

Slanguages

Languages in the Creative Economy

Rethinking Modern Languages from the ground up

Rajinder Dudrah & Punch Records



Voices

PATOIS

Pidgin

URBAN

identity

Slang

Sign Language

CULTURE



creative
multilingualism

Slanguages

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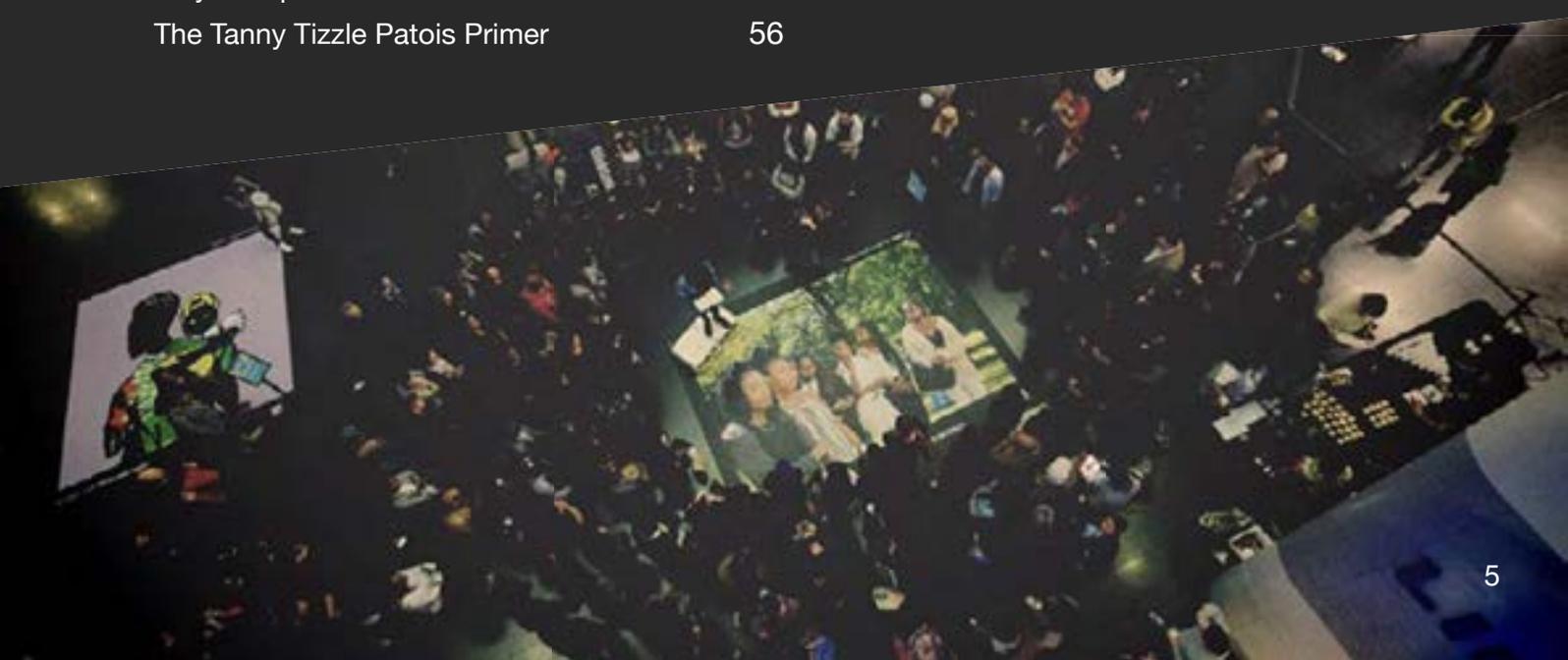
Designer, Nick Drew Design

Creative Multilingualism

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Slanguages

Languages in the Creative Economy

Introducing SLANGUAGES

Rajinder Dudrah - Professor of Cultural Studies and Creative Industries,
Birmingham Institute of Media and English

What is a 'slanguage'? The Merriam-Webster dictionary online defines the term as 'slangy speech or writing' that has been in use since at least 1870.¹ 'Slangy' or 'slang' is further defined as '1. *language peculiar to a particular group*' and '2. *an informal nonstandard vocabulary composed typically of coinages, arbitrarily changed words, and extravagant, forced, or facetious figures of speech*'.² The English Oxford Dictionary online defines slanguage as 'A form of slang; slangy speech' and gives an illustrative example of the term as "*weird and wonderful teen slanguage*".³ The urbandictionary.com in its own inimitable way gives its 'top definition' for the term as '*It's what this whole damn website is all about*' followed by a user definition which further breaks down the term into: '1. *The extensive use of slang words in written or oral communication.* 2. *A dialect of standard English believed to have its origins in the neurological changes that evolved in the mind in the post-MTV era.*' The user, Julie Pedersen, even offers a term for the study of slanguages as 'Slinguistics: the study of slanguages'.⁴

What is interesting in these three different definitions are the two periods in which the blend of language and slang are said to have occurred (the late nineteenth century and the post-1981 period with the advent of Music TV around the world), and the ways in which they make reference to formal language (written and spoken) as undergoing change. The urbandictionary.com definition also makes claims about neurological changes taking place in humans that have led to the evolution of slanguages and the way we write, speak and/or perform them.

The late nineteenth century does appear rather late for a formal periodisation of slangy speech or writing. What about, for instance, the use of slang in earlier periods in different languages, songs, literature and poetry across rural and urban cultures in periods prior to this? The accuracy of this historical designation apart, another relatively new term enters urban lexicon, that of 'slinguistics' as the ability to study slanguages.

Part of the study of slang also entails an acknowledgment that slang's relationship to formal language more generally can be seen as a contested one. For instance, Slang can be thought of as "lower down", secondary or tertiary, even derided or considered uneducated sometimes, or as an indication of a particular class or taste when it comes to thinking about using or speaking language in formal contexts. Some of this can be detected in the first definition of the term as listed by the Merriam-Webster dictionary above: 'arbitrarily changed words... forced... facetious figures of speech'. However, contrary to this view language is constantly changing and new words, either in their slang or more formal contexts are being created, used and entering official discourse, such as via these dictionary entries. Furthermore, what might we learn by paying attention to, or to put it "slinguistically", to study slanguages that tells us something about the place of language, words, speech or writing and their associated performances in culture? This book is interested in this latter and more dynamic aspect of slanguages, especially in the use and performance of slanguages in and through the work of a range of artists from the UK.

The book arises from an Arts and Humanities Research Council funded programme entitled Creative Multilingualism (www.creativeml.ox.ac.uk/) that ran from 2016 to 2020. SLANGUAGES is a research project that developed under the aegis of one of the seven strands of Creative Multilingualism – Strand 4: ‘Languages in the Creative Economy’ (www.creativeml.ox.ac.uk/research/creative-economy). SLANGUAGES (www.creativeml.ox.ac.uk/projects/slanguages) is exploring the creative way artists employ and take inspiration from languages such as Arabic, Hindi, Patois, Pidgin, Polish, Punjabi, Russian, Urdu, urban sign languages, and Yoruba. The project is wide-ranging and includes exhibitions, performances, and collaborations with artists, creative professionals and partners such as Punch Records; Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery; the Birmingham Repertory Theatre; Sputnik Theatre Company, London; Caste Away Arts, Coventry; Pesolife, London; Beatfreeks, Birmingham; Raman Mundair, Scotland; and AfroFlux Birmingham, amongst others.

This book introduces the work of twenty three artists, all who have used at least one other language in their work in the creative industries alongside English. They have also played with the spoken form and performance of languages, sometimes blending and mixing languages to speak, sing or perform through slang, and sometimes creating their own unique slang as a result. What makes their work further interesting is that their use of languages sits alongside and mixes with the languages of the medium that they are working in, for example music, spoken word, visual arts, comedy, sign language etc. As slanguages artists, then, their work draws attention to the ways in which they are inspired by different languages to perform creatively, while also suggesting new and exciting ways of communicating, making sense of the world around them through their artistry, and engaging in interesting ways with their audiences.

Four of the twenty three artists in this book (Taneisha Deans, Lekan Babalola, RTKal aka Joshua Holness and Rinkoo Barpaga) have collaborated as partners on the SLANGUAGES research project and have featured in our touring exhibition: ‘SLANGUAGES: Languages in the Creative Economy’. The exhibition was commissioned by Rajinder Dudrah and co-curated and produced in partnership with Simon Redgrave, Head of Creative Development from Punch Records and designed by Nick Drew, the project’s graphic designer.

This book, partly as an elaboration of the exhibition, not only acts as an introduction to our artists, it also, to put it in “slinguistic” terms, offers an insight into the world of slanguages as represented through our artists and their craft. It also demonstrates the impact of the SLANGUAGES project in the working lives of the artists. The book covers slanguages in action across numerous languages, including Patois, Nigerian Pidgin, Polari, Iyeric, Hindi, Punjabi, and urban sign language. The syntax and grammar of non-standard language formation and how they are used in communication is elaborated through a range of examples, including: call and response in musical performance; re-working formal sign language for the purposes of the street; gestures in dance; story telling across a range of artistic genres; and the use of rhyme in spoken word.

We hope that this book offers an accessible entry point into thinking about s/languages and creativity. Far from thinking about slang in any hierarchical manner (i.e. in a way that posits one language as above or superior to another), we aim to showcase and celebrate different languages and their varied uses as having meaning and offering comment on the world through the featured artists. If a slanguage is a result of the mixing of formal and informal languages, in what ways has this occurred and to what creative effects in the examples of our artists?

¹ www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/slanguage#h1 date last accessed 6 April 2022

² www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/slangy date last accessed 6 April 2022

³ en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/slanguage date last accessed 6 April 2022

⁴ www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=slanguage date last accessed 6 April 2022



SLANGUAGES exhibition

Strand 4. Languages in the Creative Economy

The SLANGUAGES exhibition was devised under Strand 4 - Languages in the Creative Economy which was led by Professor Rajinder Dudrah from Birmingham City University, together with co-researchers Professors Julie Curtis from Wolfson College and Philip Bullock from Wadham College, University of Oxford.

This strand investigated interaction between languages in the performing arts and the types of creativity this generates. Multilingual performance fosters creativity that is responsive to cultural contexts and audiences.

The SLANGUAGES exhibition featured the work, archives and ephemera related to four Birmingham-based artists who use different languages in their musical and artistic performances. The exhibition showcased RTKAL (aka Joshua Holness), a grime artist; Rinkoo Barpaga, an urban sign language, deaf and hard of hearing comedian and film maker; Lekan Babalola, a Grammy Award winning percussionist and Taneisha Deans (aka Tanny Tizzle), spoken word and performance. All use different forms of language in their work.

Based on research undertaken by the project team, the exhibition featured how these artist work with multi-languages, different popular cultures and British urban street styles in the formation of their music and related artwork. The exhibition also illustrated how multi-lingual languages and performance are used and taken up by different artists in their creative work in the UK's cultural industries.

Exhibitions were featured at The Buttery, Wolfson College, Linton Road, Oxford during October and December 2017 and at Birmingham City University, Parkside Building, Birmingham, during November and December 2018. Other exhibitions were cancelled due to the outbreak of Covid-19.



Rinkoo Barpaga



RTKAL

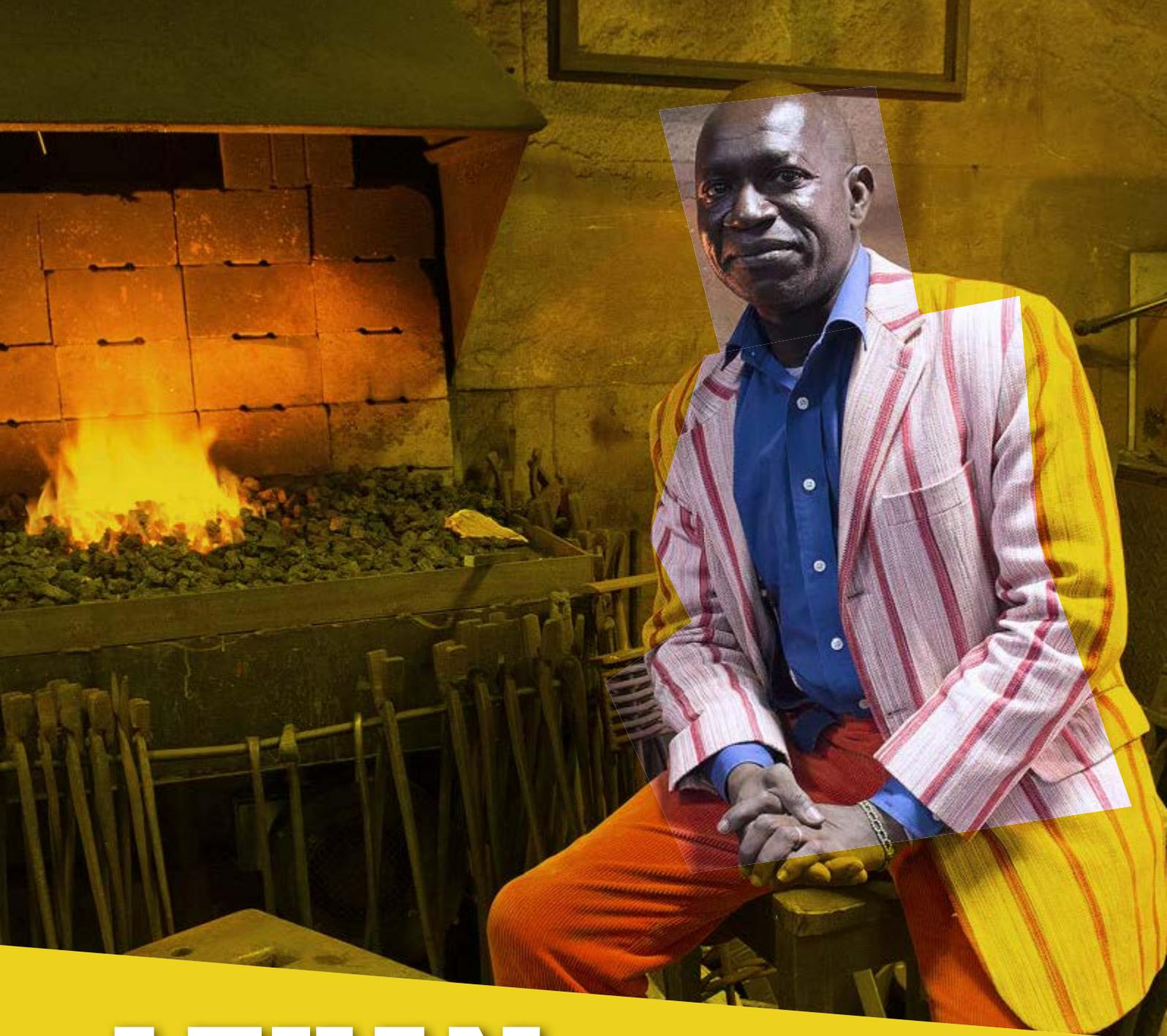


Taneisha Deans



Lekan Babalola

THE EXHIBITION



LEKAN BABALOLA

OLALEKAN BABALOLA - known professionally as LEKAN - is a twice GRAMMY award-winning Nigerian master percussionist, educator and artistic director. After playing professionally on the Lagos music scene, BABALOLA relocated to the US and then the UK in the 1980s. BABALOLA likes to say that he learned traditional Yoruba musical practice from his family in Nigeria, contemporary Jazz techniques from ART BLAKEY in New York and politics from FELA KUTI in the Kalakuta republic.



