Representing black Britain: black images on British television from 1936 to the present day

Thesis

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REPRESENTING BLACK BRITAIN

BLACK IMAGES ON BRITISH TELEVISION

FROM 1936 TO THE PRESENT DAY

APPENDICES

VOLUME TWO

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September 1998
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Details of Interviewees:

1. Imruh Bakari was part of Ceddo, one of the original workshops which came out of the 1982 Workshop Declaration Agreement. He has worked as an independent producer and as a lecturer, and was part of some of the early debates around Channel 4’s multicultural provisions.

2. Colin Prescod headed the BBC Multicultural programming unit for a time in the 1980s, and has worked as a producer. His mother, Pearl, was an actress in Britain the 1950s. She appeared in BBC radio’s Under The Sun (1958), BBC TV’s A Man From the Sun (1956) and In a Backward Country (BBCTV, 1958).

3. Henry Martin is an independent producer who formed Kuumba Productions in the 1980s. He has since headed the Screenwrite programme.

4. Parminder Vir worked as an ethnic minority arts officer for the GLC. She supported the work of the Black independent production sector and programmed a number of events around their work. At the time of this interview, she was working as a consultant for Carlton Television, looking specifically at strategies for improving their Black representation. She was Associate Producer of the BBC2 series Developing Stories on which she worked with directors from Latin America, Asia and Africa. She works as an independent producer for Formations Films.

5. Trevor Phillips started out as a researcher for LWT and went on to be the Executive Producer of Black On Black. He produced Diana: Portrait of a Princess and The
London Programme which won a number of awards, including two Royal Television Society Awards. He was Head of News and Current Affairs at LWT until 1994 and continues as an executive producer for the company. He has his own independent production company, Pepper Productions, which produced Windrush for BBC2 in 1998. He is also one of British television’s most ubiquitous presenters.

6. Treva Etienne is an actor who has appeared in a number of television programmes, but most notably in LWT’s London’s Burning in which he played Fireman Tony Sanderson. He has his own production company, Crown Ten Productions.

7. Terry Jervis has worked on a number of entertainment programmes for British television. He became a consultant for BBC Youth and Entertainment Features, works as an independent producer, and is involved in a number of global multi-media projects.

8. Samir Shah started working for LWT in 1979 and went on to produce Eastern Eye. He went on to play a senior position in BBC News and Current Affairs.

9. Narendhra Morar was Managing Editor of the BBC’s Multicultural Programme Unit. At the time of this interview, he was responsible for all programmes produced by the Asian and African-Caribbean Units based at Pebble Mill. He was also producer of the Asian magazine programme Network East.

10. Farrukh Dhondy was a member of the Race Today collective and a short-story writer. He became a television writer. In 1984, he became the Commissioning Editor for Multicultural Programmes at Channel 4.

11. Yasmin Anwar started as a television news producer. She was Executive Producer for the BBC’s Multicultural Programmes Department for two years and was responsible for After
Millwall, East, All Black and Carnival. She took over from Farrukh Dhondy at Channel 4 in 1997.
1. Interview with Imruh Bakari
Conducted 10.12.96

SM: Can I begin by asking when you think media institutions first began to put race onto their policy agendas. Can you identify a specific moment? Did it come with the access debates of the 1970s?

IB: It came out of the 1970s and I think the turning point, from my experience, was the Notting Hill riots of 1976. At that time, I was working principally as a journalist, as well as in the theatre. In terms of media production, I was a journalist. When the Notting Hill riots took place, it brought Black people or the Black presence onto British screens in a spectacular way that was constructed to reinforce certain notions that had been cultivated all along; of Black youth as a problem, the whole mugging situation, notions of Black youths being of low IQ, the whole ESN [Educationally Sub-Normal] situation from the early 1970s, and also the notion of the propensity to violence. The Notting Hill carnival confirmed that in the media. It also was a contested view, because Black people began to clamour for recognition - not only for Carnival, for what it was and their contribution to British society - but also the whole notion of misrepresentation. Don’t forget by then, we’d seen Till Death Us Do Part, we’d seen Love Thy Neighbour, a total absence from the media of any Black presence, in terms of production presence. We were just images which were used to confirm certain notions about how racism could be conceived, how it could be dealt with i.e we must laugh at ourselves and [racism] is conceived as just something of ignorant people that we could just laugh off; that it wasn’t as anything of a consequence or central to British culture. So I think the Notting Hill Carnival of 1976 and the so-called riots changed the agenda totally.
SM: So what about the uprisings or whatever you want to call them of the late 1950s in Nottingham and Notting Hill - did they not have a similar impact? What was it that was specific to the 1970s?

IB: No, not a similar impact but a comparable impact. I made a film on these riots [Riots and Rumours of Riots] and I did a lot of research on the period and of those events. But primarily it confirmed the outsiderness of Black people, African-Caribbean people principally and their inadequacy, or perceived inadequacy to conform to the norms of British society. But also it served the purpose of pulling together liberal and conservative views about immigration. And I don't care what part of the spectrum they came from, they all amounted to the same thing - these people must be stopped, numbers are a problem and they are a hindrance to good community and they are a hindrance to British society. These people must be contained in some way. The appendage to that was that their children would be different. The liberal process was, 'we are going to produce Black English people who would be contemptuous of their parents, contemptuous of where they come from but in conformity with British society'. Now they spent the 1960s into the 1970s attempting to do that by miseducating Black children, by putting them into ESN schools, all kinds of really absurd polices and practices of racism which effectually became institutionalised in terms of: one, dealing with the Black community from a law and order point of view; and secondly, producing a kind of Black person that was acceptable to British society.

The youths of 1976 blew that out of the water and said, "it's not working, we're not going to conform." Reggae music had occurred, Bob Marley came on the scene in 1972, a whole global
awareness of this young generation began to emerge in terms of their relationship to the Caribbean principally and by extension, Africa etc. Soul music, James Brown was around so there's another American situation with the Black power movement that has its resonances and manifestations here in Britain. There was a Black Panther movement in Britain, there was mobilisation against immigration legislation, against work disputes, Black workers' rights in solidarity with other workers etc. And there was an arts movement which had developed from the 1960s taking root in Britain, focused around the Keskidee Centre in Islington, where a Black arts movement, poetry, sculptures, theatre - and film because Pressure was shot there - some of the most celebrated Black artists passed through the Keskidee Centre in the 1970s. It was the mecca of Black arts and it was an institution that was Black run and it had an agenda about the Black African-Caribbean community. Both those from the African and Caribbean continents and those Black people who had grown up in Britain gravitated towards that institution. So there was an independent Black arts movement and if you put all those things together, that was part of the context in which Carnival emerged and part of the context in which Black youth of the time were developing an understanding of themselves - I wouldn't say identity, I have problems with those kinds of notions - and developing an understanding of this society.

SM: So from what you are saying, all the pressure and awareness that was developing at that time in terms of 'race', seemed to be coming from outside of broadcasting institutions themselves.
IB: There was nothing within broadcasting. Broadcasting, film and media literally ignored Black people and didn't feel that Black people were capable of producing anything that was BBC standard or from the point of view of the left, the avant-garde tradition of this country, or anything that was meritous as cinema. Anybody who wanted to say anything, it had to be a White person, so you got White people trying to take Black culture and manipulate it into something that was frivolous and exotic. Something like Black Joy by Boyd is an example of that. Black Joy started off as a play by Jamal Ali called Dark Days and Light Nights about urban Black experience, the way people would spend their leisure, about boy/girl relations. It was humorous but had important points to make about gender relationships at the time. They took this play and literally transformed it into a kind of nonsense about two infantile Black guys in the West End playing around - that's what it became, it was nothing to do with the play and what it was expressing about Black life at that time.

There was no notion about Black people being able to make Black films. I remember when I first started making films and we would go to the London Film Makers Coop or Berwick Street Collective to borrow equipment. But we couldn't talk about getting finance from anybody or money, and this is what separates somebody like my generation from people who came out of the 1980s. When we started making films, we made films because we wanted to make films and because we were going to make films by any means necessary. There was no promise of finance, there was no promise of support, there was no promise of even access to the BFI or any place for finance. We decided we want to make films, that's what we want to do so we're going to do it. That attitude separated us from a lot of people who came later, with
this notion that ‘Oh, we can go to Channel 4, we can go to the GLC, we can create a workshop and hustle for finance’.

SM: Were attempts made to get access, or was there a feeling that it would be futile to try?

IB: Attempts were made but we knew it was futile. We saw what Horace Ove went through with Pressure which was banned by the BFI. It was banned for a year. We understood who the BFI was and is, and that their agenda could never be our agenda and that’s an absolute statement, regardless of what they have done or have continued to do. We understood that. We knew we wanted to make films. wherever we could get the support or the finance from, we will work that out when we get there.

SM: Why was it banned?

IB: Pressure was considered to be a bad representative of Britain or unrepresentative of Black life in Britain or a British response to Black life. It was seen as being too violent, it gave the police a bad representation. It was just terrifying then, but when you look at it today, you think what was all the fuss about? But even the most liberal organisation of the time, saw it fit to lock the film up for a year before it was actually shown. It was never initially screened properly because of those apprehensions.

SM: But it was BFI produced, so was the treatment different from what was eventually produced?
IB: I'm guessing now, but at that time if somebody like Horace Ove got money from the BFI there would be a kind of indifference towards him making the film or even completing it. There was an institutional belief that Black people can’t deliver. So he would have relative freedom to go off and make the film. And he had his producer, Rob Butler, who is a good guy to work with who I’m sure made the film possible. But when the film came to its public screening and the governors and everyone else was involved, there was an uproar. There’s always pockets of access and people you can collaborate with to get things done but institutionally, the institution reacted by not accepting the film as valid at the time. Then Notting Hill happened and everybody else said ‘Oh, we’d better look at Pressure then, Pressure is mild considering what happened down in The Grove in those few years’.

SM: So when you say that ‘We’ all wanted to make films by any means necessary, who is the ‘We’ you are talking about?

IB: Well I’m talking principally about the people I worked with and who are all still filmmakers. Myself, Menelik Shabazz, Henry Martin. There were guys around like cameraman, Roy Cornwall, Albert Bailey...There weren’t many of us but we just saw it as an extension of what we were doing at the Keskidee and in Black politics, be it theatre, music poetry or whatever...

SM: So was there a conscious effort to make certain types of films focusing on certain things or was the drive in the film making process itself?
IB: No, we just wanted to make films and we had an interest that was wide and we saw ourselves as part of what was happening. We didn’t see ourselves as set apart. I personally said, “look I’m not a politician”. In those days when Black people became politicians they usually became part of the Community Relations Council as a stepping stone to politics. I didn’t want to be social worker. I was an artist, I saw myself as an artist and I was going to work. It wasn’t about issues *per se*, it was about we are part of this thing and we want to say something.

SM: Quite often, when the history of Black involvement in television and film is addressed, there is this impression that there was this group of radicals in the 1970s and early 1980s who wanted to make films to redress the balance, right wrongs and tell a different story from an alternative viewpoint. Were you conscious of wanting to do these things?

IB: Telling a different story, yes; telling our story, even more yes. Our situation was this: we don’t want to be misrepresented; we have the right to represent ourselves, or a view that is something of ourselves; and we don’t want it done for us; and we don’t want White people to appropriate it because that was what was happening. The issues we wanted to deal with weren’t taboo when White people did it, it was taboo when we did it. We contested that point. We weren’t concerned with deconstructing what was going on in the media and saying *Love Thy Neighbour* is wrong - if they want to make it, let them make it. I don’t care if they make *Love Thy Neighbour*, I just want to make what I want to make. I have no interest in deconstructing *Love Thy Neighbour* *per se*, I have an interest in telling my story - and that’s a wide variety and wide spectrum of interests. It is something I was able to do in radio, at least
in a local context. I used to work for Radio London - we were the first people to do any live comprehensive coverage of Carnival, we covered the Grenada revolution, we covered the hurricanes in the Caribbean, we covered music, bringing jazz into London Radio before Jazz FM, linking Africa, Africa-America, the Caribbean and Britain etc...Radio London’s ‘Black London’ got into trouble for this because it was literally running against the grain of the BBC. The Home Office got onto it because they understood that we were setting agendas. For me, that’s what the real politics is, setting agendas - not deconstructing - but setting agendas by asserting a position. That’s how media works...

SM: How effective do you think the campaigns of groups such CARM and Black Media Workers were in ‘setting new agendas’?

IB: They made limited gains, they were not successful. Because you see part of the problem of Black politics in this country is the way in which Black people have attempted to see the soul arena for the contestation of this politics within established institutions. The Black Media Workers, for example, started out as a good idea but what happened? All or many of the top people got jobs and it fell apart. Diane Abbot is where she is today partly because of that. Trevor Phillips is there partly because it was a career move. What you are doing is making the mainstream say, “You must be the leader, you must be the voice, come, we will give what you want and forget about it.” Where is the agenda of the Black Media Workers Association today - that should have existed until now. It should have been an institution.

Another great failure was the Saturday School Movement in the African-Caribbean community. By the mid 1970s, there was a network of Saturday Schools, developing an
education agenda to counteract the ESN formulations and the bad education in British schools.

The significant section of leadership within the Black community decided that it is better to go along with the Comprehensive idea, try to change the schools from within and forget about this notion of Black schools. Now they are trying to get Black schools because the Comprehensive system has failed. It will always fail because the class structure in this country will not allow it to succeed. Black people could have been leading the education debate today, and all of that energy and all of those ideas were cast aside. The individuals became incorporated into the agendas of political parties which have no interest to the Black community per se. So you neutralise the idea, there is no institutional framework.

SM: So if the radical efforts of the 1970s ultimately failed, do you think this notion of Black activism at that time has since been overplayed?

IB: It existed to a great degree, but people have to evaluate why it petered out and why it failed. It failed principally because no institutions were developed, no institutional frameworks were developed and sustained, and every effort was made to undermine institutions where they did exist.

SM: With that in mind, would you also consider the Black workshops of the 1980s to be a failure? They were only ever a temporary arrangement and arguably failed to sustain themselves because they were dependent on funding?

IB: The workshops were a failure in the sense that they are indicative of why Black institutions fail because we look outside of ourselves for the sustenance.
SM: So dependency always dooms something to failure?

IB: Of course. Which country is going to finance its own demise? Which regime anywhere in the world, liberal or other is going to finance institutions that are inimical to its objectives? None. The Black workshops were totally dependent on the whims and agendas of institutions and individuals outside of the Black community. Every thing was done - you look at the theorising of the films, the discourse around the films and debates around the films, everything was done to undermine the Black communities and its credibility as an entity. If you look at the reports from the Edinburgh Festival of 1986, people generally said that audiences don’t matter, we don’t care if Black people look at our films as long as we can get money to make them. What kind of nonsense is that? It’s absurd. Everything was done to undermine the Black community, its credibility and its connection with historical processes of that community.

The Black community, African-Caribbean, even if you want to extend it to Asians, is full of contradictions; full of things that make you feel ashamed, make you feel angry, but they are us, and we have to deal with them. If we don’t deal with them we get fundamentalists - and fundamentalism results from a dereliction of duty by Black intellectuals who fail to meet and deal with the anxieties and aspirations of ordinary people...We have to engage with what they need, with what they want, with what they fear. If we don’t do that they will find their own leaders and abandon you...

The workshops were an exciting moment and I guess that’s why some of us got carried along with it - because it was so exciting that the contradictions and the ironies and the violations that we were experiencing, we could not even get time to articulate them or find a meaningful
strategy to deal with them. The workshops were exciting because, for the first time, many of the things that people like myself that came through the the 1970s wished we had, became possible. We were able to have our own equipment, we were able to have access to the means of production, we had a 16mm camera and editing suite at Ceddo, we had access to this material and there were places that said we could have money. With that, Ceddo was a unique situation within the workshop movement. However, there was always this notion that it was dependent, it was totally dependent upon what Channel 4 saw as expedient at the time, what the BFI and other intellectuals saw as the acceptable or legitimate kinds of opposition at the time.

SM: Do you think then that there was always the feeling that it was a transient moment, that it could all end tomorrow?

IB: Well, I know that some of us always knew that because we had always differentiated between the workshops and the Black independent sector and we saw how the workshops were used against legitimate claims of Black independent filmmakers to make films outside of the workshop context. And we saw how if we couldn’t make films outside of the workshop context, the possibility of developing a financial base or production profile of any significance would be minimalised. We saw that. Film is about making money if you can; film is a business, it's not about handing out grants. It’s about getting your film seen and being able to make the next film. If that doesn’t matter because all it relies on is a production application to Channel 4, then what are we doing? Those who don’t do that, or those whose project costs more than £50,00 or £100,00, we don’t get to make films. And that’s what happened. There are no Black independent filmmakers who got to sustain or make any impact during that period because
everybody saw the workshops. Everyone saw Black film as the workshops, Sankofa, Black Audio or whatever.

SM: Are you saying then that the workshops were never the independent sector?

IB: The workshops were never the independent sector. There was always a Black independent sector outside of the workshops, apart from the workshops. People like myself, like Horace Ove, Menelik Shabazz. I say that in spite of our relationship to the workshops. If you look at the workshop declaration, then it says something very specific; that the workshops should be owned by the people who run them. Ceddo was set up very differently and at the time it was given a wink and a nod. We set up principally to be an access point, we didn’t see it as something to develop our careers, We saw it as an access point for members of the community and as an access point for us to get hold of equipment when we wanted it. It was supposed to be that sort of resource base which is why our emphasis has always been on training and documentation of events as they occurred. We set up as a Cooperative - Ceddo had about 13 people on its membership - only 3 or 4 were really active. In the workshop declaration, that was a contradiction. The workers were not the only people in the workshop. And it worked, it worked until financial crisis arose and we realised that the contradiction itself worked to our disadvantage and ACTT literally took away our franchise when it was irrelevant anyway. As a way of trying to punish us, they took away our franchise, but we knew franchises were dead anyway. It just shows you how they tried to manipulate you. Instead of trying to support our move towards a more efficient organisation, they said, “Oh, you’re not working towards the Workshop declaration, therefore you are contravening it, we will withdraw your franchise”. By
that time, Channel 4 said we will withdraw our franchise on you too and by that time everything was dead in the water.

SM: Was Ceddo the first workshop to close?

IB: It probably was, but don't forget that not many workshops existed. There were a lot of people who wanted to try and create workshops who couldn't get in because there wasn't any money and there were all kinds of things manipulated to say that you couldn't get a franchise because at Channel 4 someone couldn't endorse you. So it kept out a lot of people because the funds were limited. There were a lot of individuals who wanted to make films within the limits of the franchise and who couldn't get in because there was no space. So that's another way it worked, it became an exclusion. Once the three or four workshops were set up, that was it. There were a lot of Black filmmakers outside who couldn't get in.

SM: I'm trying to grasp this thing about whether institutions were pushed into giving you space or whether they saw it as the common sense thing to do.

IB: There is this tradition of workshops in Britain. British film culture has a tradition of workshops going back to the 1930s perhaps - the workers films collectives, post war period, free cinema period, coming into the 1960s and 1970s where you get these avant-garde radical groups within a wide spectrum of interest creating Berwick Street Collective, London Film-Makers Coop etc. There is a tradition of that. But these were principled people with a political agenda geared or focused or veering towards the avant-garde or avant-garde ideas with a limited or no interest in audiences. There were others who saw their films as part of the labour movement, but in the main it was people seeing film as art. There was that tradition in
Britain. Channel 4 changed that. There is also another independent sector of David Putnam, Simon Perry etc., who saw themselves as independent from Hollywood, the studios and the BBC who wanted to develop a commercial and viable British film culture. That's the independent sector and then we have the workshops. When you see what happened in the 1980s, you think how could these mistakes have happened again?

When the GLC closed, it more or less coincided with the dawn of Channel 4. Channel 4 had to develop this notion within its mandate of a community interest, diversity etc. These were late inclusions. This was not what Channel 4 was based on. Channel 4 began to be planned in the early 1970s with people like Jeremy Isaacs. Black people were not on their agenda till the thing blew in the late 1970s. We forced ourselves by the political momentum which we were generating onto the agenda of the media, and Channel 4 began to formulate a kind of charter that would incorporate these other voices and a different kind of access. With the closing of the GLC, a lot of the things that the GLC said it was going to do, got shifted to the BFI and of course Channel 4. So the money was always limited because Channel 4 not only made that access, it redefined the notion of independence. The workshops could get money and show films whether the people liked them or not. We thought we could make films for TV because we had that special independent sector. Channel 4 redefined not only television culture but the film culture of Britain. Within that, Black people, by virtue of what happened on the streets, literally negotiated a presence in there - and it was a grudgingly conceded presence.

SM: Let's talk a bit about the early years of Channel 4 and your role in criticising the Channel.
IB: Remember what I said about the media’s reaction to Black people in the 1970s. That never changed, it hasn’t changed. What has changed is a kind of negotiation, a kind of accommodation process which has gone on. When Channel 4 started, they suddenly realised we’ve got to give Black people something because they are making a rumpus on the street. Sue Woodford was asked- somebody nobody had never heard of among Black filmmakers - to become commissioning editor. And of course, Sue Woodford knew nothing about people and when it came to dealing with Black people, had already inculcated all the stereotypes of Black people in her head in spite of her being Black. She had inculcated all the fears and phobias of Black people in her head; she couldn’t handle Black people, particularly politically, articulate Black people. So when she held a meeting for the Black community, and guys who had been fighting council leaders and police race relations boards and who had won court cases in the Old Bailey etc, turned up, she freaked. She literally freaked out. Because there were two things going on; there was the activist line going on, but there were also people who were actually filmmakers themselves - and there is no way you can separate the two. There was a meeting in Channel 4 which blew because she couldn’t handle it. And that set the agenda for how Channel 4 intended to deal with Black people.

SM: What were the differences between what she was saying and what you were saying?

IB: She was saying basically that your demands can’t be met, you can’t be given or trusted with production money to make films, you don’t have the experience etc. The whole point was that once they saw that happening, they wanted to get a buffer between the Black community and the institution. Farrukh Dhondy has become that buffer. As a result, I was commissioned by Channel 4 with Mike Phillips to write a proposal for a Black current affairs
programme called **Our World**, similar to **Black On Black**, a magazine programme that would look at African-Caribbean context in Britain globally. They paid me to do it and then said, we don’t have any money. They probably didn’t expect me to deliver it. Sue Woodford was willing to give guys with no experience of the Black community the custodianship of Black programming and Black directors, and not go to Black filmmakers that had been making films and programmes for at least 5-6 years previously.

The workshops, because of the protected and exclusive situation, didn’t have to deal with those issues of negotiating with the industry - they just got the money and you set up and made your stuff. It’s a whole non-industrial, non-institutional framework which allowed people to be experimental etc. That’s fine, but film is an industry, and negotiating your way in the industry is the real politics of film. Sue Woodford left and Farrukh came. Farrukh is an opportunist. He’s a guy who has piggy-backed on Black politics for a long time, and he came with the credential of knowing how to handle Black people. He brought in and financed Darcus Howe and Tariq Ali, people with no previous production experience, with a need to give them political legitimacy in Britain. They were of the class of the Channel 4 people, people who thought they were radical because they had drunk a lot of beer at the Oxford Union, but people who had never really put themselves on the line. Tariq Ali has always been the bogeyman of Britain; when you look at it he was never that radical, he just became the bogeyman of British liberal politics. Darcus Howe similarly. He has a radical persona but they very much try to reinforce their allegiance to the Old Boys network that runs these liberal institutions. But what is Dhondy’s record, how has he helped the development of Black independent film making in Britain? He might say that his duty was never to cultivate a Black independent sector. The
question then is what is his role because his position is as a direct result of that need and as a direct result of that particular presence in Britain.

SM: I think he might see his role as liasing between multicultural communities and Channel 4.

IB: But to what end? Because in my view every commissioning editor in Channel 4 has an agenda which they defend. Alan Fountain had an agenda. He saw his agenda of cultivating a kind of British independent cinema which he was interested in, which is quite legitimate. Every commissioning editor has an agenda of cultivating some kind of constituency. What is Farrukh’s agenda? What his agenda has not been is in the interests of Black people in the film and media sector. He is contemptuous and indifferent to the whole idea that Black people can make films or programmes.

SM: Would you say that anything decent has come out of Channel 4 in terms of Black representation?

IB: There are one or two things which have come out in spite of - not because of. Something like Bhaji On The Beach is a success story in terms of British film making, in spite of its limitations. But it proves that if you put effort into a project, it will succeed. Now Bhaji came about as result of internal politics in Channel 4 and it was expedient for certain individuals to support this project in the way they did. That has to be an institutional policy rather than the whim of some kind of political game that is going on within the institution itself.
SM: Do you think then that Channel 4's support, as they see it, of Black communities has in fact dwindled over the years?

IB: Yes, I think so, I think they have become indifferent, one is because no-one is writing on the street. Plus they have now developed a group of White people who feel they know Black people better than Black people and are in fact making money out of Black programmes. There are no Black people making money out of Black programmes.

SM: So haven't things gone back to the 1950s and 1960s model where White people were the sole producers of Black images?

