

# B:M

B:M  
2024

RECLAIMING NARRATIVES

## BENJAMIN ZEPHANIAH

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# THE PIANO LESSON

A FILM BY MALCOLM WASHINGTON

BASED ON THE PULITZER PRIZE-WINNING PLAY BY AUGUST WILSON

SCREENPLAY BY VIRGIL WILLIAMS & MALCOLM WASHINGTON DIRECTED BY MALCOLM WASHINGTON

IN SELECT CINEMAS NOVEMBER

**NETFLIX** | 22 NOVEMBER

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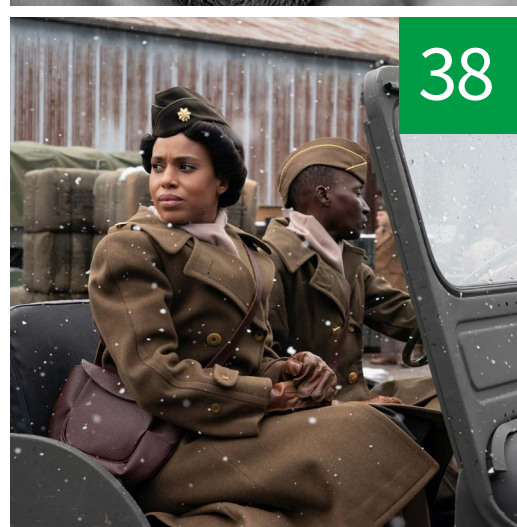
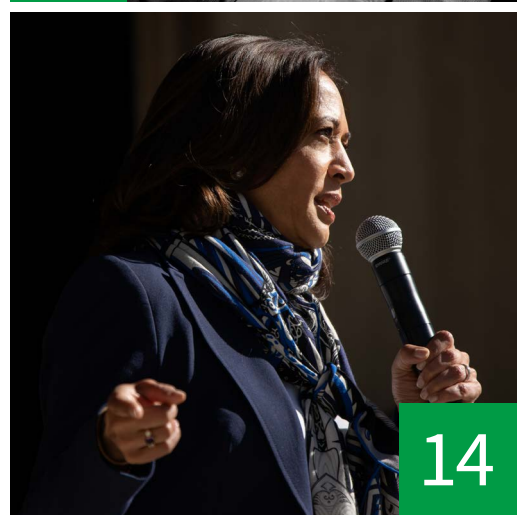
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B:M

# Reclaiming Narratives

There is a great African proverb that says: Until the Lion learns to write, every story will glorify the hunter!

This year's theme is "**Reclaiming Narratives**". This theme is not just about revisiting and correcting history; it's about taking ownership of the stories that define our culture, our contributions, and our very identity. It's a call to action for Black communities across the UK to step into the role of storytellers, historians, and custodians of our heritage. For far too long, our histories have been narrated by others, leading to distorted portrayals that fail to capture the full breadth and depth of our experiences.

This is why Black History Month is so important. It was set up solely dedicated to acknowledge our contributions throughout history and while we have a month in the UK calendar for us and about us, we need to seize it with everything we have. Racial inequity still exists and Black History should be shared so that our young people are aware of how our contributions have helped to shape UK society and hope that they can dismantle systems that resulted with us needing Black History Month in the first place.

*Reclaiming Narratives* is more than just a theme—it's an invitation. An invitation to every member of the Black community to take part in shaping how our stories are told. It's about ensuring that our voices are heard, our experiences acknowledged, and our contributions celebrated. This theme encourages us to shine a spotlight on the untold stories, the unsung heroes, and the everyday individuals who have made an indelible impact on our communities.

Throughout this fantastic edition are articles featuring people who are reclaiming narratives about our community in a variety of ways. Be that about fatherhood or being a CEO. There is also a special piece about the role of Supplementary/Saturday schools (and other organisations) that are reclaiming narratives about African



**By Cherron Inko-Tariah MBE**  
*Editor in Chief*

history. We are promoting these organisations in support of the work led by Black Education.

Black History Month acts as a reminder: As one 16 year old youth parliamentarian told me: "*October is the time that we remind ourselves about the contributions of Black people to the cultural, economic and political life of the UK. We then spread that knowledge and advocacy during the other 11 months of the year*"

It's an opportunity to contribute to a collective effort to reshape how Black history is perceived and taught. Together, we can ensure that future generations grow up with a richer, more accurate understanding of Black history that goes beyond enslavement.

Finally, I am excited to announce the publication of our *An Anthology: Saluting Our Sisters* – a book of poems celebrating Black Women. These are the poems from our poetry competition that we held in 2023. I encourage everyone to grab a copy of this collection because it is not just a book but a movement—a call to recognise and uplift the contributions of Black women who have shaped our world. Each poem is a testament to the unique and collective experiences of Black women – some known, some unknown - offering both solace and inspiration to readers of all backgrounds. Order yours from here: <https://www.blackhistoryukcic.co.uk/>

Happy Black History Month



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# Daughters

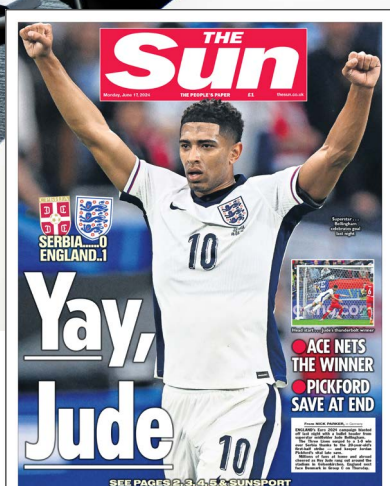
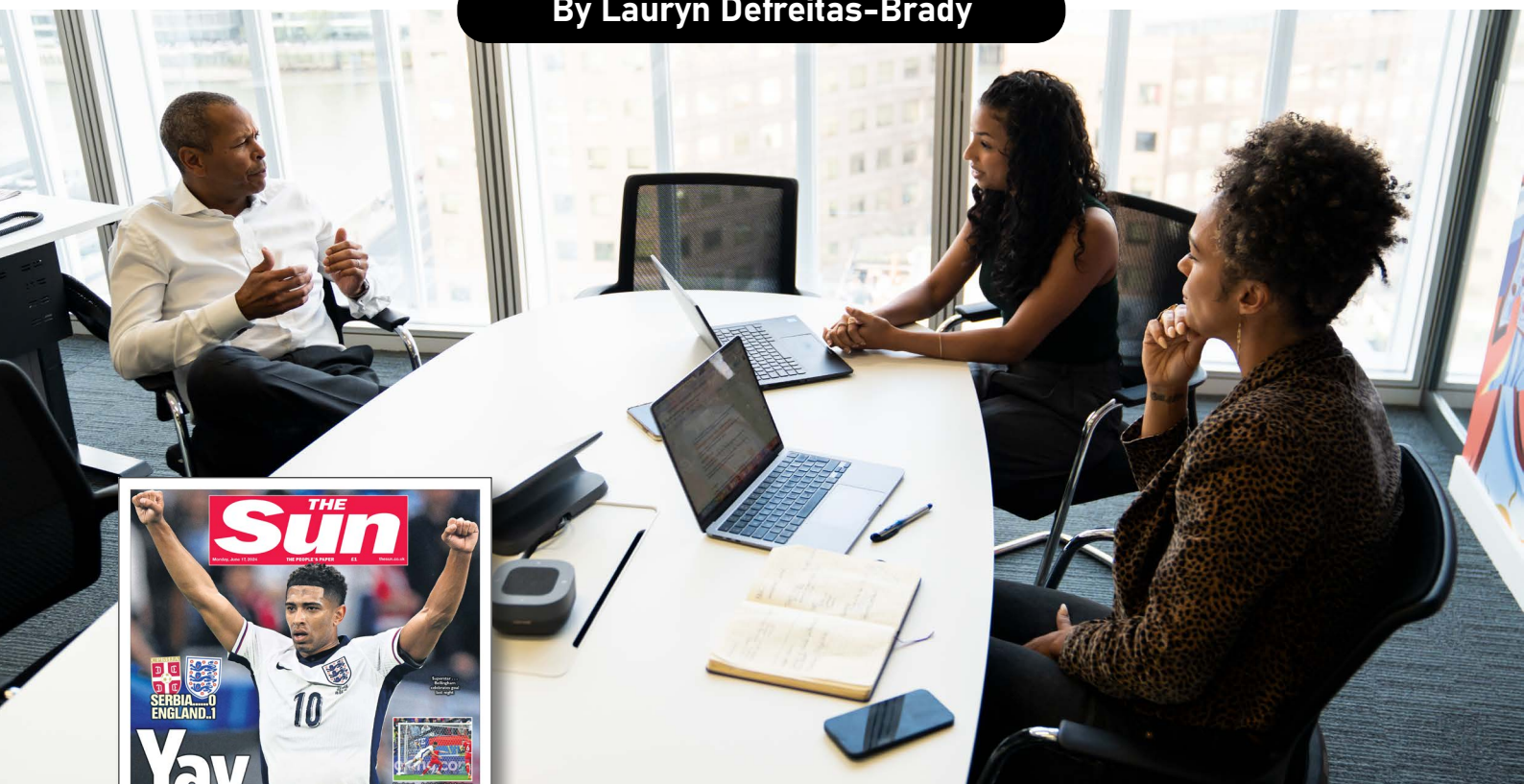
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# A PLACE IN *THE SUN*