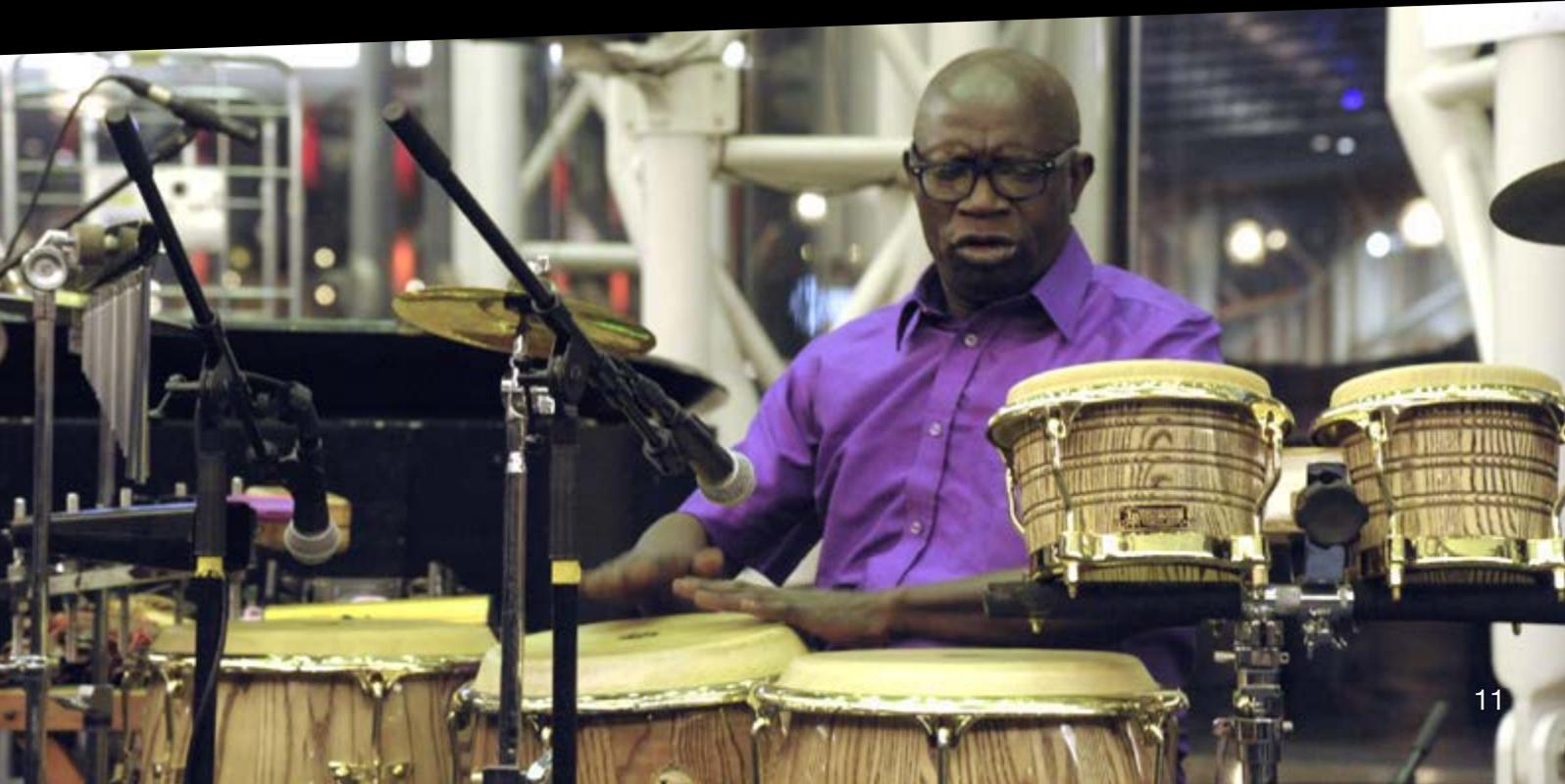
BABALOLA was awarded a GRAMMY in 2006 for his work on ALI FARKA TOURE'S 'IN THE HEART OF THE MOON'. His second GRAMMY came in 2009 for his work with CASSANDRA WILSON on her album 'LOVERLY'. Other artists BABALOLA has worked with include; GASPER LAWAL, ART BLAKEY, ERNEST RANGLIN, BRANFORD MARSALIS, ROY AYERS, KATE LUXMOORE, DAVID BYRNE, JOSHUA REDMAN, DAMON ALBARN, TONY ALLEN, AXELLE RED, PINSE SAUL, QUEEN SALAWA ABENI and JEAN TOUSSAINT.

BABALOLA sees himself as part custodian, part advocate of Yoruba traditions, and his interest is in how they impact contemporary culture through their inclusion in popular music forms. He studied film making at CENTRAL ST MARTINS and the NORTHERN SCHOOL OF FILM AND TELEVISION, working on the post-production of SPIKE LEE'S MALCOLM X. In 1995 he founded the IFA-YORUBA CONTEMPORARY ARTS TRUST, a registered charity committed to fostering the development of Yoruba arts and culture.



For me, music is about crossing boundaries and finding commonality. Yoruba culture still weaves its way through modern music in shared rhythms, and this project gives me the opportunity to tell its story. I love combining ancient and contemporary and percussion gives me a platform to take traditional vibes and give them a contemporary twist.

OLALEKAN BABALOLA





THE TALKING DRUM



A **TALKING DRUM** can be any one of a wide range of hourglass-shaped **WAISTED DRUMS** common across West Africa. The percussionist squeezes the drum between arm and ribs during play, like a bagpipe. This pressure on the leather tension cords, which run along the instrument, can modulate the pitch of the drum so it resembles human speech. Again, like the bagpipe, the **TALKING DRUM** is used to accompany ceremonies at a range of transition events - birth, naming, marriage, death.

GRIOTS and other practitioners can be trained to use the **TALKING DRUM** to mimic the tonal nature of Yoruba speech. This practice allows them to communicate coded messages that can be heard and understood upwards of five miles away. The **TALKING DRUM** - like **BACK MASKING** - can add a secret dimension to music, and is heard throughout many popular genres in West Africa, such as Senegalese **MBALAX**, and especially Nigerian **FUJI** and **JÙJÚ**.

Nigerian multi-instrumentalist **KING SUNNY ADÉ** has been using **TALKING DRUMS** in his music since the 1970s. Often these are in **CALL AND RESPONSE** with other instruments or with singers in his band. **ADÉ** is an innovator, fusing instruments such as the pedal steel guitar and the synthesizer deeply into his sound. Nigerian musician **SIKIRU ADEPOJU** has played with a variety of western musicians including the **GRATEFUL DEAD**, **STEVIE WONDER** and **MICKEY HART**.



The talking drum is often sprinkled over Western music like seasoning, for people who want the Africa, but don't want it too much. It's the same way they use the sitar. There is another level to the sound that they simply don't understand.

OLALEKAN BABALOLA





PIDGIN

Nigerian PIDGIN is a second language for tens of millions across Nigeria, and for millions more in Sierra Leone, Ghana and Liberia. 'Pidgin' describes a so-called 'contact language' which springs up informally between speakers of different languages in a relationship; typically a buyer and seller or a master and servant. PIDGIN has evolved over six hundred years and draws from Edo, Itsekiri, Yoruba, Portuguese and English.

Nigerian PIDGIN is heard extensively in African contemporary music, and amongst the Igbo and Yoruba speakers in the west of Nigeria it can be an important coded language which readily incorporates fashionable local slang and contemporary idioms. It is this fast-moving, stylized form of PIDGIN which is most often adopted by musicians, and is an African equivalent to the so-called EBONICS - the language often heard in Black American music.

Afrobeat pioneer FELA KUTI recorded initially in Yoruba and in English, but from 1971 onwards he increasingly used PIDGIN in his song lyrics and for the titles of his songs and albums. This made his work accessible to a huge market across Africa. At the same time, the status of PIDGIN as a language owned by the common people supported the anti-establishment, anti-corruption message of his work.

“ PIDGIN fulfills a need for authenticity and credibility which is especially important to Yoruba/Igbo-speaking musicians in our Nigerian diaspora. They are also the artists most likely to be experimenting with British and American cultural forms and fashions. This movement of artists keen to challenge established norms I think began with FELA.

OLALEKAN BABALOLA





AFTER SLANGUAGES

"For me, SLANGUAGES came at a time when the understanding and acceptance of cultural identity, legacy and communication was not really evident in the UK. SLANGUAGES was a way for people like me, who do not fit into the mainstream of cultural histories, to have the opportunity to express their heritage and be part of the bigger narrative. I found sanctuary in the project. It allowed my journey to have an artistic relevance and the inclusion with other artists grew into something bigger than any of us can imagine."

“When I came to this country, it was difficult for people of colour – to have an African accent felt like a crime in Black British culture. To have someone say that it’s all right to have your own language – it’s a relief. It gives me hope.

Through colonisation around the world, the Europeans imposed their language through religion. However, you now see the British government (and other European governments) producing documents in numerous languages, such as Yoruba, Swahili, Arabic etc. They have begun to realise that we need to translate into one another’s culture.”

“ I thank the SLANGUAGES team for allowing my art to be presented in a setting that would not normally have showcased it, allowing new visitors to experience the whole Yoruba Sonnets cultural sensibility.

OLALEKAN BABALOLA



Lekan Babalola

Musician, Producer and Cultural Curator

Websites: www.lekanbabalola.com

www.ifayorubacontemporaryarts.co.uk

www.birchfieldjazzfestival.com

Facebook: www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100035187292127

Twitter: twitter.com/LekanBabalola

Instagram: www.instagram.com/lekanbabalola/?hl=en

HAND GESTURES & SYMBOLS

FELA KUTI adopted the BLACK POWER salute - a clenched, raised fist - as part of his idiosyncratic pattern book of Pan-Africanism and Blackism. Today this symbol is widely associated with the Black diaspora. It is emblematic of the UK's NORTHERN SOUL movement. Hand gestures have always been a highly versatile coded symbol in world art; from cave paintings to Renaissance masters and now in contemporary music videos.



SOLIDARITY, VICTORY

Raising a clenched fist is believed to have originated in the post - WWI workers' movement. It crossed into the mainstream during the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) and gained a connection to Black Power when athletes used it to protest during the 1968 Summer Olympics.

OKAY

One of the world's most recognised hand symbols, and now an Emoji. Mostly seen as positive, zero or an evil eye in some parts of the world. Recently become an Alt Right meme meaning White Power, with the three fingers making a W and the thumb and forefinger a P.



"B" - BLOODS (GANG SIGN)

Making a hand symbol is a traditional way for gang members to clearly mark their territory and their allegiance. Hand signals are easily recognised by other young people, yet remain opaque to those for whom it is not intended.



"C" - CRIPS (GANG SIGN)

The Bloods and the Crips are two of the first tranche of street gangs to use hand signals to make letters to spell out their gang allegiances. In the UK, many contemporary street gangs use the same technique to spell out their postcodes.

FIST BUMP

Touching fists as a form of handshake. Originated with Black US soldiers in the 1960s and spread to athletes. One of a range of so-called DAP greetings from the African American community - communication through physical contact.



HORNS

Representing the horns of the devil, this is one of the best known music culture hand gestures. Its association with music in popular culture has been traced to 1969, when it appeared on cover of The Beatles' Yellow Submarine album.

SOUTHSIDE

Specific location within a city is very important in terms of declaring your gang allegiance, and also any particular form of music or street art you practice.



WESTCOAST - WESTSIDE

As above. There is also the alternative Eastside/East Coast sign.

PLAYLIST: PIDGIN & TALKING DRUMS

Since the advent of recorded music in Nigeria, artists have used pidgin as a vehicle to reach the widest possible audiences. FELA KUTI remains the best known artistic proponent of PIDGIN, as well as the best known Nigerian artist, but many other artists have employed it to creative or political effect. The TALKING DRUM can be heard in the music of KING SUNNY ADÉ and in many West African music genres



TAXI DRIVER BY BOBBY BENSON (1958)

Pidgin is used here in this international hit by a Nigerian musical innovator who brought Caribbean influences such as Calypso into African Highlife. Benson taught pidgin to British Guyanese musician Eddie Grant.

