

Transformative Encounters?  
Racism and the Sonic Representation of Stephen  
Lawrence's Story

Tahera Aziz  
Creative Technologies  
London South Bank University


**ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND**

 Arts & Humanities Research Council

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Structure of Presentation

1. Racism and the Legacy of Stephen Lawrence
2. The Artwork and the Learning Programme
3. Analysis of Feedback from School Students

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1. Racism: Contemporary Contexts and Challenges

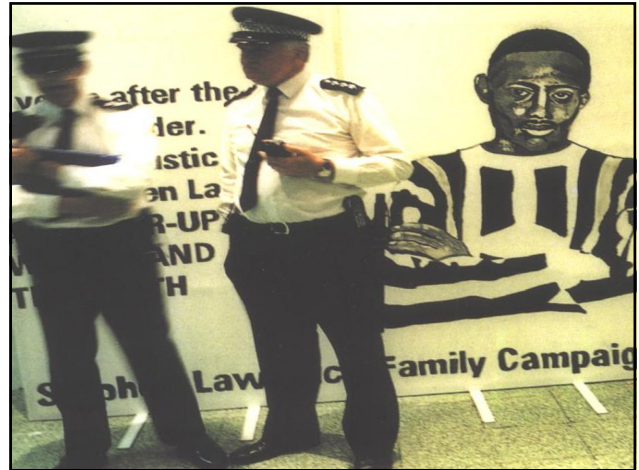
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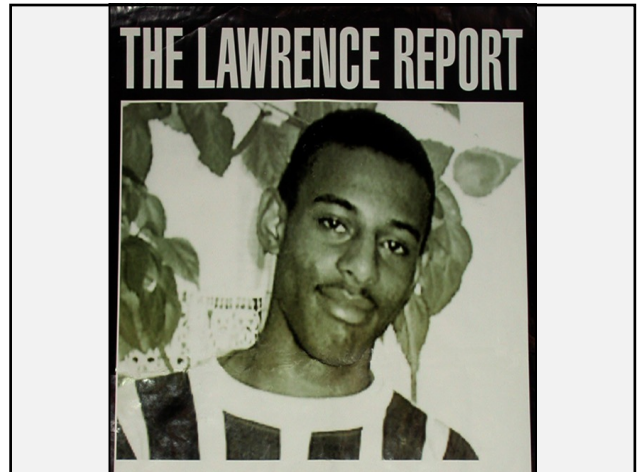
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The Lawrence Inquiry and Institutional Racism

'...the collective failure of an organization to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour, which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness, and racist stereotyping which disadvantages minority ethnic people.'

*Macpherson Report, 1999*

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One year on from George Floyd's Murder...

**WE NEED ACTION NOW**

#UKIsNotInnocent  
#BlackLivesMatter  
#SayTheirNames

TUC **STAND UP TO RACISM**  
Changing the world of work for good

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## Sewell Report on Institutional Racism

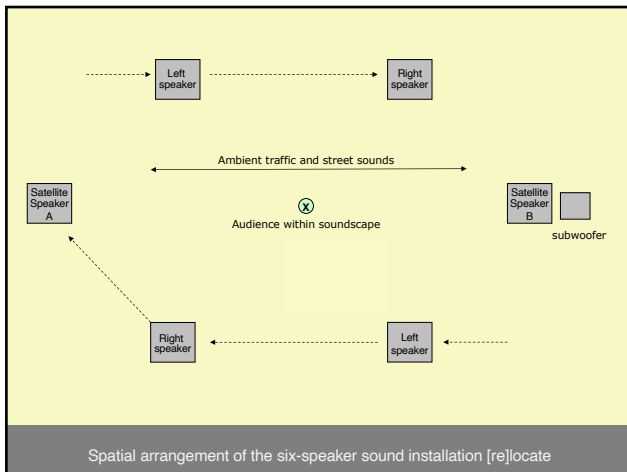
'we no longer see a Britain where the system is deliberately rigged against ethnic minorities.'

*Sewell Report, 2021*

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## 2. The Artwork and Learning Programme

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*'never ~~to~~ take the tedious task of waiting at the bus stop for granted'*

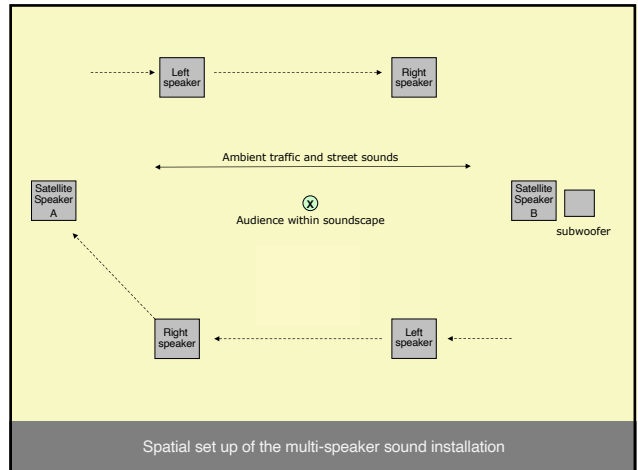
*What Stephen Lawrence Has Taught Us by Benjamin Zephaniah*