We hear from changemakers inside a major news organisation

By Lauryn Defreitas-Brady



Which is the only mainstream news organisation in the UK with a Black person in charge? Be honest, how many of you guessed *The Sun*!?

**Dominic Carter**, Executive Vice President of *The Sun* since 2022, sat down with **Shelley Bishton**, Head of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion for parent company *News UK*, for a conversation about building careers in media - where Black representation remains low - with apprentice *Sun Showbiz* journalist **Lauryn Defreitas-Brady** - hired in partnership with the MOBO Awards.

**Lauryn:** Hi both, so what inspired you to enter media?

**Shelley:** I grew up in Birmingham in the 80s and 90s, where Black civil rights were at the forefront of politics. My parents were activists, my mum has spent her life fighting

for justice and equality for Black people. I vividly remember her petitioning for Black History Month to be put on the curriculum in school. So to be here now doing this article for Black History Month magazine feels like a full circle moment.

**Dominic:** I was in media sales and was told I'd never get a job in newspapers, back in the days it really was a case of who you knew. Most people suggested that I would never get a job in newspapers but that made me even more determined.

I just thought well I'm not paying attention to that. So, I wrote to all the newspapers and I got interviews at pretty much every newspaper on 'Fleet Street' at the time. I was offered a job on *The Sun* first. Since then I've worked across a lot of *News UK* brands - from *The Times* and *The Sunday Times* to *talkSPORT* and *Virgin Radio UK*. Then I was offered the opportunity to lead the newsbrand that really is part of the fabric of British society, *The Sun*, as a Black person at the head of that organisation. It was a very proud moment.

**Lauryn:** I grew up in a very multicultural environment as well. I've always been a storyteller and my biggest passion is to spotlight stories from the communities like the ones I grew up in. Over the span of

your career, what are the key challenges you've faced?

**Dominic:** I spent the first nine years of my life growing up in Nigeria, where it's very different. There I was considered as a caucasian because I'm mixed race and in the UK I'd get called something slightly different. I don't need to tell you what I'd get called.

*"...to work in a role which is focused on removing the obstacles and creating the pathways is amazing."*

So when you spend your formative years in that sort of background you're trying to establish how you fit in anyway. Then when you come into a workplace, you're sort of immune to it. I haven't felt there's been any adversity or anything that's blocked my career, I've seen it as an opportunity and I utilised my difference to create opportunities for myself. You have to move forward and I've always felt that responsibility, not just for me and my family, but for people who look like me, to show it can be done.

**Lauryn:** I think for me, just starting out on this journey, just to get your foot in the door is so difficult and it's not talked about enough. You go through this mindset that





**SHELLEY BISHTON**

you finish university or school and you'll get a job that fits in with your degree, and everything's going to work out the way you planned it. It takes time and ambition to get into spaces like this and I think being a person of colour there's certainly that added amount of hardship.

**Shelley:** I think for most of my career I've usually been the only Black woman. And as I started to become more successful in my career, I certainly found I kept hitting ceilings and not knowing why. I do think being Black and a woman has different challenges. But I'm optimistic that things are getting better. And to work in a role which is focused on removing the obstacles and creating the pathways is amazing.

**Lauryn:** So what's the best advice you've ever been given?

**Shelley:** So, I had the pleasure of interviewing Sir Trevor McDonald a couple of years ago and it was probably one of the most incredible moments of my life.



**DOMINIC CARTER**

He said to me: "You don't need to know your final destination." He talked about the fact he had no master plan at all, he just worked really hard at every opportunity he had and I just loved it because I just think we're all so consumed with wanting to know what's next and actually no one knows. So just really get stuck in and know that you've done everything you can because at least you can say you tried your best.

**Lauryn:** I agree. For me being told rejection is just redirection was a turning point. I think resilience is a trait that's really important to have, especially in this environment.

**Dominic:** I think that's a good one and that's like saying they're not barriers, they're hurdles. They're just things to get over. You're going to have to work hard, you're going to have to be prepared for the rejection because you're going to get a lot of it and you just have to keep going - and in doing so, whether you're conscious of it or not, you become a role model for others.



**LAURYN DEFREITAS-BRADY**

*The Sun* is a division of *News UK*, a media company that's at the heart of the national conversation. Home to *The Times* and *The Sunday Times*, *Virgin Radio UK*, *talkSPORT*, *Talk* and *Times Radio*, *News UK* reaches almost 40 million people each month.

In November 2020, *News UK* launched its first diversity strategy, and set out the big mission to achieve 50/50 gender split and 20% ethnic minority representation at all levels of the organisation. At the strategy launch, we were at 36% female representation and 9% ethnic minority. The proportion of females employed across *News UK* has steadily increased to 46%, and our ethnic minority representation is now 12%.

The desired outcome of our strategy is to create a more diverse *News UK*, that is future fit, more innovative and an attractive employer with new business opportunities.

We have launched 70 two-year-long apprenticeships, and we were the first media brand to partner with Kickstart, creating 52 paid internships for unemployed young people, many of whom went on to permanent employment at *News UK*. We have established partnerships with a range of diversity recruitment specialists and have developed leadership programmes for people from diverse backgrounds, as well as introducing diversity experts across our brands. We are proud to be a Disability Confident Employer.

For more information on jobs check out [newscareers.co.uk](https://www.newscareers.co.uk).



# BENJAMIN ZEPHANIAH:

## THE POET OF THE PEOPLE

Benjamin Zephaniah's name resonates with power, passion, and profound poetry. Born on April 15, 1958, in Birmingham, England, Zephaniah emerged as one of the most influential and outspoken voices in contemporary British literature. His life and works are a testament to the enduring power of the written word and the impact of a committed activist's voice. Zephaniah passed away on December 7, 2023, at the age of 65, after being diagnosed with a brain tumour just eight weeks prior.

