

Sons of Kemet - Black To The Future
Essay by Shabaka Hutchings

Field negus
pick up your burning cross
think of home
hustle
for the culture
to never forget the source
In remembrance of those fallen
Let the circle be unbroken
Envision yourself levitating
Throughout the madness, stay strong
Black

Black to the future is a sonic poem for the invocation of power, remembrance and healing. It envisions our progression towards a future in which indigenous knowledge and wisdom is centred in the realisation of a harmonious balance between the human, natural and spiritual world. The outwards gaze of Joshua Idehen's words on 'Field negus' and 'Black' bookend the album and express the rage, frustration and perception arising in the wake of George Floyd's death and the subsequent BLM protests. The work then flows inwards from both directions meeting at the central (ideological) axis-point of the track 'to never forget The Source'. The Source refers to the principles which govern traditional African cosmologies/ontological outlooks and symbolises the inner journey. It is the unifying factor that gives meaning both to looking backwards (in nuancing and continually adding depth of contextualisation and meaning to the past) and visioning forward (in speculating and striving to realise a better future for humanity).

Black to the future depicts a movement to redefine and reaffirm what it means to strive for black power. Power is seen as the lifeforce energy needed to build upon the conceptual frameworks of our ancestors so their wisdom might guide our intentions and focus. Music can be likened to a time travelling vessel whereby cultural value systems of the past are encoded within sound and projected/protected throughout ages. The track titles all combine to reflect a single poetic statement to which a depth of symbolic meaning can be intuited in combination with the music/sonic information. This meaning is not universal and the cultural context of the listener will shape their understanding, yet in the end, the overarching message remains the same - For humanity to progress we must consider what it means for Black to the Future.