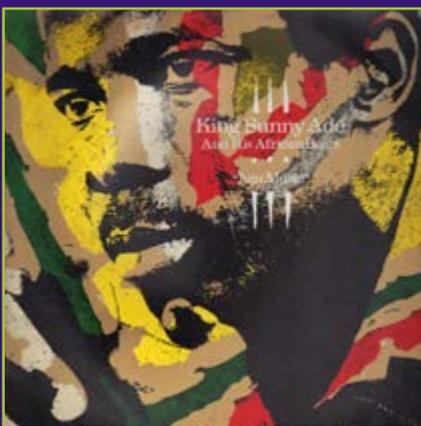
WHY BLACK MAN DEY SUFFER? BY FELA KUTI (1971)

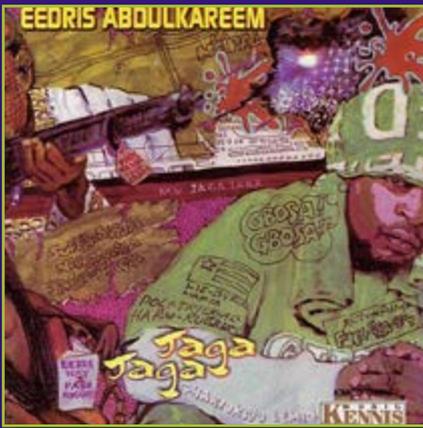
This classic album features just two tracks, both using Pidgin - "Why Black Man Dey Suffer" and "Ikoyi Mentality Versus Mushin Mentality".



JUJU MUSIC BY KING SUNNY ADÉ AND HIS AFRICAN BEATS (1982)

This major label debut was the first worldwide release by Nigerian superstar Adé. Tracks like "Mo Beru Agba" feature three Talking Drums.



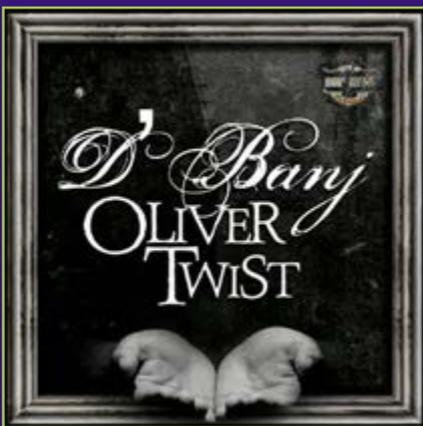


JAGA JAGA (SHAMBLES) BY EEDRIS ABDULKAREEM (2004)

Popular political pidgin rap song banned by the Nigerian president Olusegun Obasanjo. Cover art was by Fela Kuti's sleeve artist, Lemi Ghariokwu.

FUJI SATISFACTION by BANTU FEATURING AYUBA (2006)

A striking contemporary collaboration between Adé Bantu, a Europe-based rapper Adewale Ayuba, one of the best known Nigerian Fuji artists.



OLIVER TWIST BY D'BANJ (2012)

Nigerian artist D'banj blends pidgin words with Afrobeats and Hip Hop influences on this contemporary track, currently the most viewed Nigerian song on YouTube.

SONG QUEEN: A PIDGIN OPERA by THE VENUS BUSHFIRES (2015)

A Pidgin opera based on the traditional West African stories of Mami Wata, by Nigerian singer Helen Parker-Jayne Isibor.



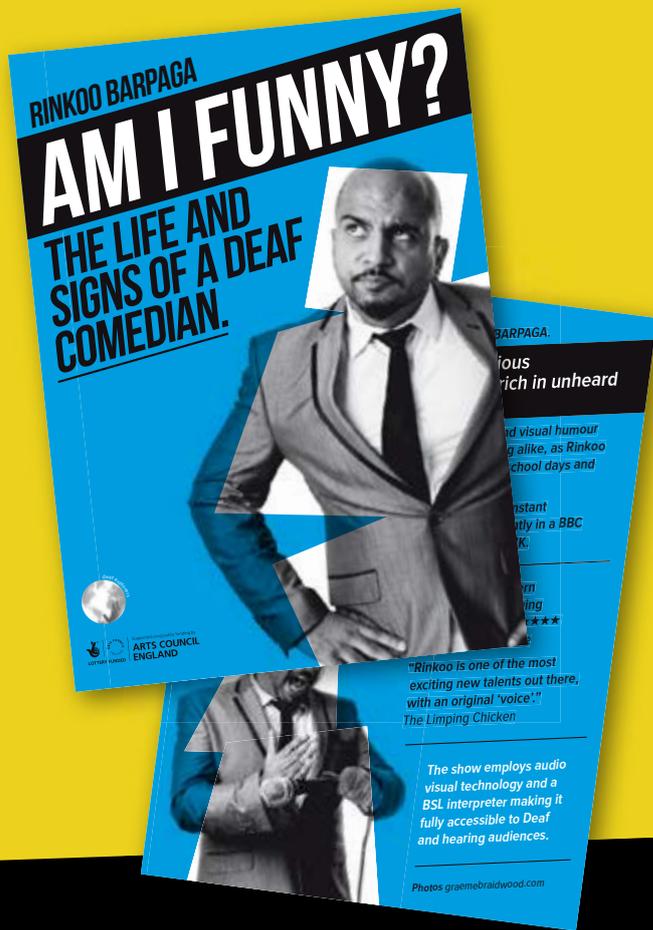
ARA DE BY ARA (2017)

Pioneering Aralola Olumuyiwa is one of Nigeria's few female talking drum musicians. She performed professionally for twenty five years before releasing her first album.



RINKOO BARPAGA

RINKOO is a documentary maker, stand-up comedian, street photographer, writer and presenter. His work explores the complexities of the British urban deaf identity. A filmmaker for over fourteen years, his award-winning DOUBLE DISCRIMINATION was seen on FILM 4 in the UK. RINKOO himself has been seen regularly as an IN-VISION interpreter for MTV, rendering PIMP MY RIDE, HOGAN KNOWS BEST, DATE MY MOM, REAL WORLD and many other favourites into British Sign Language (BSL).



Always a pioneer, RINKOO uses stand-up comedy as a vehicle to report on the experiences of the young, urban, Deaf and diverse. Launched in 2013 at the AMERICAN COMEDY INSTITUTE in New York, his solo show AM I FUNNY? - CAN A DEAF COMEDIAN BE FUNNY IN A HEARING WORLD? was described as "daring", "exciting" and "original".

RINKOO's new work includes a Deaf drama in partnership with the BIRMINGHAM REP and the critically acclaimed writer and director ALEXANDER ZELDIN.



So many Black British actors are traveling to the US for fresh opportunities. It was the same for me. In Britain I found so many barriers. In the US I was able to start a comedy career.



RINKOO BARPAGA





SIGNS AND STORYTELLING

Sign language can have highly performative aspects, with nuanced gestures, facial expressions and body movements capable of conveying subtle shades of meaning and mood.

This can lend itself as a tool for artists to tell stories and convey characters, and even for comedy. In his stand-up show, *AM I FUNNY? RINKOO BARPAGA* performs in British Sign Language (BSL) and provides an interpreter who translates the show into spoken English.

RINKOO:

“When the credit crunch hit in 2008, I lost my job and realised that as a Deaf person it can be very difficult to find a new one. This seemed like the perfect time to try stand-up comedy. I had ideas and media experience, but promoters in the UK could only see my Deafness as a barrier and didn’t want to give me a chance.

DEAF EXPLORER backed me to develop my ideas, so I went to New York, the birthplace of stand-up, to research techniques and hone my skills. I’ve always played the role of joker amongst my friends and family, but here I was very far away from them. I had to work hard with an American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter to communicate effectively.”

The show he developed, AM I FUNNY? - CAN A DEAF COMEDIAN BE FUNNY IN A HEARING WORLD? has since gone on to a sell-out UK tour.

“

I think I learned how to tell a good story from my mother. To me she was the queen of storytelling.

”

RINKOO BARPAGA





URBAN SIGN LANGUAGE

Urban Sign Language (USL) is a product of the Black and Asian Deaf experience. It developed to serve their particular views and interests, but is now growing in popularity amongst people from all backgrounds in the Deaf community, especially on social media. USL is the result of the double discrimination that occurred when BME Deaf people were excluded from mainstream Deaf provision.

RINKOO BARPAGA has been around USL since he was eight years old:

“I learned British Sign Language (BSL) together with other Black and Asian boys, and we always found ways to express ourselves. When ITV hired me as their in-vision translator, Deaf academics would write in and tell me that I needed to polish my BSL! My grammar, nouns and verbs were not standard, they said. Yet when I was back in Birmingham and London I saw other Deaf people signing just the same way I was.

When I moved on to in-vision signing for MTV, I quickly realised there were no formal equivalents for the Hip Hop’s lyrical flow in standard BSL. MTV supported my use of Urban Sign Language for their in-vision translations, and now USL is much more widely recognised in the mainstream. In future I see Urban Sign Language becoming a popular tool for expressive arts such as poetry, theatre, TV and signed singing.”



Limited language, limited world!

RINKOO BARPAGA



“To me, SLANGUAGES means discovering previously unstudied languages, like finding buried treasure and bringing it to light. Urban Sign Language has been used for a long time, without recognition. No-one has previously studied the differences between British Sign Language and Urban Sign Language.

Urban Sign Language is an important part of a person’s identity, and it comes from a number of factors. It is a mixture of where you are from, which school you attended (I have identified two schools use Urban Sign Language), your race - these factors make up who you are. Urban Sign Language is highly politicised and wasn’t accepted as ‘appropriate’ sign language until MTV used Urban Sign Language when it became more widely accepted.”



AFTER SLANGUAGES

“Since my work with SLANGUAGES, I have been approached more often, through my work as a sign language dramaturg for both theatre and film, supporting actors to develop and improve their Urban Sign Language.

I have been working on Urban Sign Language for about 17 years, but the recognition by SLANGUAGES means the study of Urban Sign Language can continue. They have given me the opportunity to present and share my work on Urban Sign Language. SLANGUAGES enabled me to consolidate my work so far and include it in the exhibition. I was pleased to have the opportunity to show the richness and diversity of Deaf languages and culture.”

“

I have concerns about the future of Urban Sign Language. As the world moves towards greater equality, I expect that British Sign Language will be accepted, and Urban Sign Language will fade away.

”

RINKOO BARPAGA



Rinkoo Barpaga

Stand Up Comedian, Actor, Film and Theatre-Maker, TV Presenter and One Man Show.

Website: www.rinkoo.co.uk

Filmmaker: www.rinkoofilm.com

Spotlight profile: www.spotlight.com/interactive/cv/1899-1278-1748

Patron for the Action Deafness: www.actiondeafness.org.uk

Board member for the Deaf International Kidz: deafkidzinternational.org

Director for the Deaf Explorer: www.deafexplorer.com

BRITISH SIGN LANGUAGE

Eight Examples



LIE

A false statement made with deliberate intent to deceive.

Hand up against chin with forefinger outstretched. Mouths the word "lie" while moving hand away.

DRIVE

To convey in a vehicle.

Both hands grasp an imaginary driving wheel and move in a circular motion.



DRUNK

State in which one's physical and mental faculties are impaired by excess of alcohol.

Fingers extended to make 'V' shape. Make backward and forward movements.



RELAX

To release or bring relief from the effects of tension, anxiety.

Hands make repeated backward and forward movements with fingers outstretched.

BRILLIANT

Satisfactory in quality, quantity, or degree.

Hand with raised thumb on open hand moves upwards.



JEWELLERY

Articles of gold, silver, precious stones, etc., for personal adornment.

Hand moves across top of body to denote wearing of jewellery.

GREAT

Wonderful, first-rate, very good.

Same as BRILLIANT, showing the limitation of conveying slightly different meanings in sign language.



COMPLETE

The act of achieving attainment or accomplishment.

Both hands raised with thumb outstretched move downwards.

URBAN SIGN LANGUAGE

Eight Equivalents



BULLSHIT

Not believing something someone says.

Thumb touching middle finger on one hand snaps down with fingers outstretched.

DRIVE

To drive a car in a "cool" way like a "gangster".

Hand simulating holding a driving wheel with one arm stretched out on car door and turning it with small moves.



PISSSED

Out of your head on alcohol.

Hand touching side of the head with a small round twisting movement to indicate pain.



CHILL

Hang loose.

Hands outstretched with palms facing down and slightly outwards.

COOL, SICK

Cool, tight, wicked, sick, sweet, nice, etc.

Slight open hand gesture. This one is all in the facial expression!



BLING

Jamaican slang denoting expensive, ostentatious clothing or jewellery, or materialistic attitudes.

Both hands outstretched and indicating neck or clothes.

POW, GREAT!

Expressing the sound of a blow or gunshot, cool.

Hand raised with pointing finger symbolising a gun then pointing forward to symbolise shooting.



SMASHED IT!

Achievement, make progress or perform in a "cool" way.

First finger of both hands pointing towards signer then coming forward to point forward.



RTKAL

RTKAL is a singer, MC and performer making new work which draws from the deep heritage of ROOTS music. RTKAL is one of a handful of contemporary artists consciously blending traditional ROOTS techniques like CALL AND RESPONSE and WORD - SOUND - POWER with modern digital innovation, such as the potential of BEATS PER MINUTE (BPM) to alter human response.



RTKAL has built his roots skills touring with stalwart soundsystems VALVE and CHANNEL ONE. He has performed alongside artists including RUDIMENTAL, WU-TANG CLAN and SKINNY MAN and at events such as GLASTONBURY, RED BULL CULTURE CLASH, BOOMTOWN and OUTLOOK. His chart successes include PUTTIN' IN THE WORK with GHOST WRITERS and RUN YOUR MOUTH with NOISSES FT LADY LESHURR. FOREIGN BEGGARS was named BEST URBAN MUSIC VIDEO of 2012 by the UK MUSIC VIDEO AWARDS.

RTKAL has been active in music since his teens; touring the UK as a founder member of PUNCH's DECPHER COLLECTIVE he learned how different beats impact audiences in different ways. His most recent mixtape, SKUNK ROCK VOLUME 1 (2015), brought him a new contemporary audience, and he has just finished a new project with producer GAVSBORG from Jamaica's EQUIKNOXXX MUSIC - HERBS AND PRAISE - designed to build bridges between Jamaican and British styles.