Benjamin Zephaniah quote displayed outside installation space, near entrance

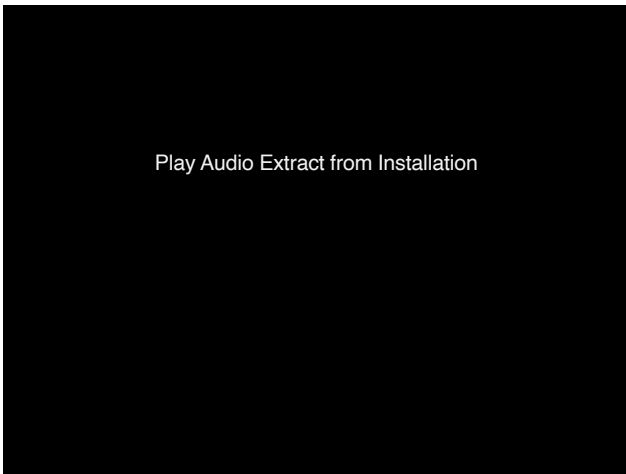
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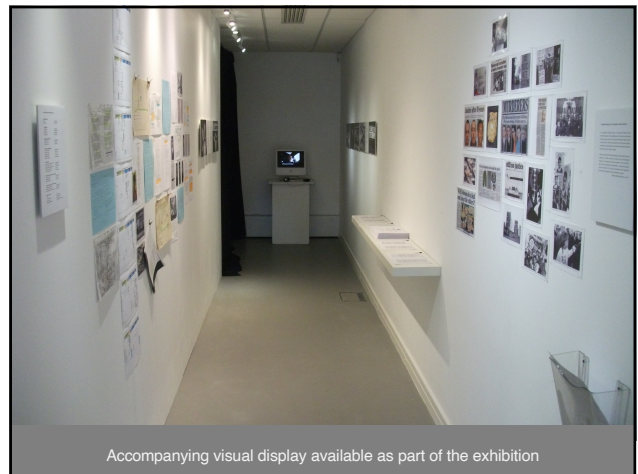
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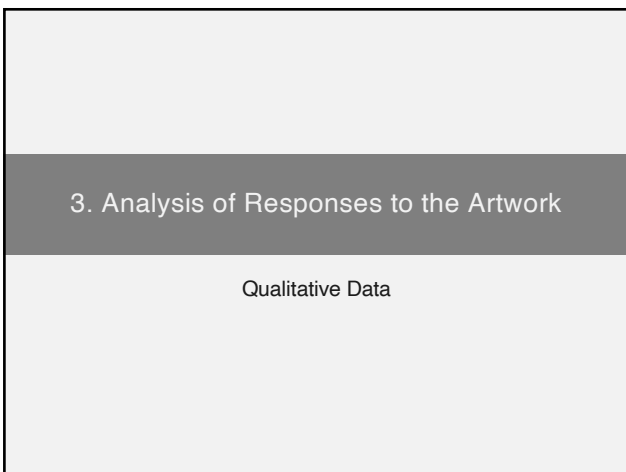
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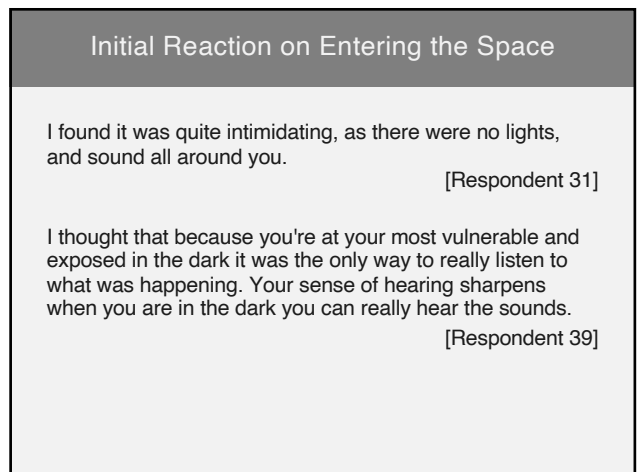
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### Emotional Journey as Events Unfolded

I got a bit anxious to start off with, but when the sound started to play, it moved me and made me think how scary it was, and how tense the atmosphere was.

[Respondent 21]

Intimidated – young adults shouting around me. It was very realistic...Annoyed at the policeman's response – telling them they must've done something to provoke them; threatened to arrest.

[Respondent 45]

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### A Sense of 'Being There'

I wanted to hear it again. It was that good. It felt like I was there and I was watching it happen. I felt very involved.

[Respondent 50]

I was very involved in the situation. I felt as though I was experiencing it, like a witness of the situation...

[Respondent 51]

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### A Sense of Injustice?

It was interesting but upsetting as you feel like you're in that position. Knowing he died for being different and doing nothing wrong. It's wrong and unnecessary.

[Respondent 32]

Quite intimidated by the voices...Startled when the voices from behind came. Angry that no ambulance came straight away. The police reaction was shocking/disappointing.

[Respondent 46]

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### Motivated to intervene or taking action

I wanted to help and scream and shout at the police because they were standing there having a general conversation.

[Respondent 61]

I felt as if I was there at the time he was stabbed, I felt like I was experiencing the attack. I felt as if I need to help them and tell the police.

[Respondent 66]

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### Reflections on the Feedback

- Immersive audio storytelling can be a potent way to engage young people with the complex issue of racism
- The creative strategy of placing the audience in the position of 'witness' seems to deepen young people's engagement with to the Stephen Lawrence case and the issue of racism
- The use of sound alone did not diminish the experience, but instead encouraged active listening (and questioning)
- There is the potential to take this further, to motivate young people to become proactive in tackling racism

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### Image Sources

Slide 6

<https://thirdeyemom.com/2020/06/09/the-george-floyd-murals-of-minneapolis-a-demand-for-justice-hope-and-a-better-humanity/>

Slide 7

David Cliff/SOPA Images/LightRocket via Getty

Slide 8

Front cover image: The Colour of Justice by Richard Norton-Taylor, 1999

Slide 9

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/jul/13/stephen-lawrence-parents-fight-for-justice-to-be-made-into-tv-drama>

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