Excavating Ceddo Film and Video Workshop

Navigating Censorship through *The People's Account* (1986) and Reading Meaningful Silences with *Culture for Freedom* (1990)

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Abstract. During the 80s, several black independent film and video workshops gained importance in the United Kingdom. These workshops tried to encapsulate the political and social problems black British communities were facing as well as countering the misrepresentation and stereotypes put forward on black British subjects by British media. One of these workshops, and on which this paper focuses, was Ceddo. Ceddo was a film and video workshop whose productions were characterised by its community orientation and its use of image as a weapon. I concentrate on the films *The People's Account* (Bryan 1986) *and Culture for Freedom* (Gordon 1990a). These works use the riots of 1985 in Brixton and Tottenham as a background to expose the marginalisation of black British communities by hegemonic Britain. They mirror each other in content but not in form being *Culture for Freedom* a continuation to *The People's Account* and the censorship that it faced.

Keywords: Black British communities, The Workshop Years, Ceddo Film and Video Collective, 1985 uprisings, memory, Tottenham Three.

1. Introduction

According to Manthia Diawara (1996, 293), "narration is always in a fragmentary state and never closed, until it enters into a relation with the film subject." This mirrors the dynamic nature of one's stream of consciousness, signifying how thoughts are in constant flux, much like the subjects experiencing them. This underscores the idea that identities are not fixed but rather fluid, continuously evolving—a becoming rather than being (Hall 1996). Moreover, when the object of study is encapsulated in cinema, this entails that thoughts, words, images and sounds are timelessly kept. However, this does not mean that what is recorded is unchangeable since one's relationship and understanding of it may vary as time goes by and an individual's experience expands. Cinema is as a tool to access a given "structure of feeling" deriving its power from the ability to capture a particular moment (Williams [1954] 2021, 861). Furthermore, fragmentation not only characterises narration but also the history of black British film culture (Pines 1988, 1). The Association of Black Film and Video Workshops in Britain was founded in 1984 with the goal of fostering unity and dialogue among black British filmmakers (Pines 1988). The importance of solidarity among filmmakers derives from how they play a pivotal role in addressing questions that concern society and countering misrepresentation. As Fernando Solanas claimed in an interview with Coco Fusco, they, as filmmakers, "assume their role as avant-garde intellectuals and provoke the system with a great deal of information, with the

great themes of our countries, and the memories of our struggles" (Fusco 1987, 59).

In the 80s, several black film and video workshops emerged in the United Kingdom with the aim of challenging the biased representation enforced by mainstream British television and cinema concerning black Britons' experiences. These black British filmmakers, through their innovative and experimental productions, successfully integrated various disciplines and articulated important reflections on post-colonial identities in contemporary Britain. They excavated and examined the archive, generating their own narratives to explore their identity using cinema as a medium. Interrogating the archive allowed them to counter official history and fight national amnesia. As articulated by Auguiste, "the archive constitutes a privileged terrain of knowledges: in archival texts, we were confronted with fragmented residues of histories of migration" (1988, 6). Moreover, archival memory resides in documents, texts, letters and films, which exhibit resistance to change and contribute to a society's collective memory (Lagerkvist 2017). Their interrogation of the archive was conducted in a fragmentary manner, characterised by absences, gaps and the remediation of misrepresentation, complicating their work of excavation. The identities that they sought to uncover were unstable given their fragmented state. As Mercer (1994, 4) notes, "identity only becomes an issue when it is in crisis, when something assumed to be fixed, coherent and stable is displaced by the experience of doubt and uncertainty."

Some of the collectives that pursued these objectives were Sankofa, Black Audio Film Collective (BAFC) and Ceddo—pronounced [ˈtʃɛd.do]. As Homi Bhabha (1994, 214) states, "in every state of emergency there is an emergence," and these collectives, gaining prominence in the 80s, played a crucial role in combating collective amnesia. However, this paper focuses on Ceddo, specifically on its productions *The People's Account* (Bryan 1986) and *Culture for Freedom* (Gordon 1990a). These two documentaries will be used to illustrate how identities constructed in the margin of a hegemonic community can counter a false or stereotyped narrative. Furthermore, this paper aims to address the often-overlooked contribution of Ceddo to black British cinema as a prolific black British film workshop. To achieve these objectives, a brief historical and contextual background detailing the creation of Ceddo will be offered. Then, I will use *The People's Account* to deal with questions related to traumatic memory, censorship and the uprisings of 1985 in Tottenham. After this, I will read *Culture for Freedom* as a thematic continuation of *The People's Account* with an emphasis on its form and its role in healing the trauma stemming from what is presented in *The People's Account*. By introducing these two documentaries, Ceddo will be brought to the foreground and its significant contribution to black British cinema will be highlighted.