### EARLY LIFE AND INFLUENCES

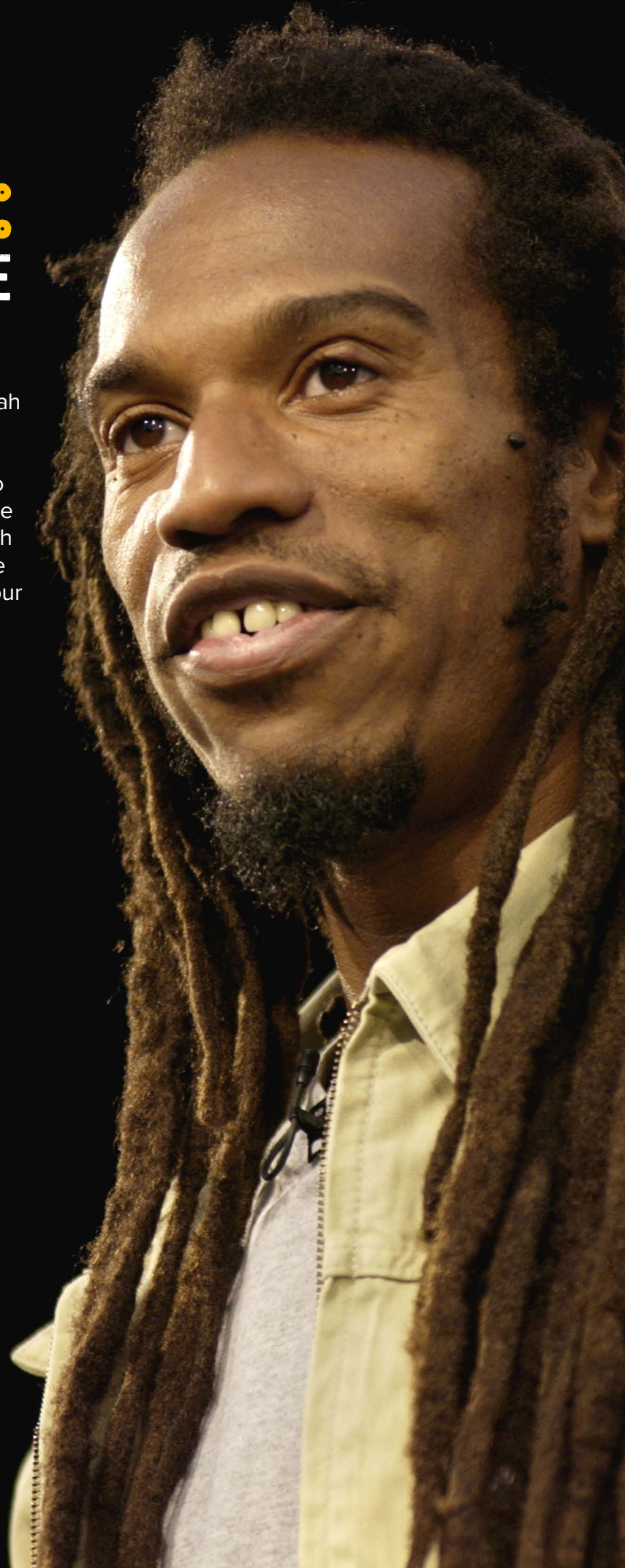
Benjamin Obadiah Iqbal Zephaniah was born into a working-class Jamaican family in the Handsworth district of Birmingham. His upbringing in a vibrant, multicultural community profoundly influenced his worldview and literary voice. The experiences of racism, poverty, police brutality, and economic inequality in his youth became central themes in his work, driving his commitment to social justice and community empowerment.

Zephaniah struggled in the conventional education system, finding solace and expression in the rhythms of reggae music and the spoken word. By the age of 15, he had established himself as a popular local performer, using his poetry to address the social issues that plagued his community. Reflecting on his early performances, Zephaniah said, "I was inspired by the reggae artists and poets who spoke about the realities of life. I wanted to do the same for my community."

In the early 1980s, when punks and Rastas were on the streets protesting about unemployment, homelessness, and the National Front, Benjamin's poetry could be heard at demonstrations, outside police stations, and on the dance floor. His mission was to take poetry everywhere and to popularise it by reaching people who didn't read books. His poetry was political, musical, radical, and relevant.

### LITERARY CONTRIBUTIONS

Zephaniah's poetry is characterised by its accessibility, emotional intensity, and rhythmic cadences. He often wrote in a distinct vernacular style, reflecting his Jamaican heritage and his desire to reach a broad audience. His work transcended the boundaries of traditional poetry, blending elements of music, performance, and political activism.







In the 1990s and early 2000s, Zephaniah was particularly prolific. This period saw the release of several major works that cemented his status as a significant literary and cultural figure.

*“City Psalms”* (1992) is a powerful exploration of urban life, touching on themes of race, identity, and social justice. It marked Zephaniah’s rise as a prominent poetic voice. Another significant collection from this period is *“Propa Propaganda”* (1996), which continued his exploration of political and social issues, solidifying his reputation as a poet of the people.

Aimed at younger audiences, *“Talking Turkeys”* (1994) is a collection of children’s poetry that is humorous yet thought-provoking, showcasing Zephaniah’s versatility. *“Too Black, Too Strong”* (2001) delves into the experiences of black Britons, exploring themes of resilience and resistance.

*“We Are Britain!”* (2002) celebrates the diversity of British society, featuring poems about children from various cultural backgrounds. *“Refugee Boy”* (2001), a novel for young adults, tells the story of a young Ethiopian refugee in England, highlighting Zephaniah’s ability to address serious issues in a way that is accessible to younger readers.

During this prolific period, Zephaniah’s work was characterised by its accessibility, rhythmic cadences, and vernacular style, reflecting his Jamaican heritage. He addressed pressing social issues such as racism, police brutality, and economic inequality, making his work resonate with a broad audience. Zephaniah once stated, “My poetry is about the people and for the people. It’s about making change through words.”

### ACTIVISM AND ADVOCACY

Beyond his literary achievements, Zephaniah was a dedicated activist who had a profound positive impact on his community and the UK. He campaigned

tirelessly on issues such as anti-racism, animal rights, and social justice. His activism was deeply intertwined with his poetry, as he used his platform to raise awareness and inspire action.

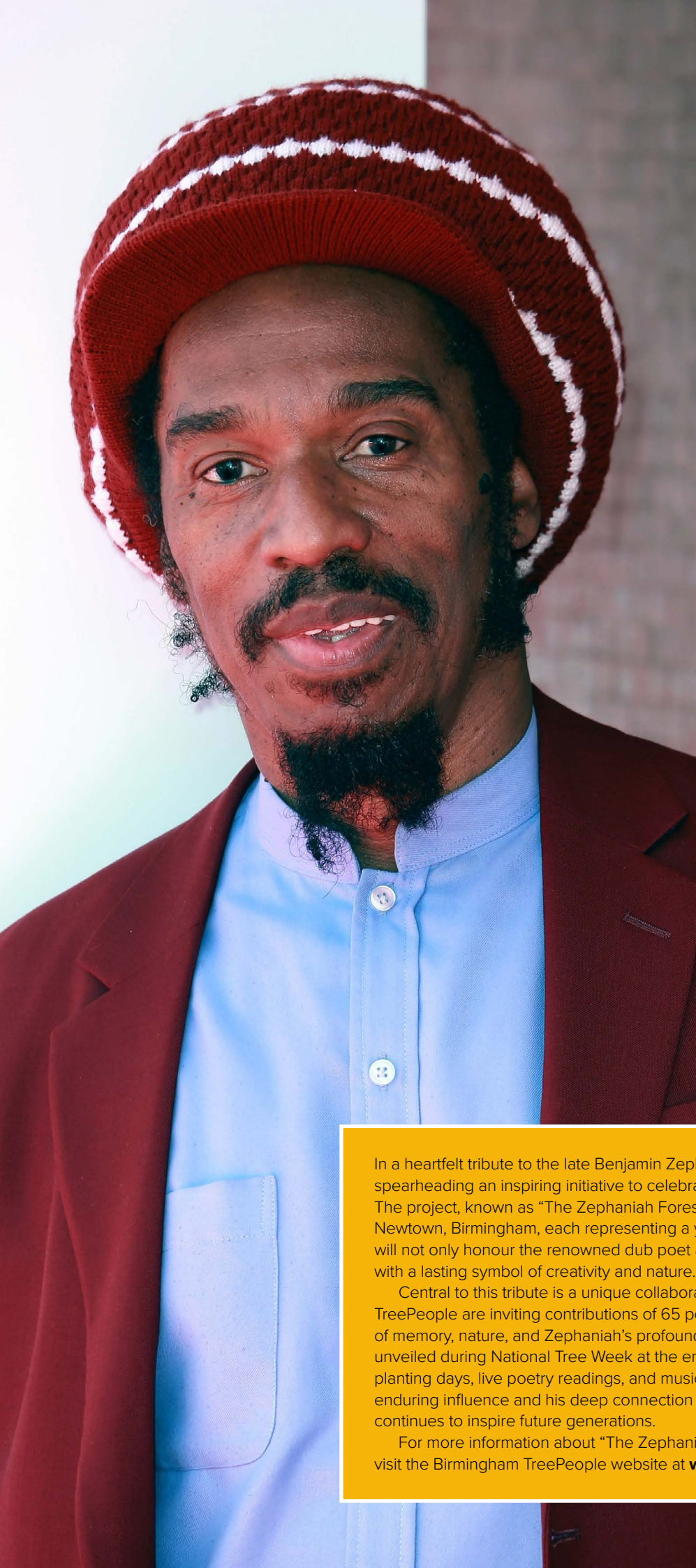
One of the most significant moments in his activist career was his decision to decline an Order of the British Empire (OBE) in 2003. Zephaniah’s refusal was a powerful statement against the British monarchy and its colonial legacy. In a public letter, he cited his opposition to the empire and its historical oppression of people of colour as his reasons for rejecting the honour. “I get angry when I hear that word ‘empire’; it reminds me of slavery, it reminds me of thousands of years of brutality,” he explained.

