

## **Reason to make the film-‘Beverley’.**

The film gives an opportunity to have a bird’s eye view of not only a country struggling with its identity but also an adolescent trying to work out what being Black in Britain was during the 1980s.

The 1980’s witnessed a dramatic far-reaching long lasting change in the UK – politically, race, gender and economically which impacted on every part of society.

There was unprecedented high unemployment, race riots, and national industrial action. There was the birth of the upwardly mobile, a drive towards de-regulation, free markets, and the concept of ‘Thatcherism’ herald by the UK first female and longest serving prime minister ‘Maggie – the Iron Lady’.

I am half-caste – a term now considered derogative. My father was Jamaican –he took advantage of his British passport, (before Jamaica gained its independence in 1962), to seek a better life in the land of milk and honey.

My mother was a ‘Yorkshire lass’ the daughter of a miner. She was tough and capable although lacked any long term career aspirations for herself or me-encouraging me to grow up to work in a shop or better still an office as a secretary rather than a factory.

Women did not have equal rights in society. At home there was a distinct division of power and a clear hierarchy in the family- what we would now be considered as chauvinistic – a woman was subordinate to a man and had the sole responsibility of domestic chores and taking charge of the children; my mother never answered my Dad back or disagree with him. In contrast with today my brother and his wife divide everything down the middle with specific days when one or the other will cook, put kids to bed etc.

A mix –race relationship has its own cultural dilemma’s – my mother had to learn my father’s way of cooking, cleaning etc – She was stigmatised for having ‘half-caste kids’. She was told ‘Blacks can’t help being black but you had a choice and choose to be a ‘nigger lover’ with ‘mongrel kids’.

My father also felt being mix-race would be easier than being black – If you’re black stand to the back if you’re brown stick around’. Whilst ironically my mother never let me forget I lived in a hostile world were I’d be judged by my colour.

The Rasta movement in Highfields preached a return to Africa and burn down Babylon. I thought of Africa as a famine ridden alien place, which I could not associate with and had nightmares of being forced to ‘GO BACK WHERE YOU CAME FROM’.

There was also class division – The inner city- might as well have been a million miles away from Suburbia.

Highfields was riddled with crime and prostitution. The police were known to be brutal and corrupt (think The Sweeney). The standard of education and housing was low. An influx of refugee's African-Asians from Uganda and Kenya, the Vietnamese Boat People gave a multi dimension of culture but also saw an increase in the National Front's popularity.

Margaret Thatcher capitalised on the political hot potato 'Immigration' and inherited a large proportion of extreme right wing voters from the NF winning her the 1979 election. Today politicians still divert attention from failed policies and an unregulated financial market by blaming everything on the 'Muslims ' and Eastern European economic migrants.

In the 1980's Terrorism came from the IRA today it is the Middle East or homegrown fundamentalists – the fear factor deflecting the poor management of the country whilst justifying the forming of a police state.

Oadby was more of a fish bowl a community looking out from behind its bay windows and patio doors. Ford Sierra's sat on concrete driveways to be washed on Sundays before mowing the lawn.

This was the era of individualism- the same way state own companies were privatised-family life became insular with the emphasis on minding your own business whilst keeping up with the Jones. I can never remember a neighbour popping in for a cuppa or a chat to moan about the cost of living; everyone kept themselves to themselves.

I found it hard to adjust from moving from one world to another—I wore my free Nelson Mandela badge and witnessed the carnage left by the riots in Leicester Liverpool and Brixton-however I felt dis-connected-

Did living in Oadby make me able to pick whether I was black or white- being mix-race did I have to choose a side?

This is illustrated in the script when the character Bev at first laughs at the racist joke and wants to associate with the skinhead gang.

In the film the rejection from the character Wilson and the neighbours etc transferred in to real life made me resent my 'negro features' large lips, Afro hair, sticking out bum. I tried everything to fit in but ultimately I didn't.

The available boxes on ethnic monitoring forms didn't have an option for mix-race and I always hesitated –did I tick black or white or both?

I don't think the issue of being mix-race has been explored in film. I was speaking to my son and he said in many ways we are suppressed, rejected and envied by both the white and black race. We belong to neither race but at the same time are both. We carry the burden for each yet cannot ally to either.

I have heard racism by whites when I have pointed out I am half black they have said 'but you're not really black you're more white' and I have heard blacks resent mix-relationships- white women stealing their men- and I commented my Mum's white and they have said 'yeah but you're more black than white- you look black and act black'.

I wanted to be mix-race an independent racial group- the way my sons are (their Dad is also mix-race)-but during the 1980's (outside of Cardiff and Liverpool) I was a minority within a minority.