2. A brief inquiry into The Workshop Years: The institutionalisation of black British filmmaking and the birth of Ceddo

The early 80s "signalled a shift not only in terms of the form and content of the black independent practitioners, but also in terms of the relationship between

black independent practitioners and cultural (funding) institutions" (Pines 1988, 3). Ceddo, along with Black Audio Film Collective, Retake and Sankofa exemplifies this shift. Ceddo operated as a franchised workshop following the ACTT (Association of Cinematograph and Television Technicians) Workshop Declaration of 1982. This Declaration, formed in collaboration between ACTT and institutions such as Channel 4, the British Film Institute and the Greater London Council, provided a framework for independent practice (Mercer 1994, 80). It not only granted financial stability but also guaranteed a model of integrative practice for independent film and video workshops where experimentation was encouraged. In line with this approach, Ceddo, engaged in the "production, training and exhibition" of its works to connect with the black British community (Givanni 1988, 213).

Despite the political polarisation of the 80s (Correia 2022, xiii) and the sense of "relentless vertigo of displacement for black Britain" (Mercer 1994, 2), during this decade, marginalised groups began to assert their voices and move from the margins of society towards the centre (Fanon [1952] 2008; Bhabha 1994; Spivak 1994). However, this resignification happened before the Workshop Declaration.[1] A significant event in black British history was the New Cross Fire on the 18th of January 1981 in Deptford, London. On this day, thirteen teenagers died. The lack of response to this incident by British institutions fuelled suspicious within the community, who took the event as a racially motivated attack. Given the lack of institutional help or acknowledgement, the black British community of New Cross organised a march on the 2nd of March 1981: the Black People's Day of Action. This march was a historic day for black Britons since people from different classes and ethnic backgrounds from all over the country united in solidarity. A few months later, the riots of Brixton took place, following a massive stop and search operation. These uprisings were soon propagated to other cities in the country. Some institutions gave a response to the situation by creating policies to stop institutional racism. One of such answers was the financial help of the Greater London Council to black British filmmakers and the ACTT agreement. Consequently, as noted by Julien (1986, 60), "the Black independent film sector was born directly out of the political climate created after the 1981 uprisings. Throughout their struggles, certain institutions were forced to take up black people's demands."

Thanks to the Workshop Declaration, "the area of black independent filmmaking saw the growth of a number of workshops established with the specific aim of catering for black film needs" (Auguiste 1986, 58). From 1982 to 1997 these collectives carried out a job of excavation and deconstruction of black Britain's experience, acting, in this way, as a counter-hegemonic force to fight the

[1] The emergence of these collectives in the wake of the 1981 riots does not imply that there were not pre-existing issues affecting black Britons or that there were no previous black British filmmakers or workshops throughout the UK. Additionally, another important reason for the appearance of these collectives is that its members had had access to higher education and training, and this helped them participate in the subsidised space created by the Declaration. As Reece Auguiste (1986, 58) claims, "black film making existed before the uprisings, but [...] in 1981 we witnessed the uprisings which in turn created a space for our intervention in the media."

misrepresentation of black Britishness. This article focuses on Ceddo because out of the three black British workshops that were mentioned before, it has been the one that has received less attention. This accounts for the noticeable gap in previous articles or information for the literature review of the two documentaries being explored here. Ceddo tried to bring the imagined community of black Britain, which was placed at the edge of British society to the centre through its productions. This is an example of bell hooks's (2003, 95) idea of the oppositional gaze in terms of language since they wanted not only to stare but also to change reality. In fact, in the Association of Black Film and Video Workshops Brochure, Ceddo (1988, 13) expressed the importance of establishing a relationship with their community given that it was important to their practice as a workshop.