IB: Yes, right back to where they were - minus. That's been a deliberate policy, to make sure there were no significant Black companies or institutions developed.

SM: Are you an advocator of targeted Black programming or specialist units?

IB: Not particularly. But within a racist society those things become necessary. It's like a self-fulfilling prophecy. If the other frameworks or the existing network cannot accommodate, then we have to make these special arrangements. They don't solve the problem.

SM: Do they stop the problem from being solved?

IB: Not necessarily, because I think solving the problem is not reliant on the existence or non-existence of those particular centres. It doesn't matter if they exist or not. It matters if the political will or perception exists somewhere else.

SM: So what do you make of 'specialist' Black strands such as BBC2's The A Force?
**IB**: *A Force* is quite interesting because what it is trying to do, is to be a Black television station after hours. They’ve just got their running order very wrong. They are saying this is Black prime-time TV, we know Black people don’t go out to parties until 11 or 12, so they will watch it instead of going out. A lot of it is trite but I would live with it because those people who like it probably read *The Voice*. If you look at it in comparison to a Saturday evening on LWT, it’s comparative - it’s probably the same thing, They are just doing what they are notorious for doing - outrage, but it’s indicative of the kind of problem we have. Here we are, but we can’t integrate that into general programming, so we put it after midnight. It doesn’t even get good listings - it just says “A Force” - nobody knows it has this A-Z Guide or whatever. They just say Black people, just put it there. So the question is have we really moved?

**SM**: So you think there is definitely a lack of intelligent Black programming?

**IB**: And commitment. There has to be respect for Black people and sometimes Black people cultivate that. There is a lack of respect for what Black people really need and feel. The idea that the Black community is *The Voice* readers is a gross insult to a lot of Black people. It’s tabloid, the worst kind, with no variation.

**SM**: So if you were taking some sort of overview of the whole history of Black involvement and representation in the sector would you say that the 1970s were a high point in terms of demanding access and actively articulating what is needed from the media?
IB: I don’t think it has actually happened yet. I don’t think there was ever a case on Channel 4 where there has been better representation. Part of the problem is that until the A Force and the stand-up comedy things that have been coming on in the 1990s - the new comic presence on TV - most Black people didn’t care what was coming on TV. This is something that people don’t understand; that in the main, people don’t care what’s on TV. Even when it’s made by a Black filmmaker, they’ll say, “That’s nice”, but their relationship to the institution is one of cynicism. They looked for and provided their representation somewhere else. I think we overestimate, as filmmakers and programme-makers, the importance of our work to Black people. So far, it has not been of importance in the way it should have been. Black films have been important; they’ve brought a new perspective that’s important. But in the main, when you look at how Black people spend their time - the Black population, not the London population or the art aware population, I’m talking about those who go and watch Kung-Fu films, Die Hard movies, those who sit in the pubs, those who watch Coronation Street, those who watch Cilla Black, they haven’t begun to talk to those people yet, because they don’t expect to see anything, They watch these White programmes and they make their own aberrant or transgressive readings of the texts and then they go out to work again - they go and read The Sun or The Daily Mirror. Because of the institutional indifference, the value of the Black output or the validity of it hasn’t even been realised within the Black community.

SM: Given that, how important do you think film and television are in debates around Black communities and politics?

IB: Well, this is the question. We tend to theorise about the centrality of film and television in life. Within the Black community and African-Caribbean community in the first instance, we
might be barking up the wrong tree - there's a lot of other representations and politics going on somewhere else. In the Asian community there is a whole other problem - in that specific experience, people will pay their TV license to watch Hindi films. When a workshop makes a so-called Asian film or Hanif Kureishi makes his film and puts it on TV, nobody cares, he's irrelevant. Until our intellectuals or artists become relevant to our own people, we too are irrelevant and we better learn that fast or we will move into history as just museum pieces. Part of it is because of the institutional and hierarchical nature of our existence - if you don't provide leadership for your community, the community will find its own leaders from somewhere else, they'll ignore you. That's part of the job of the artist - to be constantly negotiating that leadership.

SM: Right, but how important do you personally see its role?

IB: I think it's very important, in spite of the cynicism towards it. The cynicism is probably indicative of its importance. There is no doubt that film and television is central to how we experience. Black people's experience is an urban experience... and the movies are central to urban life. Audiences seem to tend to decide how to deal with each text in terms of its relevance to them and in terms of the pleasures they want to get in spite of what its saying. Take Tarzan - Black people aren't stupid, they're going to celebrate Tarzan; they want to be on the side of winners, who wants to be a loser? But that doesn't mean that they don't interpret Tarzan in a radical way in how they deal with life in the colonies. There are a lot of Black people in the Caribbean called Tarzan as a nickname - when a guy is called Tarzan it means he is a gangster, he's doing something right in the colonial context, so he has inverted
that - he doesn’t want to be a White guy, he doesn’t want to kick Black people around, but he has used the Tarzan discourse as a way of negotiating his way in the jungle of the urban city.

So people use texts in the way they find convenient. Unless you as a Black person can produce texts where they don’t have to do that much acrobatics with, it becomes more efficient in their political processes, then you become more relevant, you intervene at the point where they are really making some crucial decisions about their life. So yes, it’s important, the problem is that we have not been able to tap into that importance or significance as filmmakers or programme-makers.

SM: In terms of the new technologies, do you think they are going to serve Black audiences well - either in terms of there being more viewing options or in terms of making the terrestrial channels taking new initiatives because of the competition?

IB: It depends on who owns what. Black people have never been afraid of technology, Black people don’t worship technology, they use it, they misuse it, they abuse it for their own purposes. If you look at Black music there is evidence of that wherever you go, whether it be dub or rap etc. The minute a Black person understands a piece of technology, they incorporate it into their cultural reference points so virtual reality is the reality. The problem is with ownership and access. So far we have been outmanoeuvred. New technology is only detrimental if you don’t own it and can’t use it. Technology is a means, not an end in itself. We do not idolise technology. If it cannot serve that end then it is irrelevant. It’s a healthy attitude because it means that the technology can be incorporated and used as what we know
as a liberatory and empowering mechanism rather than a disempowering mechanism. We are not passive.

SM: Do you think cable and satellite will change the face of British terrestrial television in terms of its relationship to Black audiences?

IB: A lot of these television stations are not necessarily investing in programme-making; a lot of it is recycling stuff and the cost of production becomes an operative factor. If you can get a lot of cheap programming from somewhere, why finance Black producers to do anything? Since MTV, television has changed and what we are finding is more wallpaper television than substance television; everything is spectacle now. If you can’t provide spectacle, then you can’t make programmes. There is very little room for reflective television or reflexive television. The pace has changed. This is what the argument in the BBC is about; can the BBC go down that road and become just another competitor and should it draw back, applying the notions of public service and produce something different?

In fact, the BBC is doing much better work than Channel 4. A lot of the flak from Black people was about the BBC, because we thought that we are buying a licence and it was supposed to be a public service. Now the BBC is doing more interesting stuff. If you look at some of the Black programming that it has put money into recently, we can still criticise it but it is still a positive move because at least we have seen some notion of commitment to the product and to getting Black people making things. I’m not talking about perfect situations but about responses to a situation and the possibilities of trying to create some kind of new environment. It becomes part of the differentiation from whatever else is happening. Channel 4
made these grand statements about what it could and what it should do and it hasn’t done it and will not do it.

**SM: How has your broad regional television experience affected your views of Black representation?**

**IB:** I know the profile of England. This is another reason why we have this distorted view even of the media because a lot of it is about how London responds. In places like Leeds, guys go to work and they come home, and just go to the pub and eat fish and chips; they only have curried goat and rice as a treat on a Saturday and they talk with these funny accents. You’ve got to understand the Black community in its complexity and its peculiarities. Take Liverpool, Black people have been there for a number of generations; they have a whole historical narrative which is so unique in this country, and yet Liverpool Black people are more marginalised than any Black people anywhere in Britain. When I first went to Liverpool in the mid-1970s, Black people never went to the city centre; they were beaten up; they lived under siege; even now when you go to Liverpool you don’t see Black people on the streets and you wonder where has all this community gone....Here we have Black people for 4, 5, 6 generations who have had one of the biggest impacts on British popular culture through their music...We continue to play these kinds of race relations games which means we are constantly narrowing our options to London, to a certain kind of Black people and it’s not helping how we conduct politics here.

**SM: So you don’t think these regional differences are reflected in television output?**
IB: No, I don't. Outside of London Black people don’t get access to television generally. You don’t find any Black presence. To get a grant from a community arts council in Yorkshire in the 1960s or 1970s, you just didn't think about it. London was considered as where a possibility might exist. Communities are relatively small, relatively dispersed and in a way, the majority of people are still factory workers, unemployed etc. There are a few elite people doing white collar jobs who are just trying to survive. But there is not the possibility of conducting real politics.

The notion of the Black community in Britain as it has been theorised is very misleading for a number of reasons and very inaccurate in terms of its dynamitism and character. A great African presence in Britain has never been recognised as being part of the Black community. Even now, a significant number of the so-called African-Caribbean are West African people who have come from West Africa to Britain. We haven’t really begun to take advantage of the real dynamic of Black people in Britain and that diversity that exists for creating a really political presence here. It has been too much about theorising what the Black independent cinema is about in the 1980s - about contesting Britishness, that was the fundamental mistake that a lot of people made about the workshops and about how Black independent cinema was defined. It excluded many people because it was only about the contestation of Britishness. Most Black people in Britain don’t care of they are British or not; they just want to live a life and express themselves how they are. For many people even being Black in Britain is something new, because where they come from they have an ethnic identity which is not about being Black.
SM: Finally, if you had unlimited resource how would you organise the area of Black production and representation?

IB: There is a need for institutional frameworks within which to produce programmes and films. Film needs development, it needs work, it needs commitment. It also needs outlets. Filmmakers, writers, etc., are people that need to be worked with. When you go to Channel 4 or the BFI, the way they respond to you is that they want you to come to their door with a perfect script; it doesn’t exist anywhere. They put that on you because they think that you don’t know what you are talking about. Any idea needs a commitment and institutional work on its development...The BFI has proved that intellectuals can’t make films. The practical experience of making a film cannot be duplicated. You can theorise on it but you cannot judge it unless you know the film making process.
2. Interview with Colin Prescod
Conducted 19.11.96 (Part transcript - ref to tape)

SM: Can you start by telling me when you think race was first put onto the agenda of media institutions?

CP: I became aware that race and Black people and television was a special thing, a thing that exists, as a little boy, when I first came here and my Mum was an actress. In 1958, what my Mother was doing was Black productions, all Black productions usually produced by White people but also with writers and directors like Lloyd Reckord and Barry Reckord. It didn’t feel as though anyone was making or being part of productions that they should feel ashamed of. One has to say about my Mother and those that she worked with, that they were colonised people - they weren’t looking to be too critical of the hands held out to them by liberal Whites who wanted to do Black stuff. White people were in charge of delivering Black things. In the modern era there are Black people wanting to do Black things, but they don’t get the space to do those things. The top people putting the money into big productions will trust the White producer or Executive Producer to deliver the Black idea.

I remember Freedom Road going out and all the Black people were very excited by it - Madeline Bell, Cleo Laine, my Mother, and it was a strong production with Black voice, Black feeling, Black nuance. And the White people involved in the organisation got a lot of backing, a record was made. So on the one hand there was all this Black stuff made by White liberals, on the other hand there were very poor roles which my mother played.
SM: Was she aware then or concerned with those more derogatory roles that she played?

CP: She was getting work. It was clear that all of these people would have been happy working in Black stuff with other Black people. The feeling was right for them there and they would have been less happy doing a *Dangerman* programme, but actually they would have been happy to get the work. This is what I mean by the colonised mind, they just felt happy that they were getting the work and you did that work in order to get seen and that was the job of the actor. My Mother had to do lots and lots of work before she got recognised, doing a lot of bandana-head work and small parts and as a consequence of that somebody actually saw here, So she gets to be maybe the first Black actor at the National Theatre in the 1960s, but that was only because she was doing all this other small stuff. If she had been refusing work, she would have been nowhere. The people who got very arrogant like Errol John, a playwright who did *Moonlight on a Rainbow Shawl* and got the *Guardian* best play and also an actor. He got famous and went to the States, did a show with Frank Sinatra. But after a while he began to get very grand ideas and his own decolonisation about what he ought to be doing or shouldn't be doing. Grand in the sense that he wanted to be doing his own thing, he wanted people to give him his head and after a bit he was no longer flavour of the year or decade and became a sad reclusive man who ran around talking like a madman about all the grand things that he wanted to do but he wasn't given the space to do them.
SM: So are you saying that rather than Black artists not being political in the 1950s and 1960s, they couldn’t afford to be political or make judgements about the roles they played?

CP: I don’t think they weren’t political. If I speak to Pearl Connor today - she came out of a radical tradition in the Caribbean. She shared a consciousness with people like John Larose. But Connor was also an agent for these actors, getting them jobs. She is political but there is a pragmatism there. It’s not a case of political or not political, it has to be bigger and broader than that. I’m not into people from today judging people from that era because the conditions are so different.

SM: You’ve mentioned Obi Egbuna, a writer who was imprisoned as result of the Race Relations Act. Can you tell me a little more about that?

CP: You should get his writings. He wrote a number of books and wrote a lovely little essay about my mother called Pearl. He was a young West African man trying to write around theatre and trying to write Black stuff for Black actors and was conscious about issues of Black representation.

SM: Who was responsible for Blacks Britannica not being broadcast in its entirety?

CP: Blacks Britannica wasn’t made for England. It was made by WGBH. In 1978, David Koff (a White Jewish Californian) and his wife (a Tanzanian)...they had a commission to do a thing on the Black experience on Britain. The word was that whereas in the US things were really bad for Blacks, over here there were new possibilities. It was made as part of a series which aimed to see the world through the eyes of those who were in those parts of the world.
It was supposed to be seen through the eyes as much as possible of Black British people...By this time, the generation that had come, began to realise that their kids who they had brought up here were not going to be the kinds of success stories that they had dreamed of. David Koff was this absolutely bold radical. We made a film that was shot all over the country. The re-edited version was screened and totally altered. David thought this was outrageous...it was never made for TV broadcasting here and we didn't have rights to show it, but we did for the first two weeks that we had it in the Other Cinema...we used to have absolutely packed houses. No big advertising was possible. We hadn't delivered the film to Boston, so there was no real controversy yet. Then the BBC got told (we had brought some material from the BBC) and threatened...we weren't happy with the edited version and we went to court in the States. We had no money and got some lefty lawyers to take up the case...we were contesting the directors copyright against the commissioners...we had access to WGBH papers (revealing intricacies of the debate around the programme). 1981 came and the riots happened and as soon as the riots happened, WGBH withdrew their case and they said they would destroy their version of the film. The whole of the thing was about denying what the film was saying which was that things are very bad, the measure of how bad they are is their youth, and the measure of how bad it is for the youth is that they are about to explode. In 1982, Channel 4 purchased a copy but it has never been shown on Channel 4.
3. Interview with Henry Martin
Conducted 16.5.96

SM: How did you first get involved in film?

HM: I first got involved in film by going to film school in 1976, which was West Surrey College of Art & Design and spent three years there doing TV and Film Production. I came out and started working as an Assistant Camera man and within a year had raised the money to make two documentaries, Grove Music and Grove Carnival, which were funded eventually by the Arts Council after having been rejected by the BFI. Grove Music was completed in December 1980 and it was ready for screening by January 1981. And January or February 1981, was about the time the riots started and we had several months of riots in cities all across England. Grove Music was really a film which looked at the Reggae bands in the Ladbroke Grove area and what was at the time the emerging sound of British Reggae which was becoming increasingly distinct from the Jamaican Reggae sound, but it wasn’t really being acknowledged in the music press. In fact, British Reggae at the time was being presented as The Police and another White band called The Members and also, to some extent, The Motors. So bands like Aswad got very little promotion although they were very well known on the club circuit. So one of the objectives of Grove Music was to highlight these bands. One of the things about these bands was that their lyrics were very much about being Black in Britain. And so the film necessarily became a more political film than quite simply a music documentary. And the film does end up saying that if things don’t change, there will be some kind of unrest and this film was completed just as the unrest that it predicted started. The film was initially snapped up by Channel 4, but as the riots started, the Arts Council, not the film
department, but higher up, decided that the film should be banned. And then they decided against banning it, because I pointed out that banning it actually gives it more publicity. But what Channel 4 did, was to stick the film on the shelf for three years and then put it out one night without putting it in the daytime schedules. I got a call at 7 O'clock one evening to say my film was going to be on at 11 that night - so that's basically the kind of television screening it had.

After those two films, I started working for a company called Good News Productions. They did a variety of work - foreign television news, corporate documentaries, pop videos and rock concerts and while working for them, I did a variety of jobs directing and producing and even an Assistant Editor. So for example, I directed the first WOMAD music festival. Eventually, the company disintegrated and I moved towards the Black sector by setting up Kuumba Productions in 1982 with Menelik Shabazz and Imruh Bakari. This was really set up to take advantage of the new Channel 4 and the fact that Independent Producers, it seemed, were able to get a clear shot at working for television channels.

SM: How would you define the difference in terms of degrees of independence and working structures between those independent companies who were commissioned by TV (e.g. Kuumba) and the grant-aided sector?

HM: Well the difference between Kuumba and the grant-aided sector, was funding. We didn't have any funding, we had an office in the West End, we had to pay the rent and pay the bills to stay alive, we had to fund that out of the productions that we did or out of our own pockets, but we never received a penny from anywhere. We weren't on salaries as the grant-
aided sector were. I think the grant-aided sector had the best of both worlds really; not only did they have funding, but they had more freedom. With the arrangement with Channel 4 and stuff, workshops were able to decide what film they would make, how they’d make it, have it funded and then present it to Channel 4 to screen without Channel 4 having any input into what it should be like at all. For independent companies like Kuumba, we were dealing outside of that Alan Fountain, Eleventh Hour slot and we were dealing with Commissioning Editors who lacked clear ideas about what they wanted within their strands and there were clear limits on the kind of work we can do. If you look at the work of those workshop practitioners now as compared with then, you’ll see that their work now is shaped more by the needs of television than it was then. If you look at the work of John Akomfrah now, it’s pretty mainstream documentary stuff that he’s doing. But yet then he was doing work like Handsworth Songs.

SM: So are you saying that there was a lot more room for experimentation then, than there is today?

HM: Well there was total room for experimentation in the workshop sector, because no-one else was involved in the process. You could decide what you wanted to make, make it and have it screened without any intervention from broadcasters. With us, there was intervention from broadcasters at every stage, in terms of cost control, in terms of aesthetic quality, in terms of format, shape. If you were making a documentary that was part of a series of ten, then you would has to fit that strand.
SM: So, in a way, you were making a package to fit rather than defining what was made?

HM: Yes, that's what we had to do. Because we were also in an environment where the 'single film' - both single documentary and single drama, were disappearing fast and those were areas when a little bit of experimentation was allowed in the context of television, but television was becoming a lot more package-oriented. Today, there are no single documentary slots really, apart from short films, but there are no real Play For Today type drama slots. So innovation is really being seriously stifled within television.

SM: So would you also say that points of entry into the media were also easier for Black workers then?

HM: For a while it was easier, certainly for the funded sector, it was wonderful. I don't think any other bunch of filmmakers in the history of British filmmaking has had as good an opportunity in a way as the funded sector did. They had buildings, equipment, funding and minimal interference. As far as the independent side such as myself were concerned, the advent of Channel 4 did briefly make things better. But it very soon closed up, because Channel 4 very soon stopped dealing with small independent production companies, not just Black ones, but White ones as well, and tended to concentrate on some of those who had a capital base, the larger independent production companies.

What has happened, is that those large independent production companies have become the same like the BBC department - in-house except that it happens outside. So a whole documentary strand would be given to an independent production company, so that if you
wanted to work on it, you wouldn’t go to Channel 4, but to the independent production company. But they would be taking over a lot of the production functions. So now we’re dealing with large companies like Barraclough-Carey that have emerged. There are large companies that specialise in Black work, but the Black independents can’t get anything. At the moment, I think it’s worse than at any time since leaving film school. I can’t think of a single Black independent filmmaker in production on anything other than maybe a 2-minute video or something. But in terms of a drama or documentary, I don’t know of anyone in production. I can’t think of a worse time. Also, we’ve just seen the closure of the African-Caribbean Unit here and that to me is saying, “We’ve finished with you, enough”, and the question really is where do we go from here?

SM: Was Big George Is Dead (1987) your first shot at drama?

HM: At the time, I didn’t really understand the politics of it, but Kuumba got offered to do a drama by Farrukh Dhondy. Initially Menelik who did Burning An Illusion was going to do it, but Farrukh and him couldn’t agree on an idea. I came up with Big George Is Dead which Farrukh liked. Big George Is Dead to me is my personal tribute to the West Indians who were part of the Soho scene in the 1960s, who were very influential in determining the whole mood of the 1960s from a style and music point of view. In a sense what you had in the 1960s in London was different, but similar to what you had in Harlem in the 1930s. You had people coming down from the North of England to London; you had people coming down from the Caribbean to London; and you had that whole thing mixing in this new environment in places like Soho and Notting Hill, and so on. And the youth culture of the time emerged from that. All the suits which bands like the Beatles and the Dave Clarke Five wore were based on the stuff
that the Rude Boys from Jamaica were wearing. And Soho was really where it happened -
British R & B in Soho, bands like the Spencer Davies Group, Traffic and Georgie Fame etc, a
club called The Flamingo where there was a series of Black/White mix in terms of culture. It
was an affectionate tribute to them and also to a Soho that, by the time I was making the film,
had died. The ‘bistro-isation’ had really taken route and the mixture of sleaze and art and
culture that existed in Soho in the late 60s and 70s had disappeared. So it was harking back to
those times but at the heart of it, was a story of friendship and loyalty and how they stand
they test of time and changing circumstances. I was also beginning to wrestle with the
mechanics of the male menopause...which to me is that point when he realises that time is
finite.

SM: So was it a conscious effort to grant subjectivity, like many Black films of the
eighties, to Black men? Were you not tempted to let Yvonne, the mother, play a more
central role - since she was the link between all three men - her son, husband and the
father of her child?

HM: It was definitely a film about men’s concerns and was really about that. But I decided to
do it with men that most of the time had a hard shell. These were street guys, tough guys and
its even harder for them to come to terms with things. It is Tony’s film but he never really
speaks about his pain. It is dealt with by proxy through Boogie’s speech in the strip club. But
Tony’s reaction and the way he leaves, I hope would suggest that he has been through a
transformation by that 24-hour experience. I was hoping to suggest that holding on to notions
of Ladbroke Grove was him hanging on to his youth. I hope by the end of the film you feel as
though he’s let go of that which means he’s begun to deal with where he’s at.
SM: Was it a conscious effort to make it a narrative on its own terms rather than being ‘Issue-led’ like so many Black dramas of the 1980s?

HM: Yes. As far as documentaries that I was making, they had to be issue-led and informed by my life as a young Black man in England, constantly being stopped and searched by the police, the SUS laws, violence against the Carnival. And then we were influenced, as young documentary makers by one film in particular and that was Blacks Britannica. Up until that point there had been no serious attempt to deal with the Black issue on television. In fact, most of the documentaries didn’t get anywhere near the problem and were very misleading, and also very derogatory in the way they portrayed Black people. And then came Blacks Britannica which was funded by PBS which there was a ruckus about and PBS eventually put out their own edited version of under pressure from the British government. The original version of Blacks Britannica opened up a whole new way of making films that were some way between the European tradition of political filmmaking and the Latin-American way of making political films. And coming from the Caribbean, it seemed to be somewhere right up my street; geographically it was in the right place. So our documentaries were very strident and very to the point and provocative and deliberately so. We didn’t feel that you should come away from seeing a documentary film that didn’t provoke a reaction somehow.

Drama is something very different. My dramatic roots are very much in Hollywood cinema and to some extent Indian cinema. Particularly in the Caribbean, it was B-Movie Westerns and Gangster Movies; the late-night B-Movie tradition. When you look at Big George Is Dead,
you will see that structurally there are echoes of the Western, the Gangster film and of the film noir in terms of the characters, locations and even the lighting to some extent. The Western is there in the sense that structurally in the story the man in him wins out; the gangster thing is there by being able to use a certain kind of 60s clothing and has echoes of the dives, that petty gangster thing. After the funeral scene, there is largely interior and night interior.

SM: And yet at the same time, it can be seen as a very 'eighties film'. I liked this notion of diasporic difference - we have the young Black British boy who is very Anglicised, Tony who is a visitor from Tobago and Boogie who is here but loaded with nostalgia for 'home'.

HM: Yes, that was the trick really. It was how do you create a 60s film in an 80s film and I hope I managed to do that. It was trying to create a sense of timelessness - the exteriors in Soho, the alley by the Raymond Revue Bar, were trying to show a generic setting. The signs say, “Shoes”, “Books”, they have no names, which harks back to comics like Dick Tracy. It works to lift the space out of being grounded in that reality and gives a mythical quality to the space...

SM: Can you tell me a bit about how the Screenwrite programme started?

