Brixton
Brixton

- **Brixton is a London suburb**
- It has a past
  - Issues of race, class, oppression, injustice, street violence
- It has a present, future
  - Gentrification, global economy
  - Issues of race, class, oppression, injustice, street violence
Brixton

• Allows us to sense the complex texture and meaning of “place”, the complexities of landscape
  – A place significant for racial and social identity
  – A place significant for culture
  – It is a space, which gets shaped by the effects of power etc.,
Brixton

• Like place, time is also rich and complex
  – Generates memories
  – Sees changes
  – Sees continuities
  – People staking claims over the meaning of its history
Brixton

- Victorian suburb of south London
- Commercial centre, market, stores developed around the commuter rail station
  - Electric Avenue
- Residential areas
1950s-1980s

- Major Afro-Caribbean immigration to Britain
  - Immigrant communities face racism, hostility, relative poverty
  - Brixton is one of several inner suburbs to become an Afro-Caribbean district
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Bob Marley

• Knew Brixton in the 1970s and was sometimes seen there

• But somehow never really generated the iconic Brixton sound
1970s

- Era of economic decline, loss of traditional blue-collar jobs
  - Effects of Globalization
- Rising tensions in Brixton and other areas over policing
  - Context of high unemployment
1979

- Government became more authoritarian with the election of the Thatcher government.
April 1981

- Poorly-executed police crackdown on street crime in Brixton precipitates rioting
- Battle for Brixton
1980s onwards

- London’s economy transforms rapidly under globalization
- Traditional blue-collar jobs never come back
- But London emerges as one of 3 key cities at the centre of the global economy
- Economic boom in financial and creative economy
I looked, and behold a pale horse!

Revelation 6:8
Gentrification

• Globalization beginning to transform Brixton
  – The old divisions of race, class identity begin to dissolve
  – Brixton’s cheap real estate attracts gentrifiers
  – Brixton’s Market Row attracts foodies
  – Electric Avenue remains Afro-Caribbean
Bob Marley Way

- Beginning to attract gentrifiers
- More links
- Huffington Post notes its “regeneration”
Musical Legacy

• Brixton in the 1970s was iconic for Reggae and Afro-Caribbean music.
The Clash

- A white British punk band
- Only one member (Paul Simonon) came from Brixton
- Somehow managed to create the enduring Brixton Riot legacy song:
  - 1979 *the Guns of Brixton*
- It predated the Brixton Riots, but somehow captured the mood
Guns of Brixton

- Jimmy Cliff
- Dropkick Murphys
- The Analogs Strzelby z Brixton
- Fabulosos Cadillacs in Argentina
- LA FURIA - armas de barrio
- Mundo Livre S/A
Guns of Brixton

- Red Hot Chili Peppers
- Bőgőmasina
- Nouvelle Vague Live In Hong Kong
- Arcade Fire
- Guns of Brixton: Chinese version
- Chicha Libre
- The Nuns of Brixton
Electric Avenue

- Eddy Grant: born in Guyana, grew up in London
- His 1982 hit *Electric Avenue*, set in Brixton, became a classic
- Eddy Grant in Capetown
- Portland State University
Ghost Town

• British ska band The Specials created the iconic **Ghost Town** in response to the riots in the summer of 1981

• **Hot 8 New Orleans Jazz**

• The Specials reprise **Ghost Town** with **Amy Winehouse**
Brixton

- Brixton is a place, exists over time
- This is clearly complex, has a complex texture
  - Economy, power, politics, race, identity, globalization, music, culture …..
- Illustrates the complexity of historical geography