The members of Ceddo possessed prior experience and training in television and film before the establishment of Ceddo. The filmmakers Bryan, Shabazz and Caesar had worked together at Kuumba productions, a production company that continued working at the same time as Ceddo. Noteworthy works by these members of Ceddo in collaboration outside of Ceddo and which are relevant in the history of black British Cinema are, for example, *Step Forward Youth* (Shabazz 1977), *Breaking Point* (Shabazz 1978), *Riots and Rumours of Riots* (Bakari Caesar 1981), *Burning an Illusion* (Shabazz 1981), *Blood Ah Go Run* (Shabazz and Bakari Caesar 1982), *I Am Not Two Islands* (Bryan 1984) or *The Mark of the Hand. Aubrey Williams* (Bakari Caesar 1987). Watching these productions allows for an understanding of the history of black Britain. The works address issues close to the community such as the 'sus laws,' the uprisings of 1981, the New Cross Fire and important black British figures such as the artist Aubrey Williams.[2] Ceddo's productions were *Street Warriors* (Bakari Caesar 1986), *We Are the Elephant* (Masokoane 1987), *Time and Judgement* (Shabazz 1988), *Omega Rising* (Davis 1988), *The Flame of the Soul* (Thomas 1990), *Racism: A Response* (Gordon 1990b) and *Blue Notes and Exiled Voices* (Bakari Caesar 1992).

3. The pressure of the streets: Remembering the account of the people

3.1. The generation of 'postmemory': Young, British, and Black. Conceptual background[3]

As June Givanni (2018, 122) writes in *The Long 1980s: Constellations of Art, Politics, and Identities: A Collection of LaMicrohistories*, "[r]ace relations in eighties Britain were characterised by the struggles of previous decades: equal

[2] The 'sus laws' refers to a stop and search law created by the Victorians, allowing the police to stop and search individuals without a specific cause. This law was in operation during the 80s, particularly impacting black Britain. In January 1981, a house in New Cross was set on fire resulting in the death of thirteen teenagers. The lack of response to this incident by British institutions fuelled suspicious within the community, who took the event as a racially motivated attack. The inconclusive investigation together with the silence from British institutions serve to reinforce the suspicions.

[3] *Young, British, and Black* (1988) refers to the title of Coco Fusco's book on BAFC and Sankofa.

rights and justice; representation; human and citizenship rights. These were closely linked to black theatre, art, music, dance, film, and publishing." The struggle of the 80s is a continuation of previous ones. However, there is a generational difference between migrants who arrived before the 70s and the protagonists of the riots. As Mike Philips and Trevor Philips (1999, 352) show, "the immigrants before the decade of the seventies are isolated and marginalised, humbly accepting their lot, until the following generation which has grown up [...] rejects racist limitations by rioting during the eighties." Jade Parker (2022, 9) explains this by pointing out to the idea that British-born West Indians and younger migrants who were educated and raised in the United Kingdom were British, but this was not what they felt in their daily lives as a consequence of their experience of alienation and uncertainty. This fostered the construction of a black British consciousness. The younger generation fought against their unjust situation and the deflected dreams of belonging of previous generations.

This is an instance of transgenerational trauma. As Gabriele Schwab (2010, 13) states, "transgenerational haunting operates through family secrets and other forms of silencing." In the context of black Britain, however, it is not a deliberate choice but rather the only option available. Their voices and narratives were not allowed by Britain's hegemonic imagined community. When dealing with transgenerational trauma and the generations that make up black Britain, especially in the 80s, the concept of 'postmemory' as coined by Marine Hirsch is of importance for the purposes of this paper. According to Hirsch (2008, 106), "postmemory describes the relationship that the generation after those who witnessed cultural or collective trauma bears to the experiences of those who came before, experiences that they remember employing the stories, images, and behaviours among which they grew up." For black Britain, postmemory works in multiple ways, which is close to Michael Rothberg's (2009, 21) idea of multidirectional memory since for black Britain different histories are conceptualised and coexist in the public sphere.

On the one hand, the generation that disrupted the institutional British silence did not witness slavery or colonialism, but they remember it through images and stories coming from their parents. On the other hand, they have been living a reality of displacement and non-belonging growing up trying to reconcile the duality behind being black and British. This generation is an example of memory and history patched up together (Schwab 2010, 14). As Arnold-de Simine (2013, 216) claims, "memory is used to describe a way of relating to the past [...] based on lived experience—one's own or that of others." This generation remembers the distant past of slavery, colonialism and their parents' failed dreams of belonging as second-hand knowledge, but they can account for the present that they are witnessing and living and the disturbances of 1981 and 1985 epitomise this. The second wave of uprisings in 1985 shows that the ghost present in the transgenerational trauma of black Britain was haunting the generation involved in the disturbances. A generation that realised that Lord Kitchener's "Calypso" was ironic and that London was not the place to be.[4]

[4] An idea coming from the "Calypso" song by Lord Kitchener, "London is the Place for Me" (1948). This does not mean that the experience of non-belonging happened only in London.