Zephaniah’s activism extended to his support for organisations such as Amnesty International and his advocacy for the rights of prisoners. His book *“We Are Britain!”* celebrates the diversity of British society and promotes a message of inclusion and unity. He was a beacon of hope and a champion for the oppressed, using his influence to effect positive change. He famously said, “Racism has no place in the world. And it’s up to us, the people who understand this, to make sure it has no place in our hearts.”

### WORDS THAT RESONATE

Zephaniah’s words have a unique ability to resonate with people from all walks of life. His poetry speaks to universal themes of love, justice, and humanity, while also addressing specific issues of racial inequality and social injustice. His work encourages readers and listeners to question the status quo and to strive for a more equitable world.

One of his most famous poems, “The British”, reimagines the British Isles as a recipe, highlighting the diverse ingredients that make up the nation. This poem is a celebration of multiculturalism and a



call for unity, reflecting Zephaniah's belief in the power of diversity.

Another powerful piece, "*Dis Poetry*", challenges traditional notions of poetry and asserts the importance of oral tradition and performance. In this poem, Zephaniah declares, "Dis poetry is not party political, /Not designed for those who are critical."

## LEGACY AND IMPACT

Benjamin Zephaniah's legacy is one of courage, creativity, and commitment. He inspired a generation of poets, activists, and thinkers to use their voices for change. His work continues to be a beacon of hope and a call to action, reminding us of the power of words to transform society.

In a world that often feels divided and unjust, Zephaniah's poetry offers a vision of a better future. His life and words are a testament to the enduring strength of the human spirit and the possibility of change. As he once wrote, "We can all be heroes, if we are prepared to pay the price."

Benjamin Zephaniah's journey from the streets of Birmingham to the global stage is a story of resilience, creativity, and unwavering dedication to justice. His poetry and activism remind us that every voice matters and that through art and action, we can build a more just and compassionate world. His death is a profound loss, but his legacy will continue to inspire and guide future generations.

## REMEMBERING BENJAMIN ZEPHANIAH

As we celebrate Black History Month in 2024, we remember and honour Benjamin Zephaniah's remarkable contributions. His words and actions have left an indelible mark on the world, and his legacy will continue to inspire us in our ongoing quest for equality, justice, and understanding. Zephaniah's life is a powerful reminder of the impact that one individual can have in the fight for a better, more inclusive society.

In a heartfelt tribute to the late Benjamin Zephaniah, Birmingham TreePeople are spearheading an inspiring initiative to celebrate the poet's remarkable life and legacy. The project, known as "The Zephaniah Forest," aims to plant 65 trees in Burbury Park, Newtown, Birmingham, each representing a year of Zephaniah's life. This living memorial will not only honour the renowned dub poet and activist but also enrich the community with a lasting symbol of creativity and nature.

Central to this tribute is a unique collaboration with poets and artists. Birmingham TreePeople are inviting contributions of 65 poems, one for each tree, to capture themes of memory, nature, and Zephaniah's profound impact on the world. The forest will be unveiled during National Tree Week at the end of November, featuring community planting days, live poetry readings, and music events. This project reflects Zephaniah's enduring influence and his deep connection to the natural world, ensuring that his legacy continues to inspire future generations.

For more information about "The Zephaniah Forest" and to support the project, visit the Birmingham TreePeople website at [www.birminghamtreepeople.co.uk](http://www.birminghamtreepeople.co.uk).



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# Royal British Legion

## Reclaiming Narratives

The Royal British Legion (RBL) is the UK's largest charity dedicated to supporting the needs of the Armed Forces community - past and present - and their families.

The RBL champions Remembrance and is known for the annual Poppy Appeal. We believe that Remembrance is for all and it can bring communities together to honour the service and sacrifice of the Armed Forces.

We are committed to remembering the countless individuals from the Commonwealth, those of Commonwealth heritage, and other nations who have served in, and alongside, British Forces. These brave men and women have made essential contributions during both war and peace, and deserve recognition.

To find out more visit:

[blackhistorymonth.org.uk/royal-british-legion](https://blackhistorymonth.org.uk/royal-british-legion)



### Sgt Sidney Cornell: Second World War Heroism

This year marked the 80th anniversary of D-Day, a pivotal moment in the Second World War, when the Allies began liberating western Europe. Among the countless stories from June 1944 is that of Sidney Cornell.

Sidney was born on Boxing Day 1913 in Portsmouth. His father was the African American circus performer

Charles Cornell, who settled in England in the 1890s, and his mother was a gardener's daughter from Somerset.

Sidney married his childhood sweetheart, Eileen, in 1934, and they had four children. In 1942 he enlisted in the Army and was deployed as a driver before volunteering for the Parachute Regiment.

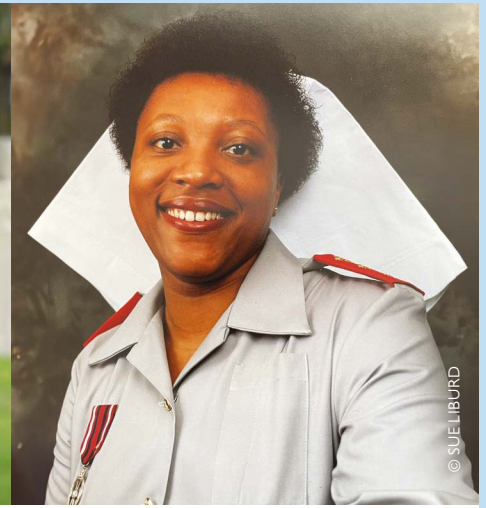
In the very early hours of 6th June 1944 Sidney parachuted behind enemy lines with 7th Parachute Battalion near Pegasus Bridge – one of the first Black soldiers to land in France on D-Day.

His great nephew Chris, who leads the family research, is proud of Sidney, who delivered vital messages under enemy fire, one of the most dangerous jobs in Normandy. Chris explains: "He was just in the thick of it and his job was to be the Company runner. He was running around, there were bullets pinging all over the place. They said he got wounded in the shoulder, and probably the leg, about four wounds in all, but he

just carried on regardless. And that was the thing, he wasn't going to let a wound in the shoulder stop him. He could have been taken out of the field and sent home, but he was determined not to."

In recognition of his bravery, Sidney was promoted to Sergeant and awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal.

After Normandy, Sidney and his colleagues were deployed in the Ardennes and in March 1945 they parachuted into Germany as part of the ambitious Operation Varsity to secure strategically important territories. On 7th April, Sidney's battalion reached the town of Neustadt am Rügenberge but found its bridge wired with explosives. They rushed it, hoping to surprise the defenders, but an arch was blown as they crossed. Sidney was one of 22 of his battalion killed that night. Chris reflects: "In a month the War (in Europe) had finished. We should be grateful he survived Normandy, but sadly he didn't reach the War's end".



