

3003HUM – Youth, Education and Extremism Reflective Blog

Black lives matter – The Events of 2020 By Sarah Urhie

*“something is terribly wrong
if the pain, sorrow and outrage
of a people makes you more
uncomfortable than murder
itself”
– Rupi Kaur*

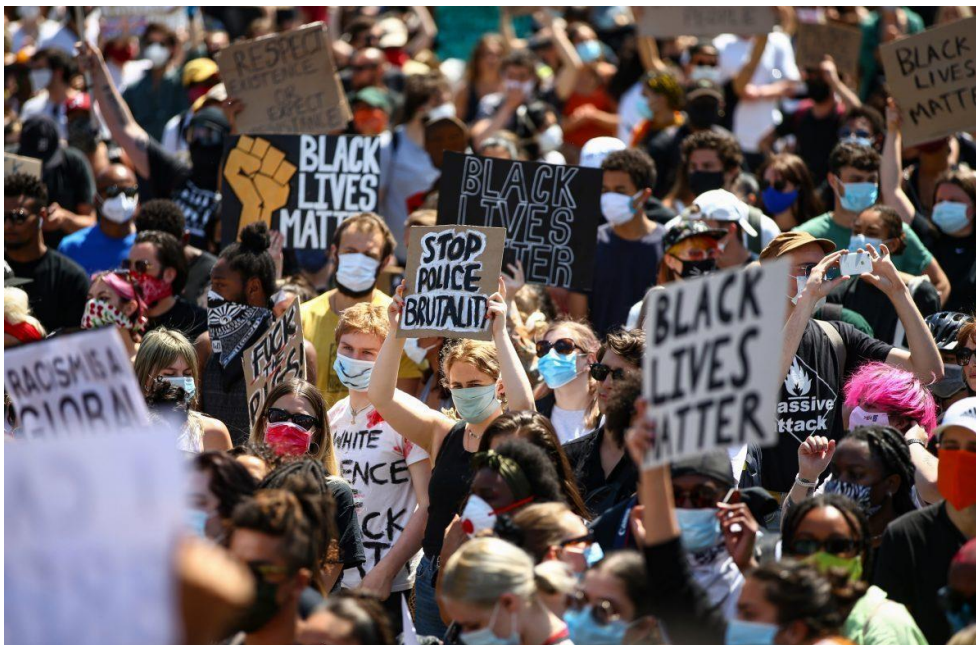
I think it is safe to say that 2020 was an ... eventful year! A series of pivotal moments took place which have undoubtedly shaped the dynamics of the world in the coming years; from the outbreak of the coronavirus which claimed the life of so many people, to Joe Biden being elected as the president of the United States.

Although the Black Lives Matter movement had been an active part of history dating back to the death of Trayvon Martin in 2013, 2020 was by far the year that it was the most amplified. The death of George Floyd on May 25th 2020 introduced an unforeseen level of outrage amongst the black community and all other races who supported the 2020 soon became the year of “no justice no peace”. People from various different ethnic backgrounds all became united through the common belief that something needed to change.

In the midst of all the pain was an undying urge for the black for the black community to gain some sort of power despite all the years of oppression. 2020 now became the year that black people took control of their own futures in EVERY aspect! It was revolutionary and I, as a young black university student, outraged by all the deaths and institutional racism, believed that it was imperative that I took part in any way that I could. Various memorable moments took place in 2020 that not only set the tone for the change that we so desperately needed, but it showed how serious the black community were about fighting for their rights.

BLM Marches

The killing of George Floyd became the breaking point, and as a result of this outrage, marches began to be organised world-wide. Irrespective of the fact that we were currently in the middle of a global pandemic, people around the world still felt compelled to take to the streets and channel this frustration into peaceful protest and the desire for equality outweighed the risks of COVID-19. Accompanied with my mask, hand sanitiser and a poster I had made the night before, I made my way to Hyde Park and Trafalgar Square to march alongside people from all different walks of life. Ethnic groups all over the world came together solely based on the desire to make the world a better place for all races.



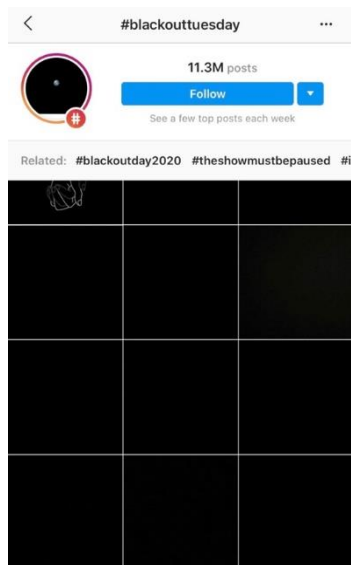
The issue of police brutality became a catalyst for self-evaluation. What can I do to make a change? Whilst some protests in some parts of the world

remained peaceful, other parts such as America displayed the complexities of the issue at hand. Violence broke out in states across America, but this highlighted the lengths people will go to just for the sake of peace.

