London by Jamaican migrants in the 1970s.⁶³

Zadie Smith (1975–), a multi-award-winning writer of Jamaican heritage, is the author of the novels *White Teeth* (2000), *The Autograph Man* (2002), *On Beauty* (2005), *NW* (2012)

⁶² Listen Mr. Oxford don, a poem by John Agard released on the 1 January 1967, available online:
<https://genius.com/John-agard-listen-mr-oxford-don-annotated>

⁶³ <https://poetryarchive.org/poet/linton-kwesi-johnson/>

and *Swing Time* (2016), as well as of short stories and the forthcoming play *The Wife of Willesden*.⁶⁴

David Olusoga (1970–), a British historian of Nigerian heritage, is also an author of many award-winning books, as well as being a broadcaster and film-maker. His books include: *The Kaiser's Holocaust* (2011) and *The World's War* (2015). He has contributed to *The Oxford Companion to Black British History*. His books explore topics such as race, slavery and contemporary British and US culture.⁶⁵ His book *Black and British: A Forgotten History* (2016) deals with relationships between the British Isles and the peoples of Africa and the Caribbean.

Jackie Kay (1961–) is a Black British author and poet born to a Scottish mother and Nigerian father. She was adopted and brought up by White British family, which inspired her first collection of poetry, *The Adoption Papers* (1991). The poems deal with the search for cultural identity from the adopted child's perspective. The poems in her collection *Other Lovers* (1993) were inspired by Afro-Caribbean people and deal with the experience of slavery as well as the search for identity.⁶⁶

18.2 Fine Art

Black fine artists were largely overlooked in Britain until the 1970s. Nowadays they are finally getting wider attention⁶⁷, although they can still be subject to a sort of cultural ghettoisation.⁶⁸

The pioneering artist Ronald Moody (1900–84), who was born in Jamaica, came to Britain in 1923 to study dentistry. But he gave up his dental practice to become a sculptor, working mainly with wood. His work was inspired by Ancient Egyptian art. He is best known for the female head, *Midonz* and his exhibitions were held in Amsterdam and Paris. Some of his sculptures were included in the legendary exhibition *The Other Story: Afro-Asian Artists in Post-War Britain* (1989) and also in the *No Colour Bar: Black British Art in Action 1960-1990* (2015) exhibition.

⁶⁴ WALKER, Robin, *Black British History – Black Influences on British Culture (1948-2016)*, s. 64

⁶⁵ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/profiles/2pT94YQjVvGILJpdYDrMn6t/david-olusoga>

⁶⁶ <https://literature.britishcouncil.org/writer/jackie-kay>

⁶⁷ <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2019/jun/02/get-up-stand-up-now-zak-ove-black-british-art>

⁶⁸ <http://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/17065/3/PHD-THESIS-CAROL-ANN-DIXON-GEOGRAPHY-AUGUST-2016.pdf>

Christopher Ofili (1968–) is a Turner Prize winning painter of Nigerian heritage. He studied cave paintings in Zimbabwe and his work reflects the influence of the Afro-American artist Jean-Michel Basquiat amongst others.

18.3 Fashion and Textiles

Black Britain has produced some leading tailors and textile designers.

Althea McNish (1924–2020) was a pioneering textile designer of Trinidadian origin, who came to Britain in the 1950s. She studied at the London School of Printing and Graphic Arts, and the Royal College of Art. The head of the Liberty department store recruited and commissioned her to design their fabrics for them. She also designed a collection for Dior, the French luxury brand and for textile and furnishing companies in Britain, Germany, France, Italy and Slovenia. She was Vice President of the Society of Industrial Arts and Designers and also received many medals and awards from her native Trinidad for her contribution to the fashion industry. Her brightly coloured designs were often inspired by tropical plants.⁶⁹

Andrew Ramroop (1952–) came to Britain from Trinidad in 1970 and started to work as a tailor in Savile Row in Central London – the centre of high-quality gentlemen’s clothing since the eighteenth century. Despite encountering many instances of racism, he eventually became the owner of the famous Maurice Sedwell firm and President of the Master Tailors Association. In addition, he started The Savile Row Academy, which trains new generations of tailors to maintain classic standards. He has dressed many celebrities from Lady Diana to Samuel L. Jackson.⁷⁰

Ozwald Boateng (1967–), of Ghanaian descent, currently has the highest public profile of all the Savile Row tailors. He has dressed Hollywood stars and has made Savile Row clothing popular with younger people.

⁶⁹ <https://www.theguardian.com/fashion/2020/may/04/althea-mcnish-obituary>

⁷⁰ <https://newsday.co.tt/2019/03/28/the-tailor-of-savile-row/>



Figure 10: *Gay Victorians*, an instalation by Yinka Shonibare, 1999; available on Shonibare's official website (<http://yinkashonibare.com/>)

Yinka Shonibare (1962–) is a British-Nigerian artist and an important Black fashion icon. He produces figures decorated with bright Dutch (Vlisco) wax cotton textiles that are commonly worn in many African countries.⁷¹ He uses them to create Victorian-style gowns and waistcoats and applies them to his headless human figurines and installations. He also famously installed a ship – with Vlisco sails – in a huge bottle on the fourth plinth in Trafalgar Square.⁷² His work has acted as a symbol of African culture.