## Sue Liburd MBE: Bridging Heritage and Service

Born in 1962 to parents from Nevis and Jamaica, Sue Liburd's roots are deeply intertwined with the Windrush generation, who answered the UK's call to help rebuild the nation after the Second World War. Her father, initially arriving in the UK for National Service, chose to remain in the Royal Air Force, dedicating his life to military service – a decision that profoundly influenced Sue.

Her father made sure she understood the realities of being a minority. He would often say, "Look, Sue, when you step out in the world, people are going to make a judgment based on your colour and they're going to make a judgment based on your gender. They're not going to see your amazingness, your brightness. They're not going to see that first. They are going to make a judgment." His words instilled in Sue the determination to overcome prejudice and fuelled her resolve to succeed.

Her childhood was shaped by strong family values instilled by her parents. "We always had a close family unit," Sue recalls. This bond became crucial when her father passed away while still in service, leaving her mother to raise three children in Lincolnshire. Despite the challenges, her mother's strength set an example that would guide Sue.

Her younger brother, Michael, followed in their father's footsteps, joining the Royal Navy as an electrical marine engineering mechanic, and served in the Falklands War.

Initially, inspired by her mother, who was a psychiatric nurse, Sue pursued

a career in general nursing. She was drawn to mental health, fascinated by the complexity of the human mind. Her passion led her to specialise in mental health nursing, where she identified gaps in her knowledge, especially when working with women with postnatal depression and psychosis. "I'm going to go off and train as a midwife," she decided, further expanding her expertise into midwifery. Sue has contributed to the progress in destigmatising mental health.

Despite her NHS success, Sue sought more diverse experiences and considered a career in the armed forces, joining the Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps in 1987. "Post commissioning, I started off in Woolwich, at the Queen Elizabeth Military Hospital. Then I was seconded out to Southampton. I was then in Aldershot, followed by a posting to Münster in Germany. It was in Münster that I got to work on the project of closing down a military hospital and opening a new one."

During her Army career, Sue had opportunities to reshape and modernise the Army by joining round table discussions on improving diversity and inclusion, and by getting involved in schools liaison and recruitment.

As she reached a pivotal moment in her military career, one that demanded a 16-year commitment, Sue began to rethink her future.

Her Army career had provided invaluable experiences that eased her transition into her current roles.

"I sit on the Veterans Advisory Board. So, I get to advise the government. I sit around boardroom tables. I'm a non-executive director, in the health service now...I've moved out of

being a clinician to being far more of a strategic influencer. And I have to give real thanks to the Army for that."

Reflecting on her service, Sue recognises the significant societal shifts since her tenure. Progress in gender equality is evident, with women now serving in roles once reserved for men, and improved support structures for pregnant servicewomen. Racial advancements are clear, with the establishment of diversity and inclusion networks within the Armed Forces.

Sue is also one of the founders of the British West India Regiment's Heritage Trust (BWIRHT), whose work embodies the theme of 'Reclaiming Narratives'.

**"What we've got is a historical narrative that doesn't typically acknowledge the contribution of people of African and Caribbean descent. We were there in the First World War. We were there in the Second world War, of course. We're serving today and our stories and our presence has been consistently airbrushed out of history."**

Each year, BWIRHT organises an annual commemoration (supported by the Royal British Legion), "We take people who are serving and reservists and from the armed forces community, particularly from the Black community. We take them to the different Commonwealth War Grave sites in Europe. We show and tell them, 'The British West Indies regiment is here' and they are now learning our history because they haven't learned it anywhere else."

As Sue continues to honour the contributions of African and Caribbean servicemen and women, she not only reclaims a rich heritage but also inspires the next generation to walk taller.

# Honouring the past, shaping the future: **Kamala Harris** and the legacy of Black leadership

As America heads to the polls next month, the world watches a historic moment unfold. Among the candidates vying for the presidency is Kamala Harris—a woman whose journey from Oakland, California, to the corridors of power in Washington, D.C., is both a symbol of progress and a reflection of the long, winding paths that Black women have travelled in their fight for equality and justice.

BY  
**ELIZABETH  
SAMUALS**



Kamala Harris's candidacy is more than a campaign; it is the continuation of a legacy that stretches across generations. Her presence on the political stage speaks to the perseverance of countless Black women who have fought to break down barriers, including pioneers like Sojourner Truth, who spoke out for both women's and racial equality; Harriet Tubman, whose courage and leadership on the Underground Railroad saved countless lives; Mary McLeod Bethune, who championed education and civil rights; and Shirley Chisholm, the first Black woman to run for the U.S. presidency. Their groundbreaking work laid the foundation for future generations. In the UK, figures like Olive Morris, a prominent activist for racial and gender equality, and Doreen Lawrence, whose relentless advocacy following her son's tragic murder brought attention to issues of racial justice, are similarly part of this ongoing struggle. Harris's life story, shaped by migration, struggle, and resistance, connects to this broader narrative of Black resilience—not only in the United States but across the globe, including here in the UK.

Kamala Harris's rise is not isolated; it is deeply connected to the historical struggles and achievements of Black women. Her mother, Shyamala Gopalan, left India to pursue a career in cancer research, while her father, Donald Harris, emigrated from Jamaica to become a distinguished economist. Together, they instilled in Kamala a deep sense of justice and commitment to equality—values that have guided her throughout her life. From her early days at Howard University, a historically Black institution, to her legal career and rise in politics, Kamala Harris's journey has been shaped by a relentless pursuit of service and justice.

Her story, though personal, is deeply connected to the collective history of Black women. It echoes the struggles of pioneers who paved the way for Harris and others.

In 1972, Shirley Chisholm became the first Black woman to run for president, and her groundbreaking campaign serves as an important precursor to Kamala Harris's own run. The barriers that Chisholm faced—racism, sexism, and exclusion—are challenges that Kamala Harris still contends with today.

Kamala Harris has demonstrated remarkable resilience and strength in her political career, notably in her ability to stand up to former President Donald Trump. Her incisive questioning during Senate hearings and her forthright criticism of Trump's policies, especially on issues like immigration and criminal justice, showcased her willingness to confront

powerful figures and challenge injustices head-on. This ability to stand firm against a controversial figure underscores her commitment to holding those in power accountable and fighting for the values she believes in.

As California's Attorney General and later as a U.S. Senator, Harris earned a reputation for tackling tough issues, including human trafficking, environmental justice, and criminal justice reform. Her work in these areas underscores her commitment to addressing the systemic inequities that have long plagued marginalised communities.

Kamala Harris's candidacy represents a larger struggle for Black women, who have historically been at the forefront of movements for social change yet often excluded from positions of power. Her rise to prominence demonstrates the progress that has been made, but it also highlights the work that remains. For many Black women, both in the United States and the UK, Kamala Harris's candidacy is a powerful symbol of what is possible when barriers are broken and ceilings are shattered.

Her presence on the world stage reminds us that leadership is not just about policies —it is also about representation. Seeing Kamala Harris in positions of

leadership sends a powerful message to young Black girls everywhere: that they, too, can aspire to the highest levels of power. Her story is a reminder that representation matters, and that the fight for justice and equality requires both personal and collective action.

Kamala Harris's vision extends beyond the United States. Her platform addresses issues that are global in scope, including climate change, healthcare, and economic inequality. These are challenges that resonate deeply here in the UK, where similar debates about race, class, and justice are ongoing. Her candidacy invites us to reflect on how we can contribute to building a more just and equitable future, both at home and abroad.

As America prepares to cast its vote, Kamala Harris's journey serves as a powerful reminder that the fight for justice is far from over. Her candidacy is a call to action for all of us to continue the work of breaking down barriers, challenging systems of oppression, and ensuring that future generations have the opportunity to thrive. Her story is not just about personal success —it is about the collective progress of Black women who have fought, and continue to fight, for their rightful place in history.



Kamala Harris's rise is a testament to the power of perseverance and the enduring influence of Black women's activism. Her story is part of a larger global conversation about race, leadership, and the future. It invites us to reflect on the lessons of the past while looking forward to the road ahead—a road shaped by the resilience, strength, and vision of Black women.