On the other hand, they have been living a reality of displacement and non-belonging growing up as they tried to reconcile the duality behind being black and British. As Arnold-de Simine (2013, 216) claims, "memory is used to describe a way of relating to the past [...] based on lived experience—one's own or that of others." This generation is an example of memory and history patched up together (Schwab 2010, 14) to make sense of the past and the present for the sake of the future. In this paper, I focus on the uprisings of 1986. These riots are a further indication of the historical tension between black British communities and the British State, which is controlled by Ideological State Apparatuses such as the media and Repressive State Apparatuses like the police and prison system (Althusser 1984). The uprisings of 1985 illustrate that the problems signalled in 1981 had not been solved.

Uprisings are tangible traumas through the motives of chasing, fire and blood as Malini Guha (2009, 108) signals. In fact, as Stuart Hall claimed in a public meeting in 1978 re-edited into Akomfrah's *The Stuart Hall Project* (2013), "the end of Empire instead of being something taking place far away, overseas, and on the news, becomes something taking place in the street, next door, and, through television." An idea closely related to the term 'pressure' used by Gilroy (1993, 83) to describe "racism, displacement and exile experienced by black diasporic communities." Pressure describes the situations that black Britons had to deal with and overcome as *Pressure* (Ové 1976) or *Burning an Illusion* (Shabazz 1981) exemplify.

The works mentioned throughout this paper and the ones which are going to be analysed indicate how trauma is translated into a language that can be understood (Schwab 2010, 8) and literature and the arts are an example of this since they are, as Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub (cited in Schwab 2010, 8) contend "artistically bearing witness." In fact, "postmemorial work endeavours to reactivate and re-embody more distant social/national and archival/cultural memorial structures by reinventing them with resonant individual and familial forms of mediation and aesthetic expression" (Atkinson 2017, 46). These works are an aesthetic expression of memory which is "the only raw material, the only stock, that [black cultural movements] can turn to [...] [B]lack culture finds itself endlessly confronted with the question of what one does with a body of informal codes" (Bourland 2019, 261). The idea of informal codes adds up to Schwab's (2010) thought of patching up one's history or narrative and the two documentaries addressed investigated here show this.

3.2. The trauma of the streets of 1985: The Broadwater uprisings as portrayed in *The People's Account*

Previous critical engagement with *The People's Account* agrees on the idea that the documentary aimed at granting the black British community a space to speak and counter the stereotypes fostered by British media. According to T. J. Demos (2019, 38), "the decade of the 80s represents a crucial formative period for film and video practice in Britain" and *The People's Account* is an example of it responding to the uprisings of 1985. For Jacob Ross (1988, 93), *The People's Account* offered the black community the "opportunity to voice its position and respond to the many attacks levelled at it by an increasingly intolerant society."

In the same line of thought, Isaac Julien (1990, 22) claims that the realistic agit-prop documentary that is *The People's Account* "was meant to give voice to the black working-class people." For Aikens (2018, 207) "at the core of the film's message was the question of rights: the right of those in Tottenham, Brixton, Handsworth and elsewhere to live without fear of their safety as well as the right to speak and be heard."

The People's Account is not only an example of the artistic expression of black British memory but also an exploration of intergenerational trauma, reflecting the concept of 'postmemory' as previously discussed. The documentary offers the perspective of the black British community on the 1985 uprisings in Tottenham and Brixton (London) and Handsworth (Birmingham). As the synopsis of the documentary states:

> In 1985 three major uprisings rocked mainland Britain. In each case it was sparked off by an act of police lawlessness on a black woman. Handsworth (Birmingham), Brixton and Broadwater farm in London, all have in common a large black community and a history of sensitive relationships with the police. Prior to the 1985 disturbances police presence in these communities had been mounting. Residents had complained about increased police harassment and arrests. In the Autumn of 1985 when the black community took to the streets, seemingly on a "bout of lawlessness", it was because they were not prepared to allow the police to brutalise black women [...] In Tottenham Mrs Jarrett suffered a heart attack when the police unexpectedly burst into her home. They also said they were looking for her son. These were the catalysts that instigated the 1985 uprisings. However, they were more or less ignored by the media. They preferred, instead, to concentrate on the 'riotous mobs' and the 'spree' of violence and looting that followed. *The People's Account* is a direct response to this *media hysteria*. It tells the stories of the uprisings from the people's perspective (Ceddo 1986, n.p.; emphasis added).