HM: I established Screenwrite initially with Ceddo. We ran a pilot programme and then we did the first Screenwrite in 1994 first of all with Film On Four and the BFI and now with British Screen. We take eight people, and hopefully teach them what narrative is about.
SM: Did the first batch of scripts turn out as you expected?

HM: They were a mixture. The thing with writing, is that you never really know how long it’s going to take for them to get there until they write their first screenplay...I think we managed to do in 22 weeks what the National Film School is unable to do in 3 years. Now we are towards the end of the second one.

SM: What about the type of scripts in general and how they corresponded to the common assumption that Black writers cannot get away from discussing ‘race’?

HM: I think that when you look at the applications, and this time we had about 380 applications, and there is an element there of people ‘letting off’, but they’re not writers and will never be writers. But I don’t think overall that the balance was a preoccupation with social contemporary political issues. Drama is about people, about characters and you can hang political and other issues on those characters and where that happens, I have absolutely no problem. White people make political films. I don’t think it’s a valid criticism of any idea that its concerns are political or social; that is not a valid criticism. But I think it is a valid criticism to say that there are no characters here who engage me or that you have a didactic tract that has no dramatic worth. If it has dramatic worth, then the themes that go into it can be just about anything. The issues tend to be within the characters and the narrative journey. So a lot of the time when people do say that about Black work, it is that, but at the same time it doesn't understand how to put that across dramatically. So if you want to be political, fine; if you want to talk about more universal, human things, fine - we can do that all within narrative cinema. But you’ve got to understand how you build and construct character. what narrative structure is and its relationship to the storytelling tradition and to dramatic writing generally.
SM: So what happens to the Screenwrite scripts once they are completed?

HM: The scripts belong to the writers so they are not tied up contractually. At the end of the very final seminar, we invite Heads of Production from main funders of feature films and a couple of people from television in to meet the writers. Before that, they would also have met a leading theatrical agent who has talked to them about copyright, how to approach an agent, what an agent does for you, what it costs, pitching etc. People like Alan from Film On Four, Ben from the BFI, someone from British Screen and Working Title etc., will go away with a brief synopsis of each of the scripts and contacts so if they are interested they can call them. But the writers will also know how to approach these departments and what they are looking for. Then, I fully expect they will go out into the real world and encounter a lot of the problems that are current in the Black independent sector at the moment, such as the racism that has meant a virtual lockout of Black talent from the industry.

SM: You have spoken about the demise in support for Black film in Britain. What would you attribute that to?

HM: I’m afraid that ultimately I have to attribute it to a lack of vision on the part of the Black independent sector itself. I don’t think that for about ten years or so they could argue with the treatment they got; I don’t think they could argue with the amount of resources that were poured into the area. And the fact that there were no independent structures that could stand the withdrawal of funding, suggests to me that they had no real vision of the future; they were along for the ride but they had no real vision. I’m surprised that others are surprised that the unit here [BFI African-Caribbean Unit] has closed down... everyone else has been shut, so
why not you? There has been a lack of vision both in terms of how you organise for the long-term and also in terms of the continual aesthetic development within this area. I think that its shape was too determined by those who put the money in and its virtual demise was very predictable. There is no way that anyone should have expected funding to go on forever - it can't, it's not possible and they should have really thought about that and what that meant. So it's very sad and I know lessons have been learnt, but I hope the lessons will be transmitted to the next generation of filmmakers, because the next generation are likely to fall for the same tricks again. That era is talked about in terms of success when it was a failure, because it did not sustain.

SM: Are you measuring that 'failure' in commercial terms?

HM: Commercial success is neither there nor here. There is nothing wrong with experimental film. In fact experimental art has always informed mainstream art. But the fact is, that it had enough of an audience worldwide to create its own commercialism and they didn't even see the commercial opportunities within that. The question is how you can turn that into something sustainable that would enable you to make more films? That has always been the question. I think it requires a certain political maturity to understand that, but it also requires a certain knowledge of your own history to understand the processes at work. The processes are no different to the processes that have been at work for hundreds of years. The Black film sector has been destroyed in a way by funding; even though it was created by funding, that same funding destroyed it because the funding divided, promoted divisions and eventually everyone got picked off one by one. The movement is so fragmented and divided.
SM: So if you had unlimited resources, how would you organise the sector today?

HM: I think there is new danger within the sector and that is the rise of the Media Studies course. Critical theory is different from Film theory... I would like to find a way of educating young Black people coming into the area about different programmes and where different ones locate you in the industry... What we need is not so much money, but access. Access is denied, and this is not just a film industry problem, it's a national problem. It's something you can't fight with money, it's something you have to fight politically. But first of all they've got to understand the importance of joint action.
4. Interview with Parminder Vir
Conducted 30.5.96

(Position at time of interview - Officer appointed by Carlton Television to find ways to incorporate more Black representation in mainstream programming)

SM: Can you talk a bit about how you first got involved in the film sector.

PV: I guess it was when I organised the first Black film festival, a festival of Black American independent cinema in 1982, presented at the Commonwealth Institute jointly with the National Film Theatre. That really fired me up, because the potential for telling our own stories coming from wherever we were coming from and in this case, all of the film makers were Afro-American, but they were all independent and had all made films while holding down 2 or 3 jobs and raising money from here, there and everywhere and invested there own resources. But they were all independent films and that really inspired me. Some of the stories they were telling, the histories they were recording, the images they were presenting... not positive images but a positive representation of ourselves as three-dimensional human beings, which was really exciting and innovative. We also programmed films made by the Black independent filmmakers in Britain of which there were only a handful - Imruh Caesar was one, Menelik Shabazz was the other, a film by Lionel Ngakane about South Africa which was made in the sixties. Those were the main voices and we closed the festival with Menelik Shabazz's Burning An Illusion. What did this do to me? One it showed me that there was an audience out there because every night there was a sellout; second that there was a filmmaking talent out there with people like John Akomfrah and Isaac Julien who were just graduating from their
various universities, but certainly there was a filmmaking talent and a desire to make our own images and to control the means of production.

And it coincided with me being appointed at the GLC as an Arts Officer with a brief for so-called 'ethnic minority' arts. And as part of that job, I did a number of things. One was to fund this new independent sector which came mainly through the Workshop agreement, so really to allocate a lot of the GLC resources and direct it specifically to the development of this sector. The other thing I did was to organise a follow-up festival to the Black Film Festival called 'Third Eye', only this time it was a festival of Third World Cinema. But we also invited Black American filmmakers, like Warrington Hudlin’s brother, Reggie Hudlin screened his first film, a short House Party half-hour at the 'Third Eye' film festival. I continued at the GLC and at the end of the GLC, I made a conscious decision that I wanted to work in the media but I wasn’t sure how - whether to go into programming, organising film festivals but I began working as a researcher on the BBC’s Saturday Review which was a weekly arts magazine programme and that lasted three months. I thought the road to becoming a producer or assistant producer at the BBC was such as long road, and I couldn’t decide whether I wanted to direct, though I did get a chance to direct when I was working for Saturday Review - just short items. I left the BBC about six months later and I’d worked on a series called Artists In Exile and with a number of executive producers. I then went on to produce my first film, a half-hour set in the London Underground for the Arts Council and Channel 4.
SM: It sounds as though you were gaining a lot of valuable experience as you went along - would you say there was easier access for Black practitioners then?

PV: Was it easier? That's a very interesting question. I don't think it was easier. I think because there was no one really in these institutions, there was no authentic Black voice to turn to, to get their fix on what was going on in the streets of Southall or the streets of Brixton or Toxteth. They realised that in the 1981 riots when they couldn't get their crews to get to the critical stories and there was a need to change. And certainly in the early 1980s, the doors were opening. But I think by the time I was making the shift, about 1986, those doors were already beginning to close. It was relatively easy for me through an indirect route. I was asked by an equal opportunities person and the Head of Drama then, Jonathan Powell, to introduce them to Black independent filmmaking talent outside. Then I produced a showreel of Black independent filmmaking in Britain. I made that presentation to senior and executive producers. It was doing two things. One to say here is the talent out there who can make films, who have trained in your film schools and they need work and to network with the decision makers. But if you were to go back and ask the people who came to that, Colin Precscod and Imruh Bakari, Isaac Julien and John Akomfrah, ask them if things became easier after that, I would say the answer would be things didn't come easier, but it was possible to put a face to a name and to have access to those people.

SM: Some people have said that the interest in so-called 'minority arts' was a political manoeuvre to hush Black discontent, simply a 'safety-valve' following the riots, etc. To what extent would you agree with that?
PV: I don't think someone consciously said, "Let's throw some money at the artists and they'll shut up". I think it's more to do with our own self-confidence. If you trace the political careers of people like Darcus Howe and Farrukh Dhondy - they were activists in the 1950s and 1960s organised around political forms and organisations. There were some artists but they tended to be part of those broader political movements. I think for me, the whole expression of Black art and Asian art, is about our own self-confidence and growth. We evolved - that was our important creative expression. And the demands by artists brought about change in organisations and institutions that could either give money or recognition or space for the work to be shown, rather than them thinking they need to throw a few pounds at us to pacify us.

SM: How were those Black independents who eventually went on to form the workshops identified?

PV: They identified themselves. Black Audio, Sankofa, Retake, Star Productions were self organised and organised themselves around particular issues or genres of filmmaking, and particular agendas. And then they came to the GLC amongst other organisations because they needed money. Certainly their birth was made easier because the GLC was there and the GLC had money and that money could be shifted into those organisations. For a similar group of people trying to get off the ground today with the same passions and burning desire to tell those stories, I think it would be very very difficult. One of the main changes is the phenomenal cutbacks in funding for the arts and that includes films. At a local level, we don't have the GLC. We have a couple of regional bodies funding film, but a very limited amount of funding compared to that grant-aided access type workshops where people could learn skills,
which was another route into the industry. You could try to go into college, try to apply for one of these trainee graduate schemes, but the workshops were an important entry-point into the industry.

SM: Did the grant-aided sector evolve as you imagined they would?

PV: It's funny. I often wonder whether I had a vision of how they would evolve and I don't think I did. Other people did have visions. They would often say that they would just turn into production companies. Or that they were a facade, that they are really a base for the handful of people who are part of a workshop. They have no desire to be open, accessible etc. I think workshops like Sankofa and Ceddo all did their bit in terms of encouraging the community. But at the end of the day, one has to remember that they are filmmakers, they are creative people and in the end, I think they had to make those choices - how long can you go on being a social worker? When do you have to say, "I have to stop now and be a filmmaker and that people must judge me by the quality of my work that can be seen on the screen". Because at the end of the day, no-one is going to judge you by how many people you've trained or given access to.

SM: What would your response be to those who say that the workshops, far from being a success, were a failure because they did not manage to sustain themselves?

PV: I think it's outrageous to think that anything can sustain itself without ongoing funding. I think that they sustained themselves for as long as they could and as long as the climate was valid for them to remain. If they had tried to remain true to the original aims and objectives
they would have died a death, but I think it was really clever to try and reinvent yourself and not get stuck.

SM: So what would you say of the opinion that funding, in many senses, actually destroyed the sector and promoted divisions within Black film practitioners as a whole?

PV: I think that's an argument that's applied to the whole of the arts. For arts to sustain, they need to have funding, whether they are White, disabled, women or Black, and Black artists hadn't been getting a share of the cake. You could argue that maybe the dispersal of giving out money was wrong, but we didn't have a history of Black funding at all. It was a question of, we've got $x$ amount of years and $x$ amount of funds, we need to shift these into the community. Inevitably we are going to hit some of these on target, others were not on target. There was no Black independent sector before the funding and the workshops, so to talk of fragmenting something that was not there...I used to think that funding led to divisions and fragmenting and in-fighting, but now I just think that it led to people growing up and leaving the secure shelter of their homes which were the workshops and having to grow up and go into the real world. Nadine had to grow up and decide she was a producer and she went on to produce feature films; Isaac Julien broke out of his workshop; Martine went on to become a presenter, and so on. I think it should be seen as something that was a growth rather than something that was detrimental.

SM: Can you say a bit about your work at the BBC?
PV: I began as a researcher and then I became a Series Producer on a series called Developing Stories, basically films commissioned by directors from the Third World, the South, Africa, Latin America and Asia.

SM: So you had a particular interest in telling stories from an international perspective?

PV: I knew I wanted to make films. I wanted to tell stories and I began to go to film festivals all over the world. I just saw so much talent and so many good films - feature films, short films, documentaries and I wanted to find a way of seeing those on the television screen in Britain, whether it was Channel 4 or the BBC. It was Channel 4 which commissioned my first series when I went around the world, literally looking at films made by women, and programmed a season on women's work from the South and it was introduced with an hour long discussion programme. That was just an amazing opportunity. The time was right and Channel 4 created South, and the BBC with TVE came up with Developing Stories, and I got a job working on that and it was brilliant. And I'd made films through my open company, Formation Films. I made a film in Algeria about women who'd fought in the Algerian revolution, Algerian Women at War for Channel 4. When I finished at the BBC in September 1994, I went and made nine films through my own company from directors from all over the world. One of them was a Black director from Britain, but the other eight were from the South.

SM: So does your interest lie with the documentary form only?

PV: Factual documentary filmmaking interests me and that's what I've done a lot of. I love documentary film - to find the story and that kind of intimate relationship that you develop
with your subject-matter. Recently I made my first radio documentary. I came up with this story idea of an Asian woman in Handsworth who’s a rapper. She’s only 16 years old and I hung out with her and her crew and discovered she has this amazing 38 year old mother who runs a beauty salon called ‘Be Beautiful’. The idea was how Asian women have fun and it would have been about a mother and daughter but it got rejected by the Women’s series at Channel 4, but I got approached by Radio to do it. So I want to do more stories for radio and more drama. And that’s what fires me about being at Carlton now, because Carlton produces 100 hours of drama, but if you looked at it’s output, you’d think that Black people don’t live in Britain and one of the main challenges is how do we begin to get Black casting without it just being Black faces - to have the casting done where the characters have a cultural context, a history, a past, future and a present. And in this 6 months, I want to learn as much as I can about how they think when they think drama, how do they cast, how do they develop the storyline?

SM: So your brief at Carlton is to look specifically at peak-time mainstream programming to see how they can integrate Black characters into that?

PV: Yes, absolutely. They have a series called London Bridge, Peak Practice, Soldier and they are brand names. So that for me is a fascinating challenge. I also have a feature film in development for Channel 4’s Film On Four called Babymother. The script has been in development and fully financed by Channel 4 for three years now, and that’s taught me about the importance of script and how long it takes to get a script right. And I respect David Aukin when he says that, “the script is everything”. He only green lights films when he is 100% happy with the script. And Formation Films has another film in development with
George Faber at the BBC and the script is being written by Derek Walcott. I have decided to make documentary my hobby, because just trying to get a one-off documentary off the ground is so difficult. But I do have contacts overseas to sell my ideas but it still takes time.

SM: So here at Carlton, once you have made your proposal about what they should do, how does it work - how do they implement that?

PV: Looking six months down to November, the idea would be to, as I go along, produce interim reports of what they could begin to do now. So what I don’t want to do, is study it and then write a report, that’s not what I’m here to do. But actually begin to look at and highlight to them - to the Chief Executive and Director of Programming - where they can make interventions and propose ideas to them about what can be done. So it’s not that you can do x types of things in children’s programming, but how they can do it and what it would look like as a programme, because that’s what they want to know. Why do they think it would draw that Asian, that Black audience back to them? Particularly young people. Old people certainly are not watching that much television within the Asian community, because they’re turning to Zee TV etc. And the same within the Black community with Identity Channel programmes. So they’re really getting worried. It will be to see what can be done at a regional level, in the Midlands and London, because the regional things they control, they don’t have to bid for money from the Network Centre. What are some of the things that can take place at the Network Centre as well? Because they’re all concerned - London Weekend, Carlton is concerned because the high level of concentration of people from Africa, Asia, Latin America living in this country are highly concentrated in those urban centres. If they lose 10% of us, they lose 10% of their revenue, so suddenly we become important - not because of our colour
or anything like that, but because it makes commercial sense. So to see how we can exploit that commercial sense to our own advantage, to change the look of television...

In Birmingham, they have a thing called Asian Eye that Carlton produces apparently and this goes out daily and that shoots up the factual ratings really high, but that’s only because there’s one programme that churns out something about Asians, but that’s not really representative. The rest of factual programming and documentaries will have very little Asian presence. What came through in the CRE conference, is that Asians are under-represented...I think we can learn from the American models, because there was an enormous pressure put on mainstream television to get their act together while at the same time building independent institutions. I think what we suffer from here, is that we haven’t built those independent institutions. Asians have begun to do it, but it took a guy from India to bring his Zee TV to us. We didn’t come up with an Asian channel that was here, so Zee TV was a fantastic vehicle for him to present all the stuff that they produce in India - very little of it gets produced here. I think it’s really to have impact on both fronts.

SM: If you could give some sort of overview, how different do you think the sector is today compared to say 10 years ago?

PV: It’s horribly different. It’s totally commercial, it’s totally ratings-led. And anything outside of that falls beyond midnight so most of the stories we want to tell fall outside of that area. And it’s really competitive. You’re trying to exist inside this so-called ‘independent sector’. And it was very painful to have made 9 films and had them broadcast between January and October and then not being able to secure another commission from October to now. Bits
of research and development money, but that’s all. And it’s not that my ideas are bad, it’s just that there are 700-800 other ideas that you are competing with and they only select 6. But it’s also that within we as a Black independent sector, there are no big Black companies. There are more Black people working within the big companies, they are beginning to employ Black people, but as big Black independent companies, there isn’t a single one I can turn to as a regular employer of Black talent or producer of Black programmes. As Black independents, we are constantly having to reassess and make the separations between things that we feel passionate about and the things that we make because it’s television. I certainly didn’t start with those divisions in my head when I began working in the industry.

SM: What is your opinion of Channel 4 now compared to when it first began? It has come under a lot of criticism recently for giving up on its minority audiences.

PV: Most of my work as an independent has been with Channel 4, but yes I would agree with that. I was at a meeting with the International Broadcasting Trust - there are other small sectors out there. One is the whole developing sector really interested in making films in what they call ‘the developing world’. My argument with that is that it is still a kind of voyeurism - White people bringing their visions and their versions of what the developing world is about rather than connecting with filmmakers who live in those worlds. So my passion is about telling those stories from the inside, working with those filmmakers. I know that this whole area is shrinking equally because we have to get ratings and audiences. I made a film called Sex Warriors on the Samouris and I got good audience apparently - but the title itself, because it had ‘Sex’ in it, I’m sure it was because people thought they were going to find a lot of sex in it!
5. Interview with Trevor Phillips

Conducted 30.10.95

SM: What attracts you to London Weekend Television?

TP: I'm not sure I am attracted to LWT over any other broadcasting company. It's simply the case that I started at LWT and I've been there on and off, in one guise or another, for 15 years now. I think what was really most attractive about London Weekend in all the time I have been there is that, generally speaking, until very recently, it had a very clear personality as a company. The personality has changed from time to time. When I first went there it was very highbrow, very ivory tower, very “Birt-ishist” and the department I was in, was run by John Birt and they were very analytical. He hired a lot of people who had no experience and frankly, no interest in television but who were very clever. It was like an Oxbridge senior-common room really. And then after John went and Greg Dyke took over, the company became very popular, very entertainment-orientated, very outgoing and to some extent that reflected Greg’s personality as well. But again you knew exactly what had to be done. So you invented Crime Monthly, and you invented music shows to replace the previous highbrow shows such as Weekend World, and so on. And then latterly, after the franchise-run, the company became very business-driven and that was OK, because you had to make shows that were rating-successes or that could be sold abroad. The things I do are not really ratings shows. Last year for example, I did Portrait of a Princess. It did pretty well and got an audience of about 10 million, but more importantly sold in 24 countries. I think that was probably the most profitable single-hour that we’ve ever made.
The thing about London Weekend is that traditionally, it’s always very clear what it’s there for which isn’t true for a lot of companies, where I think the management is slightly less certain what it wants to do. The other less elevated reason is that being what I am, I want to work in London and I was lucky enough to do The London Programme and that proved a successful relationship for me, so why give it up? I guess I’ve been pretty successful for the company and, as well as fronting The London Programme and winning prizes etc, I then became Head of Current Affairs at LWT. But my character is that of a maverick and a risk-taker, and though I think I am a decent manager, it is not my aim in life to be so, and as a result I gave up being Head of Current Affairs last Christmas and I’m now something called Executive Producer of Factual Programmes. My function is to edit and produce a couple of series a year and give advice on very specific things but I’m only there a couple of days a week really.

SM: So was it purely the managerial role that made you give up the job as Head of Current Affairs?

TP: As Head of Current Affairs you have to run a department of 150 people and only occasionally do you get to talk about journalism, and that didn’t interest me and so I said I didn’t want to do that anymore. So we came to the agreement that if I was to stay with the company which they desired, it would be with no managerial responsibility at all but purely creative, so that’s what I do.
SM: Do you think any 'crusader mentality' which you might have had ten years ago in terms of bettering images of Blackness may have dwindled now that you are operating within a department which is not specifically related to 'minorities'?

TP: Not at all. Quite the reverse. What I've always been able to do alongside the mainstream things, is to influence the way the mainstream shows that I do operate. So that, for example, The London Programme has a much more substantial consciousness of the capital's minorities now than it did ten years ago since I took over as editor. I introduced monitoring of the representation on-screen as well as employment, and I think that made quite a difference to the way that the programme worked. In addition to that, what I was able to do as an executive, was to turn the talent of the mainstream department to doing programmes that were aimed at minorities. So for example, we made the first Black magazine programme, Black On Black, and the first out-and-out Black entertainment programmes, certainly on commercial television, Club Mix and of course we created Devil's Advocate, and that's a pretty good record I think.

We were always able to keep that strand going alongside the mainstream things. In a way, these two things don't have to be separate and in this country in particular, I think it's a mistake to believe that though you might create a separate centre of production, the audience for programmes which are generated by minority talent, don't have to be for a minority audience. Some shows we've made are frankly more attractive to Whites than they are to Blacks. Devil's Advocate I think, is a case in point. I would guess that the propensity to watch Devil's Advocate amongst non-Whites is no greater than amongst White viewers.
SM: Why do you think Black On Black and Eastern Eye received more criticism than other Black programmes such as Ebony?

TP: Because they were the first, because they were more unabashed about their ethnicity and their purpose. To compare Black On Black and Ebony - Ebony was the BBC’s attempt to make Black viewers’ subjects acceptable to White viewers. Black On Black was a programme made for a Black audience in a language we hoped that would be intelligible to White viewers. Our targets were completely different. We both wanted White viewers to watch, but in Ebony’s case, that was their purpose. In our case, with Black On Black, it was a by-product of what we hoped would be a successful programme amongst Black viewers. The last numbers we did on Black On Black suggested that 94-95% of the target audience watched reasonably regularly and then there was the audience on top of that, not a huge one but a significant one.

SM: Do you not feel that there was some contradiction there? You have said that ultimately Black On Black was for a ‘Black family audience’, yet you also say that you wanted to show how Blacks ‘could behave like everybody else’. Were you not over-anxious about what White people might think of what was supposed to have been a programme primarily for Black people?

TP: I think now I probably wouldn’t use that expression about ‘Black people being like everybody else’. What I think I mean about that is that I wanted to give a true picture of the Black community in it’s own terms and in it’s own language, but in such a way that the White viewer would conclude that we were real people rather than bogeys or foreigners or something alien. And that we could, while we remained true to ourselves, be part of British life and British traditions because, after all, for 4-500 years what we came from had helped to create
Britain as it is. What I think had historically been a problem had been an attempt to try to pretend that we were exactly the same as everybody else but that we had some kind of secret savage background that we were all trying to throw off. I think what I was trying to say was that we were different but in the same way as lots of other minorities.

SM: Do you think perhaps you were trying to do too much in that one hour slot - in terms of audience, and tone with heavy and light issues and scope with national and international affairs coverage?

TP: This is a continual argument. In an ideal world one would have had a couple of different programmes, but it wasn't an ideal world. We had to try in that regular slot to cover the waterfront. There was something about being able to describe the totality of the Black world which offered a different perspective so that, at some level, politics could be linked to music and could be linked to art. If you're approaching it from the perspective of the Black person in the West, these things have common threads. What I tried to do was to devise a programme which made the best of that. In an ideal world, I think I would have had a separate current affairs programme and a topical culture arts personality-type show, but these things all need to be viewed in context. In a situation where there isn't more than one opportunity, things are always going to be exposed, you're always going to have to pack everything because the audiences' expectations are that the things they're interested in will also show up in this flagship hour. So to answer the question, yes we probably tried to do too much, but only because we had to.

SM: So if you were making a Black On Black for the 1990s, how would it differ?
TP: Well that's a good question to ask. First of all, I wouldn't make one show, I'd make two. I would probably schedule them differently, and run them right through the year. One of the problems with Black On Black was that it was run fortnightly, alternating with Eastern Eye which I think was a shame. It indicated the view that Channel 4 took - “Ethnics, we’ll bung them in the same slot, and if they can find a show we’ll let them find it”. You wouldn’t do that with most programmes would you? The only programmes I can think of that get scheduled that way are monthlies such as Crime Monthly, Crimewatch and Biteback say. The central thing would be to have two shows run weekly. One would be harder and one would be softer. If I had 40 slots a year, I’d run 12 of the hard ones and 28 of the soft ones.

