

MARK WILSON: I'm delighted to welcome Misan Harriman, the renowned photographer responsible for *Vogue's* September issue cover. Making him the first Black man to shoot the cover in *British Vogue's* 104-year history.

Misan, thank you for joining us.

MISAN HARRIMAN: My pleasure.

MARK WILSON: So, Misan, I mean, this may not be the highlight for you. But I guess it's probably your highest publicity event of the year. So, why don't we start with the *Vogue* cover. Can you tell us how it came about?

MISAN HARRIMAN: So, the *Vogue* cover, the cover itself is the child, if you like, of my civil rights imagery work. Like many people I saw the murder of George Floyd and was horrified by it. And the wave of activism that came across the Atlantic and hit the UK. I didn't know what to do. So, I got my camera. Went out. And not really knowing what to expect, whether it would be five people or 500, and started shooting. And the images I posted online went viral very, very quickly. And the editor in chief of *British Vogue* Edward Enninful saw those images and posted a few himself. And then Louis Hamilton, Martin Luther King's son, all sorts of extraordinary human beings were posting it.

Off the back of that he came to the conclusion that my visual poetry, my voice with imagery was what he was looking for to tell the story of the September issue of *British Vogue*. So, it was on a Zoom call very similar to this and I remember all the little bubbles popping up. And I was like, my god, that's a whole bunch of people. I mean, I just take pictures. Why are there so many people on this Zoom call? And then Edward came onto the call. And in his humble way, the way he does things, he just quietly said, "Misan, I would like to have you shoot the September issue." And for the rest of the Zoom call I focused on not collapsing. Honestly. That was my focus. I was like, just don't faint. For god's sake, don't faint. Do not faint.

MARK WILSON: Can you tell us about your big influences early in your life, your journey to where you are today? And then also tell us a little bit about that passion for and the late coming to photography?

MISAN HARRIMAN: So, I'm late in when I picked up the camera, absolutely. But I think my whole life I've been preparing myself for this moment. What I mean by that is that I'm a very dyslexic

person. And visual education, if you like, how I teach myself was always how I fixed problems. I was always the kid at school that used arts and culture to find my way in life. So, everyone would ask me what song they should listen to, what film they should watch, what book they should read. And I have been obsessed with filmmakers and photographers from day one, everyone from Elliott Erwitt to Gordon Parks and Moneta Sleet Jr. I can go on all day. Sally Mann. Yvan [UNINTEL].

My eye has been training itself for the last 35 years. I just happened to pick up the camera late. And that's because of, you know, my struggles with imposter syndrome, not thinking I am good enough to try something different in life. And it took my partner, my wife, to say, "I believe that you will be an above average photographer. And what's the worst that can happen? You'll fail. It's photography. If you fail, you fail. Just pick up the camera and start shooting."

And that's really what I did. I taught myself on YouTube. Many, many middle-aged dads and mums that are in their garage making how-to videos. And I watched a lot of them when I didn't know how to use a camera properly. And then I shot who I loved, my family, my two young daughters, and my friends. And it just took off from there.

MARK WILSON: You know, we're all a product of our environment, really. Did you grow up around and immersed in a family tradition of art and film and music?

MISAN HARRIMAN: Yeah, I mean, Nigerian-- so I grew up one foot in a wonderful, deep rich culture of Nigeria and the music that we have. And also in boarding school in England. And I think I am a product of the best of both of those worlds. So, in my house at any given time there will be Fela Kuti playing. And then I'll go and listen to Sarah Vaughn and Joni Mitchell and Nina Simone and Maria Callas. So, it was quite an amalgamation. And then, of course, I discovered hip hop and R & B as a young man. So, all of those things have shaped who I am. And I feel very strongly in the democratization of great-- of access to great arts, which is a big part of what we do with my media business, what we see.

MARK WILSON: Let's talk specifically about race for a minute. I want to read you something written alongside your *Vogue* cover by Edward Enninful, the *Vogue* editor. "It was more than anything else the feeling of positivity that took me by surprise. It was the 3rd of June. And on warm, gray lunchtime in central London,

mask on, distance kept, I stepped outside my home to head to the Black Lives Matter rally in Hyde Park. For all of the obvious reasons it had been an especially fraught few days for Black people around the world. A fraught year and a fraught decade and a fraught life. Yet somehow, this particular day took me from feeling lost in despair to experiencing something that felt an awful lot like hope."

Tell us a little bit about your feelings from this summer, both immediately post George Floyd's death, but also during the Black Lives Matter protests.

MISAN HARRIMAN: It's been a huge time of reflection. I've spoken a lot about the open wounds that Black men and women have hidden away to the point that we don't even realize that we have them. And I think what's happened this summer is that those wounds have come. And they're very, very visible.

So, having a camera and walking around and photographing people that are fighting, they're literally fighting for the lives of people that look like myself, has been a unique experience.

Honestly, what I would say that I've learned is that, inherently, most people are good. And the allyship and solidarity that I have seen from the protests in London have given me, like Edward said, a huge amount of hope. Especially with younger people, you know? I want to give a shout out to Black women in particular because they have been the people that have organized this summer of protests. They've managed to make sure health and safety is sorted out. They've sorted out the social distancing. Making sure people have food and snacks and all of those things. And I have to say that these are young women, you know, 19, 20, 21 years old, that are literally the oxygen of the anti-racist movement. And they don't get the recognition they deserve.

