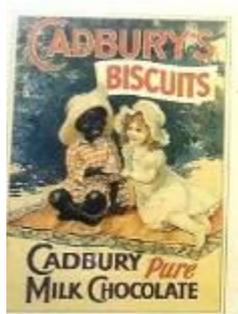# Subject Guide

Representation

Ref. Advert/43 and Advert/44
© Palmers

Ref. Advert/1
© Kraft Foods

Ref. Advert/71
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Background

This subject guide deals primarily with representation in advertising. Please also see our Publishing guide, for information on representation in the media.

The history of racism is inextricably bound up with the nature of representation and stereotyping of Black people.

The enslavement of Africans from the 17th century saw a huge rise in negative portrayals of Black people, promoting the idea that they were 'lascivious, demonic and evil.'[1] One of the reasons for this was to give a moral justification of the Trade, and built upon the idea that Africans were different to white Europeans and so could be enslaved.

During the 19th century Social Darwinism, or scientific racism, grew in popularity. This gave a supposed scientific backing to this argument that was based on the idea of biological superiority and inferiority inherent in different races. These ideas have continued throughout history, becoming the basis for many genocides of the twentieth century and can still be found in the politics of far right organisations.

As history has progressed, these ideas have been little challenged and have been enforced through media and advertising. The period from 1850-1914 saw a dramatic rise in leisure and consumption; and with it came new models and modes for advertising, especially for tea, chocolate, soaps and oils, tobacco, meat extracts, shipping and later rubber.[2] These items were imported from the quickly growing British Empire. This new interest in the Empire and the ideals of imperialism, focused on the perceived cultural superiority of the British that justified British rule and promoted pride in being British.

Technological advances saw the ability to produce books cheaply for a mass market and gave rise to a growth in printed material such as leaflets, pamphlets, programmes, journals and post

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[1] *A History of Racism.* Association for Curriculum Development (London, 1986), p. 6
[2] *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion 1880-1960.* John M. Mackenzie, (London, 1984), p. 16

cards. These were the perfect conduit to provide a visual representation of the world at large and a useful tool for propaganda and advertising.

These visual aids promoted the ideals of Empire and the colonising of 'lesser' cultures. They were helped by the military achievements of the British Empire, with British imperialism seen as a moralising force to 'civilise' supposedly backwards cultures and people. Many advertisers began to focus on images of the Empire and began to develop stereotypes and caricatures of indigenous people, often showing them as subservient and happy in their positions.

During the Victorian age music halls and theatre were one of the most popular past times. It was in music halls that many people learnt about what was happening at the time, and where the working classes learnt about the Empire. Colonisation became a very popular theme and the success of the military was one of the most popular subjects, particularly set in Africa once Britain gained a stronger foothold there. However, African rulers were often depicted as light-fingered, prone to irrational violence with a rampant sexual desire.[3] In contrast, the British soldiers were portrayed as brave and 'civilised.'

From the 1930's the cinema came to dominate and continued to draw content from these subjects. There were also very few Black actors visible on screen, with a few notable exceptions particularly African-American actors such as Paul Robeson and Elisabeth Welsh. However, even these well regarded actors were given parts which continued on the whole to portray Black people negatively. For example, in films set in Africa many of the indigenous people were shown wearing loin cloths and many of the Black characters were untrustworthy. The lack of Black presence on the screen offered no positive counterbalances to the history of negative stereotyping and representation.

Geography textbooks are also a source of continuing stereotypes, particularly those that look at migration and the 'third world.' Some textbooks used in the 1950s and 1960s were those that had originally been written at the turn of the twentieth century[4] and continued to adhere to racial stereotyping and bias. Many geography textbooks gave little contextual or political information and took a distinctly colonial attitude,[5] which was transmitted into the classrooms to form general attitudes in Britain at large.

The lack of a positive outlook on Black people, cultures and histories in educational textbooks was one of the factors which underpinned much of the education movement in the 1970s and 1980s. More information on this subject can be found in the Education guide.

The work of organisations and individuals engaged in historical research is important to fight against negative representation. It is important to investigate and promote an alternative history, to give a different viewpoint and to start to unpick racist mythologies and stereotyping.

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[3] Ibid, p. 50

[4] Ibid, p. 184

[5] Bias in geography textbooks: Image of the Third World and multi-ethnic Britain. Dave Hicks (Centre for Multicultural Education, 1980) p. 9

Collections
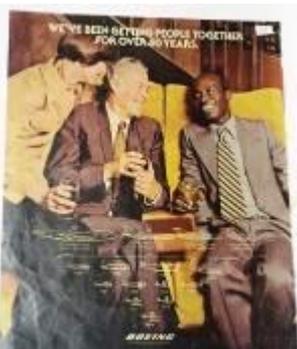
Ref. Advert/74
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Ref. Advert/40
© Murrays

2.1 The papers of Black Cultural Archives (ref. BCA)

BCA's own organisational papers contain research information on the use of images of Black people in advertising. Particularly relevant are the materials used for a 2002 exhibition by BCA entitled 'Picture This: Representations of Black People in Advertising' (**BCA/7/6/3/4** and **BCA/7/6/3/5**). For an online description of the exhibition please visit:
http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/spl/hi/pop_ups/02/uk_black_representation_in_advertising/html/1.stm

BCA also holds research material on particular stereotypes (**BCA/5/1/130**), although mostly American based.