SM: Are you in a position to do that now?

TP: Well, I’m not a Commissioning Editor. If I were, I’d think about it.

SM: Are you in a position to push for it?

TP: Well, I’m constantly being asked my opinion by various broadcasting organisations and I’ll give it to them just as I’ve given it to you. Whether it makes any difference at all, I don’t know, we’ll see. The BBC is now rethinking what it’s doing and Channel 4 is to some extent looking for a new way of approaching things. I wish I could tell you.

SM: Why would you say there are so few Black people in executive positions in television?

TP: I think it’s the same as any kind of organisation - we’re discriminated against. People are asked to take on senior executive decision-making positions by those who are currently in
those positions who trust them and feel comfortable with them. They don’t with us, it’s as simple as that. The same goes through almost every other walk of British life. Why should television be any different?

SM: Which programmes to have come out of the LWT Current Affairs Department would you say have encouraged audiences to reconsider their perceptions of Black and Asian audience?

TP: Well I think the specialist programmes have to some extent. I think Black On Black did to some extent but created hostility. Devil’s Advocate certainly has because we have created with Darcus something of a crossover figure - wildly eccentric, but nonetheless somebody readily understood on both sides of the colour-line. If I would make a choice, I would say probably The London Programme while I was there, simply because I was there. I think the same is true on a much larger scale and much more importantly with Trevor’s appointment to the anchor-role at News At Ten. The idea that a person from a minority can do something serious which is not just about being Black is a new one for Britain.

What we did with The London Programme was to turn it into a friendly neighbour for all Londoners. The fact that there is a Black face and we’ve managed to overcome that whole thing of ‘is that a Black programme?’ and so on with that show would, I think, be the most significant breakthrough. Just walking across the road here, I was stopped by three people - one Asian and two Whites, and they had something to say about the programme we did yesterday on children’s homes and which had nothing to do with ethnicity. In that particular
guise, I think they just see me as a bloke who does investigations and I think that’s made quite a difference.

SM: How do you feel about the recent announcement by the BBC that it is to disband its Multicultural Programmes Unit?

TP: My answer to this is always that ‘the proof of the pudding will be in the eating’. It’s not clear yet what they are going to do in Manchester. I think the essence of this is to ask, “what should the BBC do?” My view on what the BBC should do, is to create centres of excellence which are aimed at putting programmes of interest to and exploiting the talents of minorities into the schedule. I think it has done that very successfully with the Asian community with Network East and East which I think are excellent series, with a variety of additional programmes - films, Mahabharata. Bollywood Or Bust I gather is quite popular although I don’t like it myself. All of these things are good and they have changed the schedule a bit. Madhu Jaffrey’s show came out of that background.

They have failed completely to do that with Afro-Caribbeans, which in a way is quite bizarre because I guess you would think that Afro-Caribbean culture with its music and so on which have penetrated as far as the mainstream, it would be easier to get across. In a way, perhaps paradoxically, it is more difficult because producers ask, “what’s different about it?”, and if they can’t see what’s different about it, they say, “why should we bother?” My view really is that I don’t think it is a terrifically good sign to locate the Executive Producer in Manchester...

It seems peculiar to put him or her in a small Black community when really all the action is here, in London.
SM: Narendhra Morar has rejected my suggestion that the existence of specialist units might serve to make other commissioners apathetic about catering for Black audiences' needs. Would you agree with that?

TP: Not really. There is some evidence, but I don't think there's any evidence that without these unit's those commissioners would have been any more favourable. I think people can convince themselves that they had this brilliant series or brilliant idea, and that if only they hadn't had to go through Narendhra or whoever it is, it would have automatically gone into something peak-time which we know of course is complete tosh. The truth is that if there is anything that is a winner, people want to be associated with it. I don't think there's really any evidence that brilliant ideas from ethnic communities have been left out in the cold purely because this unit exists. It's just another conduit. It's not meant to be the only place that such ideas go. It's an argument that you can't ever settle, because how can you look inside the mind of the controller of BBC1 or BBC2? Do they turn down something because it comes from a Black producer or is about a Black subject?

SM: Do you see it as your responsibility to nurture Black talent in TV production?

TP: Yes. That's part of what I'm doing sitting here. I'm fortunate in that I'm able to make a pretty decent living out of standing in front of cameras and doing a certain number of hours of producing and, therefore, I have access to most of the decision-makers in British television. What I have been trying to do in the last year is to try and work out how I can use that experience and those contacts to create an opportunity for talented Black programme-makers to get inside. Quite often the problem is not that the units stand in their way, the problem for
all independent producers and freelancers is they just don’t have the access. It’s a truism that if someone knows you they’re going to take your phone-call, if they don’t, they’re not. So my aim is to give as wide a range as possible the opportunity to get through the door. I expect to launch something at the beginning of 1996 that will create that opportunity in a formal way.

SM: Can you expand on that?
TP: No, I’m afraid not.

SM: Black programmes have tended to be very documentary-orientated. Do you think this is simply due to economic reasons given that drama, for example, is a more expensive medium?
TP: Yes, economics and the market. There are fewer new drama projects available. There are many more hours of documentary and magazine and leisure nonsense available. Because the investment in drama is so huge, broadcasters tend to invest conservatively. I think that’s a general problem, but it has a specific impact on minorities in that if you’re not already a well-known name your chances of getting an opportunity are correspondingly smaller. Because there are no big independents and very few that fall into the special freelance category, as a group, minority’s chances of getting in to those big projects are correspondingly reduced, vanishingly small in fact.

SM: The latest ITC Report says that 71% feel that news and current affairs programmes are fair towards ethnic minorities, 13% think it biased in favour of and 12% biased against. Do you think this is about accurate?
TP: I think it's probably accurate that those proportions of people believe that. If they had made an ethnic breakdown of those proportions, they'd probably find that minorities were in the 12% that said they were not fair. The BBC has recently done some surveying on this and it's pretty clear that minorities feel that the BBC certainly doesn't provide a service for them. I guess I go with that really.

SM: Are you in your ideal television position at the moment?

TP: Good heavens no. I'd really like to be Greg Dyke, I'd love to be fabulously rich and have a huge toy-set like Pearson and Channel 5 to play with. I'm in a fortunate position. I present two weekly series which takes up a lot of my time, but not so much that I can't career around and do other things that I'm interested in. I do quite a lot of good work, working mainly with young Black people. I'm particularly concerned about the position of young Black men which I think is the biggest single problem in the community. I have the opportunity to do other things in the industry - to try and create more of an opportunity for people of colour of talent to try and find a way in.
6. Interview with Treva Etienne
Conducted 24.11.95 (Part interview - ref to tape)

SM: What do you think the climate is like now in terms of Black creativity?

TE: I think the climate now is one where Black and Asian people are beginning to understand
what they can do with their resources...Although I say things are changing, they’re not really
changing but just repetitions of things that have happened before. There’s just new ways of
doing things now, new ways of telling stories.

SM: What was the working environment like on London’s Burning?

TE: It was cool. You get there, it’s hard work. You’re working 14 hours a day and it was fine.
I can’t knock London’s Burning because I have a lot to thank it for. It put me on the map, it
gave me some stability and it gave me some time to work out what I want to do and it gave me
the confidence to do what I’m doing now...I was only 21 then...when people see me on the
streets they say that, “you were one of the first”. It was very different then.

SM: How did it work when they selected you for London’s Burning? Did they just
decide ‘We want a Black fireman’ and then hold auditions?

TE: Yes, it’s like being on a supermarket shelf...that’s what we are, we’re commodities.
SM: Do you think your character in the series was sufficiently individualised - do you think they made the most out of the characters?

TE: I think they tried. I think they tried to give him a home life and then they got a little weary about how far they could go with it. And then they didn’t know quite what to do in his work life because they had 11 other firemen to create work lives for as well. And obviously they write about what they know...and if a Black person doesn’t fit that, then they become the afterthought.

SM: So do you think it is essential to have Black scriptwriters to improve Black characterisation?

TE: Yes, or Black script-editors who can help guide writers through a storyline...They try to write something which they think is correct but without any real type of research.

SM: So what raw materials do you need to set up a production company?

TE: Money, ideas, focus, commitment and faith - you’ve got to know the reasons why you’re setting up the company. You’ve got to find a hole in the market...

SM: Is Crown Ten mainly concerned with tapping into the mainstream?

TE: I want to bring cultural stories to the mainstream. You set up the company, you develop an idea, you go to a broadcaster, you try and get them involved and then you get it on TV.
7. Interview with Terry Jervis

Conducted 20.3.96

(Position at time of interview: Programme Consultant - Youth and Entertainment Features, BBC)

SM: How did you first get started in television?

TJ: I actually used to make films on 16mm and Super-8mm back in the late 1970s when I had aspirations of starting my own movie company. I’d made a film called From Gospel To Soul about the life of Sam Cooke and I put it on at a local cinema and a lot of people turned up to see it including people from Channel 4, the BBC, Sam Cooke’s daughter and Bobby Womack, totally uninvited. Then Channel 4 gave me a call and said we’re launching this new station because Channel 4 hadn’t started then and said, “Would you like to come on board with a couple of productions we have at the moment?” So I did - I went to Channel 4 first and Channel 4 paid for my tuition in research, sent me off to Beaconsfield Film School. Then the BBC called me up about a month later and offered to take me out of my Channel 4 contract really and then I joined the BBC and I’ve been with them since.

SM: How have you kept in demand and employment since the mid-1980s when so many other Black media workers find themselves working irregularly?

TJ: You’re at the hands of market forces, but I think the key to staying in employment is that I’ve always had a strong sense of independence because even before I was in films and television, I was in business, And the thing about being in business and staying afloat is that whenever a fashion or fad is out, you’ve got to find the next thing and you’ve also got to realise what the people want, not just what you want. And I think in a way that’s the same for
television. You have got to think to yourself, "what can you provide that the people demand?"

So other than my news and current affairs experience, I've also got experience in drama, comedy, light entertainment, music. So that when I'm not doing news, current affairs, music or drama, I'm doing my music shows and it's just been good that each show has been successful enough to carry me through really.

SM: How do you think the broadcasting environment has changed since you first started?

TJ: Oh, it's changed tremendously since I first started. Broadcasting, I think, when I first started was on the verge of a change anyway from what I called the Golden Age. I came in at the Silver Age and I don't know what we're on the cusp of now. I still had the training that you just can't get now and it's sad because people coming into television now know very little and are not even given the chance to make the necessary mistakes before they're out. The difference now also is that when you're thrown in at the deep end...very few producers now even know what a mistake is I'm sorry to say. Everyone now wants a title - researcher, assistant producer, producer, director, series producer. I don't care what the title is - it's what you effectively do and whether you have the skill and confidence to carry that job function through. People now expect a great deal, but they don't want to start from a learning position, and then when you challenge them on what they know, they don't know anything. The point is that if you want longevity in the media, especially in terms of people of colour when you're competing with so much else, you must know the background of your business. It's not just good enough to be in it. I think the important issue is where we're going, not just in terms of relying on the broadcasters for commissions - which is probably why a lot of people haven't
worked because they lean too heavily on getting that one job. In a lot of ways you need to be resilient and tell people they need your skills.

SM: So tell me a bit about what you actually do as a consultant here at BBC Youth Entertainment and Features?

TJ: I'm employed as consultant for programme development, so I'm always looking out for new products and ideas and offering them up for John Wisden who's the Head of Youth Entertainment Features in Manchester or Dele Oniya who's the Head of the African-Caribbean Department in the same building. But it doesn't exclude any other division at the BBC whether it's light entertainment or current affairs. I also have my own independent company which do things like music video promos or it hires out my skills as a director especially in the US.

SM: Many things you have worked on e.g. concerts, Dance Energy, The Real McCoy have been specifically concerned with Black artists. Do you choose the projects or are you offered them. How does it work?

TJ: It's through choice. I mean, I do a lot of music - I've done Def Leppard, Simple Minds, a tribute to Freddie Mercury, etc. But my personal interest is with programmes like Behind The Beat and The Real McCoy. When you look at television as a whole, where do you see Black artists? You just don't, and when you look at record sales Black artists are always there in the top ten. So I think in a way that's my decision, because I feel that if the public are buying those records, the public obviously want to see those personalities. And those shows were all hits. You're not just talking about small numbers either, you're talking about millions and millions of people worldwide. Behind The Beat, at its peak, hit ten million viewers and
was at that time the second biggest audience figure for BBC2, probably still is - it never dropped below 2 million, 1.5 million. As far as music programmes are concerned, it topped The Word, The Tube, Top Of The Pops. Any other music show couldn’t compare with the exception of Top Of The Pops. So that’s proof that Black music sells.

SM: Do you think Black British music has been sufficiently tapped into on British television?

TJ: No I don’t and I think that is coming of age. When we started out, people like David Grant, Junior, Apache Indian and Soul II Soul made their first appearances on my shows, because nobody else would put them on and they’ve all gone on to great success. I think, in a way, you don’t get talent developing unless it’s encouraged. White acts will always get on Live & Kicking or The O-Zone without necessary merit. When it comes to Black acts, we have to sell half a million records before anyone recognises us. So ours isn’t just a thing of dressing so you get a boys group that look like Take That and the record hasn’t even got out. I can guarantee you if that was a Black act and they sent their record in and it hadn’t had a release date, they wouldn’t get in on the air. And that’s a kind of unspoken word of what I call prejudice in the entertainment industry, in television and radio.

SM: So what would you say is currently being done to nurture and promote Black talent?

TJ: I think my role is to nurture and develop people in the media because I honestly don’t think we realise the power we have in this country - and we do have a lot of influence and power. That power is within ourselves - it’s our own motivational power which we don’t
seem to have hit in media terms. We have obviously done that in the recording industry, but we still haven’t done that in business and commerce. My thing isn’t just about music. I am a businessman. Whether I am doing merchandising, selling clothes, selling records or making television programmes the actual thinking process is all the same. It’s just that each one takes a different skill and understanding. The ultimate goal is to get it to the public.

SM: What would your response be to those who suggest that The Real McCoy is overly self-conscious and perpetuates stereotypes of Black people?

TJ: I would say that they could only be talking about the recent series, certainly not the two that I did - one under Charlie Hanson who started the show and the third series which was the most popular series which I directed as well. Like with most artists, and I’ve spoken to the cast of The Real McCoy, they need proper guidance and direction and the show has obviously lost its way because no-one in the BBC has taken charge of it. No-one has given it the kind of development it had under myself and Charlie Hanson. That’s the problem at the moment. It’s about production values - not just about what ends up on the screen, but in terms of nurturing the talent, the artists. Whether you talk to someone like Meera Syal or Leo Chester who write their own scripts for their own characters, they still need the guidance of a good producer and director to let them get a sense of direction as to where they’re going and developing those things. I can well understand some of those criticisms, bearing in mind as well that the BBC did leave a White producer with no understanding of Black culture in charge of that show, I think is evidence in its own right.
SM: What would your response be to Trevor Phillips’ claim that Baadasss TV “shows nothing but contempt for Black Britons” and is “just another nigger minstrel show”?

(The Guardian, 7.4.95:8)

TJ: I would probably agree with Trevor. When I started Baadasss TV, that wasn’t the original premise for it. The way in which Rapido TV thinks...well you only need to look at their shows like Eurotrash, the current Girlie Show etc. It was programme one when I decided it wasn’t the portrayal of Black people that I had spoken to Channel 4 and Rapido about. I personally could not stay on the show because I didn’t agree with it. They didn’t have another Black producer after me, so the only people pushing out those images were White males who thought that was ‘popular hip Black culture’, but it was only really their kind of fetishes. I only did the pilot, the first episode. When I left they had to find someone in the team who basically was working on Eurotrash to take over Baadasss TV, because they couldn’t find any Black producers.

SM: So why do you think so much got lost in translation - why did they find it so difficult to stick to what you intended?

TJ: A lot of people in the media are not in the media because they really have something to say, or because they really have a strong belief, or because they’re really worried about the types of images we put out. They are in the media because they think it’s glamorous, because they can socialise with their friends of the same mentality and feel as though they are somebody, and it’s all for show. That’s not the reason why I’m in it. I'm in it for many reasons, but most of all you will not see one of my products with that kind of imagery.
SM: What about Hotel Babylon? Are you happy with the way that?

TJ: It was Jaswinder Bancel and Charlie Parsons who asked me to come in and help develop the look and start the series off. I’m quite happy with Hotel Babylon because it did not profess to be anything else and it’s about European culture, it’s music. I think it’s a good show, I have no problem with Hotel Babylon.

SM: Can you tell me a bit about this new 26 part futuristic drama, Bluefields?

TJ: Bluefields is my new science fiction drama series that we’re currently in development with. It’s basically looking at the future of us as human beings and what our condition will be. It’s based on the old European colonial wars and those wars reshaped Asia, Africa, North America and the Caribbean. I’ve basically transposed that to the planets. So that each planet effectively becomes part of the Empire, the colonies. It looks at how different types of people evolve out of many different types of people. It’s not science fiction in the sense that there will always be laser guns blasting and space ships crashing and all of that, but it’s really about the human condition, about how we are as a people. It’s an action-drama. It’s a story of a new technology that’s being developed on Phobos, a moon of Mars. On a raiding mission to Earth piloted by one of their ace pilots, the craft goes into an unexpected light drive, reaches a time barrier and crashes on earth today. It’s a Black pilot, with the most sophisticated technology we’ve ever seen, so of course they think it’s an alien craft and there’s this whole thing where world governments are trying to locate this craft, track him down, but he’s left a time vortex open which only he can close. People from the future want to raid the present, because certain resources don’t exist in the future, because in the future, Earth has become a poor barren
wasteland only populated by the poor and mutated... It's continuous stories and each story in each episode has a message which makes you think about things you do.

SM: So no doubt it will be labelled 'the Black X-Files'!

TJ: It was written before the X-Files. I guess it just took longer for me to raise the money! I guess it's a bit of X-Files and early classic Star Trek... we have a short half-hour pilot done and it will probably go into production with the series later this year. It was all written and developed by me.

SM: Why have you felt it necessary to start your own initiatives (such as New Generation Communications and Down To Jam records) outside of mainstream broadcasting initiatives?

TJ: Well you answered the question when you asked, “How is it that you have managed to keep working when so many others haven’t?” I don’t know what other people do with their dead time, but I know if I’m not in production on a TV show, then I’m in the recording studio, or I’m on the radio, or I’m developing new things like my animated adventure, Spirit Of The Pharaoh. In that sense I’m always working, because I never leave myself with idle time on my hands.

SM: Do you think that nowadays it is essential to have a business mentality such as yours to guarantee that you see your creative ideas come to fruition?

TJ: It’s important that people are more on the creative side but understand that things don’t just happen overnight. And find yourself good business partners, whether you’re a creative
person who doesn’t particularly want to start a production company - then affiliate yourself with an existing production company and use their resources, or if you’re a business-minded person who is looking to get into the media, then find some good creative people to side with. They can come up with the ideas to drive your business.

SM: In terms of television, what do you feel has been your greatest achievement?

TJ: One moment which was very satisfactory for me was not the biggest thing I’ve done, but it was the most rewarding. It was one episode of Behind The Beat when I came back with the last series. On the Sunday, I was watching the Second World War commemorations and I saw the fly-bys of the hurricanes, etc. I watched the parade on the television and I didn’t see one person of colour. Africans fought in that war, Asians and West Indians too, and I said, “Where are we?” So I went and I got a lot of archive material and in Behind The Beat we had a section called ‘Respect Due’ which was basically to showcase archive artists like Nat King Cole, Dinah Washington, etc., and I put in a ‘Respect Due’ to all the people that didn’t get a mention in those commemorations and why they died - not just for Britain’s freedom, but for mine and yours. When I put it in, it was Janet Street-Porter at the time, who wanted me to take it out. She said it had nothing to do with music. I said, “it doesn’t have to, it’s just ‘respect due’, that’s what we say in Black popular culture. I was trying to relay that part of the culture and I won because it was my show. So I put it out, and when people called up from all over the world who had never seen that footage, it made you realise the power you have.

SM: Was there something particularly exciting about that time (the mid to late 1980s) with the rise of rap music etc., and with a general sense of this emerging Black-British
youth subculture and new points of access. I mean, do you think it would be less likely that *Behind The Beat* would get made today?

TJ: Yes, I do think it would be less likely to get made today. Although I have been pressurised to come back with a new show because they have said that, since *Behind The Beat* came off air, there has been an absolute decline in sales and what that effectively did was destroy our businesses. Of course, White mainstream business doesn't get destroyed because it goes on, because there are other different programmes to facilitate their needs. This is one of the unseen things that even I did not realise - that by not doing those types of shows, the effects it would have, which is the only reason and the main reason why I'm going back to do something like *The Cool Factor* now. And that's why I think people are lost today; you have a generation of youth who are totally, totally lost. We've lost leadership...I never worry about failure, because I don't plan to fail. I plan to succeed. There is that doubt even amongst filmmakers that I know today about failure. It's this feeling of despair, fear of failure, being put in a feeling of a certain kind of disposition and it's almost as if we have been psychologically disabled. That's a terrible thing to say, but it's a reality. That is why our youth are disadvantaged, because there are many of us that didn't give them that source of encouragement. I don't think the BBC has a social obligation; I don't think any business has a social obligation as such to make you rise above the rest. It's solving a problem - it's never proactive, it's retroactive. Like television today isn't proactive, it's retroactive so why should it have a conscience about addressing our needs? We have to champion that.

SM: But what about all those Black media workers who say they are trying but not getting anywhere?
TJ: It depends on how much of a difference you want to make. If I’m knocking on the BBC’s doors and I can’t get through...I went and raised the money for *Spirit Of The Pharaoh*, I went and raised the money for *Bluefields* outside. The mere fact that they are now being taken on board by the channels is incidental. When doors don’t open to me I say, “You’ve lost out - not I’ve lost out”. I need to prove to myself that I’m capable of building this business on my own. If I only find ten people to buy my video, then that’s ten people I didn’t have at the start - that’s growth.

SM: Do you think those doors might open a little easier for you because you are mostly in the field of light entertainment?

TJ: I don’t think doors open for you any easier in music and light entertainment as opposed to news and current affairs. In fact, I would say in news and current affairs and documentary features you’re even more likely to be hired on the basis that they need a Black person to understand a certain type of story. Because to them that is still very esoteric. Black music to White people is not esoteric. They’re the biggest buyers of Black music. In a way Channel 4’s new *Flava* - I’m told that’s all White people producing it - so they don’t feel it necessary to have Black people producing a Black music show. They feel they know - it’s the things they don’t know or feel they don’t know in which they employ us for our expertise. With short term contracts when they’ve done that story, they won’t call us again until they need to do it again a few years later.

SM: What did you think of the CRE Conference (‘Channels of Diversity’, 14.3.96)?
TJ: For me, the CRE Conference was one of those things that was worthwhile, but I don’t know what it achieved at the end of the day. I met more filmmakers there who are in a worse position today than when I met them 5-6 years ago. I went along expecting to hear good stories, good achievements and I didn’t. We’re in a worse state now than I can ever remember being in the media - and that’s since the very early 1980s. When the GLC was around, we had more going on for Black people in the media than you do now. If it’s like this now, and a lot of Black people have not had the necessary grounding, training and advice from people like myself, no wonder there’s this hopelessness, because we really have nothing. Those White executives from all the companies - Carlton, BBC, Granada, Central, Yorkshire - what did they really say? Nothing. They made no commitment...don’t even know if they really sympathised. We now know what our position is and we should do something about it. We need a collective way of surviving an industry onslaught. The collective way is to get together and have a collective response to the broadcasters and if they’re having a hard time dealing with us, then let’s buy a satellite channel, let’s but a cable company. Who cares how small we start, and make it work. That is the bottom line. There are lessons to learn from other countries about how to get a footing in the media market. White people, White industry, White commerce do not respond to us out of favours. It’s when we start doing something, and they see there’s a profit in it, that they turn the tide - and that’s happened from the record business, to the fashion industry, to manufacturing. We have to stop thinking like victims and do something and shove it in their face.
8. Interview with Samir Shah
Conducted 18.9.95

SM: Can you tell me a bit about where you received your television training?

SS: I wasn’t formally trained in television, I just applied for a job in The Guardian as a researcher. I applied for two jobs: one as a researcher when they set up the London Minorities Unit; and the other for The London Programme. I had several jobs and in the end didn’t get the job for The London Programme but got the one with the London Minorities Unit. The programme which came out of that was Skin on which I was a reporter from 1980 [due to start in 1979, but strike]. I worked on a variety of programmes at London Weekend Television. I was series editor for the next seven years until I joined the BBC in 1987. I started on Skin, then I moved to Weekend World. From Weekend World, we set up Eastern Eye. I spent some time on The 6 O’clock Show and then Credo. I worked in most of the programmes at London Weekend, and went from researcher to producer to director.