MARK WILSON: With regard to diversity and inclusion and the race equity discussions, is this time different?

MISAN HARRIMAN: I feel it is. And it is because of this thing called the internet. The generations that came before me, my parents and their parents' parents may have had the same views. But they were just whispers in the wind because they didn't know how many other people felt the same way as them. And the collective voice of White people, Asian people, Black people, all of us that want to erase racism in all its forms, is in the millions of people. And we know that because we're all

connected via the internet. And that's why I think there is going to be change.

Also, you know, [UNINTEL], I hate to say it, with corporates, it is what it is. You know? Even if large institutions generally didn't care about race, they have to now. Optically they have to. So, yes there will be some tokenism. But it doesn't take much to get one or two people of color on the senior leadership team to change everything about the culture of a company. You cannot be a business that talks about diversity and inclusivity if the people that are making the decisions on diversity and inclusivity are all non-diverse. How can you if they do not have that lived experience? And a prime example is Edward Enninful himself was at the top of the food chain at *Vogue*. So he made that decision. And look at what it has done for me. Right?

And now, you know, Trevor, my business partner and I, are hiring people from a diverse background on the numerous projects that we have going. It's a trickle-down effect. But everything from HR policy, casting the net further afield from the Oxbridge or the favored universities that institutions like to hire from, all of that needs people within those aspects of the business that have had some kind of lived experiences so they have some kind of empathy and understanding on where to find new types of stories, new types of voices to change the culture of these businesses.

MARK WILSON: You and I have spoken about this before, when it comes to Black History Month, what's your take? What should Black History Month represent? What is it all about? And how does photography and the arts more broadly play into that?

MISAN HARRIMAN: I think Black History Month is different things to different people. From my point of view now, I think it is almost more important for someone that looks like you, someone that is not Black, to spend that month learning or unlearning whatever you have presumed to understand about the Black story, ranging from the transatlantic slave trade to the colonial history of race, with race. Because there's nothing wrong with not knowing. I think there is something wrong with not wanting to know more. And that, to me, is the real power of Black History Month, is it gives people that maybe didn't think they were welcome to even look up, think, and understand what Black history is, people that went through the similar education system as I did, where I was never taught, and I went to some very lovely schools, but they never taught me anything about Black history. I had a very finite version of history that I've

had to unlearn myself. So, if I was educated that way in the top private schools in England, what chance do other people have?

So, it's about education, education, allyship, and solidarity. And you don't have to be at the front of a march to be an activist. Frankly speaking, if you're a white person that doesn't understand the history of the slave trade, the history of the European relationship and the North American relationship with Africa, I'd rather you just listen to some podcasts and read some books. That, to me, is almost as important or more important than you being out holding placards with me in Parliament Square. And that's the importance of Black History Month. It's educating one's self so you can have a better view on the institutional racism that we are fighting against.

MARK WILSON: So, Misan, I get the sense speaking to you about broad subjects that you're very conscious of the responsibility that comes with your success and the platform that's it's afforded you. As you look to the future, what's next for you? What are you focused on both personally and professionally?

MISAN HARRIMAN: I think professionally it's to scale what we see to a place where we can affect change tangibly when it's so needed. You know? If you look at the the growth of companies like Vice and BuzzFeed, you know, we're doing what they did in the past, but we're doing it with culture. So, I'd love to scale that. Personally, just improve the quality of my photography and be the best image maker that I can be. I want to get into filmmaking and try and follow in my idol Gordon Parks and Steve McQueen's footsteps and make documentaries and feature films as well. And continue to push the agenda in this country and beyond of arts and culture. For example, in the prison system in England, there is no internet. So, Trevor and I, my business partner and I, are working to lobby the Home Office to install an intranet into the prison system. So, no one is saying that they can get on Facebook and email friends and family. But if you're going to shackle the bodies of these men and women, for god's sake, let their minds take flight. And what we see in my business has already a curated suite of content that inmates should be able to look at that will help them find a way to grow as human beings. That's the sort of thing that I'm looking to do above and beyond everything else that we've spoken about.

MARK WILSON: Misan, thanks so much for joining us today. Congratulations on all that you've achieved in 2020 and to date. Well done on all of your work and the good work that you continue to do.

MISAN HARRIMAN: My pleasure. Thank you for having me.

This transcript should not be copied, distributed, published or reproduced, in whole or in part, or disclosed by any recipient to any other person. The information contained in this transcript does not constitute a recommendation from any Goldman Sachs entity to the recipient. Neither Goldman Sachs nor any of its affiliates makes any representation or warranty, express or implied, as to the accuracy or completeness of the statements or any information contained in this transcript and any liability therefore (including in respect of direct, indirect or consequential loss or damage) is expressly disclaimed. The views expressed in this transcript are not necessarily those of Goldman Sachs, and Goldman Sachs is not providing any financial, economic, legal, accounting or tax advice or recommendations in this transcript. In addition, the receipt of this transcript by any recipient is not to be taken as constituting the giving of investment advice by Goldman Sachs to that recipient, nor to constitute such person a client of any Goldman Sachs entity.

This transcript is provided in conjunction with the associated video/audio content for convenience. The content of this transcript may differ from the associated video/audio, please consult the original content as the definitive source. Goldman Sachs is not responsible for any errors in the transcript.