

T O L U C O K E R

AUTUMN WINTER 2021

SORO SOKE: DIASPORA '68

Soro Soke means 'Speak Up' in Yoruba, the native tongue of Tolu Coker's parents.

Motivated by the End Sars and Black Lives Matter protests and influenced by the real-life stories of British-Nigerian immigrants living in the North Kensington estate in London, Tolu Coker's AW21 collection and film reflect on notions of Black empowerment from the 1960s and 1970s. It is an ode to Black communities and allies who stand in solidarity and continue to support social justice as well as an immortalisation of Coker's own family history.

"My late father was a photojournalist and community activist with political involvement in the British Black Panther Party. His work captured the voices of his community, offering a different glimpse into the Diasporan experience."

The designer materialises her emotions and feelings – frustration fuelled her creativity – and made clothes echoing the idea of Sunday's Best, dressing to impress in outfits that bring together European and African aesthetics. Craftsmanship and sustainability remain key elements of Coker's work with the collection featuring prints woven in denim and textiles developed to reduce water consumption during the production process.

"I have developed woven print and dry-indigo denims, creating aesthetically beautiful textiles, whilst drastically reducing the vast amount of water which traditionally-dyed denims exhaust."

The silhouettes embody the sophistication and elegance of the late 1960s and early 1970s, whilst remaining contemporary and using colour, textures, and fabrication to convey a sense of youthfulness. Hats that exude swagger complement outfits and the colour palette is composed of blues, yellow, brown and red.

The designer has created a print compiling the faces of contributors to social justice movements, from notable figures to community and family members. Featured on shirts and on the lining of garments, the print, named 'Írántí' is a clin d'oeil to a Yoruba tradition that celebrates loved ones by printing their visages on fabrics to wear during wedding, funerals, and other ceremonious occasions.

"Írántí' is Yoruba for 'Remembrance'. This print's purpose is to document and immortalise faces, places, and moments associated with Black experiences and movements. I wanted to normalise, honour and immortalise the people who protest and fight for equality as many often go unrecognised in history books, despite their incredible and world-changing impact. Often, their stories live on solely through oral history and those who had the honour of knowing them."

The collection is an opportunity to highlight the stories of a generation of Nigerian immigrants who had the privilege of accessing higher education in Europe with the intention of going back to their home country to share their skills and knowledge. In that regard, this collection is also about giving back to the cultures we celebrate and the communities whose stories we centre. A percentage of the profits from sales will be distributed to charitable organisations in Nigeria. Later this year, Coker will travel to Nigeria and photograph the sequel to the story and connect with communities across the country.

"I wanted to empower the communities I am blessed to be connected with. It is about taking control over our own narratives and showcasing the future we want in society without forgetting our lived traumas. It is equally as important for us to be vocal about our vast and rich history- for me that means also circulating images of joy, pride and excellence whilst supporting those who today are affected by some of the issues I explore in my work."

ABOUT TOLU COKER

Tolu Coker is a young British-Nigerian Fashion Designer and multi-disciplinary artist based in London. Following several successful stints at Maison Margiela, J.W. Anderson and Celine, the London-born designer graduated from the prestigious Central Saint Martin's Design school in June 2017 with First Class Honours.

CREDITS

WORDS BY PIERRE 'PAMBOY' M'PELE

CREATIVE DIRECTION AND COLLECTION DESIGN: **TOLU COKER**
MEN'S HATS IN COLLABORATION WITH: **LUCY BARLOW**
WOMEN'S HATS IN COLLABORATION WITH: **VIVIENNE LAKE**
SHOES: **MANOLO BLAHNIK**
ACCESSORIES: **TOLU COKER**

PHOTOGRAPHY: **ADE COKER**
ARCHIVE PHOTOGRAPHY: **KAYODE ISHOLA COKER**

STILLS SET DESIGN: **KING OWUSU**, ASSISTED BY: **ENVER ANKAY**
STYLING: **PC WILLIAMS**, STYLING ACCESSORIES: **ASOS**
MAKEUP: **MICHELLE LEANDRA**
HAIR: **TONI AND GUY**, USING LABEL M
EFI DAVIES (LEAD HAIR STYLIST)
DEXTER JOHNSON
LUCY DRAPER
ELLE PAGE

TOLU COKER AND ADE O ADESINA PRESENT 'SORO SOKE', THE FILM

DIRECTED BY: **ADE O ADESINA "ADELIGHT"**
CREATIVE DIRECTION: **TOLU COKER**
DOP: **NATASHA DUURSMAN**
EDITOR: **SAM STOREY**
AC: **JOE WILLIS**
GAFFER: **DEIMANTE SPRAINAITYE**
COLOURIST: **NIGEL TADYANEHONDO**
FILM SET DESIGN: **JOSIE HUNTER**, ASSISTED BY: **NATALIE DEAN, SHANICE WILLIAMS**
MODELS: **JENNIFER MALENGELE, KING OWUSU, PORTIA OKOTCHA, ODILE JORDAN, RUDIE MCCREE, MIREILLE BAGAYE, DANIAL ROMAIN, KOLA AYENI**

WITH SPECIAL THANKS TO MY VERY SPECIAL FAMILY, FRIENDS AND COMMUNITY WHO MADE THIS POSSIBLE:

ADE COKER, OLAPEJU COKER, CHEF PHILSON NICHOLAS, BIBI BATOOL, ADE O ADESINA, JENNIFER MALENGELE, KING OWUSU, ALICE MAHONEY, SHANICE WILLIAMS, DAWN MASON, MARIAM @ MALC AGENCY, MICHELLE SMITH, EFI DAVIES @ LABEL M/ TONI AND GUY, PIERRE M'PELE, KODAK LABS, PINEWOOD STUDIOS, KODAK PROFESSIONAL EUROPE, TEYIDOS ROYOS

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