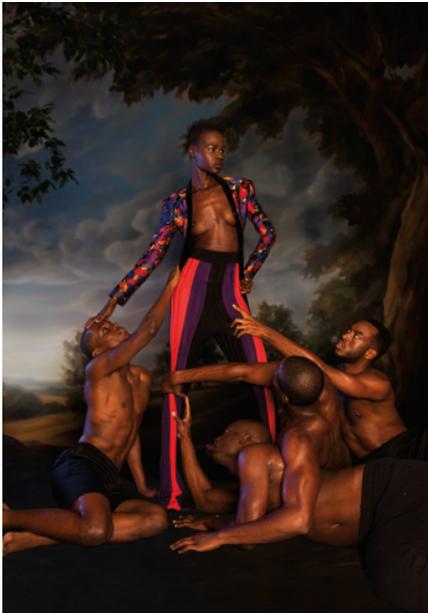


# SEAN KELLY

Wiley, Kehinde. "Black Lives Have Mattered for Thousands of Years: A Photo Story by Kehinde Wiley," *Paper*, October 30, 2015.

## PAPER

**"BLACK LIVES HAVE MATTERED FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS": A PHOTO STORY BY KEHINDE WILEY**



Left to right; Mateo shorts, Balmain jacket and trousers, Yeezy season 1 pants

America is a country in transition. So much of the American mythos is the notion of the city on the hill -- that we are a beacon of light for others to see our greatness, our social justice and equality. In the end, though, there have to be moments in which we step back, examine ourselves, and police our own actions. We have a black president, and that is a sign of progress in many ways, but we still read in newspapers every week about young black men because their bodies are in our streets. There's significance in that and, as an artist, I have to negotiate a response that is at once critical but also curious about how this could change. These photographs move in the direction of my aesthetic, which is decidedly art-historical, while exploring the strange intersection between that history and this particular moment in American culture.

None of this stuff is clean -- the history of art is the history of empire and social domination. As I'm co-opting the visual language of historical society portraiture, I'm very aware that those portraits, and as a result my own works, are made on the backs of every single person who came before us in the fields of Cuba, or Haiti, or Jamaica, or Brazil, or South Carolina. On some level, we're all dirty.

I stand on the shoulders of many great artists whose work emphasizes the importance of diversity in American society. Black lives matter because it's a prescient thing to highlight in this moment of cultural evolution. But black lives have mattered for thousands of years. My interest is in the now -- what does it feel like to be black in 2015?

Makeup by Kim White at Artists at Wilhelmina

Grooming by Fran Freeman

Hair by Nikki Nelms [nikkinelms.com](http://nikkinelms.com)

Set design by Von Fedoroff, Matt Maher and Jane Mai

Casting by Roger Inniss for Boom Productions Inc., Kehinde Wiley Studio: Amy Gadola and Brad Ogbonna

Stylist assistants: Ofunne Okwudiafor, Kristina Brown and Shanell Scott

Special thanks to: Tiffany Reeves, Mekdes Mersha, Kimberly Gedeon, Aisha Awadallah, Ajang Majok, Shantavia Beale, Darren Willis, Antoine Boardraye, Atiba Newsome, Darnell Ross, Alaska Gedeon, Tyler Duverne, Ava Lee Carter, Bryse Steward, Nola Denby, Jaielle Alejandro Welch, Craig Fletcher, Liam Daniels and Omar Elwadi



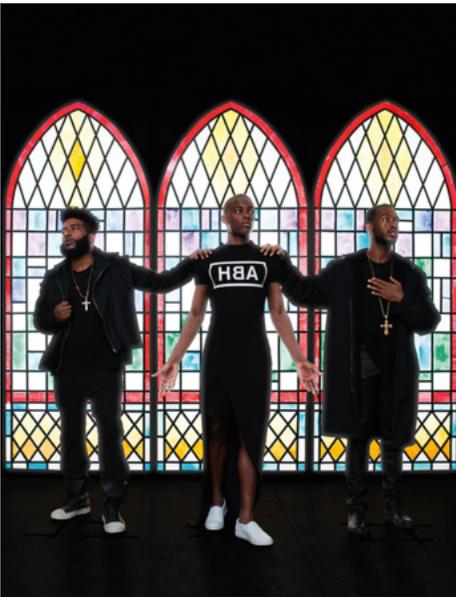
Off White coat, Mateo shirt, Yeezy season 1 pants, Armando Cabral shoes



Harbison jumpsuit, Chelsea Paris shoes



Left to right; Cushnie Et Ochs dress, Harbison jumpsuit, Chelsea Paris shoes, Cushnie Et Ochs top, Off White pants



Left to right; Hood By Air coat, Mateo shirt, Yeezy season 1 pants, Camille Tanoh shoes, Hood By Air shirt, Mateo shorts, Camille Tanoh shoes, Yeezy season 1 jacket, Pyer Moss shirt, Telfar pants, Camille Tanoh shoes



Cushnie Et Ochs fur coat and dress, Ade Samuel shoes, Khiry Collection necklace



Harbison coat, Pyer Moss shirt and pants, Off White shoes



Left to right; Karl Kani top and pants, Casely-Hayford shirt, Pyer Moss pants, Yeezy season 1 top, Karl Kani pants