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## From enslavement to Royal Court: The remarkable journey of Sara Forbes Bonetta

BY DAVID OLUSOGA

Some people from the past lived lives so unlikely that even when the documentary evidence is in front of you, it is difficult to believe your eyes. Sarah Forbes Bonetta was an enslaved child, imprisoned in the court of an infamous slave-trading king in West Africa. Then, in 1850, she was given to a British naval officer as a gift for Queen Victoria. Brought to Britain Sarah met the Queen, who helped arrange for her to be cared for and educated. Sarah eventually got married and had a daughter of her own, Victoria Davies, who

became the God-daughter of Queen Victoria. Sarah's story is so remarkable that until recently even some of her own descendants struggled to believe it. When the elderly members of the family told stories of Sahara and Victoria the younger members presumed they were just exaggerated family legends.

In May 1850, an officer in the British Navy, Captain Frederick Forbes, visited the court of King Ghezo of Dahomey in West Africa. Forbes's mission was to persuade King Ghezo to abandon the trade in enslaved

people, even though earlier attempts with similar objectives had failed. Forbes brought letters to King Ghezo that detailed Britain's opposition to the slave trade, including a personal letter of opposition from Queen Victoria, who also sent gifts of silks and cloths.

King Ghezo refused to abandon the slave trade, reminding Forbes that the British had in the past traded in enslaved people. As was the custom, the King also gave Forbes gifts to give to Queen Victoria, and Forbes listed the gifts in his diary: they included expensive cloth, a footstool, cowrie shells (which were valuable in Africa) and a barrel of rum. There was also what Forbes described in his diary as 'a captive girl'. The girl, who was probably seven or eight, was enslaved, and had been captured around two years earlier during a war in which her parents had died. Forbes named her Sara Forbes Bonetta, after himself and his ship, the HMS Bonetta. The sailors on the ship called her 'Sally'.

When the HMS Bonetta arrived back in Britain, Forbes contacted Queen Victoria and the Queen agreed to pay for Sara to go to school and to make sure she was cared for. Queen Victoria also requested that 'Sally' be brought to Windsor Castle to meet her. So, on 9 November 1850, the little girl made her first appearance at court, and her first entry in the Queen's journal.

*"We came home, found Albert still there, waiting for Capt. Forbes and a poor little negro, girl, whom he brought back from the King of Dahomey, her parents and all her relatives having been sacrificed. Capt. Forbes saved her life, by asking for her as a present ... She is 7 years old, sharp and intelligent, and speaks English. She was dressed as any other girl."*

Sara Forbes Bonetta's life was transformed by the Queen's willingness to draw her into the extended circle of her court and provide her with an excellent education. But as a Black child, a former slave, thrust into the heart of Victorian Britain's elite, her life story was also buffeted and shaped by the profound contradictions and confusion about race that the Queen and most of her subjects shared in the middle decades of the 19th century. One idea that was common in Britain at the time was that the cold British climate was dangerous to the health of Black people, and so in January 1851 Sara was sent to live in Sierra Leone, then a British colony, for her own safety.

After a few years Sara returned to England, and in December 1855 again appears in Queen Victoria's diary.

*"Saw Sally Forbes, the negro girl whom I have had educated: she is immensely grown and has a nice slim figure."*

Three years later Sara was invited to be a guest at the wedding of the Queen's



eldest daughter, who was also called Victoria. In 1862 Sara was living in Brighton under the care of Miss Sophia Welsh, when a thirty-three-year-old West African businessman, named James Pinson Labulo Davies took an interest in her. He was from Sierra Leone and they had been introduced there some years before, when Sara was a child. He came to visit Sara in Brighton and declared a wish to marry her. Aged nineteen, Sara seems not to have been enthusiastic about this plan, but Queen Victoria approved of Mr Davies and in August they were married. When she signed her marriage certificate she gave her name as Sara but also included the African name given by her parents – Ina.

Their wedding was a lavish affair and became a big story in the newspapers. Hundreds of people came out on the streets of Brighton on the day to cheer, and reports of their wedding appeared in hundreds of newspapers in Britain and all over the British Empire.

On 15 September 1862, shortly after their wedding, Sara and James attended the photographic studio of Camille Silvy, who was famous for taking expensive photographs of the rich and famous. The photographer captured Sara and James, in fine clothes, posed like other high

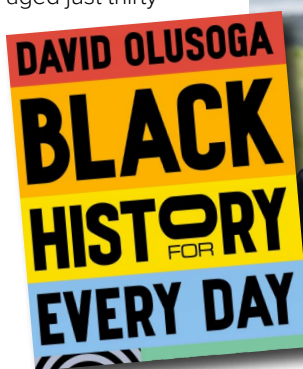
society Victorians of the day.

Not long after, the couple travelled back to West Africa where, in 1863, their first child was born. They named her Victoria, after the Queen, who became her godmother. Sara took her daughter to Britain and introduced her to the Queen on 9 December 1867. In her diary Queen Victoria described Sara's daughter as 'aged four, a lively intelligent child, with big melancholy eyes'. When little Victoria was christened the Queen sent her new goddaughter a gold cup on which was inscribed these words:

*"To Victoria Davies, from her godmother, Victoria, Queen of Great Britain and Ireland, 1863."*

In the 1870s Sara and James had two more children; Arthur, who was born in 1871 and Stella, born in 1873. In 1880 Sara caught tuberculosis and died, aged just thirty-seven. Queen Victoria continued to support her goddaughter Victoria and paid for her to go to school at Cheltenham Ladies' College. Today, the descendants of Sara Forbes Bonetta live in Britain, Nigeria and Sierra Leone.

**David Olusoga** is a British historian, broadcaster, and author known for his exploration of race and empire. His upcoming book, *Black History for Every Day of the Year* (co-authored with Yinka Olusoga and illustrated by Kemi Olusoga, due for release in the UK on 12th September 2024), continues to shed light on pivotal but often overlooked historical contributions. Olusoga's insightful documentaries and writings have made significant contributions to our understanding of historical injustices and racial issues.



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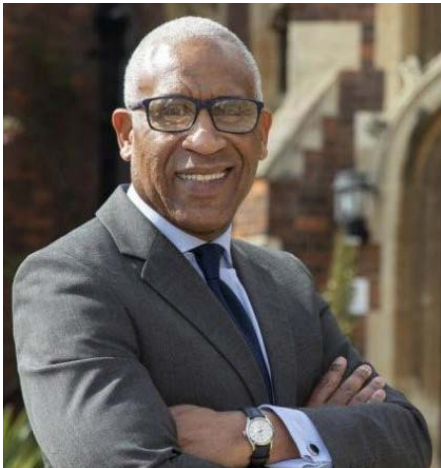
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# Reclaiming Narratives

Sir Simon Woolley (Lord Woolley of Woodford) is the Principal of Homerton College at the University of Cambridge. He shares his reflections on the theme 'Reclaiming Narratives'.



I am always struck by the deluge of micro aggressions many Black people have to face, often on a daily basis. On a train, for example, you'll be the last person a white traveller will sit next to as they assess where to sit. In London you'll need on average two or three vacant black cabs for one to stop. In shops and in stores the body language of the service provider readily tells you're not welcome. These unspoken and at times spoken narratives at work and beyond are designed to make you feel less than others. Whether you're going for a job or looking for promotion, many will be familiar with:

- "You could do with a bit more training"
- "We're not quite sure they'll fit in"
- "Wait a few more years and then apply again"

Given the nature of these micro aggressions they are difficult to call out. And even if you wanted to, you probably don't for two fundamental reasons: first, you'll be accused of having chip on your shoulder, which is the same as being gaslighted. Second, and equally important, is the simple fact we've built a pretty resistant shield to these micro aggressions that allows us to get on with life. We know if we don't the mental anguish does not allow us to keep moving positively forward.