What stood out to me was the fact that it was the younger generation who were taking the bold steps in organising this marches and speaking up in front of thousands to express this yearn for change. To me, this indicated that the youth of today wanted a different world for their kids, a world of equal opportunities, equal treatment and most importantly, unity for all.

Black Out Tuesday

Black Out Tuesday was a social media-based protest organised by Jamila Thomas and Brianna Agyemang which took place on June 2nd 2020 that essentially encouraged those who were advocates of the



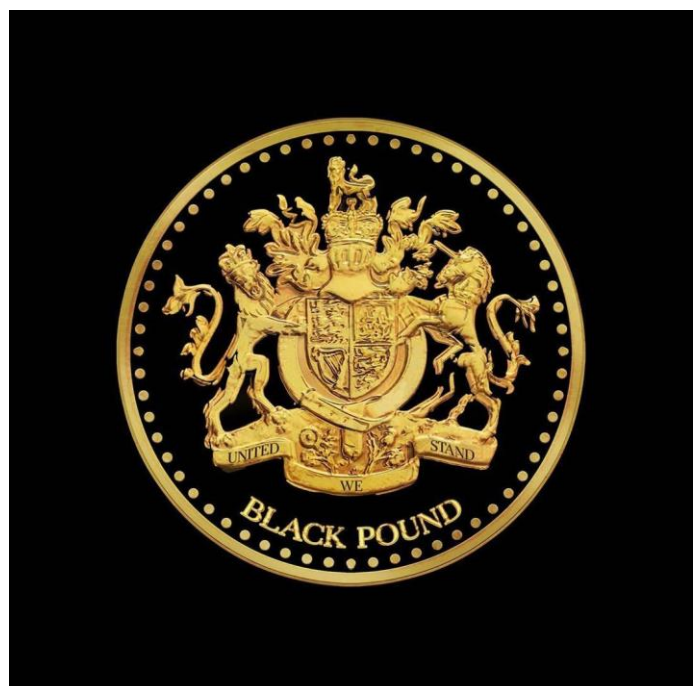
Black Lives Matter movement to withdraw from spending money online and in stores for the whole day in the hopes of attaining systemic change in regard to police brutality and institutional racism.

Those who supported the idea took to social media platforms such as Instagram, uploading an images of a black square with the hashtag #BLACKOUTTUESDAY. Everything was put on hold! No music, no spending. This approach was different to the typical methods of expressing discontent in regard to political matters, but this was also what made it more empowering. This

also showed how social media can be a useful tool for socio-economic change (Carney, 2016).

Black Pound Day

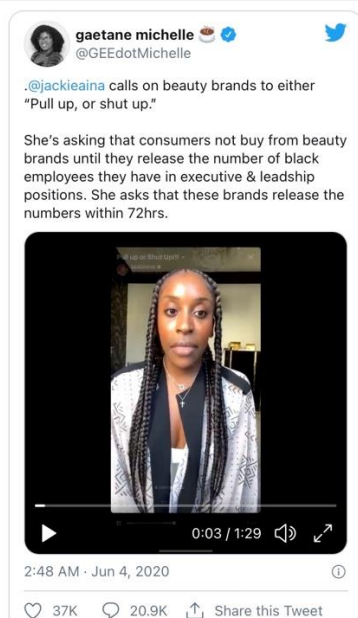
In the hopes to help support the prosperity of the black economy, Black pound day was introduced as a method of bridging the gap between capitalism and economic gain for black business. From June 27th 2020 black people were encouraged to only spend money on items and services that had black owners. To prove my loyalty to the cause, I refrained from shopping at my favourite clothes stores like Pretty Little Thing and Zara and



made it my mission to seek out brands who had a black CEO. The hunt was tedious but a huge eye opener as I realised that none of these famous high-street brands that we see constantly had a black CEO let alone a black employee working in any high position for the company. This idea succeeded in black people investing their money back into the black community whilst simultaneously exploring issue of neoliberalism (Issar, 2021).

Jackie Aina calls out brands

As someone who has always been passionate about fashion and make-up, this particular moment defiantly took me by surprise. Jackie Aina, one of the most influential, black fashion and beauty bloggers took to Instagram to express her disappointment in major brands such as Pretty Little Thing and Fashion Nova, stating that their silence during these difficult times disregards their solidarity towards the black community despite the fact that their whole aesthetic comes from them capitalising on black culture. But she didn't stop there! As a result of her rant on social media, Jackie presented a challenge which shocked many social media users. The YouTube star gave 72 hours for top brands to release a list of the number of black employees they have in their company who hold corporate or executive roles.



The journey may still be long, but the message has been made clear. 2020 was the year of speaking out for what is right, and although the results may not be instant, we have been seen, and most defiantly heard!

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