BCA also has records relating to the launch of Stephen Bourne's book *Black in the British Frame,* a publication looking at Black people in film and television and which includes publicity and event materials **(BCA/7/6/12**) and recordings of the event (**RECORD/63**).

2.2 Advert (ref. Advert)

In addition to BCA's organisational papers, there are also a number of advertising packages and ephemera within the collection from 1854-2004. Most the material was collected for the 'Picture This' exhibition and includes packaging for tea, cocoa and hair dressing products.

2.3 The Papers of BASA

BASA was established in 1991 as the Association for the Study of African, Caribbean and Asian Culture and History in Britain (ASACACHIB) to encourage research and to disseminate information on the history of Black and Asian peoples.

In 1997 the organisation changed its name to the Black and Asian Studies Association (BASA) and is now a membership organisation. It focuses and campaigns on education related issues;

particularly on the school curriculum (**BASA/2/2/1, BASA/4** and **BASA/5**) to gain greater recognition of Black history in schools.

BCA also holds a number of research essays (**BASA/2/1**) relating to BASA conferences and the records and correspondence relating to BASA's work on the citizenship curriculum.

2.4 The Papers of Runnymede Trust

The Runnymede Collection includes the library and archive of the Runnymede Trust, established in 1968. Runnymede has worked for four decades to challenge racial discrimination and promote a successful multi-ethnic Britain.

The Collections covers all aspects relating to representation and media, but of particular interest are the series on Scientific Racism **(RC/RF/04/02/)**, and Race and the Media (**RC/RF/24**) during the 1970s and 1980s.

The Runnymede also has an extensive library and periodical collection. See "Periodicals" and "Further Reading" below for references.

2.5 The Papers of the Community Roots Trust

The Community Roots Trust (CRT) was set up in 1977. The charity had the aim to improve the management and service delivery of community self-help projects with particular reference to the needs of ethnic minority communities. The organisation operated at a national level and had units based in London, Birmingham, Wolverhampton and High Wycombe.

The records of CRT particularly relating to representation is the African-Caribbean Radio Project (**COMMROOTS/2**), which reflected a consensus of dissatisfaction regarding the media representation of the African-Caribbean community following the uprisings in 1981.

2.6 Periodicals

BCA holds a large collection of publications and periodicals which feature national and grass roots publications. This series features over 100 periodicals from BCA's collection and the Runnymede, particularly during the 1980s and 1990s. The following have a focus on advertising:

Runnymede (ref. RC/PERIODICALS)

The Runnymede Periodicals holds a wide range of journals, from *Artrage* **(RC/PERIODICALS/26),** to *Ten-8* (**RC/PERIODICALS/379)** and *Dragon's Teeth* **(RC/PERIODICALS/258).**

BCA Periodicals (ref. PERIODICALS)

BCA holds a number of periodicals which highlight the successes and issues facing the Black community. Some examples from BCA's collection are:
PERIODICALS/41: BFM: The magazine for Black filmmakers and movie lovers
PERIODICALS: Pride
PERIODICALS/89: Autograph: The Association of Black Photographers Newsletter

Subject Guide
Further Reading

The Library at BCA, along with the Runnymede Library contains many books relating to representation, and particularly the media. However, to compile this subject guide the following books were used.

- *A History of Racism.* Association for Curriculum Development (London, 1986)

- *Bias in geography textbooks: Image of the Third World and multi-ethnic Britain.* Dave Hicks (Centre for Multicultural Education, 1980)

- *Black and White in Colour: Black People in British Television since 1936.* Jim Pines (ed), (London, 1992).

- *Black in the British Frame: The Black Experience in British Film and Television.* Stephen Bourne (London, 2005)

- *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion 1880-1960.* John M. Mackenzie, (London, 1984).

- *Television and the Riot.* Howard Tumber (London, 1982)

- *The Black and White Media Book: Handbook for the study of Racism and Television.* John Twitchin (ed), (Staffordshire, 1988).

Websites

Advertising Archives. Available at http://www.advertisingarchives.co.uk/en/pages/about-page.html

Black Cultural Archives 'Picture This: Representations of Black People in Advertising.' Available at http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/spl/hi/pop_ups/02/uk_black_representation_in_advertising/html/1.stm. Retrieved October 2012.

History of Advertising Trust. Available at http://www.hatads.org.uk/.

Manchester Art Gallery. Empire Marketing Board. Available at http://www.manchestergalleries.org/the-collections/revealing-histories/propaganda-pride-and-prejudice-posters-from-the-empire-marketing-board/. Retrieved October 2012.

Museum of Brands. Available at http://www.museumofbrands.com/index.html

Unilever Archives. Available at http://www.unilever.com/aboutus/ourhistory/unilever_archives/

V&A 'Brand New.' Available at http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/w/when-shopping-was-shopping-reminiscing-about-the-early-days-of-brands/