I'll give you an example. London black cabs again. I'm smartly dressed – I know that shouldn't matter - in London's West End and I join a queue on a taxi rank. A cab pulls up along side me, strains his neck to have a look and then drives by. The taxi behind pulls up and ushers me in and I'm ready to go. He turns to me and says, "I wouldn't have believed it unless I witnessed that with my own eyes". Feeling that I must have missed something dramatic, I said, "what did you witness"? "The cab in front. That was

shocking". "Oh, that" I shrugged. "At least you stopped" I replied with human warmth.

Our coping or surviving mechanism has meant we're so used to these micro aggressions that they're noted but disappear as soon as they arrive.

There are other narratives that we mustn't ignore and that we must reclaim because these victories and reclamation make a dramatic difference personally and in society too.

A dramatic illustration of reclaiming the narrative was when the Cambridge academic, Nathan Cofnas swam in the cesspool of debunked eugenics to claim that "Blacks would disappear from almost all high-profile positions outside of sports and entertainment." Not content with the pseudo-science that claims Black people are inferior to take leadership roles, it invites racial discord and potentially hatred by also stating: "Whites are the ones who brought blacks out of Africa and created the conditions where they failed to develop a culture of homework, respect for the law and strong nuclear families."

We have to both challenge and reclaim this poisonous narrative not just because Cofnas is a Cambridge academic, which by default gives him a huge platform, but also because until we complained he was potentially teaching and supervising Black and white anti racists students at Cambridge.

Our role to reclaim the narrative also challenges the notion that freedom to insult and insight racial hatred can go against the values of an organisation.

To me, there's another part of reclaiming of the narrative, which is less defensive and more celebratory. I often seek to unearth, reclaim and shout about a leadership skill and narrative that is akin to superpower.

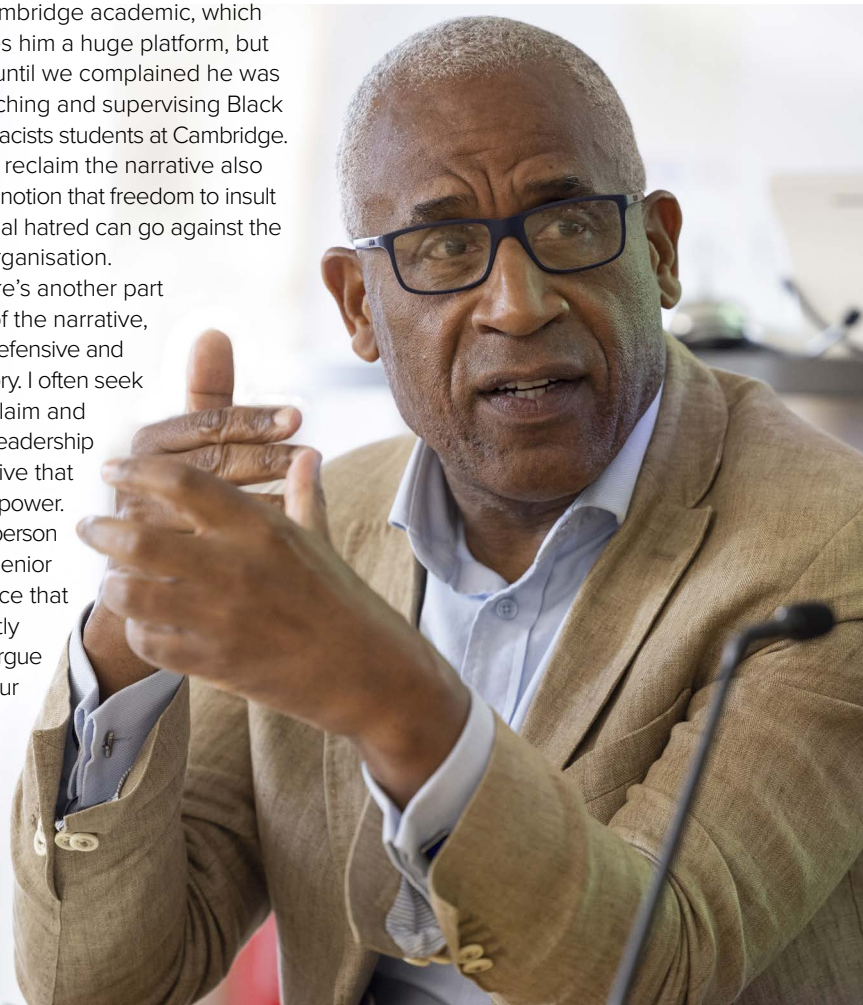
As a Black person walking into a senior leadership space that is predominantly white, I would argue you engage your superpower without even knowing what you're actually doing. Long before you even arrived

in the room you had to seriously think about what you'll wear. You instinctively know that to be taken seriously from the get-go, you'll have to walk in smart. Then when you walk in particularly if it's new people, more often than not it's you that approaches a colleague or a stranger with a smile and starts small talk; 'how are you today', 'it's shocking weather', etc. Finally, when you do speak you'll be acutely aware you've got one chance to impress. There's no middle ground. You either fail, or you impress. When you impress, people will say, 'she was so articulate, so impressive'. As though it was a surprise for someone like you to deliver well.

The superpower you've illustrated is both an ability to wonderfully read the room, to make the room feel at ease, and then win them over. And most will be unaware they are doing that all the time. Acknowledging, reclaiming and owning the skill allows you to do it better, but also gives you greater confidence to you worth.

During this Black History Month reclaiming this narrative will be life changing to you and to those around you.

Happy Black History Month



# PERSONNEL VISIT RUNNYMEDE MEMORIAL DURING BLACK HISTORY MONTH

To honour Black History Month, RAF personnel attended the Air Forces Memorial at Runnymede to honour those 20,458 Servicemen and women of the Commonwealth Air Forces who lost their lives during operations in the Second World War and who have no named graves.

During the very moving ceremony, a wreath was laid on behalf of the Commonwealth Air Forces by Air Recruit Chesney.

It was particularly poignant for Air Recruit Withers whose great uncle was one of the named servicemen at the memorial. She was proud to deliver a moving tribute to her relative reminding us all of the sacrifices made by so many.

The Memorial was designed by Edward Maufe and was unveiled by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II in October 1953.

“ It has been an honour to represent the Royal Air Force and lay the commemorative wreath today. It is a wonderful site and this has been a great way to end an important month of reflection.

**AIR RECRUIT CHESNEY**



# Nursing in the UK: Celebrating our diverse past, present and future

**Nicola Ranger**, RCN General Secretary and Chief Executive, reflects on the nursing staff who paved the way for the profession today.

The history of nursing in the UK is an incredible story dating back centuries, rich with nursing staff from around the world, from different classes and cultures, an array of personal experiences and distinct life choices. Every day, I take inspiration from those who walked in these shoes before us.

Icons of the past set the precedent for the future. One of those icons is Mary Seacole, a pioneering nurse who overcame racism and injustice so she could care for British soldiers during the Crimean War.

Born in Jamaica in 1805, Mary learned her nursing skills from her mother, who kept a boarding house for wounded soldiers, and forged a career path for herself as a nurse.

Mary travelled to England in 1854 to ask the War Office to send her to Crimea as an army nurse. Her services were turned down, but not to be deterred, she funded her own expedition to Balaclava, Crimea, where she set up the British Hotel, which provided a place of respite for sick and recovering soldiers. She also visited the battlefield, sometimes under fire, to nurse the injured.

She was known as Mother Seacole to the soldiers she helped and is a nursing icon whose dedication to the care of others continues to inspire our profession today.

This year, we celebrated not just 76 years of the National Health Service (NHS), but also 76 years since the HMT Empire Windrush arrived in England.

***‘Without help from the Windrush generation of nurses, the NHS as we know it couldn’t have survived.’***

On 22 June 1948, the ship arrived in Essex, carrying hundreds of passengers from the Caribbean to help fill post-war workforce shortages. On 5 July, the NHS was launched.

Many Windrush passengers took up roles in the NHS, including as nursing staff. Those first NHS employees faced racism and discrimination. But despite these hardships, they committed to caring for British citizens, forming a crucial part of our health service.