With this project I hope people will understand the journey music goes on. I want to be a true student of the game, taking inspiration from the greats and passing it on to the next generation.

RTKAL



CALL & RESPONSE

The lyrical technique of **CALL AND RESPONSE** between musicians and singers is found in many global music traditions, such as **FOLK SONGS** and **SEA SHANTIES**.

In western classical music call and response is known as **ANTIPHONY**. Call and response is the root of the common western song structure of **VERSE AND CHORUS**. The call and response is most clearly heard in African-American pioneered genres such as **JAZZ** and **GOSPEL**. Here it has been developed beyond the song structure and acts as a bridge between artists and audience.

REGGAE grew from American **RHYTHM AND BLUES** mixed with **MENTO**, **SKA** and other Caribbean styles. Reggae often employs a pattern of lyrical call and response between the lead vocalist and backing singers. Typically this is termed **CHANT AND CALL**.

The **ROOTS REGGAE** subgenre frequently includes the audience in a participatory call and response. Roots lyrics are often structured around the repetition of phrases.

A well-known example would be:

“ Fighting for survival...
...fighting on arrival ”

BUFFALO SOLDIER by **BOB MARLEY** and **KING SPORTY** (1978)

This repeated call and response produces a liturgical, hypnotic effect, and a shared connection between artist and audience.





The imaginary effect of an internal racial core (is) socially reproduced by... mimesis, gesture, kinesis and costume. Lines between self and other are blurred and special pleasures are created as a result.

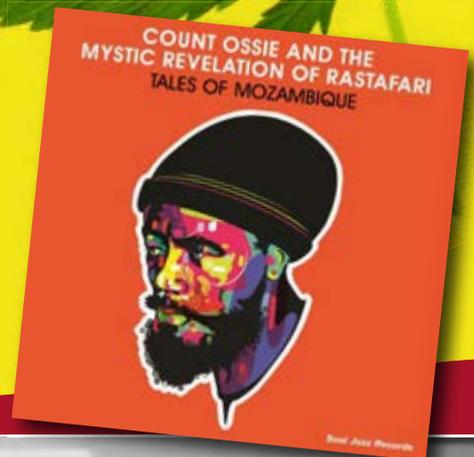


PAUL GILROY, THE BLACK ATLANTIC (1993),

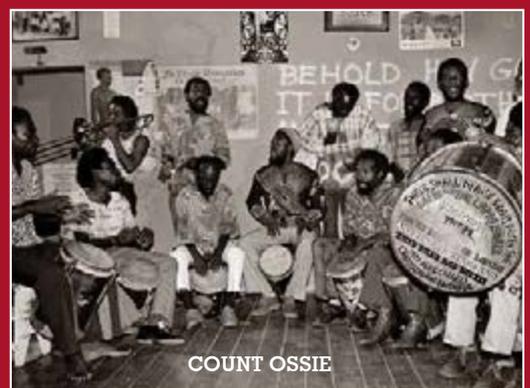


WORD SOUND POWER

In common with other faith traditions, Rastafari professes philosophies believed to facilitate positive change in the lives of adherents and the wider world. Undoubtedly the most widely known such practice, or **LIVITY**, is the use of **GANJA** - marijuana - as a sacrament in **GROUNATIONS** and **REASONINGS**. More deeply influential however has been the use of **African DRUMS** at Rasta ceremonies.



In the late 1950s, Rasta drummer **COUNT OSSIE** was the first musician to co-opt these **NYABINGHI** drums and rhythms into mainstream Jamaican music. This influenced the then-emergent **REGGAE** music genre, and through recordings, it went on to shape the sound of western popular music. The mindful use of drums and speech is central to the Rastafari concept of **WORD-SOUND-POWER**. This is an understanding that the **VIBRATIONS** of both speech and music can impact the hearer and the world in either a positive or negative manner.





With the concept of **WORD-SOUND-POWER** in mind, the **RASTAMAN** will bring elements of ceremony into the concert hall with the expectation of making listeners into participants. This is most evident in the work of **ROOTS REGGAE** artists such as **VAUGHN BENJAMIN**, aka **MIDNITE**. He plays and records with minimum equipment, in common with the **IYARIC** conception of music **PRODUCERS** as **REDUCERS**, who kill the **LIVITY** in the sound.

VAUGHN BENJAMIN



I like to be relaxed. My voice needs to recuperate, and it depends on vibration. Sometimes I listen to the bass man alone or the drummer alone.

VAUGHN BENJAMIN





AFTER SLANGUAGES

“Since taking part in SLANGUAGES, I have been invited to join the BIRMINGHAM 2022 COMMONWEALTH GAMES team as musical director. Right now I’m working alongside some of the most talented creative professionals in the region to imagine and deliver the opening and closing ceremonies of the Games.

This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to share the soundtrack of our city in a collective experience for one and a half billion people. Birmingham has gone through a creative renaissance over the last decade and as a Brummie, I’m ready to represent the city as we know it to be.”



THE
MBC

Joshua RTKAl Holness is an Artist, Educator and Curator, whose work is focused on contextualising Word, Sound and Power and it's application in the modern world.

After first gaining traction as a young musician in Birmingham's underground scene, Rtkal's career has developed and grown gaining many accolades and moving into many different areas such as touring (WU TANG, Skinnyman, equiknoxx), being a lead artist for the Slanguages exhibition at Oxford University, curating BASS festival and Pull up tour for Punch Records, making Birmingham's 30 under 30 entrepreneur list, winning the BMA's best dancehall act, achieving syncs with GTAV and Cineworld along with many others.

After recently launching "THE MBC" an independent record label based in Digbeth, Birmingham, RTKAl now hopes to facilitate a path for the next generation of creatives from the city.

RTKAL

RTKAL is a singer, MC and performer

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Instagram: www.instagram.com/rtkal/?hl=en

Label Instagram: www.instagram.com/the.mbc/?hl=en

YouTube: www.youtube.com/channel/UCuPOIIE0DWh-qH-lnoYuUCA

Spotify: open.spotify.com/artist/2vnTkNJZB7zdGMijNNNqLW

Linktr.ee: linktr.ee/RTKAl

PLAYLIST:

WORD-SOUND-POWER



BURNING SPEAR

Stage name of Winston Rodney, influential Jamaican Rasta ROOTS REGGAE singer and musician who has recorded since 1973. Winner of two Grammys; nominated for twelve.

LISTEN TO: BURNING SPEAR AND ROCKING TIME (1974).

CHRONIXX

Jamaican REVIVAL REGGAE artist recording and touring since the late 1990s. Has played at Glastonbury.

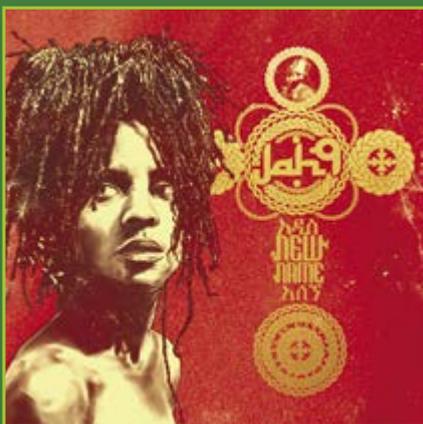
LISTEN TO: START A FIRE mixtape (2012)
DREAD & TERRIBLE (2014).



JAH9

A Jamaican singer and spoken word artist, she is inspired by DUB music and poetry. She has been active since 2010.

LISTEN TO: NEW NAME (2013).





JESSE ROYAL

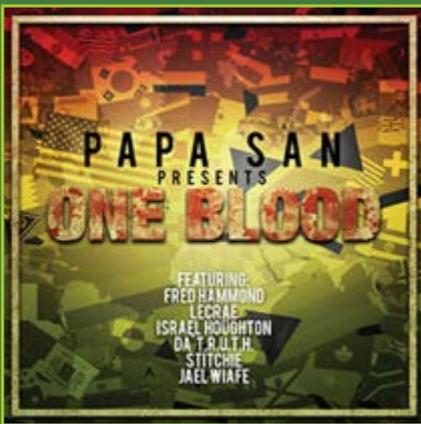
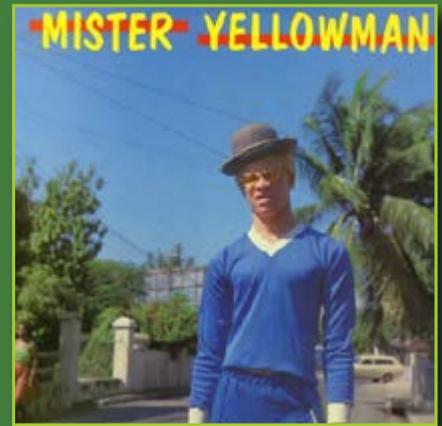
Jamaican Rasta singer mentored by FATIS BURRELL and EARL CHINNA SMITH. Recording and touring since the late 2000s. Also a so-called REGGAE REVIVAL artist.

LISTEN TO: MISHENI mixtape (2012)
HOPE AND LOVE (2015).

YELLOWMAN

A Jamaican DANCEHALL performer active since the late 1980s, his stage name references his white skin due to albinism.

LISTEN TO: MISTER YELLOWMAN (1986)
FREEDOM OF SPEECH (1998).



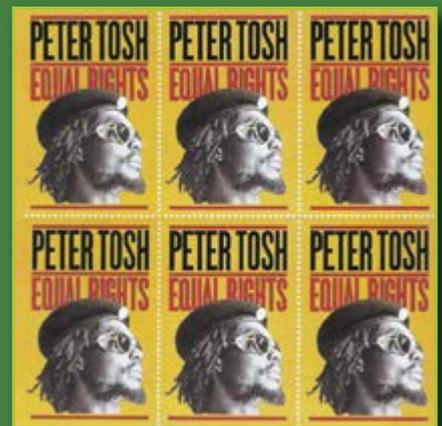
PAPA SAN

A REGGAE / GOSPEL performer who originally started as a DANCEHALL artist. Active since the early 1980s he has recently recorded with US HOLY HIP HOP artists LECRAE and ANDY MINEO.
LISTEN TO: ONE BLOOD (2014).

PETER TOSH

Influential Jamaican Rasta and REGGAE artist, core member of THE WAILERS with BOB MARLEY and BUNNY WAILER. His backing band was called WORD SOUND AND POWER.

LISTEN TO: EQUAL RIGHTS (1977)
LEGALIZE IT (1976).



VAUGHN BENJAMIN

Rasta singer and musician and centre of ROOTS REGGAE band MIDNITE; known for long, intense performances using CALL AND RESPONSE and other liturgical elements.

LISTEN TO: JUBILEES OF ZION (2000)
WATCH ESCAPE TO ST CROIX (2014).

DREAD TALK

IYARIC

IYARIC is the oral tradition and chief medium of transmission for the ideas and discourse at the heart of Rasta culture. Also known as I-N-I LANGUAGE, LIVALECT and I-TALK, it is deeply rooted in the heritage of its speaker community. Despite this, 'dread talk' remains supple enough to express nuanced contemporary ideas and issues, and through HIP HOP and ROOTS REGGAE it has spread far beyond the Rasta community. IYARIC speakers draw with equal ease from the sacred - the King James Bible, ganga - and the secular - politics, empire. The term 'dub history' has been created by academics to describe the eclectic evolution of 'dread talk'.

The Rasta concept of WORD-SOUND-POWER implies that the vibrations of speech, as well as music must impact the world. For this reason a striking feature of 'dread talk' is the playful manipulation of word-sounds to reflect the positive goals of the movement, subverting the subtly downpressive language of babylon.



IYARIC PHRASES

The etymology of some IYARIC words reinforces the ideology and concepts of Rastafari:

BABYLON

The corrupt establishment, the "system", Church and State, the police, a policeman.

BALD-HEAD

A straight person; one without dreadlocks; one who works for babylon.

IRIE

Phonetically; "all right".

IYARIC I

"Iya" ("higher) joined with Amharic, the Ethiopian language.

JAMMIN

To be having a good time, to be dancing calypso/soca.

LIVITY

A positive, healthy lifestyle.

ONE LOVE

A parting phrase, expression of unity.

RANKING

Highly respected.

REASONINGS

Dialogue and discussions of "sounds" (from Isaiah 1:18).

Other IYARIC words use the concept of WORD-SOUND-POWER to combat the subliminal negativity inherent in daily speech.

DOWNPRESSOR

Replaces "oppressor", also "downpression".

I'N'I (I-AND-I),

Replaces "we" or "us," while declaring the unity of both.

LIVICATION

Replaces "dedication", also "livicated", "livicate".

OUTVENTION

Replaces "invention" - something mechanical and inhuman.

OVERSTANDING -

Sometimes "INNERSTANDING"
Replaces "understanding".

POLITRICKS

Replaces "politics".

REDUCER

Replaces "producer", who destroys the livity of live music.

TANEISHA DEANS

TANEISHA DEANS, aka TANNY TIZZLE, (now known as Art By Taneisha) is a young Birmingham artist at the forefront of a contemporary fusion of spoken word, performance and visual arts practice. She aims to exploit whichever medium will best express her ideas; poetry, Photoshop or storytelling.

Her voice is delivered through a variety of creative personas, usually modelled on aspects of her own character and of people around her, and drawing equally on her roots in Jamaica and her experiences growing up in the UK.

As a performance poet and animator, TANEISHA seeks to place audience participation at the centre of her work by exploring how digital connectivity and interaction can enhance traditional artforms. Her debut solo exhibition, DO YOU FOR YOU (2017) featured paintings and stories presented in both English and Patois, with machine-readable codes providing access to online performance poetry. For her recent artist-in-residence commission, DOODLEHUB (2018), TANEISHA created a pop-up exchange where she and local people could create and swap simple, hand drawn images.





Everyday I wake up with a new song in my head that I attempt to sing. Although I know I'm no good at singing, I love to do it. It's all in how it makes me feel.

We live in a society where we are always under scrutiny, so I think being able to embrace your perfect differences is key to everyone's sanity. I know that it is to mine.