Since mainstream media failed to provide fair coverage of the events, ignoring the perspective of black Britons, *The People's Account* emerges as a counter-hegemonic force. It endeavours to visually remediate the biased representations found in mainstream British media. For Astrid Erll and Ann Rigney (2009, 8), "remediation is concerned with the ways in which the same story is recalled in new media at a later point in time and hence given a new lease of cultural life." The documentary seeks to challenge and correct the dominant narratives surrounding the uprisings of 1985, ensuring a more accurate understanding of it away from the misrepresentation enforced by mainstream Britain. This prevents next generations from forming a false 'postmemory' since *The People's Account* challenges misrepresentation. As was explained before, the younger generation is recipient of transgenerational trauma and lived with a postmemory that is fragmented and, as such, they need to assemble the fragments of a history that they have not lived (Schwab 2010).

After the death of Miss Cynthia Jarrett, according *to The People's Account*, there was an enquiry, but no police officer involved in the death was disciplined in any way. This was not the case of the aftermath of the death of police officer Keith Blakelock. According to the pamphlet produced by the Tottenham Three's Campaign, 369 people were arrested for this even if no forensic evidence was recovered (The Tottenham Three Campaign 1991, 2). Winston Silcott, Mark

Braithwaite and Engin Raghip are the Tottenham Three and *Culture for Freedom* deals with this episode. They were sentenced to life imprisonment but released later on because of the lack of evidence.

Coming back to the uprisings of 1985, these started as a peaceful demonstration on the part of the black British community. Nonetheless, as *The People's Account* highlights, "for some still unexplained reason, the police took action to prevent the people leaving the state and it was this action by the metropolitan police which directly caused the uprising." As the documentary states, before the uprising, the metropolitan police had been spreading rumours of a forthcoming uprising in Tottenham. The work elucidates the impossibility of knowing the truth behind the rumours and the uprisings, which shows that the wound of the previous uprisings of 1981 was still opened and not healed and that the problems that arouse from previous uprisings were unresolved.

The idea of not being able to access the truth and how it differs for several sections of society is also explored by Michael Foucault. For him, as Paul Rabinow (1984, 73) signals, each society determines what is acceptable or not. In other words, "each society has its regime of truth" as well as methods and practices to apply to those who go against the accepted regime of truth. For Foucault truth cannot be located outside, it is constructed as discourses in society. *The People's Account* questions and analyses the truth behind the uprisings. That is why the documentary is an ethnographic film since it needs to record the account of the community. As Catherine Russell (1999, 12) writes "ethnographic film assumes that the camera records a truthful reality," and the importance of the footage taken for the documentary is highlighted with Nora Alter's (2018, 273) ideas. As she maintains "archival images function as "reservoirs of memory [...] to attest to the diasporic subject's existence."

The People's Account indicates how black British communities are united across space and time. As one of the interviewees argues, "I am not suddenly going to forget the injustices that my people have suffered." The uprisings are the result of the explosion of their collective memory. In fact, Silke Arnold-de Simine (2013, 16) claims, "memory is used to describe a way of relating to the past [...] based on lived experience (one's own or that of others) and requiring empathy and identification." Examples of this are present throughout the documentary such as with the portrayal of the events surrounding Cherry Groce, the death of Cynthia Jarrett and the constant question of who is going to be next, showing the uncertainty faced by the community.

The context behind the reception of *The People's Account* is equally revealing of the struggle for representation of black Britons as the censorship that the work faced reveals. The film was censored on three different occasions even if "there was nothing drastically wrong with it" (Julien 1986, 22). The IBA (Independent Broadcast Authority), the body in charge of granting permission for transmission on British television, opposed to the broadcasting of *The People's Account* because of its unbalanced representation of the police. The IBA asked the collective to change some words and include a programme after the documentary balancing the film. For Ceddo, implementing those changes would mean not portraying the real account of the people. Ceddo believed that the changes that the IBA wanted them to implement were "[t]antamount to state censorship" (Mercer 1994, 70). Lawyers of Ceddo and Channel 4 stated that legally speaking

there was nothing wrong with *The People's Account*. However, the IBA claimed that Ceddo was infringing section 4 of the 1981 Broadcasting Act.[5] Despite Ceddo's insistence of the gains that the nation could have by watching the documentary, there was no luck.

This episode indicates how the idea of pressure is present both in the film's content and its history of censorship. *The People's Account* unapologetically addresses the experiences of marginalisation faced by black Britain as well as the silences and absences of British institutions. It gave voice to black Britons creating a visual piece of radical openness (hooks 1989) different from previous media depictions. At the same time, the work indicated how race is a category trying to create differences. As Hall (1996, 167) signalled, "racism, of course, operates by constructing impassable symbolic boundaries between racially constituted categories, and its typically binary system of representation constantly marks and attempts to fix and naturalise the difference between belonginess and otherness." The following section shows how in spite of this censorship, the black British community continued fighting.