SM: You have said that Eastern Eye tried to be as impartial as impossible, using the highest standards of journalism. What is your response then to those who argue that the slot should have been weighed in Asian people’s favour?

SS: I think they’d be wrong. I still think it’s right to apply in a journalistic department like London Weekend Television, who’s ethos was journalism of that high order. Whichever programme you worked on, whether it was Skin, Gay Life, The London Programme or Credo, that ethos was judged by the same heavyweight standards of journalism to whatever subject-matter you were looking at, and I think that’s what made it different. It treated the
Asian community as you might treat any group. I always liken specialist programmes to any other specialist programmes. If you were to do a regional current affairs programme in which your constituency was a region geographically, the idea that somehow they shouldn’t treat those regions with the same journalistic standards as the network is absurd. Say you’re running a programme for Cornwall, you’re not going to treat the Cornish stories differently.

SM: But isn’t it slightly different because generally, across the board, representations of Black and Asian people on television are very limited?

SS: I would say that the Celts would say that representations of the Scots and the Cornish is pretty poor in the mainstream as well. I mean that whinge is constant across all groups - that they’re misrepresented. The North think they’re misrepresented by the South. You can construct a programme which sets out to balance things out, to propagandise, but I think that should be clearly labelled if that’s what you want to do. I don’t think anybody would watch it, I think it would be completely disregarded and it would probably do more damage than good and no-one would believe it. If they told a story on a programme which was avowedly propagandist, why would you believe it? There’d be no credibility and I don’t know quite who it would be for.

SM: Why do you think Eastern Eye and Black On Black faced more criticism than other Black programmes such as Ebony?

SS: I’m not sure about the level of criticism that each programme got and I’m not too certain what Ebony’s agenda was. I think that the Eastern Eye and Black On Black criticism came from a particular interest group, the radical Left that had a stranglehold on the media and who,
on the one hand, didn’t like the lightweight stuff because it wasn’t serious-minded enough and, on the other hand, didn’t like the serious-minded stuff because it wasn’t having a go at the Whites. It would have been very easy to have seen off that criticism by producing a predictable knee-jerk politically correct programme. Even now people in the Asian community remember Eastern Eye which is a damn sight more than they do any other programme, and that’s an extraordinary thing for a programme which only ran for three years. I think the criticism came from a particular interest group and I don’t really take it very seriously. And of course, we also got criticism for showing the bad side of the Asian community.

SM: Do you think another problem was that it was trying to do too much by packing heavy and light issues, national and international affairs, into one programme?

SS: I think that became a problem as the programme developed. I think the ragbag nature was a problem. The Asian community is a very rich and complex community which has, as you say, it’s national and international dimensions. It has entertainment on the one hand and serious issues on the other hand, and the more you probe into the Asian community, the richer and deeper it is, the more stories you get across the whole range, and the more difficult it becomes to pack it all into one vehicle and the more odd that vehicle appears to be. And at that time, the sub-continent was quite big, and there were a lot of issues there and a lot of interest in it with the Jewel in the Crown stuff. In the end, I think it couldn’t sustain the range of different kinds of stories.

SM: So why wasn’t the decision made to maybe split the programmes up into ‘heavy’ and ‘light’ slots instead of getting rid of the whole programme.
SS: You’d have to ask Farrukh that. In the end, I think Channel 4 has lost its distinctiveness, but that’s not just in multicultural programming but generally. But there is no flagship programme that the Asian community can connect with. In a way what Farrukh has done is the only way you could have done it.

SM: So does that mean you don’t share Trevor Phillips’ disappointment that a regular slot was taken away from Black people when Farrukh Dhondy arrived at Channel 4?

SS: Well I know Trevor is very keen on flagship. There is an emblematic role which a flagship inevitably has, and it gives a visibility and a status and there are arguments for it. But the weight that flagship has to carry is very difficult. I wouldn’t like to run a flagship like that, it asks too much of it. Trevor is very keen on it and he sees it as a big problem for the BBC that we don’t have a flagship. But the argument cuts both ways.

SM: How would you say that Eastern Eye differed from Black On Black?

SS: I think Eastern Eye was more journalistic, and Black On Black tended to be more event-driven. It had more performance in it. Black On Black was a more performance-based programme and Eastern Eye was a more journalistic story-based programme. With Black on Black you could cheat, you could tell stories about America, but if you were to just restrict yourself to British Afro-Caribbean society, I’m not sure it had quite the same dimensions as the Asian programme. It was much more narrower-based, much more working-class grouped. Asians went across the social spectrum. There seemed to be culturally, socially and economically a wider range of activities for Eastern Eye to tell stories about, and I think Black On Black had a more restricted range of activities to report on. And the Black
community were obviously a lot more mainstream in terms of music which was their great
performance-based thing.

SM: If you were making an Eastern Eye for the 1990s, how would it differ, how would
you change the original format?

SS: I think it's terribly old-fashioned now, incredibly slow. The whole style of television has
changed a lot. I'd find it quite difficult because I don't really know where the Asian
community is at. Magazine formats are difficult. It would be different both in form and
content. I don't know enough about any of the communities now to be able to tell you how I
would change it.

SM: Why don't you know?

SS: Because my work isn't as involved with it anymore. My understanding of it is incredibly
lay, I understand it only through my family. I belong to a particular part of the Asian
community, so I can't generalise on what is happening. I don't know it professionally and I'd
need to know it professionally to think of how to start a programme. It's also a generational
thing. Asian kids now seem to me much more integrated into the mainstream of British life
than they were 15 years ago. They're much more in the mainstream of the media. The impact
of being here has changed the ethos and culture of young Asians.

SM: Can you talk a bit about the differences in working for LWT, Channel 4 and the
BBC?
SS: Well, it's very difficult because I'm doing different jobs. At London Weekend, I was an organic part of the institution. I arrived as a child and I became an editor and by the time I was an editor, I was part of the culture and people knew my history. I arrived at the BBC a very senior figure in a very hostile environment, in a much much larger organisation whose culture is quite unique. So therefore, you arrive in a different country where the language is quite different, where the people don’t know you, they’re very suspicious, very hostile. So my perception of the BBC is not the same as London Weekend, because I was part of the family at London Weekend.

Here I was part of the evil empire, appointed by the Director General, the Deputy Director General as he was then, John Birt, and not knowing I had a particular task. I was quite young and looking back, I don’t think I was right for the job. I don’t think I was experienced enough to run a department effectively. All I’d ever run was one programme and this was quite a large department full of extraordinarily difficult and talented people who I didn’t understand, who all spoke a different language. I would have been better off if he had made me editor of Panorama or something. As far as I understand it, John had asked David Cox and Jane Hewland, who was then head of features who their best editor was, and they both nominated me as their best editor. As a result, John asked me but I’m not sure it was the right decision, but you couldn’t turn down the position. It would have been better if I had had some managerial experience.

SM: Has that proved to be a problem?
SS: Oh yes. I only realise it now that I wasn’t sufficiently prepared for the job. I didn’t know what the job was, and I can’t tell you how the culture of the BBC has to be experienced to be believed. The BBC is huge and it is a world unto itself, it’s references are entirely internal. Everything is internalised, everything is catered for in the BBC. You can have your enemies here and your friends here, it’s just huge. It’s a very introspective, inward-looking organisation and it can afford to be. It has no reference point outside, so I was completely an alien figure and I couldn’t understand the group of people I was talking to because they seemed to have no connection to the world outside. They were just interested in internal politics, in the interplay of editorial forces within the BBC. If you don’t actually know how it works, my god, how do you find a map through it? Now I’m a bit of an old hand, and have established my own history, although you’re never really a BBC person unless you arrive here when you’re 21.

SM: Why do you think there are so few Blacks and Asians in senior positions in the BBC and the TV industry as a whole?

SS: I think it will change. I was lucky but if you go down to a producer-level, you will see quite a few young Asians, not so many Black people. This is another problem, I think we’re separating out now, we have to talk about the two groups as different. You don’t have to look that far to find Asians. This is a liberal organisation. It doesn’t work against particular groups. We’re not in here with some vicious right-wing conspiracy at the BBC. People here, on the whole, are very sympathetic towards issues of race and we have a lot of women heads of department. I would hope that within 5-10 years there will be more young non-immigrant Asians here. I don’t think anyone seriously expects an immigrant community to be senior in the world of the media, just because I think you have to be so familiar with the culture of the
society you live in to be able to make creative decisions about it, and an immigrant community
isn’t familiar with it. But second and third generation are that culture and there is no cultural
barrier to them taking on positions of power and responsibility because they’ll understand the
references and nuances of what it is to be English.

I think it’s an erroneous question. The media as a whole, it seems to me, is the wrong target for
racial discrimination. I don’t think the media as an industry is particularly racist. I think it is a
liberal industry, I think it is very meritocratic and if you’re talented, it’s incredibly unlikely
that you won’t get in. Take Anand Thakkar, who’s a brilliant director...created the Late Show
look. People fall over backwards to employ him. The place is interested, very focused, it is
interested on what’s on the screen and if you’re good and can produce magic on screen, that’s
it. There’s no barrier to that, and there’s no cultural problem. I think there might be in other
industries, in older industries rooted in tradition. But that’s breaking up, because technology is
breaking up.

SM: Last year’s ITC Survey says that 71% of it’s sample felt that news and current
affairs are fair towards ethnic minorities, 13% thought it was biased in favour of ethnic
minorities and 12% biased against. Do you think this sounds accurate?

SS: It sounds alright to me. I think our organisation is still too White, I wouldn’t want to be
complacent about it. It’s too White, it’s too middle class and it’s too Oxbridge and the
workforce does not represent the nation. How we get from here to there is quite difficult.

Whilst I was saying it is a liberal institution with no overt discrimination, most of the policies
if left on their own will probably end up reproducing it themselves, so you will get the White middle-class Oxbridge man recruiting the White middle-class Oxbridge man.

SM: So you're saying that the BBC is not representative, but it's not racist - and you think it's incorrect to focus on the lack of Black senior figures in TV?
SS: Yes, it's much more complicated than that. As you get older, you start saying these rather odd contradictory remarks. We've got biases here with the South against the North, with the middle class against the working class, against people with particular accents. It's just as uncomfortable for someone with a broad Geordie accent as it is for someone with a Black face, so it's a much more complicated phenomena, it's not just simple racism.

SM: Do you think your 'Asianness' gives you a unique insight into some news and current affairs issues?
SS: That's a very difficult question to answer. Again, I'll be contradictory about it. On the one hand, the news-judgement is often so brilliant here, I'm often struggling to keep up. Against that, I think I'm much more sensitive and aware and alert to third world issues. For example, coverage of India, my knowledge-base is better. I'm always giving people a hard time for the way they cover and report on India. British minds will continue to think of foreign countries that single story of waring tribes difficult to govern, that kind of imperialist notion - there is a sense of the ungovernability of places. If you look at the economic story over the last 5-6 years which has been probably the biggest story, it has been pretty much under-reported. India is still an exotic country, so you still get these tiresome people such as Clive Anderson
and Harvey-Jones going off there to see it in a particular light, and I’m much more conscious of that than maybe my colleagues are.

SM: So would you say that generally speaking, BBC news & current affairs is still selective and biased in much of it’s coverage of say, British race relations?

SS: It’s not consciously that. There’s quite a lot of debate at the moment about whether we should have a Race Correspondent. I’m in favour of the ghettos, I think it’s a good idea to have that. I think we may under report what goes on in the Asian community and the Afro-Caribbean community because we don’t have a specialist correspondent whose job it is. Since we don’t have that, you very rarely get stories that come out of our ethnic communities that are of interest to our nation as a whole. They tend to be pathological, either criminal or immigrant-based. In the workforce we have been trying to do it, but I don’t think we’ve made as much improvement on the on-screen stuff.
9. Interview with Narendhra Morar
Conducted on 17.7.95

SM: Can you tell me a bit about how you became interested in television and how that led to you becoming Managing Editor of BBC Multicultural Programmes?

NM: It was all a mistake. I started as an absolutely junior, first-year, bottom of the pile researcher on Eastern Eye. Worked for Channel 4 for three years and then The London Programme.

SM: How and when did the BBC decide to have a multicultural unit - was it prompted by Channel 4 initiatives?

NM: It was felt that a magazine show was needed, but different to some examples. For example, Ebony did not have the resonance in the community. All the research shows that many hadn’t even heard of it. If the programme isn’t reaching your target audience, then you have a problem. I also think they [the BBC] felt they could expand things. Now, one side has done very well, and that’s the Asian side. Now what they’re trying to do is to expand the African-Caribbean side. There’s a big season on Africa starting this week. There are also other smaller minorities such as the Chinese who have nothing at all on television. We need to try and find programmes which will be accessible to them and will appeal to them too. The BBC did it [set up m.c unit] over ten years later, so it wasn’t Channel 4 that made it [the BBC unit] come into existence. I think there were clearly a lot of internal problems which I can’t really go into because I wasn’t party to those discussions. When I joined in 1987, I had one programme
on a Saturday morning for which unfortunately there was very little money. African-Caribbeans had quite a lot of money and quite a lot of slots. We got to a crisis state with the old Asian magazine programme which many people, especially young people, were not watching.

SM: Can you say a little about the recent budget cuts and how this has affected the multicultural unit.

NM: We are part of the BBC so there is a general problem of funding. Money is not as easy in every department. At the end of the day, we have to have ideas which we can sell to the controllers. It's not my decision only. In my mind, there should be an Asian magazine for example, but not the only thing. We’ve got Asian programmes. We’ve got East, which is our current affairs flagship programme, we’ve got Network East our magazine programme, we’ve got Bollywood or Bust which is our entertainment programme, plus we’ve got all sorts of documentaries and I'd like to see a similar range of genres for the Black community as well. So we could start with a Black current affairs programme and a Black magazine, and once you have those basics you can start developing other types of programmes.

SM: Have you considered catering for Asian and African-Caribbean audiences in the same magazine programme?

NM: You could think like that, but I personally haven’t seen any evidence that it works. All the research that we’ve done, and I’m sure others like the BFI have done, if you asked Asian people they’d want specific programmes aimed at their communities, and the second thing is that they’d want better and more representation in the mainstream. That seems to be the train
of thought. I see very little demand for joint programmes. You could do some joint programmes like for example Black Bag, but again that falls between two stools, because in the end the majority of people who watch it will be a very small minority of Black and Asian people. So who you are targeting - the Black community, the Asian community, don’t actually watch it. Then that begs the question, who are you making these programmes for? You can make programmes for a small minority and that’s fine, as long as that’s your state of intention. But if there are scarce resources, if there’s scarce airtime, then you have got to ask yourself the question, if I’ve only got twenty hours in a year, do I aim at the biggest number of people or the smallest number of people? Or do I do a bit of mixing - have some broad-based programmes, some very specific and narrow-based programmes. Some, like Network East are more narrow-specific. East on the other hand, is exactly the opposite. One of our aims is that it reaches not only the Asian communities, but White and African-Caribbean people simply because they are good and interesting current affairs documentaries. My view is that we should try and make as many of our programmes as accessible as possible for the wider audience.

SM: What specific differences do you see, if any, between the needs of Asian and African-Caribbean viewers?

NM: The needs and demands are quite clear. Our research shows that African-Caribbeans want more factual stuff, some entertainment and some religious stuff and Asians want more Indian movie stuff. Even though we do Bollywood Or Bust and various items on Network East, they still want more of that, they can’t get enough of that. They also want more focused stuff here and our last series of Network East was much more domestic-based. Clearly there is
a demand for relating their own experiences. And generally, they would like to see less negative and more positive.

SM: In today’s increasingly competitive broadcasting climate, do you fear that minority programming will be overlooked? Some people would say that ‘minority programmes’ can never be ‘commercial programmes’.

NM: We’re making more programmes now than at any other time, so just in terms of sheer numbers, that’s not true. Secondly, many of our minority programmes are very commercial. Madhu Jaffrey’s Flavours Of India was very widely viewed, so was that a commercial programme or not? Sometimes these definitions are somewhat too rigid - ‘minority’ and ‘mainstream’ for example. There are a whole bunch of programmes that now sit between those definitions or, in fact, cross both definitions - they encompass both and that’s the third kind of programme. And it seems that what maybe I’m arguing for is maybe that third way in a sense. But that’s not to say that you can’t make culturally specific or very targeted programmes. Of course, some of them need to be, because that’s the function of the programme. Network East is an absolute classic example of that. I’m very glad that a lot of non-Asian people watch it, that’s fine. But ultimately my target audience for that particular programme is the Asian community, and we’ll continue making it. I see no signs, unless I’m completely misreading the situation at the BBC, that it’s not important. We have an audience to think of, and if part of what they demand is programmes aimed at them, we have to provide them. That’s part of our function to do that because they pay their licence fees, just like anybody else. As long as that situation persists, then I think that there will be minority programming. The key is to think of the audience, and I think all too often, programme-makers forget that - they think they’re
making programmes for themselves. We ought to be making programmes for the audience, because they’re the ones that are paying us.

As long as there is a demand for it - that’s the key. If tomorrow, all the minorities said they didn’t want any specialist programmes, everything should be in the mainstream, then our function disappears. There is no evidence at all, no matter what research you look at, to show that’s the case. In fact, the two things that they keep on consistently saying and all our research has shown in the BBC, is that they want more minority programming of good quality. The latest research on African-Caribbeans for example, shows that they would very much like to see more Black history and culture type programmes, not surprisingly. Amongst the Asians of course, Hindi movies. But they also want to see better and more extensive representation in the mainstream, whether it’s in drama, in factual programmes - so that we are also seen as part of the fabric of everyday life. It’s not either/or, it’s both things that they’re demanding.

SM: Isn’t there an argument that the existence of minority programming units, can encourage other departments to be apathetic about serving Black audience needs, because they rely on you to do the job?

NM: Yes, and it’s the biggest load of bollocks I’ve heard, and I’ll tell you why. You look at the number of programmes that have ethnic subject matter - whether it’s Panorama, music and arts - Channel 4, every department, they all do it. Why? Because they can be quite interesting good programmes. The BBC I can specifically talk about. We are all business units, so we are competing against each other anyway. So if they can get a commission to do a Black programme, then of course they’re going to do it, and they do. There has never been a policy in
the BBC where other departments can’t do Black subject matter. So Under The Sun might do something, Public Eye might do something on Asian health, etc, etc. And I think it’s good, I think they should do it.

SM: If someone submitted a fictional treatment based on, for example, Asians in Southall, would it be likely to end up on your desk?

NM: Not necessarily, simply for the reason that we hardly do drama. But if it was a brilliant idea, and the drama department got it downstairs, then why should they give it to me, it’s work for them.

SM: What if there was a series of say ten Screen Two’s, and there were six good scripts with ‘ethnic subject matter’, would it be likely that all those six would get made?

NM: If they’re any good than they should get made.

SM: Should but probably wouldn’t?

NM: Drama I think is a different case. I think you’re right. I think that in drama, a lot more could be done. I think there are certain areas in the BBC where far too little is being done. For example, sport. One of the things that Black people in this country are really successful at is sport, yet there’s not a single Black sports presenter on BBC Television. I can’t justify it. So you’re right, in certain areas the Black experience is not being reflected in its full form.
SM: So given that television drama is still largely an ‘exclusion zone’ for Black people, why is so much of your unit’s output documentary-oriented and factual programming? How do you prioritise the types of programmes the unit makes?

NM: That presupposes that there are a lot of good scripts that are waiting out there. I don’t presuppose that at all. A few years ago, I went to chair an Asian writers’ workshop and there were lots of writers having a real go, saying, “you guys are racist, you don’t commission our work.” So I asked, “how many of you have sent a script?” There were only two out of the whole crowd. That was quite telling. There are a lot of things about perceptions.

If you have a small community like ours...if you take Asians, there are about 1.5 million roughly, you can’t expect to have hundreds of amazing talented drama writers - I’d be surprised. What makes us so different to any other community? The BBC in the last few years have been having difficulties in finding decent drama full-stop, never mind Black drama. One of the reasons has been money, the other has been scripts, so I don’t expect hundreds of Black scripts that are wonderful. That’s not to say there aren’t a number of significant Black plays.

The reason why I haven’t been doing drama, is very simple. First of all, I was so busy consolidating and creating the factual end. We started with the factual, we’ve now consolidated that. Now I feel ready to move into drama, personally. But there are two problems. One, I indicated earlier, and that’s scripts. But two is much more important, and that’s money. Drama is the single most expensive form of television. I have no experience in drama. If I go to the controller with a good script, he’ll say, “you’ve never made a play before, so why should I give you half a million pounds or whatever.” Which is a fair point, I can’t argue with that. So
now we and the drama department, the head of whom is Chris Parr, are cooperating together to try and make ethnic dramas. And not just dramas, but comedy too. I don’t have that particular expertise, I’ve never made those types of programmes. We’ve made a start, but it will take time.

SM: How do you know what Black audiences’ wants and needs are? What audience research does the BBC undertake?

NM: The BARB ratings are completely useless as far as ethnics are concerned. The BARB sample, is not represented by race, so it doesn’t tell you anything when you measure ethnic audiences. So the only thing you can do is get MORI or Harris or whatever to do a proper opinion poll which is what we do sometimes. You can’t do it every year, because it’s too expensive.

SM: There were many criticisms of All Black, particularly the first series. Two of the main ones being that the series was voyeuristic, made about rather than for Black people, and secondly that it was constructed in negative terms, focusing on rent boys, prostitution, violence etc. What is your response to those criticisms and why do you think All Black got attacked so much more than the Asian equivalent, East?

NM: We never shied away from any issues in East. We did exactly the same thing with All Black, but I think there was one strategic and one immediate mistake. The immediate mistake was that because the first two or three were really hard-hitting, everyone lashed out saying, “this is all negative.” We didn’t have any other programme to reflect other facets of the Black experience. Which is what we had with East and Network East, the one kind of balances the
other, which is exactly what I’ve been arguing for all this time. That’s what the BBC should be doing - have the hard-hitting stuff, but also the entertainment and celebratory programmes. To me, Network East is a celebratory programme. Everyone just thought, “oh no, not another negative series” [with All Black], but no-one ever thinks that about Panorama.

SM: Yes, but surely that’s because Panorama’s subject-matter is a lot more diverse in the sense that it may have one out of ten that can be seen as ‘negative’. But also because Black people have very few programmes which they are told is for them - and so such a large degree of negativity will inevitably be criticised.

NM: But Panorama only deals in negative things, it’s not celebratory.

SM: Your defence of All Black is that East was as bad or negative.

NM: No, as good. You have to question the function of a series. If a series is current affairs, then I’m not surprised it’s going to be hard-hitting. You’re indicating that East, Panorama or All Black shouldn’t do difficult subjects. My argument is that they should, that’s their job, but there should also be other series that do other things.

SM: But isn’t that the point - because there are so few ‘positive’ representations elsewhere, and because All Black was the sole Black programme aired at that time, many Black people were obviously critical of the negative focus of the series. Because we have so little, we can’t help but be critical, and sometimes that criticism is justified.
NM: This raises a very fundamental question, which is are we journalists or propagandists?

Now my view is very simple, we are journalists first, I'm not a propagandist. Journalist criteria are what we operate by.

SM: But there is an argument that you could use the All Black or the East slots more radically, as an alternative space for new angles on current issues - such as the Joy Gardner case, the Bradford riots or Paul Condon's comments about Black muggers.

NM: But those you could do anyway in different slots.

SM: Which slots?

NM: Any slots, by definition. Like I wouldn’t do massacres in Assam on Network East, because it’s completely contrary to what its function is. There is a definition, a conceptualisation to each series. There is architecture to a series. That might be what you want, but that’s not the function of those two series. There’s nothing to say you shouldn’t have an alternative viewpoint of Gardner or whatever, but lots of other programmes do that anyway, in terms of alternative views or partisan views. Our Community Programmes Unit will give airspace to those very campaigns. To expect us, as a small department, to do everything, is impossible. Therefore, in the end, we have to choose.

SM: I think the general feeling might be that when you are given a three hour space to make six actuality programmes to cover the issues which are related to a specific community, and that generally across the board you have very selective imagery of those same people, then why focus on the negative aspects?
NM: Not all of them were.

SM: Which ones weren't?

NM: Should we cover things up? Are you saying that we should make no programmes that are critical of the Black community?

SM: No, not at all. But perhaps the unit could make the move towards balancing it out with more diverse, enlightening subjects and viewpoints.

NM: In another series. At the end of the day, you have to try and sell these series.

SM: How do you think your unit's output differs from Channel 4's Multicultural Unit?

NM: I suppose there's a complimentarity. Also, I think Farrukh tends to be more news-oriented than we are. The beauty and genius of Channel 4 was that it was exciting and experimental, reflecting minority experiences. Although some of that is still there, I think BBC2 now is seen as much more that kind of channel. BBC2 has gained a percentage point over Channel 4.

SM: Why are there so few Black people in prominent positions at the BBC?

NM: It's going to take time. The BBC has a policy that by the year 2000, it should reflect the percentage of ethnic minorities.