TANEISHA DEANS





//

When I first began to write poetry, I was just getting things off my chest. I just wanted to get down how I was feeling. Later I began experimenting different rhythm patterns. I learned how to deliver a spoken word piece; the importance of voice control and projection.

TANEISHA DEANS

//

SPOKEN WORD

SPOKEN WORD refers to an established genre of performed poetry which emerged from Twentieth Century American artistic movements such as the HARLEM RENAISSANCE and the BEAT WRITERS. As a form, SPOKEN WORD developed from the work of earlier OBJECTIVIST and MODERNIST poets. However as a practice and a tradition it reaches back much further; to the recitals of memorised epic poetry performed by African GRIOTS, European RHAPSODISTS and others.

The technology of the printing press encouraged generations of poets to write and to be read. Now contemporary media technology enables modern SPOKEN WORD artists to explore the performative aspects of their work. Techniques such as ALLITERATION, ASSONANCE, EXPRESSION, METRE, PACE, RHYTHM, ROLEPLAY, and STORYTELLING are commonly employed by poets to express very different subjects and opinions.

The academic study of SPOKEN WORD is very diverse, encompassing both popular movements - SLAM POETRY, HIP HOP POETRY, DEF POETRY, PUNK POETRY - and the avant-garde fringe, such as FLUXUS, the L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poets and the FYLKINGEN organisation.



For me, SPOKEN WORD is sometimes a way to say the things you want to say but don't necessary know how to say. The effect of something as simple as pausing at the right time, taking a breath at the right time, can make whatever I am saying more impactful. What you are really doing is just speaking your truth.



TANEISHA DEANS





JAMAICAN PATOIS

It's not that Jamaicans don't understand standard English - it's just that PATOIS hits harder.

TANEISHA DEANS

When we hear the word PATOIS in the UK, we usually think of the vernacular native language spoken in Jamaica and across the Jamaican diaspora. Linguists call this language JAMAICAN CREOLE. They reserve the word PATOIS to describe all non-standard hybrid languages, including JAMAICAN PATOIS, NIGERIAN PIDGIN, NUBI and CAMFRANGLAIS.

JAMAICAN PATOIS is a hybrid language, chiefly drawing from GHANAIAN AKAN and regional BRITISH ENGLISH dialects. Loan words from ULSTER ENGLISH, LOWLAND SCOTS, PORTUGUESE and HINDI give JAMAICAN PATOIS speakers a broad expressive range. PATOIS' aesthetic flexibility has been leveraged for over half a century by REGGAE and DANCEHALL artists. Today JAMAICAN PATOIS has the almost unique status of an international linguistic icon.

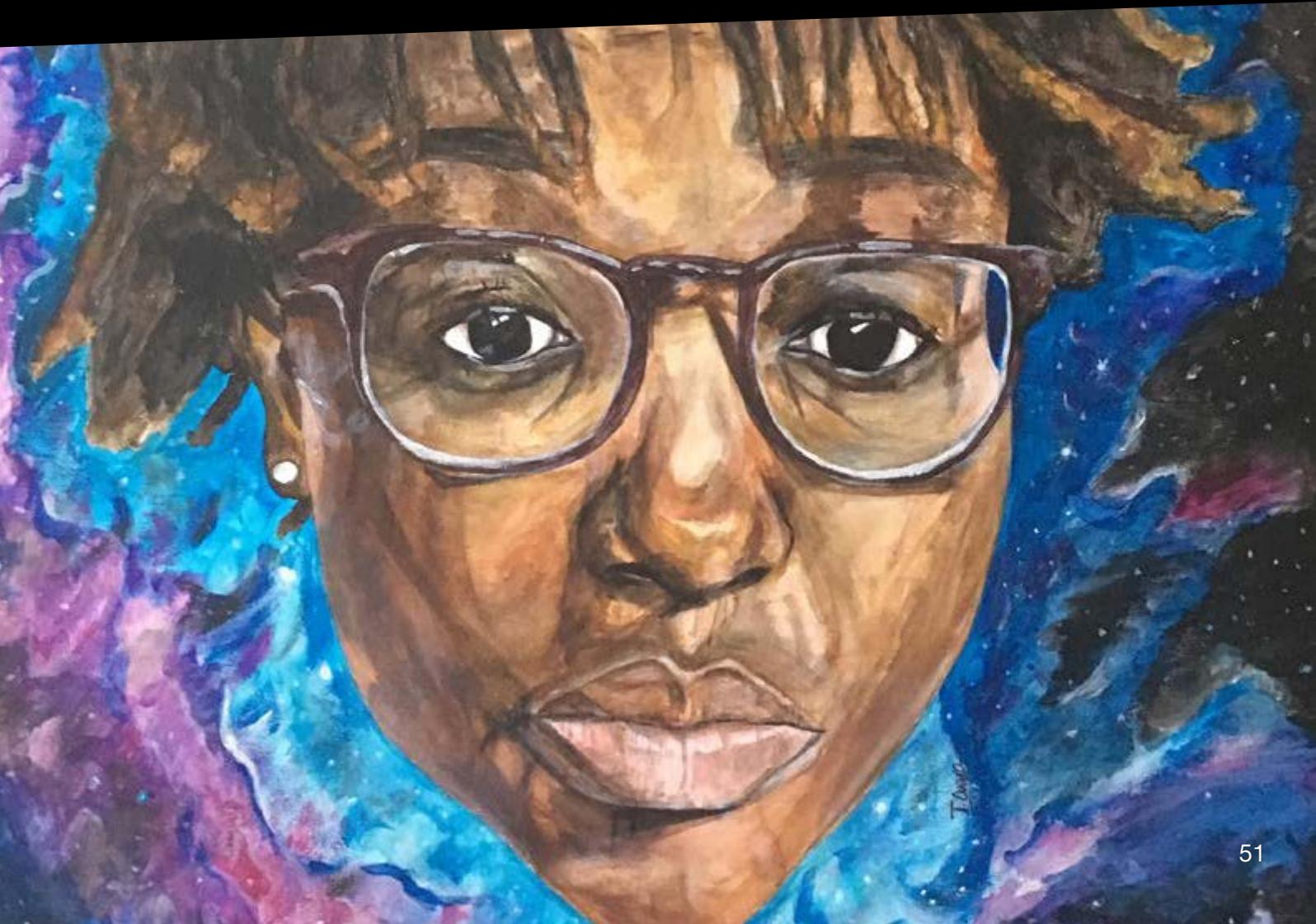
“Everyone seem to find our dialect intriguing. Some even attempt it themselves, especially on the street. People seem to want to master at least one word, especially a swear word.

In 2002, the UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES (UWI) began a project to standardise JAMAICAN PATOIS, in much the same way as American reformers such as NOAH WEBSTER approached the variations in ENGLISH. UWI’s project is intended to support those for whom PATOIS is their primary language. However, bilingual artists frequently jump between PATOIS and ENGLISH in their work, a stylistic device known as CODESWITCHING, and one frequently employed by SPOKEN WORD artists.

I use PATOIS in my work. When I think about Jamaica, or when certain things trigger me to write, PATOIS helps me address those issues. It comes out naturally when I feel strongly about something.”

“ PATOIS is a part of me. I will never stop using it and I will never lose sight of where I came from.

TANEISHA DEANS





AFTER SLANGUAGES

"SLANGUAGES allowed me to appreciate the different ways in which others can express themselves via various use of languages and dialects within their art-forms. To me, Slangauges gave artists like myself a platform to present in a raw authentic way but also allowed enough room for the audience and the recipients feel and flow with the journey that we as the artists took them on."

"I have dabbled in a few projects since being a contributor to SLANGUAGES. I have gained my PGCE in Secondary Art and Design and have been working in schools. I collaborated with Cannon Hill Park Friends; Tony to deliver workshops based on the The Big Draw theme; 'A Climate of Change' at Cannon Hill Park.

I am currently involved in a project with Dudley Children in Care alongside the poet called Kurly (Memorhyme) with aims to deliver workshops and create final outcomes celebrating black excellence and black inventors whose creations/inventions still play a major part in modern day life/society. The project is called 'Layers of Legacy'. I have also performed in Barcelona and at other venues including the Legacy Centre of Excellence for Wednesday Mic Fever; hosted Miss Culture Jam."



From contributing to SLANGUAGES, I went on to being featured at Aston University during International Women's Week and I felt that SLANGUAGES elevated my journey as an artist both professionally and personally. It gave me recognition and confidence to take up space on stages and in spaces I never thought I could before.

TANEISHA DEANS



Taneisha Deans - Art By Taneisha

Versatile Artist, Poet, Educator and Creative.

Website: artbytaneisha.com

Instagram: www.instagram.com/artbytaneisha/

Twitter: twitter.com/artbytaneisha

Facebook: www.facebook.com/ArtByTaneisha

Pinterest: www.pinterest.co.uk/ArtByTaneisha/



PLAYLIST: curated by TANNY TIZZLE

SPOKEN WORD & JAMAICAN PATOIS



MUTABARUKA (ALLAN HOPE)

Jamaican Rastafarian Dub poet. Listen to: DIS POEM from the album THE MYSTERY UNFOLDS (1986).

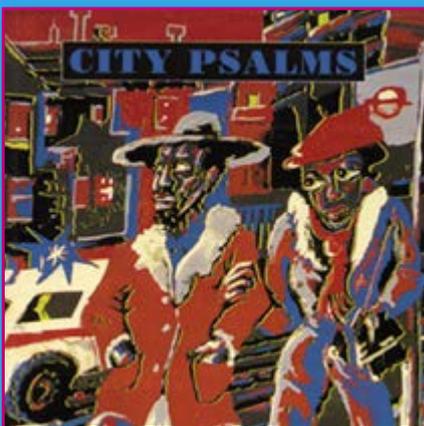
"This made me realise how far spoken word can make you can go; moving beyond boundaries."

STACEYANN CHINN

Jamaican / American spoken word artist, performance poet and LGBT activist.

Watch: FEMINIST OR A WOMANIST (YouTube).

"This is a performance piece which empowered me to dig into my deepest feelings and use them as my material."

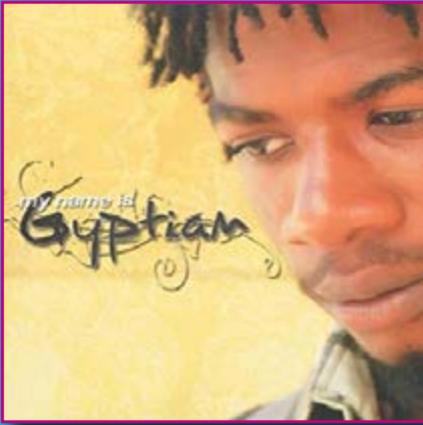


BENJAMIN ZEPHANIAH

British writer, Dub poet and Rastafarian.

Read: DIS POETRY from the collection CITY PSALMS (1992).

"This is a short poem that shows JAMAICAN PATOIS can shape the structure of a poem."



GYPTIAN (WINDEL EDWARDS)

Jamaican Rastafarian Roots / Reggae and Dancehall singer.

Listen to: **SERIOUS TIMES** from the album **MY NAME IS GYPTIAN** (2006).

“This is an artist who uses his wide vocal range to challenge himself in a range of genres.”

MAJAH BLESS (OMAALL WRIGHT)

Jamaican Rapper and Dub poet.

Listen to: **AMBITION** (YouTube).

“MAJAH BLESS made me want to explore Dub poetry, and Dub Poetry made me want to write about serious issues affecting Jamaicans.”



QQ (KAREEM DAWKINS)

Jamaican Roots / Reggae artist, “Singjay” and former child star.

Listen to: **BETTA MUST COME** (YouTube).

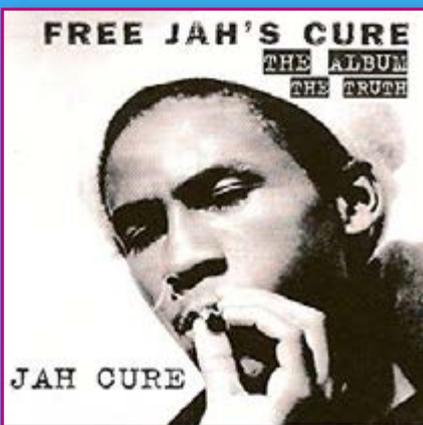
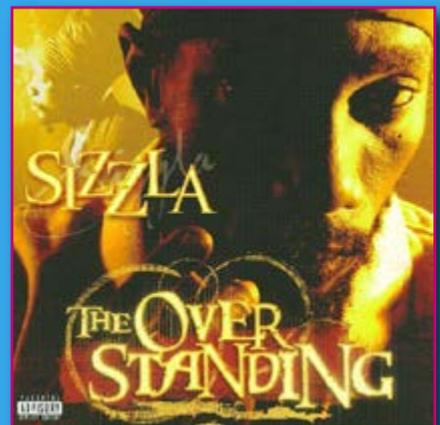
“I first heard this single when I was young; just like Kareem. It helped me see that age was no barrier to expression.”

SIZZLA (MIGUEL ORLANDO COLLINS)

Jamaican Rastafarian Roots / Reggae artist.

Listen to: **THANK YOU MAMA** from the album **THE OVERSTANDING** (2006).

“SIZZLA KALONJI’s views on LGBT rights receive a lot of attention, but as a writer he’s a force to be reckoned with.”



JAH CURE (SICCATURE ALCOCK)

Jamaican Roots / Reggae artist. Listen to: **PRISON WALLS** from the album **FREE JAH CURE** (2005).

“TYAH CURE wrote and recorded this in prison. His conscious, emotional writing provides a sharp contrast to his reputation.”

THE TANNY TIZZLE PATOIS PRIMER

“Travelling around Jamaica, you notice PATOIS has many regional variations. In cities like New Kingston it’s often Standard English with PATOIS inflections. In the countryside areas like Portland, it’s the other way around.

Names for things like childhood games and fruits change, and words are often pronounced differently. For example PINCKNEY and PICKANNY both mean CHILD (from the Portuguese PEQUENINO). Sentence flow often indicates a tense change; for example, MI A EAT (“I am eating”) and MI DID A EAT (“I was eating”).”