The collective believed that the changes that the IBA wanted them to implement were "tantamount to state censorship" (Mercer 1994, 70). However, on 7th April 1987 Ceddo issued a press release to put forward their own account of the situation happening with the IBA. On this document, it is possible to read how the documentary had been scheduled for transmission on three occasions and how despite having complied with requests to make changes to the documentary, it did not happen. Lawyers of Ceddo and Channel 4 stated that legally speaking there was nothing wrong with *The People's Account*. However, the IBA felt that it was biased when it came to the representation of the police and that *The People's Account* should be followed by a balancing studio discussion programme to counter the biased depiction of the police by Ceddo.

On May 1987 a further press release explained why the IBA was not airing the programme. The IBA was asking for editorial changes which would put an end to Ceddo's self-expression. The IBA claimed that Ceddo was infringing section 4 of the 1981 Broadcasting Act. Despite Ceddo's insistence on the gains that the nation could have by watching the documentary, there was no luck. Funnily enough, nowadays the documentary of Ceddo that is easier to access just with a simple internet search without the need of having to be based in the United Kingdom is *The People's Account*. As such, *The People's Account* has managed to become timeless and not consigned to oblivion in spite of the IBA's opposition. The following section shows how, in spite of this censorship, the black British community continued fighting and gathering to make their voices heard.

3.3. Reading meaningful silences and remembering: Countering censorship with *Culture for Freedom*

I take *Culture for Freedom* as a response to the censorship faced by *The People's Account*. The film is a documentary which uses strategic silence in some

[5] These claims refer to the clause "nothing is included in the programmes which offends against good taste or decency or is likely to encourage or incite to crime or to lead to disorder or to be offensive to public feeling" (Broadcasting Act 1981, 68).

sequences as a subversive mechanism. It includes a recording of the event named Culture for Freedom which took place at the Hackney Empire (London) in 1990.[6] This event was organised by the Broadwater Farm Defence Committee and the families of the Tottenham Three—Winston Silcott, Engin Raghip and Mark Braithwaite—wrongfully imprisoned for the death of police officer Keith Blakelock. The benefit night included performances of various members of the community to raise awareness and send the message that black Britons were united. The people who performed that night were She Rockers, the Bemarrow Sisters, Gatecrash, Irie Dance Company, Craig Charles, Lioness Chant, Leo Chester, Roger Robin, Hepburn Graham, Treva Etenne and Asward & Soul II, among others.

Culture for Freedom portrays the aftermath of the uprisings and introduces the Tottenham Three, not present in *The People's Account*. This is why I consider the work a continuation of *The People's Account*. Additionally, its post-production to eliminate sound of the sequences where artists deliver political speeches indicates how Ceddo may have been trying to avoid censorship while showing that they were going to continue using images as a weapon against oppression and censorship. Silence forces viewers to carefully decode its message and asks them to actively engage with the work. As such, *Culture for Freedom* is a counter-documentary which fights national amnesia and continues the task initiated by *The People's Account*.

The edited recording of the night is not the only issue encapsulated in this documentary since by juxtaposing images and the inclusion of montages the viewer is immersed in the issues brought to light by the benefit night and the oppression faced by black Britons as the Tottenham Three and the uprisings of 1985 indicate. There are some scenes—which will be further on explored—that can be heard as well as the recurrent voice-over saying, "release the Tottenham Three," which is accompanied by a drawing of the Tottenham Three: Winston Silcott, Engin Raghip and Mark Braithwaite.

The fact that *Culture for Freedom* deals with the aftermath of the 1985 uprisings five years after *The People's Account* signals how the memory of what happened had not died. It also indicates the enduring nature of issues that continue to haunt communities, persisting in collective memory and resisting erasure. The interplay between remembering and forgetting is evident in the narratives that have been systematically supressed or marginalised, underscoring the ongoing struggle for these narratives to exist and be acknowledged. As Schwab (2010, 13) maintains, "historical information remains stable when the narrative arising from the multiple versions becomes independent of its tellers." The narrative arising from the uprisings of 1985, the Tottenham Tree Campaign and how the community reacted to it showed that in 1990 the wound was opened.[7]

[6] When I do not use italics on Culture for Freedom I am referring to the event and not the film.