SM: Can you tell me a bit about some of the BBC Multicultural Unit's future projects?
NM: This week, a big project starts - African Footsteps, which is about quite big names having personal journeys through Africa. There will be some stuff on the 30th Carnival, a new series of East and a three-part series on Pakistan. There are a couple of other Black ideas which are still in the pipeline.

SM: You mentioned in 1987 that you were keen to develop an Asian soap opera- what happened to that?

NM: I would love to do that, but it would probably be too expensive to do a drama series. But you also need a good script and a good idea. Money in itself is not the only thing. With drama we have to be very slot-sensitive. We have the two hour slot on a Saturday, which is 10 or 11 in the morning, and then everything else is in the evening on different days.

SM: Do you have any regrets about any decisions you have made since being Multicultural Editor?

NM: The running order of All Black. The problem with any institution like this is that you inherit a situation when you enter. I suppose to be in Birmingham instead of London is always a problem. It’s quite difficult to attract young talent here. Apart from that, I think Afro-Caribbean programming hasn’t developed as fast as I would have liked it to. I think last year I would have liked to have seen more on air, but hopefully next year...
10. Interview with Farrukh Dhondy
Conducted 1.6.96

SM: What did you think of the Black and White in Colour research?

FD: It was crap. It should have concentrated on what is actually happening and try to tell the
truth rather than choose five or six...you see what happens in Black filmmaking, is that there
are those people who are trying to clue in to what the television industry is, what the film
industry is, who Black people are and therefore what is the connection - between the film
industry, the television industry and such people. That’s one load of people, and I believe I
belong to that. There’s another lot of people who think, “I’m the descendent of Black people,
I have to get on in this society; the one way I can get on is by impressing polytechnic lecturers
and if they’ll give me £10,000 or £15,000, and later on Channel 4 will give me £40,000, I will
make something that fits into the alternative discourse of representational iconography” -
which is the kind of stuff you impress polytechnic lecturers with. And that has a very
particular purpose: it launches people on pseudo television careers; it gives rise to something
which is not art but pretends to be; it pleases polytechnic lecturers; it never gets an audience; it
wins prizes at festivals made up of juries of polytechnic lecturers and it pretends then to be
the whole thing.

SM: But then how do you negotiate what you have just said with your position here?

FD: My role here is to assess constantly what the Black, Asian, multicultural population is
doing. The secondary role is what it needs from television and supply some of those needs;
then what it ought to have from television. Let’s think of what ‘multicultural’ is;
multiculturalism is lots of different cultures. Take the simplest multicultural incident in this country and that is the Salman Rushdie incident. A guy writes a book which does dirt on Islam according to his own lights. He writes it in the tradition of Stern, Joyce, Marquez; he feels completely entitled to write that. DH Lawrence attacked sexual hypocrisy, Joyce attacked the Catholic Church. This fellow feels, “I’m a Muslim, I come from somewhere, it’s a load of nonsense, I’m going to write a satirical magic-realistic book about it completely within the Western intellectual tradition.” Some people have never read books in their lives, they come from a completely different colonial culture. Salman’s grandfather probably lorded it over the ancestors of the Bradford Muslims - and they feel it, they feel the class difference - no intellectual tradition at all apart from the wrought of Islam, and then of course some apologists swim in. But those people feel offended, genuinely offended...completely different tradition. There you have the clash of multiculture, you have real tragedy because you have the clash of two rights. You can’t say who’s right and who’s wrong; they’re both right in their own terms, but you can see that one culture is not reconciled to the other.

The central task of multicultural programming, of multicultural considerations is to mediate that interchange, because it’s becoming global. What makes multiculture is colonialism and the transfer of populations. When they lived where they were, they were quite happy, there was no multiculturalism, there was unique culture in separate parts. Multiculture is when you import lots of Muslims here.

SM: So what about ‘serving the public’, what is your concept of ‘public service broadcasting’?
FD: What does it mean?

SM: You should have some idea of what, if anything, it means to you.

FD: What is yours? I’m asking you where do I begin?

SM: To me, it’s simply that the broadcasting industry should have some interest in serving what all and different sectors of the public say they want from television.

FD: What do you mean by serving? Giving them what they want?

SM: Yes, to some degree, but to also provide a range of representations as part of that service.

FD: If you want to give them what they want, you pick up audience figure research, and you find that what they want is dwarves fucking, mindless buggery, Eastenders wall-to-wall...

SM: Come on, not everyone wants that!

FD: Yes everyone wants that. If you look at the figures, how are you going to go - minorities, majorities, who, how? If you look at the figures you’ll find that the public like football, so why not wall-to-wall football?

SM: What about the need to inform and educate?

FD: Ah, but that is not what they want then. That is what a particular cultural elite class in Britain has always thought they ought to have. Therefore, Britain’s newspapers and media are editorially-controlled. They are not ‘take a straw poll, see who likes what and set it out’. 
There is a tradition of criticism, of literature. People say Shakespeare, Kipling, George Eliot, Dickens. Jane Austen, Salman Rushdie - you make an assessment of which books are good, which are lousy, which poems are good, which are lousy - according to a critical criteria. It's not a critical criteria that are sorted out by the population, it is sorted out by a group of elitist intellectuals at the universities, at the academies. Then it is taken and translated for the good of the population.

SM: What I can't quite grasp is your position and the fact that the unit is here. There has to be some kind of sentiment behind that, that there ought to be more Black representation, that Black writers ought to be commissioned.

FD: No why should they be?

SM: What is the function of the unit then?

FD: How many Blacks are there in the country?

SM: About 6%?

FD: Every writer and everyone who interferes with multicultural programming ought to read this book.

SM: Which is?

FD: It's 'Ethnicity in the 1991 Census'. It will tell you how many people there are, how many are married to Whites, it will tell you where they live mainly, where they don't live mainly, it will tell you how much numerical significance to give to them.
SM: Yes, but television never has mirrored 'real life', so I'm not suggesting that's even an issue here. In terms of numbers, to me it's irrelevant whether there's 6% or 60% or whatever. That's not the issue. But in terms of the actual ethos behind the unit, isn't it that there should be some kind of provision, some kind of function, some sort of concern with the new communities?

FD: The new communities are here and they brought strands, assumptions of culture with them. Those have to be mediated in the broader society, and all the actions they take, including the Salman Rushdie question...I can give you a thousand instances like that - schools, religion, habits of mind, habits of speech, habits of marriage, patterns of relationship, what happens in a home, simple things like what you wear, millions of things your culture enters. It is the mediation of those that become multiculture. That needs to be done in television, otherwise you'll have a uniculture in television. I personally believe there are points of excellence in the arts, literature and so on. I also personally believe very much that everything that one does in television ought to fit into or learn from the great traditions of television.

SM: Yes, but you still have that sense of 'ought to, need to' alongside a belief of 'Why should we need to' as well?

FD: No, I feel they ought to, that's my personal bias. I feel as FR Leavis did about books, or the editor of The Observer feels about The Observer. I feel that television ought to be editorially-led, ought not to be done by committee, ought not to have pretence at democratic opinion forming and giving people whatever they like. It ought to have a head sitting in charge of it saying, "I think this is what the public want to have." Between that and Channel 4 that's
what I think; between that and what I do for Channel 4 there is the commercial reality. I know there are certain things I ought to do, even if I do not like them. I ought to run Hindi film seasons...

SM: You have said that when you were at University, you weren’t particularly interested in television - how did you learn what the medium could offer, about the potential of television?

FD: Yes, it’s true, I didn’t watch much television. You live in a country like Britain for 20, 30 years, and you get to know that half the socialisation of the people is through the television medium, people talking about it. It becomes the icon, it becomes the most important form in which people communicate with each other. Once I got a television set I started watching a lot of it, because from India I had no tradition of watching television. Every Thursday night, people would rush to the junior common-rooms to watch Top Of The Pops - I had no idea what it was. I made a point of seeing War of The Roses at the time, but apart from that, I didn’t seek out a television set. Later on, one begins to learn the jokes and references. And then I got into school-teaching and while I was teaching, all the kids would talk about television quite a lot of the time. It was a point of reference. School-teaching brought me into the habits and potentials of television.

SM: So were you more interested in the impact of television than the medium itself?

FD: Of course, I had no interest in the medium at all. Then I started writing books and some televisionwallahs asked me to translate the books into television, begged me to translate the books into television.
SM: Do you think you would have been begged today, or do you think entry-points into the media have become more difficult over the years?

FD: I think I'd be begged today. I think Hanif Kureishi is, I think Salman Rushdie is. They came slightly after and they are being asked all the time. They don't have to send their books out and say please please can I do the Buddha of Suburbia. I think that we now have a culture in which being Black is half the race. I've seen the most lousy crap produced by certain channels written by Black persons, absolute substandard rubbish, concessionary tosh.

SM: Like what?

FD: Series of short films done by the BBC. I couldn't believe it. Stuff on radio I hear - I listen to it because I do my job and I'm curious. I can't believe it. Some documentary stuff is horrific, it's as if people are just beginning to make new starts again. There was that Modern Times documentary on racism - totally dishonest rubbish and scary that ITV would put that on after the standards that we've set.

SM: It was BBC2. (Skin Tx: 1.5.96)

FD: Yes, BBC2. Scary - not scary because somebody had paint daubed on their windows, I know that they get that, I've had a lot of it myself. Those are facts not hyperbole. But what was scary was that they put that on.

SM: But why was it scary?
FD: It was a grossly dishonest piece of journalism. They had a chap who you thought was a freelance racist, and at the end of the film they told you that he was the father of a white boy that had been killed for nothing by some Bangladeshi boys in Kings Cross. You don’t do that.

SM: So what, scary because it tricked the viewer?

FD: No, scary because in any other circumstances, including Frederick West, you would not be allowed to do that. It’s only the special concessions that some antiracists have bought in the BBC that allows them to get away with that very nasty trait - that’s scary.

SM: To what extent was your early work - Come To Mecca and King Of The Ghetto borne out of your political concerns?

FD: The books were borne out of what I was doing at the time and the plays were borne out of people asking for them. Writing for television is a very professional job, but it comes easy to me - I think like that.

SM: What apart from Bandung File and Black Bag do you think Channel 4 has provided in terms of ‘intelligent’ Black programming?

FD: Salaam Bombay, Bandit Queen, Devil’s Advocate, Desmond’s, Karachi Kops, Families Season, Rear Window...

SM: What about at the moment - we’ve had Black On Black, Eastern Eye, Bandung File, Black Bag - but very little at the moment.
FD: Those are magazine/documentary series. I think we've made ten breaks with tradition if you want to know. I think we've made films completely in a new genre. From Salaam Bombay through to Immaculate Conception to Mississippi Masala to Bandit Queen, it's giving Asian directors in the main and producers the chance to run their own thing and to make a genre film which is not Bombay and is not arthouse and which is not for polytechnic lecturers. I want the public to see them, and I want the public to pay money to see them, and I want them to see them not because they want Black representation, but because they like the stories and they see the film moves them and they want to see that kind of material. That's a new genre and there's nothing less than that. Everybody else who's making films in Britain is, by and large, working in the same genres that have come out of tradition. The films that have come out of this department are a complete break with the traditions that have invoked them. Bandit Queen is nothing like Mother India or like Satyajit Ray.

SM: Drama, in terms of regular slots, not one-off features is still scarce.

FD: They don't give me them to do. But I'm doing one this year called Turning Worlds. It's a three parter, it's been written, it's been cast, got a director...any month now it's going to happen. It's a bit like King Of The Ghetto, Channel 4's caught up with giving me the cash to do that.
The history of multicultural programming on British television has always been a difficult one.

Channel 4, although widely perceived as the channel which most caters for minorities
(according to research conducted by the BBC and CRE) is no exception here. Since the
Channel’s inception in 1982, the Multicultural Department originally headed by Sue Woodford
and then by Farrukh Dhondy, has had mixed responses from both audiences and media
workers. Yasmin Anwar has just been appointed to take over from Dhondy as the unit’s
Multicultural Editor. In this interview with Sarita Malik, Anwar discusses her plans for the
unit, offers an insight into how she defines ‘multiculturalism’ in the 1990s and explains how
she sees the future of targeted programming in Britain.

SM: I’ll start with the obvious question, which is what is your concept of
multiculturalism? Can we speak of ‘a new multiculturalism’ in Britain?
YA: It’s probably easier to start with what it’s become. It’s become a sort of cover word for
Black and Asian programming. I suppose when you see what multicultural programming came
out of, it’s understandable why. It originally emerged in the BBC as programming for
immigrants, primarily for Asian immigrants given that they didn’t speak English. They even
called it the Immigrants Unit. I suppose there’s been a steady trajectory from then onwards in
terms of this thing which was then called multicultural programming. Multiculturalism is a fairly derided idea, not just by Tebbit and the Right, but also derided in other more august and thoughtful circles as a rather nebulous term. The fact that that was then a term which was then drafted on to Black and Asian programmes, was always somehow unsatisfactory and always gave this area of programming a rather dry, rather prescriptive feel and a rather didactic feel. It sounds like we’re preaching and like we’re probably not much fun and I think that was also reflected in the assumptions and expectations that not just White but Black programme-makers came with.

I suppose for a while, lots of people have had a problem with the name and the idea, and I think there are three things which I would like to do. One, which is maybe the hardest, is to get rid of the name because the name has come to mean things that I don’t want it to mean. It’s quite hard to think of a replacement though.

SM: What about Trevor Phillips’ suggestion of an Editor for diversity.

YA: Too personnel. It’s too much of a personnel concept. In personnel management, we’ve moved from Equal Opportunities to Diversity. I think it’s too close to the corporate world for it to mean something exciting for programme-makers. You need to find a word that isn’t sullied by all kinds of other assumptions that have already been heaped on to the word and unfortunately ‘Diversity’ is one of those words which has already been adopted by all kinds of personnel management to mean finding a way of making equal opportunities more palatable for the 90s...It would be nice to think of something fresh for the new millennium.
More importantly, I think there are two things I would want to do. One is to broaden the remit because we do live in a multicultural society, and that isn’t just Black and Asian. There are lots of stories that have nowhere to go at the moment, and I think the department should be a little more welcoming and a little more open to persuasion than we have been in the past for other minority cultures. And then, even more importantly perhaps, the other thing I want to tap into as opposed to multiculturalism, is cross-culturalism. In other words, yes of course there are separate cultures and identities, but I suppose what I find most exciting and what I am a product of myself, is something much more distinctly British - and that is the ability to be both born and bred here, and carry all other kinds of cultural baggage and interests and influences, and have no difficulty with that. There was a time when that was problematised and I’m not saying that wasn’t a problem for some people. I think Norman Tebbit is a prime example. There are still some people hiding in the woods, not surrendering, but most people accept that, like it or lump it, Britain is now, beyond doubt, a mixed society, on the religious, cultural and race front. So that’s stopped being a point of contention; it just is. I’m not saying everything is rosy, but I suspect that in terms of ease of presence, minorities have an ease of presence here which perhaps they never had before and it’s other people who might have a problem with that.

Equally, I think the other thing that is interesting, is the way in which the way we have been influenced not only by the mainstream but that we are also now part of the mainstream. Many of the influences which are definitely not Anglo-Saxon, are absolutely part of the fabric of British culture and society. It’s not only Irish people that go to Irish theme pubs, it’s not only Greek people that can laugh at the Stavros character that Harry Enfield developed. There are
all kinds of things that we feel we have a familiarity with. In that way, many cultures which we regard as minority cultures, are actually much more important and mainstream than perhaps even we allow ourselves to think. I suppose it's about trying to bring that to television, because I think that television is lagging behind that fact. It's people that are younger than me, you can see that when you problematise these things or talk about things in a particular way, they kind of look at you like, "I don't know what you are talking about" and I think, by and large, the voices and experiences and all that excitement and buzz that younger people have from ethnic minorities, Black Britons, is kind of ignored or hasn't found a place or a voice and it would be quite exciting if we could look at what is the changing face of the UK. I think that's what this department should be at the forefront of. If we need a remit or something to aim for, it shouldn't be about looking backwards although that is also useful up to a point. But it is really about trying to tap into what other people haven't noticed yet, because they're not even looking.

SM: Why do you think television has been so slow in picking up these exciting changes - particularly amongst the young. I mean it seems to be happening everywhere else apart from on television?

YA: I know, isn't it weird. I think it is because many of the Black programme-makers are working to an agenda that they are not entirely happy with but haven't challenged. Most people have to make ends meet, and often that means trying to work out what somebody wants from you and delivering it. I have noticed that sometimes people come to me with a proposal and I ask them, "In the best of all possible worlds, is this the programme that you would want to make?" And they say, "No." So why are they pitching it? It would be nice if a
director brings not just an idea but brings enthusiasm. They say, "because that's what we think you want." That's become part of the problem. It's almost like there's a world of Black people in television which has very little to do with the reality that even Black programme-makers go back to when they finish making their programmes. They themselves will tell you that they are tired of making programmes which are just down and depressing and not even the sort of programmes they want to watch. We need to cut loose of all of the things that you think I might want, and you think you should do, and you think the community thinks its important to do. As a programme-maker, you owe nobody anything apart from yourself. As a creative person, what are the programmes that you can bring to screen that no-one else can, because that, in essence, is where all programme-makers need to start. Forget about my agenda, forget about your agenda, forget about their agenda. Let's go back to first principles which is what are the things that nobody else is talking about or only talking about in a particular way.

SM: Are these the main ways in which you think the agenda of today's multicultural unit needs to be distinctive from the one set up in 1982?

YA: Yes, certainly the cross-culturalism; certainly broadening the remit so that we stop trying to be so specific; certainly the re-energising ourselves about what we think we are doing and perhaps giving ourselves a new sense of remit.

SM: So broadly speaking then, do you think the history of targeted programming to date, can be measured in terms of success or failure?

YA: I'll tell you a measure of how serious the situation is now. There are virtually no proper mainstream programmes with Black and Asian leads. There's Bombay Blue and things like
**Black Bag** and **Black Britain** which are put out at prime time but in not good slots. When you see what they’re put out against in terms of scheduling, you can tell they’re not really highlighted. In terms of scheduling there is a big challenge out there. **Desmond’s** is the only thing I can think of that cut right across the schedule and cut right across the audience and picked up 5 million plus, which for Channel 4 is a very big audience, and out there along with the other real popular programmes. It is a real challenge, because if we are saying we are part of the mainstream, where are our mainstream successes? If we’re not having any, then why not? I don’t have any big answers to that, all I want to do is make sure that we start having some.

SM: **How different is the working set-up here compared to at the BBC?**

**YA:** Totally. Primarily, is that if you are employed by the BBC, you're employed because they think you are going to fit in. If you’re employed in Channel 4 it’s because they think you’re going to make a difference. In other words, because it [Channel 4] has a commissioning structure, they are looking for people who think they can bring something to the schedule that they won’t get otherwise. In the BBC, it’s much more fraught because it’s about fitting in with the overall corporate picture. The nicer thing about Channel 4 is that the corporate picture and the corporate sense of self is much freer. There is duty to push the boundaries and to look in the place other people aren’t looking, and try and find new ways of saying things and new people to say them. All these things should be enormously liberating for departments that are trying to bring new things to air. The question still remains though of why is it taking so long? As far as I’m concerned this is a sort of year zero and we should start from here and try not to refight old battles - but try to look forward to all these things which are so new.
SM: So how different can you and how different do you plan to make what Channel 4's multicultural programming is doing from the BBC's?

YA: In some ways, we're in an advantage already because we don't have these separate departments called 'African-Caribbean' and 'Asian', which always feel uncomfortable because it's sorting people according to their racial origins. Culturally, there are all kinds of differences between Black and Asians, but the assumption behind that, is that they are so distinct you have to put them in separate departments. It also narrows the range of what you can do, because you are constantly saying we're targeting this audience and that audience. We have talked to ourselves for quite some time now. In 1997, it is time that we start talking to everyone else.

SM: Apart from that structural difference, I was thinking more about differences in terms of programming and specifically drama. The BBC multicultural department was very weak on the drama front, so is this now a priority for you here at Channel 4? And if so, what type of drama will you be looking for?

YA: Drama is definitely a priority, but that doesn't necessarily mean that you rush the first thing to screen that you find - you have to make sure you get it right. In terms of what I'm looking for, I'm looking for the kinds of things I haven't seen much of. I'm not looking for self-referential, inward-gazing, issue-led stories which, frankly, from the opening credits you know what the thing is going to be about, bar the detail.
SM: So in that sense, would the types of mainstream dramas that the BBC have come up with recently - and I'm thinking here of Holding On and This Life - be the sorts of stories you would be interested in?

YA: Holding On and This Life are the best examples on television of the changing face of Britain - and I think that's what we need to build on - and a lot more interesting than other things that are made in the name of multiculturalism.

SM: Do you think this department would face problems in making dramas like these because they are clearly racially-mixed dramas rather than specifically Black dramas?

YA: No. The other thing we need to do is to use the other expertise in the building. I'm not the world's greatest expert in drama, but we've got some of the greatest experts in drama in the building. I fully intend to exploit the talent inside this building, and that if something does come through the multicultural department, it doesn't lack the attention it gets elsewhere. And that means bringing on the best people to read the scripts or to discuss the scripts. We don't need to be proud about whether that happens just inside this office, or whether I can pool in other people from the drama department, which would be really exciting.

SM: Yes, but do you think we have got to that stage where Black independents can go to other departments with their ideas?

YA: I don't mind where people go. I think the important thing is that they go where they think they can get the commissions. I wouldn't say, "No, don't go there, don't go to the drama department, come to me." If you want to go to the drama department then please, please go.
SM: Yes, but do you think the presence of the multicultural unit might cause a problem with the assumption that things should come here and then you might not have the budget to cover it?

YA: No one's got the budget to do anything until it's been given the go ahead, and there's no reason on earth why I can't get the same budget as anyone else. It depends on the nature of the project. There is nothing written into my contract that says that I have to make programmes more cheaply than another department. By and large, it depends on the sort of audience that any one production is expected to get. That, plus the time it is going to go out, which also determines the audience by and large.

SM: So how true are the rumours that this department has faced budget cuts?

YA: No-one has budget cuts, because what's happening in Channel 4, is that the whole budget round is changing and it will be much more schedules-driven from now on. In other words, money will chase the schedules and money will be allocated on a project-by-project basis. If something good comes out of this department, there will be just as much chance of it being given good money as anywhere else.

SM: Are training and production schemes of concern for this department?

YA: I'm always interested to hear about any, because one of the things we need desperately is more experienced programme-makers and I don't just mean how to get people started off, or how to become a researcher, because I think there are a number of people who have been in the business long enough and who are quite experienced. What we don't have, is lots of executive producers, and senior producers, or senior directors, and what is happening is that there is a bit
of a glass ceiling which tends to happen fairly early and people don’t get on. We need to crack that because it just means that there aren’t enough managers coming through who really have done the business before they set up themselves in business, and I think that reflects in terms of the degree of expertise that any one company can then have. Everyone knows that it is no longer good enough to bang a particular drum on the race front. We all know it’s about expertise and you have to buy in to the skills that you need. Quite often, the best person for the job might not be from an ethnic minority, and that’s something that’s got to change.

SM: What about nurturing and investing in those skills that you need?

YA: Yes, I suppose in terms of training is that the best training you can get is work. Something I am keen to talk about in Channel 4 is that I have no magazine programmes, and magazine programmes are the best things for people who are moving from senior research into directing. I need to find a way of using the talent that is coming through. That requires forward planing and communication from the outside world about who’s there. But that is infinitely preferable to endless training schemes. What you learn on the job, that’s what most people learn.

SM: I suppose the main disappointment and cause for concern, at least amongst some Black media workers, is that Channel 4 has done very little to develop any Black-owned companies, and that the degree of commitment that was there in the 1980s, at least in terms of the workshops, is simply not there today.

YA: There’s no doubt that the whole media industry is changing and it is becoming more and more polarised into big companies and very small companies who exist on a more hand-to-mouth basis and the big companies who really do run things. I can’t think of any company that
has a Black profile, although there are Black people working in many of these big companies. The problem is that the big companies have the turnover and the expertise that that turnover gives them in terms of managing productions that its very difficult to get on a hand-to-mouth basis... so clearly for some kinds of production, they have an expertise which is extremely useful and I think people need to be a lot less proud about how they get what they need. If you want to become a company in your own right, then maybe that will take five years, and during that time you might have to work for a large independent if you’re lucky. People need to look quite hard at the conditions in the industry and do what they can to get what they can out of it. There is no career structure in television, and no-one will develop your career for you and that’s further compounded by discrimination where, by and large, big companies think that if they’ve got one Asian on board, then they don’t need another Asian. You know that when you see the make-up of some production teams. Making a career in television is such an individualised experience, that it’s very difficult to see where a group sensibility can come in.

SM: There is still this sense of disillusionment that things are not much better and in some sense worse than they were 10-15 years ago.