A SUH DI TING SET

"That's just the way it is."

BIG TINGS A GWARN

"Big things are happening."

CUYAH, SHE GWAN LIKE SHE NICE EEE

"Look at that, she acts like she is so nice."

EVERY MICKLE MEK A MUCKLE

(From Scottish/Irish proverb) "Look after your pennies and your pounds will look after themselves."

GWAN MEDZ IT

"Go and think it over."

IF YUH WAAN GOOD, YUH NOSE AFFI RUN

"If at first you don't succeed, try, try, try again."

I NO COME TO HEAR ABOUT HOW HORSE DEAD AN' COW FAT

"It's like telling somebody to knock off with irrelevant details."

JAH KNO STAR

"I can't believe it."

ME BLEACH HARD LASS NIGHT

"I partied straight through the night."

NO CUP NO BROKE, NO COFFEE NO DASH WEY

"Even if disaster strikes your home it's always possible that all may not be lost."

TIME A DI MASTER

"Give it time."

VICTORY NUH CUM FROM LIE DUNG IN BED

"Nothing ventured, nothing gained."

WAH GWAN? - MI DEYAH!

"Hi! What's going on? 'I'm here."

WAH SWEET YUH AGUH SOUR YUH

"There's no gain without pain."

"If you're not careful that smile will turn upside down."

WANTI WANTI CAN'T GET IT, GETTI GETTI NO WANT IT

"Have-nots covet what the Haves take for granted."

WORK WID DI TING

"Just put up with it."

STAND PON CROOKED AND CUT STRAIGHT

"Work with the little you have until better comes."

YUH ZEET

"Do you see?"

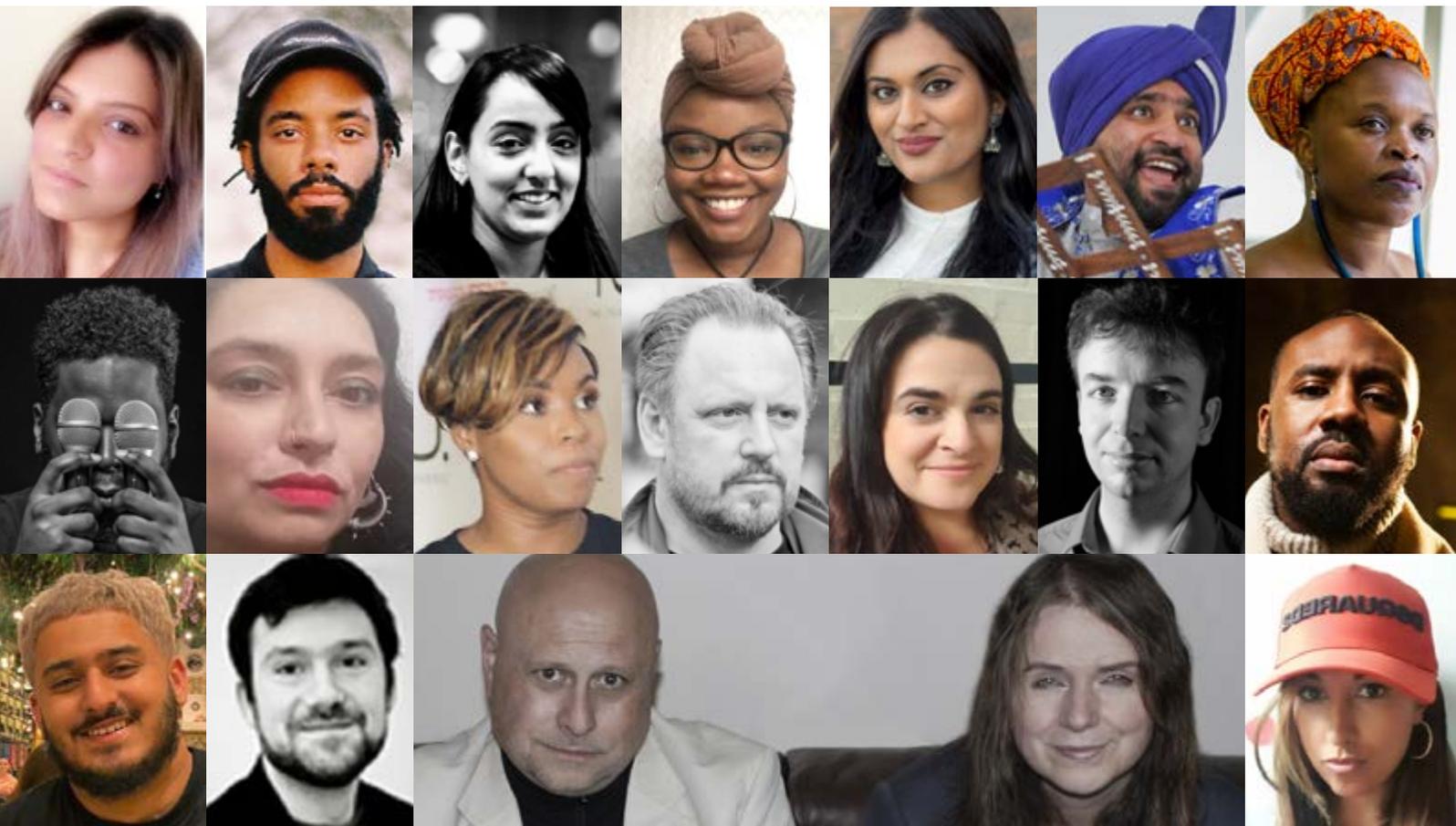
"Do you understand?"

BEYOND SLANGUAGES

What started off as an exhibition with four artists from Birmingham developed into a wider project comprising over twenty artists from the UK. In this book we feature twenty three of these artists with whom SLANGUAGES collaborated to produce new artistic works. In doing so, we also explored issues of artistry, working in and through particular creative methods and exploring social and cultural issues together.

This section introduces nineteen of our artists who were not part of the original exhibition but became part of the SLANGUAGES collective, broadening our work across a range of genres and demonstrating how languages can be shaped by, and themselves shape, the creative endeavours of human beings.

The artists also provide short testimonies as to how being part of SLANGUAGES not only enabled them to create new work but also how it allowed them to develop artistically, build confidence, explore languages old and new, and foster new skills and networks. The SLANGUAGES project has been enriched by the contributions of our artists, and in turn our artists have been impacted by being part of SLANGUAGES.



Laura Nyahuye



I speak Shona, my mother tongue. English is my second language. Born and raised in Zimbabwe, I am a resident of Coventry, a mother, a multi-disciplinary artist, curator, designer/maker, writer, storyteller, performer, changemaker and advocate. I am heavily influenced by my African heritage.

At Maokwo, lived experiences of migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, minoritised humans and artists from migrant backgrounds are at the heart of what we creatively advocate and respond to. We amplify women, young people, sanctuary seekers and artists voices. We consult and tackle issues to do with inclusion, representation in the arts and communities.

We are artists

We are storytellers

We are changemakers

We believe in the power of art to change the worlds view and instigate true humanity...

For SLANGUAGES we produced a project called *Imagine My Reality*, that helped us to express the issues that we were heavily bothered about in that moment. Coronavirus came and put the majority of countries on their knees. Coronavirus did not apply for a visa, it does not own a passport however it came through borders. Social distancing was a luxury for some. Staying at home was wishful thinking for others. Why? Because they are asylum seekers, migrants crammed in shared accommodation, social distancing is unrealistic. At Maokwo we responding to these realities via various creative avenues.

Laura Nyahuye Artist CEO/Founder @Maokwo

Artist, storyteller, changemaker.

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Twitter: [@maokwo](https://twitter.com/maokwo) [@lauranyahuye](https://twitter.com/lauranyahuye)

Facebook: [Maokwo](https://www.facebook.com/maokwo) YouTube: [Maokwo - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/maokwo)

Ashlee Elizabeth-Lolo



I am a playwright, poet, radio broadcaster and drama facilitator from Aston, Birmingham. My primary art forms are theatre, film and poetry. I speak English and Jamaican Patois.



I've worked with SLANGUAGES on two projects: *Between the Rocks* (2018) a one-woman spoken word play which explored language, identity and faith from a black female perspective. I've also co-written *Jugni*, a poetic, cultural exploration of black and Asian female history for the stage.

SLANGUAGES is one of the main reasons why I have established a career as a playwright. Without their support and belief in my craft, I wouldn't have thought theatre was a viable path. The project has fuelled me with self confidence, provided me with a collective of creatives which feels like family and a chance to explore myself at the intersections of art, academia and language.

Ashlee Elizabeth-Lolo

Playwright, poet, radio broadcaster and drama facilitator.

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Twitter: [@lolounplugged](https://twitter.com/lolounplugged)

Edmund Hunt



I am a composer, and I am currently a co-investigator on an AHRC project called 'Augmented Vocality: Recomposing the Sounds of Early Irish and Old Norse'. Although my PhD was in musical composition, I studied early medieval languages and literature as an undergraduate.

I focused on the languages, literature and philology of northern Europe, specialising in Old Irish, Middle Welsh, Old English and Old Norse. My PhD explored the use of early medieval text in contemporary musical composition, and my postdoctoral project takes similar ideas even further. At the start of the Augmented Vocality project, we made recordings of actors speaking poems, words and phonemes. The analysis of this material forms the basis of new live electronics vocal processing, which will be explored and demonstrated in my musical compositions.

I discovered SLANGUAGES through meeting Rajinder Dudrah. We collaborated on a creative project, inspired by our journeys into work at BCU. Our project was called 'Journeys Across the Midlands'. In response to the voices, sounds and landscapes that we encountered on our daily commutes into work, we each created some spoken word poetry. I composed a soundscape (using recordings of train journeys between my home and Birmingham) to accompany the piece.

The voices, dialects, languages, place names and natural features of the Midlands are evidence of the region's continually evolving linguistic history. SLANGUAGES was a wonderful opportunity for me to delve into the linguistic richness and diversity – both past and present – of the places where I live and work.

Edmund Hunt

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Dr Farah Nazir



I am currently a lecturer in linguistics at Newcastle University studying the linguistics of the Pahari-Pothwari language. My research interests are in South Asian languages, syntax, semantics, multilingualism (particularly in the UK), codeswitching, and language creativity.

I wrote three pieces for the SLANGUAGES Blog which explore and discuss [The Art of Common Talk in the South Asian Diaspora](#), [Codeswitching \(We Codeswitch Like Riz Ahmed\)](#) and the status of the Pahari-Pothwari language in the UK ([What is the name of my language? Pahari-Pothwari, Mirpuri, a dialect of Punjabi, or Apni Zaban](#)).

The aim of these pieces was to create awareness on how speakers use language and take inspiration from their languages in their common talk both consciously and unconsciously, and how language itself and language ideologies can affect the perception of one's identity and language choice. Specifically, I discussed that codeswitching can have negative connotations which date back to "purist" ideologies of languages. In reality codeswitching is a pattern found across the British South Asian diaspora (and beyond), and exemplifies language creativity and language's capacity to carry and accept one's blended world.

This for me is what SLANGUAGES encompasses and through it I was able to engage and get feedback of what language/slanguage means to a wider audience outside of the academic sphere and how it is changing in reality. The pieces have also been used as part of a reading list for my Multilingualism module at Newcastle University. Overall, the project has been a fun way to engage and discuss topics that are understudied and at times misunderstood within and outside of academia.

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Nathaniel Télémaque

I'm a visual artist, writer and PhD candidate and English is my first language, however I have conversational understandings of Spanish and Japanese. My audio-visual project "*Sounds Like Harlesden*" came about through a collaboration with Rajinder Dudrah and my Pesolife Art Collective peers Secaina Hudson and Kalina Blaize.



For me "SLANGUAGES" means acknowledging the different ways language permeates our everyday lives and geographies of home. Be it in our local shops or bus stops, churches and Mosques, different languages can also be tied up with different cultural practices and ways of life.

I believe that the term "SLANGUAGES" can act as a kaleidoscopic lens for these practices and experiences, as well as the local vernaculars and colloquialisms that are embedded within them.

Sounds Like Harlesden allowed me and my peers to take the time to slowly and organically engage with the different communities in Harlesden, in substantive and creative ways. We talked to different people about their views and beliefs on the local area, as well as the formations of their linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Our project gave us the time to further develop and refine our practices, in a locale we love and care for deeply.



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SLANGUAGES is significant. It means much to us as artists, having provided a space to learn and rethink our 'socially engaged practice'.

Working with excluded communities (those frequently invisible, or voiceless), allowed us to celebrate the diversity found in the Mercian borderlands; establish creative partnerships with global communities, and re-connect with individuals from our original archive. Expanding our process and participation strategy to be more 'people-centred', and working within a 'social art' context, it evolved our skillsets. Ultimately, our belief is that art can be both an act of resistance, and form of 'social sculpture'.



Darryl Georgiou & Rebekah Tolley-Georgiou (Georgiou & Tolley)

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Noah Birksted-Breen



I am a theatre director and translator of contemporary Russian plays – and in 2005, I founded Sputnik Theatre Company, dedicated to producing new Russian works in the UK.¹ I'm also an academic, working as a scholar of Russian contemporary culture² and more recently investigating the transition to a low-carbon society in Social Sciences.³ I speak Russian and French.

I was fortunate enough to work on a SLANGUAGES commission, *Oxygen*. The pleasure of SLANGUAGES was the opportunity it gave me to experiment with new forms of translation across cultures and genres. *Oxygen* was my first experiment in translating from Russian into UK 'street slang' (as opposed to received pronunciation), as well as into a different genre – hip-hop. I worked with Lady Sanity and Stanza Divan, two Midlands-based hip-hop artists, to create a 'hip-hop drama' as we call it, and we collaborated with Professor Dudrah who contributed with his expertise on popular UK Black culture.

The joy of this process was for each collaborator to bring their set of ideas and artistic practices to the process – hip-hop, theatre, urban British music, Russian contemporary culture – creating a unique output which speaks across cultures, genres and diverse audiences.