[7] The families of the Tottenham Three produced pamphlets to inform on the situation of the Tottenham Three. This brought the issue closer to the community and was used to ask for help and involvement. The benefit night in *Culture for Freedom* includes a phone number which can be rung to contribute.

When decoding *Culture for Freedom,* the silent dialogue in some sequences established between its viewer and the interventions of the event are an example of a talking cure carried through images and music and not words (Freud [1893] 1955). Ceddo is the analyst and the viewer is the patient who has to overcome mainstream amnesia by giving meaning to silences and absences, which have a deep emotional relevance and significance. This reading is a symptomatic one since the viewer needs to be aware of the intention behind its silent form. Following Özem Güçlü (2016, 19), "silence [...] might also be a vehicle of expression, judgement, and will." To this idea, it could be added that "[t]he role of moral consciousness is normally associated with the muted one, the person around whom everyone else feels guilty" (Chion 1999, 96). This is one of the situations that the viewer of *Culture for Freedom* could experience. Guilty for not being able to understand what happened and what led to the event.

Culture for Freedom provided an avenue for both those present in the benefit night and viewers of the work afterward to confront and potentially alleviate the guilt stemming from misinformation. It facilitated a sense of belonging within the community, spanning generations and transcending temporal spatial boundaries. By encapsulating the memory of the event, the documentary serves as a vessel through which individuals can connect with their community's history and collective experiences, fostering a deeper sense of connection and understanding across time. Art in the form of speeches, poetry reading, songs, dancing and comedy worked towards freedom and connected black Britain. This documentary existing also means that those who were not part of the event and want to remember it can do so in the form of a prosthetic memory. For Alison Landsberg (2004, 19), "prosthetic memories originate outside a person's lived experience and yet are taken on and worn by that person." Anyone watching *Culture for Freedom* can wear this memory and by remembering it, they are keeping its memory alive. Cinema is an example of prosthetic memory. This idea emphasises once more the community orientation of Ceddo and its productions with the past, present and future and the viewers of *Culture for Freedom* as an example of it.

There is a sheer number of scenes that are of interest to demonstrate how the film visually constructs black Briton's oppression. The opening scene does not immediately present an image. Instead, the viewer first listens to the piercing wail of a police siren. Following this, a sign with the words "Welcome to Boradwater Farm" emerges, setting the tone for the narrative that follows. Shortly after, the sign shifts from a green background to a red one and the words "Welcome to Broadwater Farm" appear. This is followed by a collage of young black Britons on the right and policemen on the left. In the middle buildings separate them. This represents the pressure of the streets that I previously wrote about and which the police and young black Britons embody. Immediately afterwards, the viewer is given a close-up of the young black people on the right and the sign "Welcome to Broadwater Farm." The police do not appear anymore. This indicates how *Culture for Freedom* focuses on black Britons and their account, not the police's or any other repressive apparatus.

The close-up is followed by juxtaposed images of episodes in black British history and the memory of communities. They show uprisings, people marching in demonstrations and especially the Tottenham riots. After this fast-paced flow of juxtaposed images, the images start to get colourful. The colours are green,

yellow and red, a reference to the colours of the flag of the Rastafari movement together with a black fist in the middle, a further reference to black power and the idea that the narration belongs to black Britain. This introductory part of the documentary shows how Ceddo helps the viewer navigate the message encoded in a refined artistic way. The event Culture for Freedom starts with a hearable live musical performance. The lyrics of the songs are quite subversive and add to the idea that meaning is encapsulated in music and images and not words. The song is "Breaking Down the Barriers" by The Twinkle Brothers. The relationship between the African Diaspora and music is significant. Music is where the consciousness of time travels, especially in music involving drums as is the case in most of the performances in the work. There is a political function behind the music which was recognised already by masters in colonial times (Bidnall 2017, 19). After this long take, the experience of silent reading starts through the several speakers taking up the stage. This silence is only disrupted on specific occasions throughout the documentary. An example is the repetition of a drawing of the Tottenham Three behind bars and the voice-over that repeats the sentence, "release the Tottenham Three." This is the structure that is repeated on several occasions in the documentary and which mediates the silent bits providing the film with cohesion.

An important silent scene is the dramatic reconstruction of a young black Briton being interrogated in prison.[8] In a following scene, this person takes the stage and, reading from his hand, shares what he was asked. He embodies those people from Broadwater who were interrogated after the disorders. This suggests once more that art—a dramatic performance in this case—is a medium used to mediate and heal traumatic experiences, especially when someone who may have first-hand knowledge about it takes the stage and shares it with the community. Having to read this silent scene among many others of relevance is an example of how viewing this documentary is a constant exercise of reading against the grain. By reading against the grain, I follow Walter Benjamin ideas as explained by Mela Dávila-Freire (2020) on reading history against the grain to approach *Culture for Freedom* from an unconventional perspective and read it in a different way not done before.