YA: Well remember that the other thing that has changed is the type of programmes which are being sought. It may well be that if they are making the types of programmes that are no longer wanted, that may well disadvantage them in the market-place. It’s hard to generalise about the number of reasons why people don’t get work. We have to be quite hard on ourselves and acknowledge that at least some times, it may be because there are people whose expectations are quite unrealistic when they look at the competition they are up against. Being a company is always about having some sort of a unique selling-point that the market-place wants. It is as
naked and capitalistic as that. It is about naked interest in viewing figures and in filling the
schedule in the way that they see it. People need to become more oriented towards
understanding that's what television is. If you don't have much expertise, then that will play
against you and the only thing you can do about that is to buy the expertise in and not expect
you to do everything. If you've got a great documentary idea for a strand that's up and
running, and you put a name that you know is reckoned with in the industry with the
proposal, then it just stands a better chance and that glory rubs off. You do have to use the
currency that's available to you and that means playing that game and not being too purist
about what you can do and how quickly you can do it.

SM: Channel 4 has been accused of being quite locked in internationally, of not
broadening the notion of a Black diaspora to include those from Latin America, the
Caribbean and even the rest of Europe. Some headway was made with South and
Farrukh pursued this with particular emphasis on India. Is this now a priority for you?
YA: That's a sort of medium term priority, because I do feel that I would like to crack the
whole UK thing first and I do want to get UK producers running because I do think they are a
priority. When we feel that we have got a production base here sorted, then we can start
looking abroad, and looking at the relationships between producers here and producers there
that might reveal something quite interesting. I'm conscious that different countries have
different expectations of what television production means, and I do think it's quite often a
case of teaming - creating teams from here and there, rather than expecting producers who have
never seen Channel 4 to know what kind of production we expect. That's not my immediate
priority, although I'm always interested to hear about programme-makers who are making exciting stuff.

SM: So what about something like South happening again?

YA: Definitely not. It's not my type of programme. I think you've got to make programmes that have something about them that makes people want to watch them. With South, there wasn't much consideration about what might make it less watchable, and the great idea was taking the voice and the eye of the director in situ to make a programme about their neck of the woods. The only thing is, for me, it was too diverse, it was very hard for a viewer to get their head around what it was about. I think it is nicer when you manage to find themes or some way of structuring material so that audience's get a sense of what they might come back for again. Perhaps the whole of the South isn't the best way of theme-ing that material. South was an example of a really good idea but for my money it wasn't packaged in a way that made it audience-friendly.

SM: Given that output from this department has dramatically decreased since the late 1980s, what does this indicate about the future of multicultural programming, particularly in the context of the emerging digital, cable and satellite age. How secure do you think the unit is?

YA: I think it depends very much on how we develop or how I develop it in Channel 4. If all I commission are programmes which by and large don't pick up a decent audience, and therefore all our programmes are deemed as uncompetitive by the scheduler, it will be hard work to argue for more programming. The challenge is to make the types of programmes which people watch
and aren't seen as a social-work liability on the part of the broadcasters. If you are consistently unable to pick up large viewing figures then inevitably, your programmes will be less exciting to the chief executive, etc. We have to think more about how we can make an impact on the mainstream and on the prime-time schedule. I do think it's time for Black and Asian faces to be there in numbers.

SM: Isn't that going to have to mean a whole reconceptualisation of multicultural programming and the way Black representation has come to be seen?

YA: No, all it means is finding the nuggets of a good idea and developing them. I am excited because I know I'm not alone in thinking it's time. This is not a one-man band; it's about finding the right team and expertise. I'm actively seeking and looking for the up and coming talent.

SM: What do you think of Trevor Phillips' assertion that you should be 'let loose on the entire range of diversity, including the Irish, the Jews and the Chinese'?

YA: There's no reason why not.

SM: Finally, what are your immediate plans?

YA: I have to sit down and develop a proper strategy at least for the next couple of years. That means putting a lot of thoughts on ice until I'm sure of what I want to do. In the mean time, there are some things coming up that I know are must-haves. There's the thirtieth anniversary of Enoch Powell's 'Rivers of Blood' speech coming up in April. I don't want to let that pass, so that's a must-have. Empire Windrush in June, the fiftieth anniversary, a must-
have. Again, there's everything to play for in terms of approach and genre. The main thing is that I think we need to make an event of both of these. Obviously the millennium, and we need to think is there any thing that we can put out in 1999 that will be something that we want to watch.

SM: You're mentioning key moments and anniversaries, what about some kind of ongoing presence?

YA: That's what I need to think about. We need strands, but I need time to think that through and discuss it with people here. It's more important to get it right then it is to get the volume. Just picking the right things now means that you can add them. Picking the wrong things means that you have to keep getting rid of the, decommissioning them. The only way to develop volume is to get things up and running which work.
APPENDIX B: ‘BLACK AND WHITE IN COLOUR’ SEASON, BBC TELEVISION, PROGRAMME DETAILS

**Saturday, June 27, 1992**
Black and White in Colour (1992, Part One, Dir: Isaac Julien)
1936-late 1960s.

**Z Cars - A Place of Safety** (1964)

Play For Today - Hole in Babylon (1970, Dir: Horace Ove)

**Sunday, June 28, 1992**
Color Adjustment (Dir: Marlon T. Riggs)
-the American experience of black programming

**Do The Right Thing** (Dir: Spike Lee)

**Monday, June 29, 1992**
A Passage to India (1964)

Tonight: West Indians (1963, Dir: Jack Gold)

**Empire Road - The Street Party** (1979, Prod: Peter Ansorge)

**Tuesday, June 30, 1992**
Black and White in Colour (Dir: Isaac Julien)
-late 1960s-early 1990s

**The Colony** (Prod: Philip Donnellan)

**Wednesday, July 1, 1992**
A Man From The Sun (Prod: John Elliot)

**Empire Road - Wedding**

**Adelaide Hall From Variety in Sepia** (1947)
**Friday, July 3, 1992**
The Lenny Henry Show (1984)


- Elisabeth Welch
- Pauline Henriques
- Pearl Connor
- Cy Grant
- Lloyd Reckord
- Carmen Munroe
- Thomas Baptiste
- Zia Mohyeddin
- Rudolph Walker
- John Elliot
- John Hopkins
- Joan Hooley
- Cleo Sylvestre
- Kenny Lynch
- Norman Beaton
- Horace Ove
- Michael Abbensetts
- Desmond Wilcox
- Trevor Phillips
- Samir Shah
- Farrukh Dhondy
- Mike Phillips
- Trix Worrell
- Charlie Hanson
- Judith Jacob
- Paul J. Medford
- Treva Etienne
- Lenny Henry
### FIGURE 1: ETHNIC MINORITY POPULATIONS IN BRITAIN, 1991

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>% of total Population</th>
<th>% born in UK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Population</td>
<td>54,888,844</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>51,874,000</td>
<td>94.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All ethnic minorities</td>
<td>3,015,050</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**(Breakdown)**

- Black Caribbean: 500,000 (0.9% born in UK)
- Black African: 212,000 (0.4% born in UK)
- Black Other: 178,000 (0.3% born in UK)
- Indian: 840,000 (1.5% born in UK)
- Pakistani: 477,000 (0.9% born in UK)
- Bangladeshi: 163,000 (0.3% born in UK)
- Chinese: 157,000 (0.3% born in UK)
- Other Asian: 198,000 (0.4% born in UK)
- Other: 290,000 (0.5% born in UK)

Source: 1991 Census

### FIGURE 2: COUNTRY OF BIRTH, AND SIZE OF COMMUNITY IN BRITAIN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Other Country Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Irish Republic</td>
<td>592,000</td>
<td>Cyprus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>409,000</td>
<td>Poland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Ireland</td>
<td>245,000</td>
<td>Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>234,000</td>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>216,000</td>
<td>South Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>143,000</td>
<td>Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamaica</td>
<td>142,000</td>
<td>Middle East (excl. Israel &amp; Iran)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>112,000</td>
<td>France</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladeshi</td>
<td>105,000</td>
<td>Uganda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>91,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 1991 Census
FIGURE 3: PERCENTAGE OF THE POPULATION IN EACH AGE GROUP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>0-15</th>
<th>16-64</th>
<th>65+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>19.3</td>
<td>63.9</td>
<td>16.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All ethnic minorities</td>
<td>33.0</td>
<td>63.7</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Breakdown)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Caribbean</td>
<td>21.9</td>
<td>72.5</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black African</td>
<td>29.3</td>
<td>69.2</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Other</td>
<td>50.6</td>
<td>48.2</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>29.6</td>
<td>66.4</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistani</td>
<td>42.7</td>
<td>55.6</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladeshi</td>
<td>47.2</td>
<td>51.6</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>73.3</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Asian</td>
<td>24.4</td>
<td>73.2</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>41.7</td>
<td>55.1</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 1991 Census

FIGURE 4: REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF ETHNIC MINORITIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Total ethnic minority population</th>
<th>% of total ethnic minority population in Britain</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>South East</td>
<td>1,654,700</td>
<td>56.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Greater London)</td>
<td>1,346,800</td>
<td>44.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Anglia</td>
<td>43,300</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South West</td>
<td>62,700</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Midlands</td>
<td>422,900</td>
<td>14.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Midlands</td>
<td>188,800</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yorks &amp; Humberside</td>
<td>215,200</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North West</td>
<td>243,200</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North</td>
<td>37,800</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wales</td>
<td>41,200</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scotland</td>
<td>64,000</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 1991 Census
The CRE first held a seminar about the television industry's relationship with racial and cultural diversity in the late 1970s. This encouraged research on the portrayal of ethnic minorities on British television, and on programme-makers attitudes towards the issue (Anwar, 1983). A number of recommendations followed (for example by the Afro-Asian Committee of Equity) which proposed that the IBA, BBC and individual companies needed to acknowledge the The CRE first held a seminar about the television industry's relationship with racial and cultural importance of diversifying roles and opportunities for Black media workers. Another CRE seminar was held in 1991, as the deadline for the ITC bids for the new ITV licences approached.

The 1996 CRE Seminar, organised in conjunction with the ITC and BBC, invited researchers in the field of race and television to present their findings to a large number of delegates within the broadcasting industry. The morning session was chaired by Trevor Phillips, and included research presentations by Guy Cumberbatch, Karen Ross and Annabelle Sreberney-Mohammadi. This was followed by a panel session which included Robin Duval (ITC, Deputy Director of Programmes), Clive Jones (Carlton UK TV, Chief Executive) and Michael Jackson (BBC2 TV, Controller). The afternoon session culminated in a summary by CRE Chairman, Herman Ouseley, which was preceded by four discussion groups. These were broken down into News and Current Affairs; Drama and Light Entertainment; Factual Programming; and Mainstream/Multicultural Programming.
Research Findings
(detailed breakdown in reports)

The Aston Research:

Statistics alone cannot capture the complexity involved here but the statistics
provide the starting point for discussion. They also provide a basis for
judgments to be made about the progress, for example, of equal opportunities
for actors and on-screen presenters of ethnic minority origin. (Cumberbatch
and Woods, Key Research Findings 1)

Guy Cumberbatch, a Chartered Psychologist from Aston University who specialises in media
research, presented the findings of his BBC and ITC commissioned research. The methodology
favoured a 'headcounting' approach, so that the frequency with which people from ethnic
minorities appeared on British television, was measured. It also considered their level of
appearance and the types of roles they played. The research looked at four weeks of prime-
time terrestrial television (17.30-12.00 on BBC1, BBC2, ITV and C4). The findings confirmed
basic facts about Black representation, such as that there is a heavy proportion of African-
Caribbeans in music and sports linked programmes and that Asians are almost invisible in
these areas; that Black people are not likely to be regarded in high social terms on television;
that one in five of those in children's programme are Black; that there are very few Asians in
light factual/quiz programmes. Perhaps more revealing was that Trevor MacDonald takes up
3% of the number of representations of ethnic minorities on British television! Or that 63% of
Asian performances are repeat ones which feature a total of just six Asians.
Whilst it was useful to know that Asians, for example, are under-represented on television (of the 3 million members of ethnic minorities in GB, 49% are Asian, but they are only seen in 22% of factual programmes, 5% of fiction programmes and 7% of adverts), to take such statistics literally would also reveal that African-Caribbeans are ‘over-represented’ on television (they take up 29% of the ethnic minority population and are seen 46% in factual programmes, 30% in fiction programmes and 60% in adverts). This is where ‘counting heads’ can serve to soothe the consciences of programme-makers and executives, who might believe that sticking in a few more Asian faces on television might solve ‘the problem of Black representation’. To this degree, such statistical findings reveal nothing about the quality or the complexities of Black representation and characterisation. When these same programme-makers and executives hear that the overall proportion of members of ethnic minorities featured on British television is higher than their demographic composition, they might just feel that the need to improve representation is not that urgent after all. According to Cumberbatch and Woods summary,

Overall, members of ethnic minorities accounted for 8.5% of the total television population - compared with a real world estimate of around 6% in the Great Britain population. Black African Caribbean people accounted for 49% of all ethnic characters, 32% were Asian, and the rest were “other ethnicities”.

In the week following the conference, the BBC staff newspaper Aerial reported that:

Overall, they [ethnic minorities] accounted for 8.5% of people who appeared on the two networks [BBC1 and BBC2] over the six week period (Britain’s
We can see then that the interpretation and 'filtering down' of statistics can, in fact, serve to deny the intricacies behind the 'facts'. Such selectivity over which statistics to focus on only indicates self-congratulation, with the insinuation that the BBC are doing more than their 'fair share'. The BBC must have been pleased that the Aston survey they helped organise (in conjunction with the CRE and the ITC) had produced such favourable results! Like the 1994 ITC Research Publication and Andrea Millwood Hargrave's Broadcasting Standards Council report, 'The Portrayal of Ethnic Minorities on Television' (Oct 1992, Research Working Paper VII), the Aston research displayed a number of limitations which, at the end of the day, did not shed much new light on a complex area of research.

The Leicester Research:

The second study by Karen Ross and Annabelle Sreberny-Mohammadi of the Centre for Mass Communication Research at Leicester University was more insightful, perhaps because it moved away from numbers and focused more on attitudes and views of Black people towards television. The structure was more open, based on focus groups, questionnaires and diaries. The researchers admitted the limitations of their findings, and urged the need for mixed methodologies, whilst agreeing that there is no such thing as a 'typical' Black viewer. They also said that the debate does not appear to have changed that much since the 1960s. They argued that stereotypes are more insidious today and that we should be concerned not only with what we see, but what we don't see - the invisibility. They noted that there was a lack of
cultural fidelity and concern for getting the details of cultural and religious distinctions right. They also suggested that the casting of a Black character with a White partner was irresistible for programme-makers, who often attempted to appease White viewers. They recognised Chef! as a notable exception here. The rarity of a Black star billing such as Lenny Henry and positive and ‘real’ characters such as Ash in Casualty was also mentioned. The researchers said their respondents recognised how Black programmes were often marginalised - for example, where a series such as Pride & Prejudice would be ‘talked-to death-about’ beforehand in the programme trailing, a Hindi movie season would be scheduled in the ‘graveyard’ hours. They concluded by stressing that we need to get behind headcounting and assess how Blacks are represented and how White people understand Blacks through mediated experiences.

Commentary

The disparity between some of the research project findings points perhaps to the problems inherent in such analysis. The Leicester research for example, found that:

Most viewers had very similar programme preferences to those of “mainstream” audiences inasmuch as the most popular programmes mentioned were those which feature regularly in the top twenties - soaps, crime series, etc.

Clive Jones of Carlton UK, claims by contrast, that the results of small-scale qualitative research commissioned by ITV showed that:

Asians are very much like the English television audiences of the 1950s...Asian families are often uncomfortable with British soaps - they prefer to watch more sanitised soaps like Home & Away.
Jones continued that Asians tend to watch television in family settings and are concerned with standards of taste and decency. He also claimed that there are distinct differences between the viewing trends and habits of Asians and African-Caribbeans. Thus, he suggested that where African-Caribbeans watch television more individually as they do other things, Asians tend to view within a family context. The problem I have with such findings, is that they appear to be underpinned by certain generalisations around what 'Blackness'/'Asianness' constitute. (Thus, for example, Asians very traditional, Victorian, overly-sensitive to seeing sex etc, bound to viewing within family setting). More importantly, what do such findings actually tell programme-makers and executives about how to go about meeting the needs of Black television audiences? ITC Research (ITC, 1996) claims that the number of television sets per household of African-Caribbeans and Asians is near identical (1 Set: Asians - 66%, AC’s - 67%; 2 Sets: Asians - 26%, AC’s - 24%; 3 or more sets: Asians - 8%; AC’s - 9%). Since similar technology exists for African-Caribbeans and Asians, one would assume that both groups would not have such dissimilar viewing habits - thus, each would sometimes view TV with other people and sometimes individually.

At the end of the research presentations, the overall sense given was that statistics hold a number of limitations, and that in themselves, they do little to change anything. I got the impression that the large broadcasting companies were patting themselves on the back for undertaking the research, but got little evidence that they would implement any changes that some of the results suggested were needed. Much of the research findings also implied (Leicester research excluded) that there was such a thing as a typical Asian and African-
Caribbean viewer. If a survey said that out of 300 White British viewers, 200 said they do not approve of the level of violence on television, would we be able to generalise by stating that statistics show us that White British people do not like violence on television? Such unnuanced logic reminds me of Andrea Millwood Hargrave’s paper, ‘The Portrayal of Ethnic Minorities On Television’ (October, 1992), which used six Muslim men as its quota sample for the pilot project in a “research clinic” (implying a purely scientific approach). The central problem here is, of course, the assumption that you can take a Black person, ask their views on television and apply the results to the entire Black viewing population. Arguably, another problem is that, without exception, all these researchers are White, and they might lack the cultural knowledge and language that might have enhanced the findings. How easily, for example, would a 60 year old Urdu speaking person be able to express his/her views on *Eastenders* to somebody who did not understand the language, would a certain respondent be able to speak more fluently about their attitudes to television in their mother-tongue language, etc? Although this might only apply to a few people in the quota sample, it still bears consideration. After all, would a Bengali speaking person with limited English be expected to interview an English-only speaking respondent? The way such research is conducted often reveals a lack of cultural sensitivity. Audiences are not an undifferentiated mass and we need to look at such specificities.

**What The Executives Had To Say**

Michael Jackson argued that soap operas are a good example of the way forward for better representations on British television. He said:

> What has happened in soap operas is the most positive development; the rest of television should learn from them.
Jackson went further by arguing that, "Soaps are now what the Royal Court once was" (in terms of displaying talent). Jackson agreed that multicultural programming should not just be factual, that there are very few Blacks in positions of power, and that the Asian youth audience in particular have been ignored on television. He said that BBC2 were planning to make Friday nights an 'entertainment zone' targeted specifically at young African-Caribbeans. He suggested a development fund for multicultural producers to get into traditional programmes like Timewatch, and the need for a good database of independents holding details of people and their work to date.

Clive Jones (Carlton Chief Executive) agreed that Black people watch less ITV than their White counterparts and that Carlton was very concerned about attracting Black and Asian audiences. At the same time he relayed the results on the ITV commissioned research, which appeared to suggest that Black viewers were, in some way, 'over-sensitive' to certain images on British TV. For example, that Asians were 'uncomfortable' with British soaps and African-Caribbeans were 'insecure' when they saw Black contestants on British quiz shows. This shifted the onus of responsibility from the broadcasting companies onto the viewers themselves; as though what we 'do' with the images we are offered is in some way inappropriate.

Robin Duval (ITC) argued that things have improved. Thus, "Curry & Chips would be inconceivable today", and that ethnic minorities have a noticeably high profile today. He indicated that TV is little more than a reactive agent, by claiming that TV inherits and
perpetuates prejudice, and is the focus of the national malaise. He agreed that programme
codes are a 'blunt instrument' and that it is easier to tell programme-makers what\textit{not} to do
that what to do.

\textbf{Concluding Remarks}
What resulted from the conference was an overall sense that the 'fat cats' of the companies
were awarding themselves brownie points for headcounts over proving real changes. The
general atmosphere was one of a 'race awareness day' - rather than a genuine sense that most
were leaving any the wiser. The fact is that statistics can be used in any way: as Herman
Ouseley commented in the closing plenary, they can be "rubbished or noted".

The afternoon session that I sat in on, was discussing 'Mainstream or Multicultural
programming'. It was a muddled discussion which included few ideas about \textit{how} to improve
programming so as to satisfy Black audiences. More significantly perhaps, the discussion
which was attended by many HOD's from out of London regions, proved how 'behind the
times' many of those regions are in terms of meeting the needs and wants of their Black
audiences. For many of them, the concept of Black-targeted programmes was totally
inconceivable - for different reasons. Clive Lloyd, Head of Features for HTV, argued that with
only ten and a half hours of English-speaking programmes per week, there was little chance of
Black people in the region being served in distinct ways by their regional television. Others
argued that it was too cost expensive to get a realistic spread of UK people to work for their
regional television centres - and that when they did try, they did not get responses from Black
programme-makers and artists. When asked where they advertised, they said 'local agencies'. 
It was explained to them that this would not get many Black respondents (particularly when
the advert did not specify their keenness to employ a Black, Asian person, etc). Suggestions
were made that they advertise in a Black newspaper such as *The Voice*. It is deeply worrying
that in 1996, key decision-makers in television are so ignorant about basic practicalities like
this and oblivious to ways to attract Black employees. Such apathy was indicative of many of
the regions’ indifference to their Black viewers. (At another point in the conference, I
overheard a key figure from the ITC (Bob Towler - Head of Research) responding to a young
Black woman’s criticisms of Black representation on British television, by saying, “Don’t you
know that Shakespeare often got it wrong too, but it doesn’t stop him from being a good
artist”.

Perhaps the most important point which came out of the conference, was that the main
impetus for the controllers of television to make real changes now, is because *they cannot
afford to not make real changes*. It was generally understood that there is an ethnic minority
market who are not that happy with the terrestrial television they are currently getting.
Furthermore, it was agreed that many ethnic minorities are now seeing non-terrestrial television
as a viable and attractive alternative. Ouseley ended the conference by reminding everyone of
the CRE’s dual function, to not only encourage positive action in various institutions, but also
of its law enforcement role. He suggested that, given the way things are today, British
television companies need formal investigation into their recruitment procedures etc. Ouseley
offered them advice and action plans on how to go about improving their relations with ethnic
minorities. I wonder how many will take him up on it.
APPENDIX E: NUJ CODES OF CONDUCT

FIGURE 1: NUJ CODE OF CONDUCT

1. A journalist has a duty to maintain the highest professional and ethical standards.

2. A journalist shall at all times defend the principle of the freedom of the Press and other media in relation to the collection of information and the expression of comment and criticism. He/she shall strive to eliminate distortion, news suppression and censorship.

3. A journalist shall strive to ensure that the information he/she disseminates is fair and accurate, avoid the expression of comment and conjecture as established fact and falsification by distortion, selection or misrepresentation.

4. A journalist shall rectify promptly any harmful inaccuracies, ensure that correction and apologies receive due prominence and afford the right of reply to persons criticised when the issue is of sufficient importance.

5. A journalist shall obtain information, photographs and illustrations only by straightforward means. The use of other means can be justified only by over-riding considerations of the public interest. The journalist is entitled to exercise a personal conscientious objection to the use of such means.

6. Subject to justification by over-riding considerations of public interest, a journalist shall do nothing which entails intrusion into private grief and distress.

7. A journalist shall protect confidential sources of information.

8. A journalist shall not accept bribes nor shall he/she allow other inducements to influence the performances of his/her professional duties.
9. A journalist shall not lend himself/herself to the distortion or suppression of the truth because of advertising or other considerations.

10. A journalist shall not originate material which encourages discrimination on grounds of race, colour, creed, gender or sexual orientation.

11. A journalist shall take private advantage of information gained in the course of his/her duties, before the information is public knowledge.

FIGURE 2: NUJ GUIDELINES ON REPORTING RACE AGREED BY THE NUJ IN ITS ANNUAL CONFERENCE (1975)

- Only mention someone's race or nationality if strictly relevant
- Resist the temptation to sensationalise issues which could harm race relations
- Press for equal opportunities for employment of black staff, particularly in areas of extensively minority group settlement
- Seek to achieve wider and better coverage of black affairs: social, political and cultural
- Investigate the treatment of blacks in education, employment and housing and the activities of racialist organisations.

(The guidelines were printed on cards and sent back to the NUJ's 30,000 members (of whom 2,000 work in television and radio.)
FIGURE 3: NUJ GUIDELINES ON REPORTING FASCISM AGREED BY THE NUJ IN ITS ANNUAL CONFERENCE (1978)

- When interviewing representatives of racist organisations or reporting meetings or statements or claims, journalists should carefully check all reports for accuracy and seek rebutting or opposing comments. The anti-social nature of such views should be exposed.

- Do not sensationalise by reports, photographs, film or presentation the activities of racist organisations.

- Seek to publish or broadcast material exposing the myths and lies of racist organisations and their anti-social behaviour.

- Do not allow the letters column or 'phone-in' programmes to be used to spread racial hatred in whatever guise.

QUESTIONS ON NUJ CARD HEADED, 'RACE: HOW DO YOU COVER ELECTIONS?'

- Can you be neutral on racism?

- Are you helping to make race a 'problem'?

- Do you give racists easy publicity because they are proactive?

- Can you treat the National Front like other political parties?

- Conscientious objections - do you know your rights?