In my view, the strength of SLANGUAGES is as an 'incubator' platform, encouraging and embracing unusual artistic experiments which might not otherwise find a home in the risk-averse theatre and performance industries - too often shying away from cross-genre, cross-cultural collaborations.

There's a video of *Oxygen* on the SLANGUAGES website:
<https://www.creativeml.ox.ac.uk/oxygen-hip-hop-translation/>

Due for release in 2021/22, there's also a follow-on projected call *FAM*, an online film involving the same collaborators as *Oxygen* – another SLANGUAGES commission, which explores the experiences of contemporary British hip-hop artists in the context of their grandparents' journeys to the UK from the Caribbean (the Windrush generation), using street slang dialect, hip-hop and drama.

¹ www.sputniktheatre.co.uk

² <https://www.creativeml.ox.ac.uk/about/people/noah-birksted-breen/>

³ <https://www.tsu.ox.ac.uk/research/flyingless/index.html>

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Raman Mundair



I am an Indian born, Queer, British Asian writer, director, dramaturg, artist and filmmaker based in Shetland and Glasgow. I am an award winning author of *Lovers, Liars, Conjurers and Thieves, A Choreographer's Cartography, The Algebra of Freedom* (a play) and editor of *Incoming: Some Shetland Voices*. I am a Scottish Book Trust IGNITE fellow.

My short film *Graffiti* is under script development as part of the CONVERGENCE BFI programme and my short film *Trowie Buckie* was shortlisted for Sharp Shorts 2020.

My SLANGUAGES project - *Mu Vich, Ajeeb Jeeb: In My Mouth, Strange and Curious Tongue*, is an experimental exploration of articulation, of the act of naming and forming ways of expressing in a creative, textual, visual and performative way. It is an open ended conversation without an assigned syntax or grammar. It is a diasporic, cultural and linguistic free association, each moment enhancing and amplifying the previous moment. It is a multi-genre work that dances within the evocative space of emotional exile, the space that many second and third generation people of colour can step into and emerge with an innovative new language and identity – a unique way of seeing and telling our lived experiences.

Working on my SLANGUAGES project began during the early days of the 2020/21 pandemic. It was poignant to be reflecting on the act of being rendered silent and being wilfully misheard or misconstrued at a time when a universal silence, laden with fear and confusion, was descending upon us. My project had always intended to be live and interactive but the pandemic had other ideas. Working within these constraints was itself an exercise in opening up conversation, dialogue, communication and meaning in a time of great flux. *Mu Vich, Ajeeb Jeeb: In My Mouth, Strange and Curious Tongue* – is a beginning, an opening overture if you like, of a larger, expansive movement. A suite of creative happenings that dovetail and clash and create a babel of endless possibilities.

Find out more about *Mu Vich, Ajeeb Jeeb: In My Mouth, Strange and Curious Tongue* at:

www.creativeml.ox.ac.uk/blog/exploring-multilingualism/mu-vich-ajeeb-jeeb-my-mouth-strange-and-curious-tongue/



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Raveeta Banger



I work as a freelance writer, playwright, arts researcher and project manager in the creative industries across theatre, literature and critical writing and am currently developing my career in documentary filmmaking. Invested in topics addressing the arts, literature, on-screen representation, inequity, culture, race, caste, and social identities through creative expression, I draw upon broad areas of research and knowledge in my profession.

My work looks at the ways in which these subject matters impact Black and South Asian communities in the diaspora with a focus on mental health too. Through research and debate I utilise my social media as a forum of expression, also engaging the medium of film.

Fluent in both English and Panjabi and with a sound understanding of Hindi I take artistic inspiration from my bilingual and dual heritage. SLANGUAGES has provided me with an opportunity to artistically explore language and culture, whilst exposing me to additional forms of expression through dialect and tongues new to me: Russian, Yoruba and Urdu to name a few.

My creative project with SLANGUAGES was a collaboration with two talented Midlands based artists. Ashlee Elizabeth-Lolo and Rupinder Kaur. I stage directed and co-wrote a play called *Jugni – the female firefly*.

Jugni is a story about the Black and Asian female journey through time. *Jugni* embarks upon intergenerational and multilingual conversations uncovering her lost voices in history. This three-woman performance draws inspiration from modern day experiences and observations from all three artists. We explore themes of colonial history, race and migration through spoken word, poetry and song. 'Jugni' translates as 'female firefly' in the Punjabi language and the play illustrates and explores the various embodiments of fire in the lives of Black and Asian women.

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Jag Kumar

I am a music and dance artist and believe that cultural awareness in the Arts brings people together. My 35 years experience in the arts has shown me that working and collaborating with artists from different ethnic backgrounds and with different cultural experiences is hugely enjoyable and you get a lot out of collaborating together.



The more I've collaborated through the arts the more I have experienced similarities in dance, music and language. Arts bring togetherness, and within arts we can be together.

Alone I can "Say" but together we can "Talk".

Alone I can "Enjoy", but together we can "Celebrate"

Alone I can "Smile", but together we can "Laugh"

I was privileged to be a part of SLANGUAGES where Yoruba, Punjabi, Hindi and English was fused together through a short musical drama in collaboration with Lekan Babalola, the Grammy Award winning percussionist and specialists in Afrobeat and Jazz, Steven Sahota, a very talented Bhangra musician and singer, and Kiran Johal, an artist/teacher in Bhangra, Giddha, Bollywood and contemporary dance.

This project was a prime example of how similar and different our cultures are. For example, in the Indian culture, the girls side of the family give a dowry to the boys family, and in the African culture, the boys side give the dowry.

I am a strong believer in that only if we communicate and question in a positive manner we will learn about each other's culture. Ignorance is an assumption, and if we ASSUME it can make an ASS OUT OF YOU & ME. (ASS/U/ME).

Jag Kumar

Music and dance artist.

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Rob Hewitt

Redhawk
Logistica



Redhawk Logistica is a vehicle for collaboration that usually involves creating temporary social engagements via unexpected art interventions in public places. We are fascinated by power positions in society, particularly thinking about the potential of the individual for self expression in the context of public spaces that are uniformly dominated by the presence of corporate brands.

We have often used placards to convey ambiguous and thought provoking texts and the inspiration for *A Million Welcomes* was a multi lingual sign instructing residents not to feed the pigeons.

It was really good fun to be part of SLANGUAGES and to work with the institutions who were behind it. The assistance from the university researchers helped with the tricky job of translation and they also offered guidance when developing the ideas behind the project. The real areas of interest are the margins, the bits where different territories meet, the greys areas and spaces in between, so the recognition of dialects within the SLANGUAGES project was exciting, as well as the use of languages as a creative agent (rather than as a communication tool).

I found it fascinating that although many of the people who came across the placards could not understand the words written on them, they still functioned as a way of connecting people through the conversations with placard holders, with each other and the sharing of comments and photos online. It was genuinely meaningful when someone came across a placard in their own language when stepping off their train, equalled only by the randomly convened but deep conversations we had in the street about languages and participation.

Rob Hewitt - Redhawk Logistica

Engaging people with the contemporary urban environment in creative ways.

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Tennexa Freeman



Tennexa Freeman is a Birmingham-based playwright and filmmaker, and her new project *RuffNeck* was commissioned by SLANGUAGES and directed by Kieron "Konez" Burke – both are artistic members of The Creative Universe company. *RuffNeck* was originally intended to be a play for theatre audiences and was due to be staged in spring 2020. With the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown, Tennexa and her team decided to develop *RuffNeck* as a part online animation

and digitised play format. As a result of this SLANGUAGES project wider audiences will gain bilingual education of Black Heritage.

RuffNeck is a rib tickling, futuristic play depicting life in Birmingham set in 2030. It explores language through the relationship of a dual heritage young boy and his Caucasian White British grandmother and his African Caribbean Grandmother. 'Ruff neck' is a slang expression for a thug or streetwise strong individual that dwells in an urban low-income community. The choice of the name of the play reflects a social survey of urban generations to come who will be eager to learn more about their Black culture and Black history in schools. This exciting piece presents introspection on culture and language. This journey is most unique from the other projects as our stance on language is to tap into emergent popular creole in contemporary UK 21st Black British society. The play became an extended version- a mixture of theatre and animation.

SLANGUAGES has allowed us to use Jamaican dialect creatively through dramatic writing systems in order to affirm language as a site of intellectual engagement and cultural transmission.

Through animation we explored the Caribbean pronunciation systems and family structures and through comical storytelling we discussed African heritage, Chaucer's English, language variations, and interracial communities to discover the roots of Jamaican Patois.

Tennexa Freeman

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Rupinder Kaur

My name is Rupinder Kaur. I am a writer, performer and workshop facilitator. I work predominantly between poetry, theatre and film. My debut poetry book *Rooh* was published in 2018 with Verve Poetry Press. I am the founder of Azaad Arts and co-founder of Gully Collective.



My work explores womanhood, language and history. I speak Panjabi, Hindi and Urdu fluently.

With SLANGUAGES I have worked on two projects - *Jugni* which was a theatre project and *Sada Chidiyan da Chamba* exploring Panjabi folk songs through a female perspective. I have also been involved in workshops and conferences held by SLANGUAGES.

SLANGUAGES to me represents who I am. Living in Birmingham, speaking a range of languages as my British and Asian identities merge. I have really enjoyed working on the range of projects SLANGUAGES offer, collaborating with like-minded creatives and growing as an artist through those experiences. Equally I have enjoyed working with an understanding producer like Professor Rajinder Dudrah.

Rupinder Kaur

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Ellie House & Reena Jaisiah



Ellie is a Producer of community centric performance and film, and also Chief Operations Officer for Feeding Coventry, a charity addressing food poverty, where creativity is an essential part of members journeys into resilience.

Reena is a community arts director and the artist director of Caste Away Arts. Her focus is giving a voice to the voiceless and creating a platform for social taboos and discrimination.



Our project was called *Tongue Tied* and it's a celebration of languages and stories between a diverse group of women. We held a workshop with speakers of seven unique languages, all women from Coventry and created space to share stories and language using dynamic theatre in a way which created connections and a feeling of community. We worked with the theme of 'Home' and commissioned the audio captured in this space into an animation with the help of a filmmaker

SLANGUAGES project enabled a subtly different approach to our creative work together and really allowed us space to challenge ourselves. Dynamic theatre practice, using languages, offers such a lot and the animation is just one outcome of an amazing experience where we all came away with a richer understanding of our neighbour and barriers were broken down. There is a really strong wellbeing element in this project because it's important to feel valued on a different level which is not about your job, or status.

There is a lot to be said for just bringing joy.



Ellie House and Reena Jaisiah

Producers, writer and theater practitioner.

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Stanza Divan

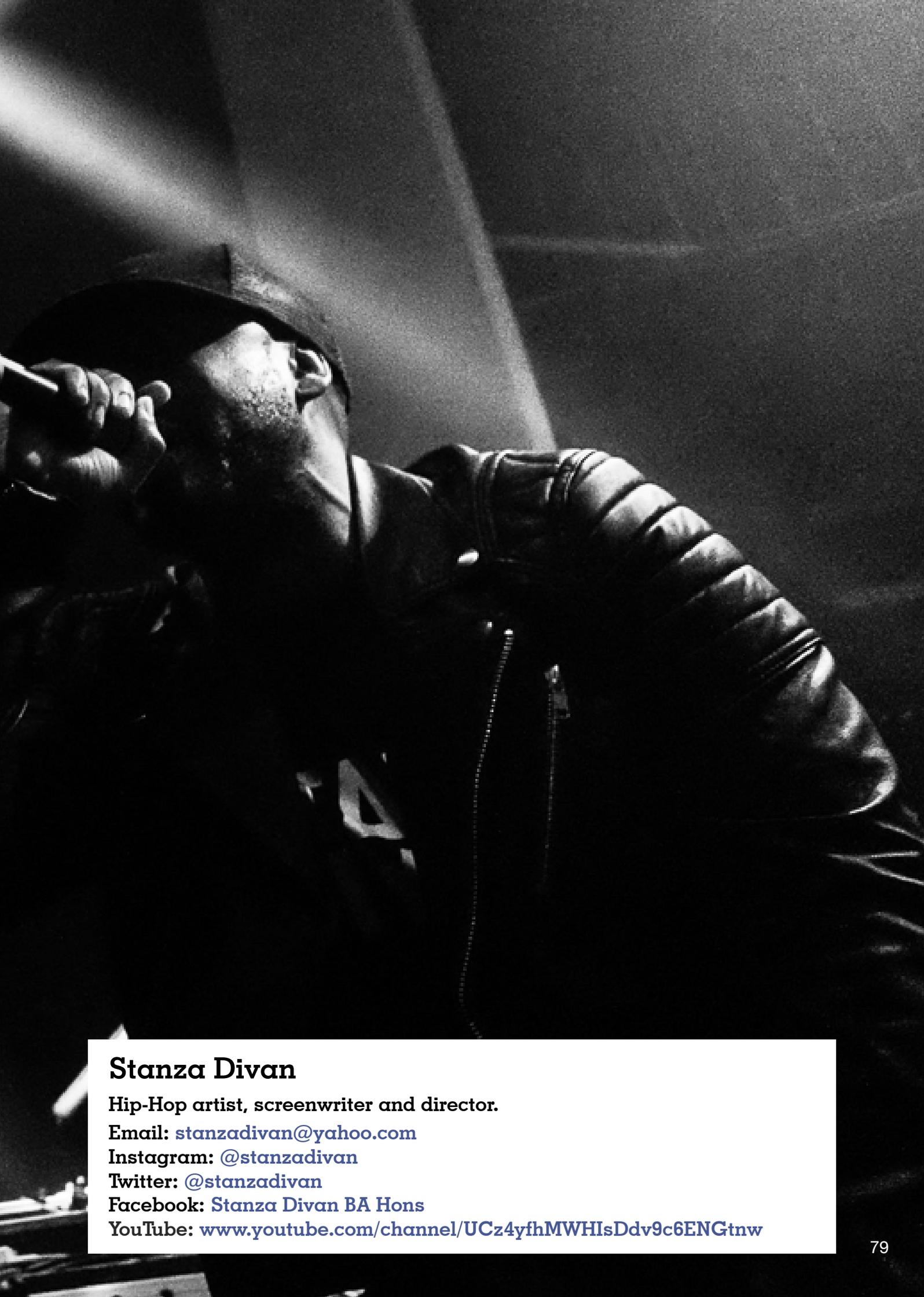


I'm predominantly a British Hip-Hop artist and embarked upon the SLANGUAGES project with the intent to venture into theatre incorporating acting, spoken word and Rap. As the project progressed, I have gained experience in screenwriting and directing in addition to the above.