There are only three scenes where voices are heard. The first one is that of a speaker pointing out to the idea that the media are to blame for the Tottenham Three's imprisonment. This person directly asks the audience for help. He has addressed the media, an ideological state apparatus, which constantly vilifies black Britons as I indicated in *The People's Account*. This shows how the people in that event knew that the problem that they were facing went beyond the Repressive State Apparatus, which are the police or the prison system. The power exercised by the media in the UK and its relationship with black British community was encapsulated in *Racism: A Response* (Gordon 1990b) by Ceddo.

The following hearable example is what seems to be a comic sketch between two women which ends up in a gloomy tone. These two women talk about daily issues such as having families, being mothers and generational gaps. However,

[8] Scenes of interrogations in police stations are recurrent among the mentioned workshops. Further examples are *Mysteries of July* (Auguiste 1991) by BAFC and *Young Soul Rebels* (Julien 1991) by Sankofa.

one of them mentions that she has her son in prison, her son Winston. She is embodying the feelings of the families of the Tottenham Three. As such, it is an attempt at healing the community's trauma through a cathartic experience that many parents in the audience could relate to. The final hearable moment comes from a woman who asks for help. She asks the audience to spare a thought for the Tottenham Three and do something about it. She wants help to put pressure on the home secretary as it has been done with the families of Broadwater and to actively fight.

These hearable moments are quite strategic and they emphasise not only the idea of pressure on black Britons but also encourages the community to fight back since it is the only solution available to face a problem that is common and, as such, to be united. They also include the viewer in the narrative by being an active witness and decoder as well as a carrier of prosthetic memory. Consequently, this documentary together with this article are examples of how by using the arts—whether through writing, film or music, or a combination of all of them, as *Culture for Freedom* does, traumatic memory is a productive force. By engaging with the past through acts of remembrance and commemoration, they offer opportunities to reshape the relationship between past and present. Through it, individuals and communities can confront and process traumatic experiences, fostering healing and memorialisation.

4. Conclusion

All in all, this article expands the conversation between modes of remembering and audio-visual culture through Ceddo's productions and their two productions *The People's Account and Culture for Freedom*, which are underexplored. This article has done so by considering the importance of Ceddo and its productions to understand the construction of black British identities in the 80s in the social, political and cultural context that Ceddo dealt with. This has been demonstrated by addressing the context in which Ceddo was born following the Workshop Declaration Act, an institutional response of the uprisings of 1981 as well as the context of the uprisings of 1985 in Tottenham. Additionally, by remembering *The People's Account* it has been possible to explore questions related to trauma and the generation of postmemory that occupy the visual space constructed in the documentary together with questions related to censorship. Moreover, and strictly related to the previous argument, this article has managed to read *Culture for Freedom* as a response to the censorship faced by *The People's Account* and as an attempt at healing the trauma present on it by reading the silences and absences of the stories that were not allowed to exist. It has also been taken as an example of prosthetic memory. In this way, these productions reveal the relationships between memory and identity concerning the black British experience in the 80s.

Ceddo puts forward an excavation of black British identities that were not part of the main British narrative as well as a representation of black Britishness from the point of view of the own community. The fact that this paper brings into the conversation these two productions and explores them is a way of keeping the memory of these productions and Ceddo alive. As Masokoane (1986, 63) states

on behalf of Ceddo, "[t]he future could still be in our hands, let us, therefore, make this gathering a turning point where we can push and advance black film making in this country to become a recognisable force." Their engagement with community issues demonstrated that the future awaited them and this paper has shown that they are still an important film and video workshop addressing crucial questions in terms of memory, cinema and identity formation.

This article shows that Ceddo's productions are still of relevance today and that they should be included more often in conversations about black British cinema. There have been recent attempts at doing so as the conversation "Chronicles of a Black Filmmaker" between one of the members of Ceddo, Imruh Bakari Caesar and Linton Kwesi Johnson at the black-led gallery 198 Contemporary Arts and Learning on 26th October 2022 in Brixton shows. A further example is the display of some of Ceddo's works in the exhibition *PerAnkh: The June Givanni Pan-African Cinema Archive* which took place from 15th April to 4th June 2023 at Raven Row, London.

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