Skinheads represented a group of disillusioned anti-establishment angry adolescents. The original skinhead came from the 1960s fusion of Jamaican immigrants SKA music and the style of dress worn by mods. Skinheads were a working class sub-culture with a love of fashion and good music, especially the Trojan label. It could be argued they were the original British rude boys.

The skinhead culture still exists a distinct section are far left and vocal anti-fascists. Unfortunately the name referring to the close cut hairstyle has become an international label for the far right movement.

The racist skin head or 'bone heads' as authentic skins would call them, were associated with the National Front a political party which was opposed to immigration and multiculturalism. NF graffiti was commonplace 'Wogs Out' 'Go Home' the initials NF were sprayed all over Leicester. The NF marched in public often shouting racist chants and provoking fights between anti-fascism groups.

The National Front is now a marginal force with fewer than 200 members. But we have seen the increase in the English Defence League membership approximately 35,000 members and they organise regular marches across the UK.

I was able to determine whether a skin head was racist by the colour of the laces, tying up their Doc Martin boots – red laces signalled Danger Racist! Black laces might mean a nod of respect in my direction; a mutual understanding of music unites people regardless of race. It's a shame the 'Skin Head' image has been hijacked by the far right. The film *Beverley* will be an opportunity for the original British rude boys to have a voice.

In 1980-85 as a female mix-race adolescent caught up in a time a massive social upheaval I needed some-way of expressing the dichotomy.

The music of The Special, The Beat, and Selecta etc – gave me something I could cling too- it was a fusion of black and white –literally Two Tone. Also there wasn't just 'Rude Boys' but 'Rude Girls'. The music expressed the political and economic climate with a reggae sound I instantly recognised as part of my identity. The reformed mod clothing made me feel important – Its monotone black and white released me from the red, gold and green of a strange place called Africa. 'Rudies' stuck two-fingers up to the Imperialism of the West and the Conservative Establishment – uniting black and whites together.

Two Tone was a strength I needed to recognise my roots without shame or explanation whilst having the room to forge my own 'Britishness'.

Black British has also not been explored in film –Why Black British rather than Black English?

Londoners tend to see themselves as Londoners regardless of colour they see London as home. Outside of London people are much more separated on lines of race. There are still 'White Clubs' and 'Black Clubs' and 'White areas' and 'Black areas' in London but it is not unusual to see a mix group of friends. There are lots of black managers, teachers, and professionals. Blacks are integrated in to society on all levels.

In the rest of the UK a subtle line of segregation exists- I have never had a black school teacher, manager or GP. Outside of the inner city black areas 'the ghetto' it was unusual to see more than the odd black person living in a semi or detached house in a middle class or an affluent area.

Black people still suffer from discrimination –poor education, housing, lack of resources etc. They are over-represented in the mental health and criminal justice system. In the 50 years since the first UK's black community became established they have struggled to see themselves, their children or grand-children succeed at the same rate as other immigrant populations.

England conjures images of a Union Jack and colonialism, which makes me very uncomfortable. Britain isn't a 'place' that actual exists to be pointed at-it's an amalgamation of different small islands under an umbrella term. I feel able to say I am British without challenge-rather than English.

As far back as I can remember crime was a part of my life. I never questioned our lifestyle until we moved to Oadby. I realised that not every-one's family was dodgy, and I had to keep things a secret. There were a lot of contradictions – I would have been beaten if I stole something or lied and I had to behave and dress conservatively. Yet I remember our house being raided by the police and going on prison visits.

I cannot recall a British film where growing up in a reasonably successful criminal family has been explored from a child's perspective- or crime from a black perspective- the pimp, drug dealer as a good father as a central character –who is trying to escape the ghetto and create a better life for his family.

I want to make the film because from a social point the 1980s changed Britain for-ever - The destruction of the powerful trade unions, poll tax riots saw police use riot gear for the first time outside of Northern Island, loss of manufacturing and privatisation left the working class de-moralised and looking to some-one to blame.

The issue of race is complex and none more so than for the mix-race population. How can you create an identity were none existed before you? I loved Daley Thompson and always

made a point of informing people Bob Marley had a white father. The same as I did when Obama became President of America.

I love being mix-race and part of the fastest growing racial group in the world. I boast I can make any colour child and in physiological terms I am a Hybrid- less likely to suffer the ailments associated with the black and the white race e.g. cancer and diabetes.

The music and two-tone genre has not been exploited – Quadraphonia was a great example of the mod phenomena in film. Babylon a classic 80s film based on social and racial discontent. However *'Beverley'* would add the race element from a black/white inter-racial point of view and her struggle to integrate rather than separate. It is also refreshing to have a female lead character.

The story from ghetto to suburbia fully monopolises-the death of one chapter in British history and the birth of another.