The name of our creative project is '*Fam*', a feature length film revolving around the lives and experiences of two independent rappers of Black British Caribbean heritage. The rich in content script, has been written by myself and Lady Sanity and explores topics such as Identity, immigration, misogyny, institutional racism, self-hatred and feminism to list a few. Our objective to write and perform a theatre piece merging UK hip-hop and Russian theatre was adjusted as a result of altered creative interests and the Covid-19 pandemic. A theatre project turned into a short film and a short film, eventually into a feature length film with theatre elements.

In exploring the topics aforementioned, British Urban Street Slang, Caribbean Patois, English and offensive language were combined to accurately depict words and phrases regularly used in Black British Culture.

SLANGUAGES has been an exceptional project for me, immediately challenging me, taking me out of my depth and introducing me to art, particularly film and music that I wouldn't have discovered myself. By presenting me with the initial challenge of interpreting and adapting Russian theatre it demanded legitimate and high levels of study. The project has exposed me to new ways of working, experience of both playwriting and acting which I doubt I would have obtained at such a high level this early on in my career. I feel that this project has been an important milestone for me creatively and has allowed me to be a part of something I believe will be considered culturally important in years to come.



Stanza Divan

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Rozart (Rahul Banger)



I am a producer, studio engineer and artist manager and speak Punjabi.

I was part of the **SLANGUAGES** creative multilingualism projects where I composed four beats based around the multicultural influences that I grew up with in my local area (Handsworth, Birmingham), as well as the influences I have been exposed to in recent times moving to a new city (London) and coming across more cultures.

SLANGUAGES means a lot to me not just from my own project, but from watching the other projects I came across such as the Pesolife short film covering the diversity of cultures within the Harlesden area.

This project opened my eyes to many things and made me realise you should not judge a book by its cover. This project, as a whole, even showed me the different cultures that I am surrounded by without sometimes even being aware of them. For instance, cultures such as the Latin American culture which was used in the beat I produced called **SLANGUAGES Summer Swing**.

Rozart (Rahul Banger)

Producer, studio engineer and artist manager.

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Juice Aleem - Afroflux



I am Juice Aleem and I'm a part of Afroflux.

Afroflux is a series of explorations into the lesser known and activated sides of the Black experience.

I'm the main connector between our projects and often numerous ideas on language come into play through technologies such as music, dance, coding, Rap, symbols and the traditional use of language such as Patois, Twi or Creole.

Having met Rajinder and hearing his explanation of the SLANGUAGES ethos, I knew it would be a good fit for us. That and seeing a few of the SLANGUAGES events in real time made it a reality to work together at some point.

Being able to present our ideas and works to a new group of people is always a positive outcome, especially amongst the more academic fare. Being able to present our amazing collaborators to those worlds made it a must do, especially the fact we were able to connect in the isolated bubbles of life under lockdown.

Juice Aleem

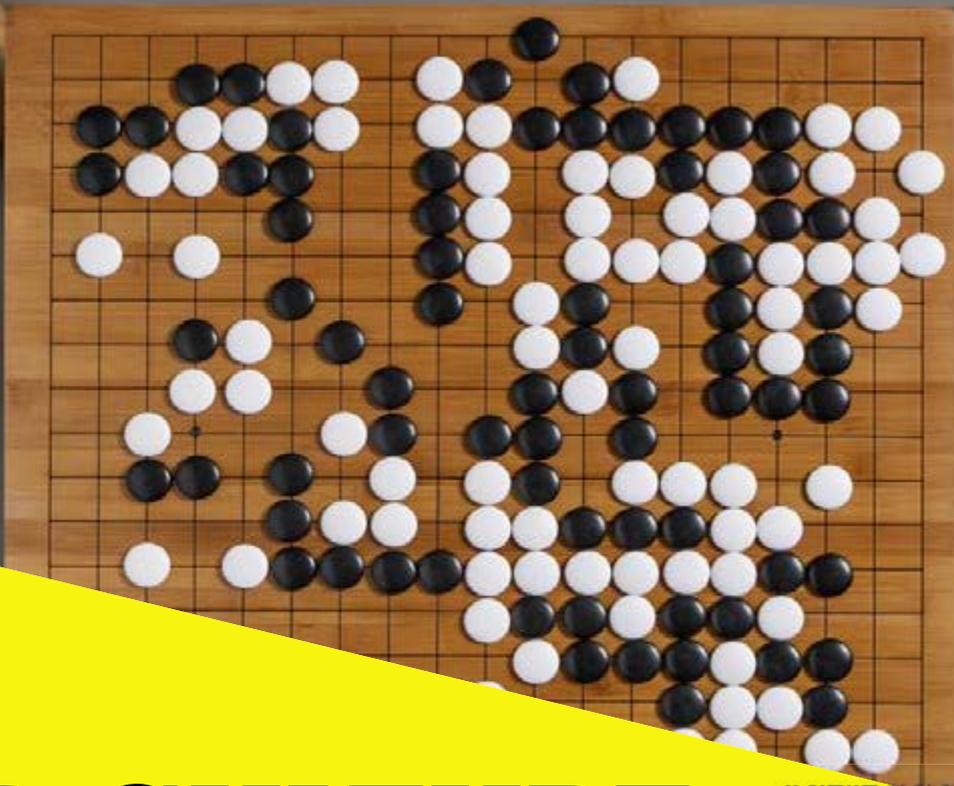
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QR CULTURE: SLANGUAGE FOR CYBORGS



Queen Victoria is on the throne: scientists and futurists explore ways to use the new electromagnetic telegraph to link the nations. Artist, painter and inventor **SAMUEL MORSE** creates a new language - **MORSE CODE** - and anyone who learns it can communicate in real time, anywhere in the world.

Morse's dot/dash alphabet anticipated our modern-day information language of digital zeroes and ones and, in 1951, the **BARCODE** brought computers into the conversation. By stretching out Morse's dots and dashes into machine-readable lines, barcodes would revolutionise retail in the 1980s, but that was only the beginning.

The QR (Quick Response) code was inspired by the pieces laid out on a board game. Devised in 1994 by Japan's **DENSO WAVE**, the square QR CODE gave barcodes a second dimension with room to hold much more information.

Now QR codes are all around us: on posters, flyers, business cards, artwork, bank notes, menus and even gravestones. QR codes take just seconds to generate; they are free to use and the widespread adoption of smartphones - especially among young people - brings Samuel Morse's slanguage into our contemporary world of ideas, politics, cultures and capitalism.

HANDSWORTH REVOLUTION

STEEL
PULSE



QR CULTURE: EMBEDDING DIGITAL SLANGUAGES IN THE PUBLIC REALM

One innovative use for the QR code is to build diverse audiences for artworks in the public realm, increasing the sense of ownership in the communities where they are sited.

“ We currently have over a dozen pieces of commissioned public artwork in neighbourhoods right across Birmingham. Next year we’ll have around twenty. When each artwork has a QR code displayed, local people can get up-to-date information about the work and the artist. More importantly, it informs the community why it is there. If they like it, the QR code lets them know where to see more, and how they can get involved.

AMMO TALWAR MBE CEO of PUNCH
(wearepunch.co.uk)

“PUNCH keeps an online database of artworks which anyone can use to plan their own public art tour around Birmingham. Young people, Black and Asian people, new communities and the disadvantaged - everyone carries a smart-phone because that’s how you connect with your support network. QR CODES help us start conversations - just by scanning a picture.”

A Glossary of Slang

Slang: *An informal term that stands for or means something else than its literal meaning; a shorter way to say a word or phrase. Slang is slang for short language.*

Urban Dictionary <https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Slang> by Tarboy9 April 18, 2015

Below are some examples of slang used in the 1920s and 2020's.

1920's slang

Alderman

A man's pot-belly. A roasted turkey garnished with sausages resembled an Aldermans gold chain.

Babe

Woman.

Bee's knees

An extraordinary person, thing, or idea.

Bent

Stolen, as in "that cars bent".

Big cheese

Big shot, the boss — someone of importance and influence.

Blower

Telephone.

Bunk

Nonsense or untrue story.

Cat's meow

Something splendid or stylish.

Cat's pyjamas

Term of endearment, as in "I think you are really, really cool."

Conk

To hit someone on the head.

Dish

A pretty woman.

Flapper

A stylish, brash young woman with short skirts and shorter hair.

Fuzz

The Police, a derogatory term referred to the felt on the helmet.

Goon

A stupid man or someone hired to terrorize or eliminate opponents.

Heebie-jeebies

A state of nervous fear or anxiety.

Jalopy

An old car.

Jam

In trouble or a tight spot.

Lid

Hat.

Mickey Finn

A drink drugged with knock-out drops.

Moniker

Name, originally a mark left by a tramp.

Nicked

Stolen or caught and arrested.

Peepers

Eyes, as in "keep your peepers open."

Pins

Legs.

Punk

A criminal, jerk.

Rappers

Fakes, set-ups.

Rat

To "rat on" is to inform on.

Sing

Make a confession.

Skirt

Woman.

Square

Honest.

Squeeze

A female companion or a girlfriend.

Swanky

Stylishly luxurious and expensive.

Swell

Wonderful.

2020's slang

Cheugy pronounced “*chew-gee*”

Mocking someone or something as “uncool.”

Clap Back

“Clap back” describes a verbal retaliation to criticism—otherwise known as a comeback. The term originates from the 2003 Ja Rule song “Clap Back.”

Clock

To hit hard. If you clock, are clocking, or clocked, someone, you hit them with an insult.

Dope

Cool or awesome.

Flex

To show off your accomplishments. Used in rap songs, Ice Cube used it in the song, “It Was a Good Day.”

Ghosted

A romantic partner who withdraws suddenly, back into anonymity (like a ghost). A rejection without any explanation.

Glow Up

“Glowing up” is like the upgraded version of “growing up.” As you age, you only become more fabulous.

Gucci

Good, cool, or going well.

High Key

Another slang term with roots in the hip-hop community. High key elevates the meaning of the sentence like “I am high key stressed right now.”

Keep It 100

To be authentic.

Kiki

A party or festive gathering. To celebrate, or share gossip as in the Scissor Sisters music video for “Let’s Have a Kiki.”

Lit

Amazing, cool, or exciting.

OK Boomer

Differing values between Gen Z and Baby Boomers, essentially boils down to: “I disagree with you, but I can’t be bothered to argue.” Both an expression of frustration and a way to end an argument.

OMG

An abbreviation for “Oh my gosh” or “Oh my God.”

Sus

A shortening of “suspicious”, when something (or someone) doesn’t seem right, but you can’t quite identify why?

Squad

Your besties. Your girls. Your buddies. Your squad. Whatever you call your closest team of loved ones works.

Skrt

Used to describe the sound tires make when you stop unexpectedly. If a friend is gossiping and you’d like them to revisit part of the story, you can quickly interject with “skrt!”

Snatched

If a person’s hair, makeup, or outfit looks particularly fab, they’re snatched. You’ll hear it on any episode of RuPaul’s Drag Race.

Stan

An overzealous or obsessive fan. As in the Eminem song “Stan.”

Thirsty

To desperately want approval. Listen to Missy Elliott’s “Chinga-A-Ling.”

Twerk

A “sexually suggestive” way of dancing.

Vibe

A shortening of “vibrations” and a source of positive energy. “Vibe” describes the impression of a place, gathering, or person.

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Further Reading

Find out more about **SLANGUAGES** through their blogs.

www.creativeml.ox.ac.uk/projects/slanguages

Also see:

www.creativeml.ox.ac.uk/blog/exploring-multilingualism/four-new-beats

www.creativeml.ox.ac.uk/sounds-harlesden-interview

www.creativeml.ox.ac.uk/blog/exploring-multilingualism/multilingual-boliyan

www.creativeml.ox.ac.uk/blog/exploring-multilingualism/slanguages-impact-podcast

Publications

Rajinder Dudrah, Julie Curtis, Philip Ross Bullock and Noah Birksted-Breen (2020),

*A Breath of Fresh Air... Ivan Vyrypaev's Oxygen (2002):
From Moscow to Birmingham via Oxford.*

Chapter 4 in Katrin Kohl & Rajinder Dudrah et. al. eds.
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Katrin Kohl & Rajinder Dudrah et. al. eds. (2020)

Creative Multilingualism: A Manifesto. Cambridge: Open Book Publishers.
www.creativeml.ox.ac.uk/creative-multilingualism-manifesto/



SLANGUAGES

Languages in the Creative Economy

Rethinking Modern Languages from the ground up

SLANGUAGES explores the creative way artists employ and take inspiration from languages such as Arabic, Hindi, Patois, Pidgin, Polish, Punjabi, Russian, Urdu, urban sign languages, and Yoruba. The project is wide-ranging and includes exhibitions, performances, and collaborations with artists, creative professionals and partners such as Punch Records, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, the Birmingham Repertory Theatre, and Sputnik Theatre Company, London, amongst others.

This publication looks at twenty three artists who use different forms of language to present their art and the widely different backgrounds and inspiration that has contributed to their success. Taneisha Deans, Lekan Babalola, RTKal aka Joshua Holness and Rinkoo Barpaga have collaborated as partners on the SLANGUAGES research project and have featured in our touring exhibition. We also present nineteen other artists who have worked with us and contributed their creativity, energy and craft to the SLANGUAGES programme.

In the words of Simon Redgrave,
Head of Creative Development at Punch Records,

*"SLANGUAGES is about different languages
climbing into each other's cars and driving away.*

It's about the collision of languages."

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