Mention should also be made of Naomi Campbell (1970–), who has been dubbed “Queen of the Catwalk.” Of Jamaican heritage, she established herself as one of the three

⁷¹ WALKER, Robin, *Black British History – Black Influences on British Culture (1948-2016)*, s. 68

⁷² <http://yinkashonibare.com/press/past/hms-victory-returns-to-trafalgar/>

most recognisable and popular models in the world in the late 1980s and the 1990s. At the age of 15, she was one of six models of her generation to be declared ‘supermodels’ by the fashion industry.⁷³

19. Conclusion

Modern black Britain can be said to have begun in 1948, when HMT Windrush brought around 800 West Indians to Tilbury Docks in Essex. Even before their arrival, there already were black communities in Liverpool, Bristol and Cardiff as the result of previous waves of migration. The best-known person from the previous waves was Shirley Bassey, a singer of Nigerian origin. She became the first black British pop singer and entertainer. A vast majority of the Windrush passengers were of Jamaican descent, others came from Trinidad and other Caribbean states. They were housed in air-raid shelters under Clapham Common in south London, hoping to start a new life in Britain. Most found jobs in London, while others moved to other big cities. They moved to the areas where work was needed - London, Manchester, West Midlands. In 1956, London Transport began recruiting people from Barbados. Other places also faced a lack of staff. Therefore, Caribbeans started working for the NHS, British Rail, in factories, underground, hospitals, the post office, cafes and on buses to fill this gap. The black staff had a great influence on the development of British Rail and London Transport, the institutions that were established in Britain after the war. However, the biggest contribution was made on the NHS. Many Afro-Caribbean nurses have supported the institution and many of them have specialized as midwives.

Among the passengers of HMT Windrush there were many Trinidians, such as Lord Kitchener, who is considered the Grand Master of Calypso. Calypso is a musical style that originated in West Africa and was consequently brought to the Caribbean along with slaves. It was subsequently brought to Britain by Windrush passengers. Many other musical styles subsequently developed from this style.

Migrants faced discrimination upon their arrival, and their presence caused a culture shock to many Britons. Throughout the past century, society has responded to their presence by creating various subcultures. The Teddy Boys were the first one to be formed in 1950s. It was a tough White working-class subculture that was known for gang activity and gained a

⁷³ <https://hyperallergic.com/335472/how-dutch-wax-fabrics-became-a-mainstay-of-african-fashion/>

bad reputation for anti-Black violence. This subculture was influenced by Rock-n-Roll. However, this style comes from Black America. Many Britons, like the Teddy Boys, associated this style with figures such as Elvis Presley or Bill Haley. However, Rock-n-Roll evolved in the USA from Gospel, Boogie Woogie and Rhythm & Blues and these originated in Black culture. Teds weren't apparently aware of its origin and supposed Rock-n-Roll originated in White American culture. Teds' hostility towards Black people resulted in violence and many riots. In one of them, a man of Antiguan origin was stabbed to death in Notting Hill. No one was ever found guilty. Claudia Jones, a black activist started Notting Hill Carnival in response to this violence and helped to bring Black and White together.

Styles brought to Britain from Black America included R & B and Soul. Their records were brought to British port cities such as Liverpool, Belfast and Newcastle by White merchant seamen. These styles revived existing British music scene. White British enjoyed these styles and started copying them. This led to the creation of the Merseybeat scene in Liverpool. That is how The Beatles consequently formed. Other musicians, especially the Rolling Stones, subsequently began to create the British R & B scene respectively.

During the 1960s, Ska was brought to Britain by Jamaicans. Their arrival contributed to popularity loss of Trinidadian music. Ska was a style praising Jamaican cultural identity. This style inspired the Mods, a subculture that originated in Britain. Unlike the Teddy Boys, the Mods were White upper-class youngsters. They adopted Ska as their own style. The Mods were also, unlike the Teds, a subculture that accepted everyone - regardless of social class or race. This subculture lost its popularity with the Hippie movement in the 1970s. Mods inspired subsequent subcultures, such as Skinheads, Soulboys and Rave.

Reggae, which was considered rebel music, influenced the Punk subculture. Punk Rock was a subculture that originated in New York in the early 1970s and came to Britain in the mid-70s. Punk has become a new lifestyle for many White working-class young British.

During the 1970s, racism increased in Britain, which accompanied the dark period of the 1970s. The reaction was the arrival of the 2 Tone musical movement, which appealed to both Black and White people and helped bring both races back together.

British soul scene was created in Black Britain and was also heavily Caribbean influenced. Not only the Caribbeans but also the Africans influenced the formation of modern Black British culture. Africans began to enter Britain in larger numbers in the 1970s, 1980s

and 1990s. Commercial jazz, Funk and Soul were styles introduced by Sade, a Nigerian British-born singer. Skepta, JME and Tinie Tempah became popular on the Grime scene. Afrobeat was launched by Fela Kuti, a Nigerian musician and activist. Apart from Nigerians, Ghanaians and Somalis also significantly influenced the Black music scene.