(SOURCE: DENIS MACSHANE, 'REPORTING RACE', SCREEN EDUCATION 31, SUMMER 1979)
FIGURE 4: NUJ-NGA-NATSOPA AGREEMENT

1. The NGA and the NUJ believe that the development of racist attitudes and the growth of the fascist parties pose a threat to democracy, the right of trade union organisations, a free Press and the development of social harmony and well-being.

2. The NGA and the NUJ believe that members of their unions cannot avoid a measure of responsibility in fighting the evil of racism as expressed through the mass media.

3. The NGA and the NUJ reaffirm their total opposition to censorship but equally reaffirm their belief that Press freedom must be, conditioned by responsibility and an acknowledgement by all media workers of the need not to allow Press freedom to be abused to slander a section of the community or to promote the evil of racism.

4. The NGA and the NUJ believe that the methods and lies of the racists should be publicly and vigorously exposed.

5. The NGA and the NUJ believe that newspapers and magazines should not originate material which encourages discrimination on grounds of race or colour as expressed in the NUJ’s Rule Book and Code of Conduct.

6. The NGA and NUJ recognise the right of members to withhold their labour on grounds of conscience because employers are providing a platform for racist propaganda.

7. The NGA and NUJ believe that editors should ensure that coverage of race stories should be placed in a balanced context.

8. The NGA and NUJ will continue to monitor the development of media coverage in this area and give mutual support to members of each union seeking to enforce the aims outlined in this joint statement.
APPENDIX F: TUMBER'S REPORT ON COVERAGE OF 1981 RIOTS

FIGURE 1: THEMES AND REFERENCES IDENTIFIED IN ORDER OF RELATIVE FREQUENCY: PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF ITEMS BY THEMES AND REFERENCES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>% of Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Riot Equipment</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>80.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rioters' destruction of property</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>73.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Causes; i.e. attempts to explain</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>69.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looting, theft</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>61.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>57.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rioters' violence against people</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>53.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courts and sentencing</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>50.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>50.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>50.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police injuries</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>42.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside agitators</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>38.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skin Colour</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>38.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social deprivation</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>30.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police harassment</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>30.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imitative - 'copycat'</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>26.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political extremists</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>26.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>23.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racist group</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>23.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riot training</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>23.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compared to previous riots</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>23.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innocent people's injuries</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>23.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compared to Northern Ireland</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Predicting events/future riots</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11.54</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rioters' injuries</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compared to soccer hooliganism</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drugs</td>
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<td>7.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humorous items</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compared to violence in another country</td>
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<td>3.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police violence</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.85</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

255

FIGURE 2: FREQUENCY AND AMOUNT OF TIME ACTORS INTERVIEWED

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Total no. of interviews</th>
<th>Total seconds</th>
<th>BBC seconds</th>
<th>ITN seconds</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Police - Senior</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>367</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police - Junior</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Residents - Shopkeepers, etc.</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>71</td>
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<tr>
<td>Religious Figures - Local</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Councillors and Local MPs</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government Ministers</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>373</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opposition Front Bench</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>282</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other MPs</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camera Crews</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experts</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants - Active (Rioters)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants - Passive</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>14</td>
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APPENDIX G: POLITICS OF SPORTS AND ETHNICITY/
ADDITIONAL NOTES

THE DIVISION OF LABOUR AND RACIAL STACKING IN BRITISH
SPORT

1) Male bias in academic studies of sport

As well as the male bias of sport and sports journalism, academic research on Black
participation in British sport has also tended to focus on the male experience. This has tended
to be sociology-based, looking at leisure patterns, physical education provisions and cultural
trends (Cashmore, 1982, Sargeant, 1972, Carrington and Wood, 1983). Apart from noting the
relative absence of women (Asian and African-Caribbean) and Asian men (apart from in
cricket), these studies have tended to focus on African-Caribbean males. In the little research
which has been done on Black women, it has been noted how the Black female leisure
experience contrasts significantly with those of Black men and White women (Lovell in Jarvie,
1991: 58-73). This type of research is useful insofar as it addresses a number of issues
(schooling, role modelling, physical education, access, self-image, parental expectations, career
values etc.), which influence the variations between different social groups and their
relationship to sport. (See Trivedi, 1984: 37-55 critique of Lewis, 1979: 1, for her argument
that Asian women are frail and passive.)

2) Racial stacking procedures

There have been criticisms over the years of ‘racial stacking’ procedures: the assumption that
Blacks posses certain skills and lack others which, in turn, determines what positions they are
asked to occupy on-field (e.g. Asians as batsmen and African-Caribbeans as bowlers in cricket, Blacks as wingers rather than mid-fielders in football (see Maguire in Jarvie, 1991: 104-5).

Thus, the myth that Black men are, for example, better with their feet than with their hands, good at running but not at tackling, that they have a lot of aggression but not much ‘bottle’, has arguably contributed to their predominance in certain (non-tactical) positions. In 1982, the manager of QPR declared that Black football-players ‘use very little intelligence; they get by on sheer natural ability’ (Smith quoted in Cashmore, 1982: 45). (The Radio 5 documentary series produced by Graham Hepburn-Harrison ‘Across The White Line’ (19.2.96) investigated the lack of Black football managers. Note, for example, how Luther Blissett - who has played for England and AC Milan - has apparently applied for 22 jobs with no offer for interview.)

Similar myths of what the body will allow circulate around Asian footballers and have potentially prevented them from entering the game at a professional level (there are virtually no Asian professional footballers in Britain). Sixty-nine percent of professional club officials recently claimed that Asians are physically inferior when it comes to the game and also mentioned ‘cultural barriers’ like diet, language and religion. (Asians Can't Play Football, Report compiled by Jas Bains and Raj Patel, Midland Arts Sports Forum, 1996).

The lack of Black footballers prior to the 1980s (which, in turn, meant that they were rarely seen on television), perpetuated the myth that Black people simply could not play the game (in the same way that Blacks were assumed to be unable to play golf pre-Tiger Woods success in 1997). Twelve first division managers in the 1980s claimed that, ‘They lack bottle, are no good in the mud and have no stamina’ (quoted in The Guardian, 10.2.96: 24). Black men first began to reach Football League level in the late 1960s/early 1970s (Viv Anderson followed by
Garth Crooks and John Barnes), but by 1985-6 they constituted 7.7% of the English Football League first team squads, and this figure has increased since then (Maguire, 1988). There is still, according to footballer, Les Ferdinand, a general image that Black players are “too lazy, not hungry enough, don’t want it enough” (Ferdinand, cited from Black Britain, BBC2, 29.10.97). Most Black footballers have indeed, faced varying degrees of racism. As ex Liverpool FC Captain, John Barnes argues:

Until we are accepted in an intellectual level - socially, economically, intellectually, then that is the way to get rid of racism, not to produce more 100m sprinters and produce more footballers and produce more boxers, because that is the main Black stereotype - that we can run 100m metres and that we can box. Let’s have some more Black darts player or snooker players. I think that would be more important in breaking down the barriers of racism than Black footballers or Black boxers. (Barnes, cited from ‘Ruscoe on 5’ Radio 5, Tx: 3/6/96)

Herman Ouseley, reminded us in the 1980s that no Black British sports person had been exempt from some form of racist abuse (Ouseley, 1983: 14-20), and this fact appears to hold true today. Mark Walters, who was transferred to the Scottish Football League has described the type of racist abuse he received (The People, 17.1.88). In 1997, Ian Wright revealed that, following racial abuse from Crystal Palace team-mates, he considered giving up football (Daily Mirror, 29.10.97: 34). Blatant booing has been a common form of racial abuse (experienced as early as 1965 by Albert Johannsen). It was also seen by television viewers during England’s 1993 World Cup Qualifier against Holland at Wembley, when John Barnes was booed at every touch of the ball. After scoring a goal during a free kick, a commentator said, “’Boo me now if you dare” he says to those English supporters’. Banana skins have also been thrown from the terraces (The Independent, 2.1.87), but there is also more discreet goading or ‘subtle’ commentary on certain individual’s poor performance which is often (even in jest) attributed to racial difference. There have been a number of efforts to tackle this since the 1980s.
Important as they are, these various campaigns and initiatives are not, in themselves, enough to undercut the forceful and compelling ways in which Black people are represented in sport across and within different media.

Rugby has its own set of problems related to racist practice, although investigative reports have been conducted. The first Black rugby player to captain a British team in Australia was Ellery Hanley in 1988. There are now some prominent Black Rugby players such as Martin Offiah (the British rugby league player who made a brief appearance in ITV's *Emmerdale*) and Jeremy Gusgott (who, for a time, presented ITV's *Gladiators*). (‘What’s The Difference: The Nature and Extent of Racism in Rugby League’, was commissioned by the Rugby Football League and conducted by Jonathan Long of Leeds Metropolitan University. This and other questions of race in British sport were discussed in the Radio 5 ‘Race Around The UK’ week (1-9.6.96)). For example, the Rugby Football League commissioned an independent report, called ‘What’s The Difference: The Nature and Extent of Racism in Rugby League?’ (led by Jonathan Long of Leeds Metropolitan University) and prompted a 13 point action plan to be launched later in 1996. But some say that the full picture has not been considered. All rugby players interviewed as part of the research had suffered racial abuse of some level on the pitch; over 50% of the supporters had heard racist chanting against Black players etc. But the conclusions were that although the game had a significant problem with racism, this was small and focused only on the professional game. But some still claim that Rugby does not have a problem - the British Amateur Rugby League Association (BARLA) is the governing body for the Amateur Game. Its Chief Executive, Maurice Oldroyd, says that in the non-professional game there are, "certainly no major problems at all as far as I understand it, but obviously we
are brought up in a sense that we do get certain little prejudices from time to time. I’m not
saying there are too many Alf Garnetts, but there are those feelings around...but overall in the
amateur game, the number of complaints we ever receive are minimum.”

There are various issues around policy, public space and participation which have affected
different social groups’ involvement with sport. If we look at the immediate post-war years,
working-class youth and Black communities were low participants of public amenities. The
1980s marked an important turning-point, because it brought a drive towards ideals of
communalism and equal opportunity, and urban/community programmes were devised in order
to encourage fuller participation (Parry and Parry in Jarvie, 1991: 164-5). The Sports Council
Initiative Action Sport, the Muhammad Ali Sports Development Association (London) and
the Greater London Council (GLC) in the early 1980s, all identified sport as one potential area
for targeting disaffected Black youth. More recently, tabloid ‘Black papers’ such as Eastern
Eye and The Voice have attempted to redress racist reporting of Black sports people by
campaigning for a reconsideration of the way sport is represented in the mainstream media.
The ‘Kick Racism Out of Football’ campaign, initiated by the CRE, has gained momentum. In
1997, another campaign, ‘Show Racism the Red Card’ was launched, which involved 57
football stars urging racial harmony across Europe.
APPENDIX H: KEY TERMS OF THE 1982 WORKSHOP DECLARATION

'An agreement between the British Film Institute, Channel 4 Television, the Independent Film and Video Association, Regional Arts Associations and the ACTT [Association of Cinematograph, Television and Allied Technicians] which ensures ACTT approval for properly funded and staffed production units who want to engage in non-commercial and grant-aided film and tape work. Those who seek to work under the Declaration should have a track record of activity in the grant-aided and independent sector. Workshops must also be democratically controlled by those who work within them and any surpluses earned must be used for further workshop production. Their programme of work should cover a range of activities grouped around production and aim to develop audiences, research, education and community work in the widest sense.' (my addition)
APPENDIX I: ETHNIC MINORITIES’ (SOUTH ASIANS) ATTITUDES TOWARDS BBC2 AND CHANNEL 4 (THE MINORITY CHANNELS)

**FIGURE 1: WATCHING BBC2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Gujarati N-48</th>
<th>Punjabi N-47</th>
<th>Bengali N-47</th>
<th>Urdu N-40</th>
<th>Total N-182</th>
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<tr>
<td>YES</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>23</td>
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**FIGURE 2: WATCHING CHANNEL 4**

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<th>Bengali N-47</th>
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<td>51</td>
<td>33</td>
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<tr>
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<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
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**FIGURE 3: AWARENESS OF CHANNEL FOUR REMIT WITH REGARD TO MINORITIES**

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
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<th>Bengali N-47</th>
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<tr>
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<td>13</td>
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FIGURE 4: HOW WELL DOES CHANNEL FOUR FULFIL ITS REMIT?

<table>
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<tr>
<th>FULFILMENT</th>
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<td>Very Badly</td>
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<td>13</td>
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<tr>
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<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>18</td>
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<td>Not Very Well</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>18</td>
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<td>53</td>
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FIGURE 5: HOW TELEVISION SHOULD CHANGE IN THE FUTURE

<table>
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<tr>
<th>DESIRED CHANGES</th>
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<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less Violence</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>More Serious and Religious</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More about Ethnic Minorities</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More Asian Languages and people</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More About India</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More Indian Films</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Author’s Note: These figures are meant for general interest. It is worth noting, however, that the sample was very small (under 200) and based only on Asians’ attitudes towards the two minority channels. It should also be observed that the South Asian groups here are categorised according to language, rather than by ethnic group, i.e. ‘Urdu’ is a language, not an ethnic group.
APPENDIX J: US AUDIENCE FIGURES


America’s Top Ten TV Shows (1995/96)

All Homes

1. ER
2. Seinfeld
3. Friends
4. Caroline In The City
5. Monday Night Football
6. The Single Guy
7. The Home Improvement
8. Coach
9. NYPD Blue
10. 60 Minutes

Now if we add brackets to show where these programmes stand in black households - an interesting picture emerges. The research demonstrates that black people want to watch completely different things to white people. And there’s evidence that it may be true here as well.
America's Top Ten TV Shows (1995/96)

Black Homes

1. ER (20)
2. Seinfeld (89)
3. Friends (111)
4. Caroline In The City (106)
5. Monday Night Football (9)
6. The Single Guy (125)
7. The Home Improvement (53)
8. Coach (60)
9. NYPD Blue (23)
10. 60 Minutes (22)

Seinfeld is number 89 in black households. The Single Guy and Home Improvement are also way down the viewing priority list. Will tastes converge in time? No sign of it! In 1985/86, there were 15 shows in common between the two top twenties. Now there are just three. Football is number 5 in the white household and number 9 in the black household. ER, number 1 in white households is down at number 20 in black households. It is not just about black faces because there are prominent black characters in ER, Eriq La Salle as Benton for example. But that doesn't help even though we all love Benton. Let's have a look at the shows which were unpopular amongst blacks at this point. That might tell us more.

America's All-White Favourites

2. Seinfeld (89)
3. Friends (111)
4. Caroline In The City (106)
6. The Single Guy (125)
7. Home Improvement (53)
8. Coach (60)
Seinfeld, Friends, Caroline In The City, they're big shows, now what do they have in common,? Yes they're sitcoms, but none of them have a regular black character. You can add to that Grace Under Fire at number 11, Frasier, Roseanne, and Murphy Brown, all the way down the black chart. So if black viewers aren't watching the shows that leave them out, what are they watching?

Here’s a collection of shows you’ve probably never heard of. Up at number one, New York Undercover, the most popular show in black households. Where is it in ‘All American’ households? Number 122.

**Black America’s Top Ten**

**All Households**

1. New York Undercover (122)
2. Living Single (124)
3. The Crew (124)
4. In The House (79)
5. Fresh Prince of Bel Air (76)
6. Martin (Sun) (117)
7. Family Matters (61)
8. Martin (Sat) (127)
9. Monday Night Football (7)
10. The Preston Episode (128)

Leaving aside football, all of these shows are led by black characters. New York Undercover is a cop show written by black and Latin writers. It beats the opposition Seinfeld in the ethnic audience.
APPENDIX K: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BROADCASTING ON FAIR PORTRAYAL OF ETHNIC MINORITIES IN EUROPEAN SOCIETIES

FIGURE 1: MULTICULTURAL PROGRAMMING

Against the backdrop of a rapidly changing media environment in which black and ethnic minority people are invisible and given the situation in which xenophobia and racism are growing creating further marginalisation and alienation amongst these groups, public broadcasters have a special obligation to adopt a multicultural programming policy.

The main elements of such a multicultural programming policy should be:

* To assure a balanced and diverse programming, that permeates all programme areas, ensures fair portrayal, and ensures that black and ethnic communities become part of broadcast reality.
* Incorporates an equal opportunities policy that ensures a diverse workforce to produce programmes that include a range of perspectives and cultures and that enables the commissioning of programmes that challenge racism and xenophobia directly.
* Where necessary to include specific niche programming to serve minority communities.
* To promote an awareness of these issues amongst sections of the general public and amongst governmental and non-governmental bodies and organisations in Europe in the field of human rights, broadcasting regulation, independent production, education and training, etc.

RECOMMENDATIONS
The following are in line with the EBU Television Programme Committees' declaration of intent (see Fig 2) adopted on 26th October 1994. They are also a response to the plan of action contained in the October 1993 Vienna declaration made by the Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe (see Fig 3). They have been worked out in close cooperation between experts of the EBU, the Council of Europe and PBME (Public Broadcasting for a Multicultural Europe).

These recommendations are issues with the following objectives:

* To obtain and sustain the containing debate in public broadcasting (nationally and in the European Broadcasting Union) about standards and expectations in European democratic societies;

* To propose guidance for programme and policy makers in broadcasting;

* To stimulate measures for both the creation and development of multicultural broadcasting and equal employment initiatives for ethnic minorities;

**Recommendations for all areas of broadcasting**

Broadcasters should:

* Ensure that programmes include nothing which offends against the equal rights and dignity of all human beings and which is likely to incite racism, xenophobia and destructive nationalism. Similar considerations apply to the treatment of minority religious faiths or language groups.

* Avoid using terminology to describe minorities that gives offence to minority communities and which can create negative associations of 'otherness'.
* Recognise that terminology that seeks to belittle, denigrate or abuse individuals on grounds of their ethnicity, race or religion. This has no place on television or radio. Those contributors using such terms in live broadcasters should have made clear to them that the company does not support their views or language. There should be public statements to that effect where necessary.

* Develop creative ways of challenging racism and xenophobia.

* Avoid reinforcing stereotypes of minorities by unnecessarily emphasising race or ethnicity. Ethnic origin or colour should only be mentioned when it is relevant to the story.

* Avoid unfounded or thoughtless associations between minorities and social problems.

* Address the under representation on the air of people from ethnic minority communities in the full range of output.

* Beware of depicting a fictional reality which may reproduce and perpetuate prejudice.

* Seek out experts, commentators, game show contestants from the widest variety of backgrounds. It is important to show minorities in a variety of roles in society rather than confirm fixed views of their roles.

* Challenge unsubstantiated racist and xenophobic statements when interviewing representatives of racist organisations or reporting their meetings, statements or claims. They should also carefully check all reports for accuracy and seek rebutting or opposing comments. The anti-social nature of such views should be exposed.

* Take care with statistical information to ensure that it does not create unnecessary alarm by exaggerating or sensationalising issues.

* Avoid making resident and naturalised groups into exotic exhibits for the television audience. All residents and nationalised citizens need to be treated as such and not identified as outsiders.
on the basis of linguistic, ethnic, religious or cultural difference. Particular vigilance needs to be given to programmes about countries of the South and films about particular groups, their cultures and religions.

* Portray an accurate picture of the diversity within minority communities.
* Equip audiences to interpret racist and xenophobic constructions.
* Avoid making assumptions about a person's cultural background on the basis of their name or religious details.

FIGURE 2: EUROPEAN BROADCASTING UNION - DECLARATION ON THE ROLE OF PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTERS IN A MULTIRACIAL, MULTICULTURAL, MULTIFAITH EUROPE

We public service broadcasters, noting the freedom of expression, including the freedom of the media, is one of the important roles that we have to play in a multiracial, multicultural and multifaith Europe.

The existing EBU Statutes stipulate that each member organization must provide a service of national character and importance in its own country. It must serve the entire national population, offering programming for all sections of the population, including minorities.

Therefore it is essential that we make every effort to reflect the cultural, racial and linguistically diverse character of our societies accurately in our programmes and the workforce.
We, as broadcasters, should ensure that our services defend the equal rights and dignity of all human beings, reject trivialization of violence and act against xenophobia, racism and destructive nationalism.

In concert with the 1993 Vienna Declaration of the Heads of State and Government of the Member States of the Council of Europe, we are concerned at the rise of racism and fascism in Europe and believe it is our duty to combat these attitudes.

**FIGURE 3: THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE - VIENNA DECLARATION**

In recognition of the need to promote a harmonious European Community, the October 1993 Vienna summit conference, of the Heads of State and Government of the council of Europe, resolved to pursue a policy for combating racism, xenophobia, anti-semitism and intolerance, and to adopt for this purpose a Declaration and Plan of Action.

The Declaration stated that ‘the protection of minorities is an essential element of stability and democratic security in our continent’. It instructed the Committee of Ministers to begin work on drafting a protocol complementing the European Convention on Human Rights in the cultural field by provisions guaranteeing individual rights, in particular for persons belonging to national minorities.
Further the Committee of Ministers were requested to ask the media professions to report and comment on acts of racism and intolerance factually and responsibly, and to continue to develop codes of ethics which reflect these requirements.

(Source: Europe Singh and Jeffrey Morris, *Recommendations for Broadcasting on Fair Portrayal of Ethnic Minorities in European Societies*, developed in consultation with members of the European Broadcasting Union television programme committee and individuals from public broadcasting organisations in the UK, France, Belgium, Germany, The Netherlands, Sweden and Denmark. They were endorsed by the PBME conference held in Strasbourg 18-20, 1995).
## APPENDIX L: THE USE OF TELEVISION/ PERCENTAGE SHARE OF VIEWING

### FIGURE 1: PERCENTAGE SHARE OF VIEWING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Channel Type</th>
<th>Main Sample</th>
<th>Asian Sample</th>
<th>African Caribbean Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ITV including GMTV</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BBC including Breakfast TV</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Channel 4 (S4C in Wales)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BBC2</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satellite or Cable Channels</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Unweighted Base Size: 1414 164 138

FIGURE 2: INTEREST ('VERY' OR 'QUITE') IN DIFFERENT PROGRAMME TYPES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Main Sample</th>
<th>Asian Sample</th>
<th>African Caribbean Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National News</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local and Regional News</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Films - Recent Releases</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International News</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adventure or Police Series</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature and Wildlife Programmes</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drama Documentaries</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plays and Drama Series</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Situation Comedy Shows</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soap Operas</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older or Classic Cinema Films</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quiz and Panel Game Shows</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and Medical Programmes</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holiday and Travel Programmes</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Affairs Programmes</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hobbies and Leisure Programmes</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports Programmes</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variety Shows</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative Comedy Shows</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chat Shows</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Films Suitable only for Adults</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programmes for/about European Countries</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumer Affairs</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Programmes for Adults</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woman's Programmes</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science Programmes</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pop or Rock Music</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programmes for Older Children</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business and Financial Programmes</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church Services</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programmes for use in Schools</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programmes for Under 5’s</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programmes about Religion</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Unweighted Base Size: 1452, 164, 153

FIGURE 3: BROAD ATTITUDES TO TELEVISION - SUMMARY (DEFINITELY/TEND TO AGREE)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Main Sample %</th>
<th>Asian Sample %</th>
<th>African Caribbean Sample %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It's up to me what I choose to watch on TV not the regulators</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The four main broadcast channels give me all the viewing choices I want</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I dislike the way films are sometimes cut even when they are broadcast</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satellite or Cable offers you a far wider choice of programmes</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pay Channels should have exactly the same restrictions on what they are</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If people want to pay extra to watch violent or pornographic programmes</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satellite/Cable TV offers more channels than I can manage to watch</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Things that are likely to upset people should never be shown on television</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV channels you have to pay extra to watch offer good value for money</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I often switch from channel to channel and try to follow more than one</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compared with satellite or cable, the four main broadcast channels are</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Unweighted Base Size: 1452 164 153

FIGURE 4: ATTITUDES TO ETHNIC ISSUES - SUMMARY
(DEFINITELY / TEND TO AGREE)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Main Sample</th>
<th>Asian Sample</th>
<th>African Caribbean Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This is a free country and people should</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>be able to promote their ethnic values</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and cultures if they wish to</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programmes about particular ethnic</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>minorities should be made by people</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>from those communities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television has a responsibility to allow</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>access to ethnic minority group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television should cater for all the</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>different ethnic minorities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comedy on television should not poke</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fun at ethnic minorities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic minority issues ought to be part</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of the regular television news coverage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having a channel for a particular ethnic</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>minority’s programmes is a good idea</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All too often TV portrays negative</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stereotypes about different ethnic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>minority groups</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cable or satellite channels offer better</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>opportunities than the mainstream</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>channels for ethnic minorities to make</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>their own programmes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Unweighted Base Size: 1452 164 153

APPENDIX M: PROPORTION OF ETHNIC MINORITIES EMPLOYED BY THE BBC, 1994-95

FIGURE 1: PROPORTION OF ETHNIC MINORITIES EMPLOYED BY THE BBC, 1994 - 95

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1994-95</th>
<th>Target (2000)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Network TV</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Network Radio</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World Service</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scotland</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wales</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midland/East</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: BBC Annual Report and Accounts 1994-95