In the early 1980s, several riots between the police and Black citizens took place across Britain. Racial unrest and conflicts between the police and Black youth escalated due to the situation at the time, which was very hostile to minorities. An important milestone in Black British history was when minority citizens began entering politics in the 1980s and started occupying non-manual jobs. The Black middle class finally began to form, and Black people started entering the British mainstream. Until then, they stood out of the mainstream.

White British have adopted many styles from the Afro-Caribbean community. Based on the Grime style that developed in early 2000s, another subculture emerged, the Chavs.

In considering how Afro-Caribbean immigration has affected cultural life in Britain, this thesis first related the history behind that immigration (Section 3; 4) In particular, reference has been made to the rise and fall of the British Empire, to slavery and to how Britain, in its debilitated state after the Second World War, badly needed immigrants from Commonwealth countries to keep its public services running. Consequently, large numbers of Afro-Caribbeans came to work, especially, for the newly created National Health Service, for the Royal Mail and as bus drivers and conductors.

The Afro-Caribbean community faced racism in Britain. Immigrants had to deal with many struggles, such as discrimination created by employers, politicians and the media. Another challenge came from some subcultures, such as the *Teddy Boys* and later on the *Skinheads*, as well as the extreme-right political group the *National Front*. Many *Moderators*, however, were open-minded and friendly to the community. Afro-Caribbeans also experienced racism from the police, and this escalated into several riots and violence (Section: 26). Nevertheless, White British society has often responded to these events by expressing solidarity, as in the *2 Tone Movement*.

Although racism is still present in British society, the cultural richness brought by Afro-Caribbeans is widely valued nowadays (for instance, their contribution to music, literature, fine arts, fashion, establishing the *Notting Hill Carnival* etc.). As can be seen from the sections: 5; 6; 23, the immigrants came from a wide range of countries and brought a wide variety of cultures with them.

In addition to music (Sections: 9; 12; 14; 15; 16; 19; 21; 22; 23; 25; 29; 30), the Afro-Caribbean community has also made a significant contribution to literature (section 31), fine arts (section 35) and fashion (36).

Britain has provided fertile ground for artists of various nationalities. Many personalities from the Afro-Caribbean community have become legends, and their legacy lives on. Many of them contributed to shape the British music scene and its associated subcultures.

Despite all the obstacles they faced in Britain, and in great part through the efforts of activists – both Black and White – , they have managed to enter the British mainstream.

Thus, despite the difficulties, and particular the racism, that the Black and Caribbean immigrants and their descendants have faced, they have contributed hugely to the richness of British culture. And they are also contributing – although this is a work in progress – to making Britain a more tolerant place.

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http://yinkashonibare.com/resources/content/artwork/2/12/medium_1341763837.jpg

21. Resumé

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá Britskou kolonizací Karibiku a afrického kontinentu a následnou migrací z těchto oblastí do Británie. Historická část této práce se zaměřuje na Britské impérium, jeho politickou strategii, zámořské působení a kolonizaci od jeho vzniku až po následný pád a ztrátu kolonií. Kulturní část práce zkoumá migraci z Karibiku a Afriky do Británie, a to, jak britská společnost na tuto migraci reagovala, a jak příchod nové kultury ovlivnil stávající britskou kulturu. Tato část se věnuje zejména oblasti hudby a osobnostem, které se podílely na tvorbě britské hudební scény. Pozornost je věnována vzniku různých subkultur a hudebních hnutí, které vznikly ve společnosti jako reakce na příchod nové kultury a nově vytvořených hudebních stylů. Následné části jsou zasvěceny dalším kulturním odvětvím, ve kterém se vliv afro-karibských migrantů projevil – literatuře a módě. Politická a socio-ekonomická situace ovlivňující vývoj daných událostí je uváděna napříč kapitolami pro celkový kontext.

21.1 Klíčová slova

Britské impérium, kolonizace, migrace, černošská kultura, rasismus, subkultury, hudba, literatura, umění, móda, afro-karibská komunita, Británie

22. Abstract

This bachelor thesis deals with the British colonization of the West Indies and the African continent and the subsequent migration from these areas to Britain. The historical part of this work focuses on the British Empire, its political strategy, overseas operations and colonization from its uprising to the subsequent fall and loss of its colonies. The cultural part of the work analyses the migration from the Caribbean and Africa to Britain, and looks at how British society reacted to this migration, and how the arrival of a new culture affected the existing British culture. The particular focus is made on the music field and the personalities who contributed to the creation of the British music scene. Attention is paid to various subcultures and musical movements that emerged in society as a reaction to the arrival of a new culture and newly created musical styles. The following sections are dedicated to another cultural sectors in which the influence of Afro-Caribbean migrants

has manifested itself - literature and fashion. The political and socio-economic situation influencing the development of the given events is presented across the chapters for the overall context.

22.1 Key words

British Empire, colonisation, migration, Black culture, racism, subcultures, music, literature, art, fashion, Black community, Britain