Since then, people from around the world have continued to contribute tirelessly to the NHS, making it a diverse and unique national treasure. The NHS is a national service, but its staff could not be more international. I'm lucky to have worked with



nursing staff trained all over the world, educated to a fantastically high standard. Without help from the Windrush generation of nurses, the NHS as we know it couldn't have survived.

The NHS is now the biggest employer in Europe of people from Black, Asian or minority ethnic backgrounds, making up more than 25% of the NHS workforce and representing more than 200 nationalities. Staff from ethnic minority groups make up more than 32% of nurses and health visitors – 10.7% are Black.

Despite this, many nursing staff, including our internationally educated staff continue to face challenges, including culture changes, abuse and a system that doesn't allow equal opportunity.

The RCN represents more than half a million nursing staff and I'm proud that we have a hugely diverse membership. Those members are passionate about the diversity within nursing, and at our annual conference last year, they voted to make the RCN an anti-racist organisation. That's something we're working towards day by day, by listening to our members who experience racism.

We aspire to be a world-class champion of equity, diversity, inclusion and human rights, providing workplace advice, support and representation for all nursing staff and fighting against any racism and/or discrimination they may face. We have work to do, but equity is our clear ambition, diversity is our underused asset and inclusion is our future.

In 2016, Mary Seacole's reputation was lionised, with a statue of her standing outside of St Thomas's Hospital in London – thought to be the UK's first statue to honour a named Black woman.

In August 2024, the very same statue was vandalised in an abhorrent display of racism-fuelled vandalism. Witnessing a period of racially motivated riots in the UK, and seeing health care workers targeted as part of that, was horrific, and we're supporting the restoration of the statue. Our international colleagues are welcome, valued and we owe them such immense gratitude.

This month, we celebrate the prodigious Black nursing predecessors, from Mary Seacole and the Windrush nurses, to modern pioneers like former RCN President Cecilia Akrisie Anim. They are a credit to our profession and a powerful reminder of the strength we find in diversity and unity.



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# UPRISING

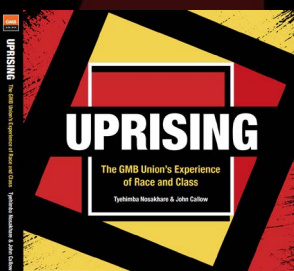
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After an amazing first year the groundbreaking GRASP programme is set to commence again in BHM 2024.

The book "Uprising" by GMB focuses on the history and contributions of Global Majority individuals in trade unions, highlighting their impact on the British Labour Movement from the 19th century to present. It emphasizes the interconnectedness of race across industries and communities, aiming to reconnect trade unions with diverse communities.

Having produced 10 excellent Race Ambassadors from ten different workplaces across the country GMB will host its second cohort this October who will undertake the 6 months fully paid comprehensive training and development programme for Global Majority heritage activists and members.



Written by Tyehimba Nosakhare & John Callow

The book is richly illustrated and available for purchase at Bookmarks Bookshop for £12.99 plus £2.50 postage and packaging or direct through GMB via [info@gmb.org.uk](mailto:info@gmb.org.uk)

Due to GRASP's continuing success we will also be launching our GRASP Activities and Initiatives Network which is open to all GMB Global Majority members interested in their continuous learning and development. Interested?



For more information contact [tyehimba.nosakhare@gmb.org.uk](mailto:tyehimba.nosakhare@gmb.org.uk) or join GMB [www.gmb.org.uk/join](http://www.gmb.org.uk/join)

# Black History Studies

"I founded Black History Studies with my husband Mark because we saw a significant gap in the education available on Black History topics that are often missing from school curricula. Our goal was to address these gaps and provide a more comprehensive understanding of Black History. We also wanted to promote cultural tourism to African Heritage sites, which is why we launched Black History Tours. Since then, we've organised successful group tours to Egypt and various locations across Europe, helping people connect with and learn more about African Heritage."

Our mission echoes the quote by Historian Arthur Schomburg that "African history is nothing but the missing pages of world history." We believe that it is very important that all history should be taught to everyone and throughout the year, not just in Black History Month. Black History is a subject that can be interesting to all. This is evident when we organise presentations,



webinars, walking tours and museum tours to places such as the British Museum and the International Slavery Museum in Liverpool. We have a diverse audience eager to learn about the contributions of Black people to the development of history and civilisation.

Our history did not start with African chattel enslavement. On our curriculum, history starts at the origin of humanity! On 24th November 1974, the oldest known skeletal remains of anatomically modern humans (or homo sapiens sapiens) were excavated at sites in East Africa. Human remains were discovered at Omo in Ethiopia and were dated at 195,000 years old, the oldest known in the world. Professor Donald Johanson of the US Institute of Human Origins gave the remains the name 'Lucy'. Having been discovered in Ethiopia, the skeletal remains were later renamed Dinqinesh, a word in Ethiopia's official language of Amharic, meaning 'you are marvellous, unique, one of a kind.'

Some of the challenges we faced in our journey in regards to correcting historical inaccuracies are that people have been told so many lies and misinformation about Black History and Black Studies, that when presented with the truth or corrected version of history, as Frantz Fanon states can lead to cognitive dissonance where people ignore this new information and evidence presented so they can hold on to their original beliefs. This often occurs when notions of white supremacy are challenged as the African contributions to history and civilisation are exposed and explored.

The theme for 2024 is reclaiming narratives and I will give you five narratives that aim to uncover the hidden histories of people of African and Caribbean descent who have contributed to World History:

- 1.** The presence of Africans in England dates back to at least the Roman period when African soldiers who served as part of the Roman army were stationed at Hadrian's Wall during the 2nd century AD. Septimus Severus, the emperor who was born in Libya, spent his last three years in Britain before he died in York in 211AD.
- 2.** In 1901 the ancient grave of a woman was discovered in York. Over a hundred years later, tests revealed her North African origin and established her as the earliest proven evidence of a Black

woman in the British Isles. The contents of her grave indicated she was a woman of means and high social status. The engraving 'Hail Sister May You Live in God' found at the site, suggests a Christian burial. Images of the 'reconstructed' face of a woman of African descent who lived in York during the fourth century.



- 3.** There is Black History in the Holocaust! 50,000 African people were killed by Hitler & the Nazi's during the period '1933 to 1945' known as the Jewish Holocaust. The fate of Black people in Nazi Germany and in German-occupied territories ranged from isolation to persecution, sterilization, medical experimentation, incarceration, brutality, and murder. There are stories of Black survivors of the Holocaust such as political prisoner, Lionel Romney spent four years, from 1940 to 1944, in the Italian internment camp system, and the final year of the war, 1944-45, in the notorious Mauthausen concentration camp in Austria.



- 4.** The great Russian poet, Alexander Pushkin (1799- 1837) who was partly of African descent, became the father of Russian literature in the 19th century. Pushkin's work as a journalist marked the birth of the Russian magazine culture, including him devising and contributing heavily to one of the most influential literary magazines of the 19th century, the *Sovremennik* (The Contemporary).
- 5.** The 'Africa Times and Orient Review' is the first political journal produced by and for Black people ever published in Britain. Duse Mohamed Ali, an Egyptian Nationalist and Pan Africanist Journalist founded The African Times and Orient Review in London in July 1912. It was printed in Fleet Street in London. Marcus Garvey was a staff writer at the newspaper.

To find out more about what we do, visit our website [www.blackhistorystudies.com](http://www.blackhistorystudies.com)

**Charmaine Simpson** is the Chief Executive Officer and co-founder of Black History Studies. Director of Black History Study Tours, dedicated to promoting cultural tourism to areas of African Heritage. A Financial Educator and Financial Literacy Advocate who organises courses, workshops and events to improve Financial Literacy.

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# GREATER MANCHESTER

## FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE



“When some of my black friends knew I was joining the fire service, some of them told me not to as there is no place for a Black man in the Fire Service.

This opinion was probably based on the lack of black faces you would see on a fire engine, and the thought that the police and the fire service were very similar in their actions towards Black people.

My journey in the fire service at times has been difficult, with doors closed in my face and barriers placed in front of me as I navigated life as a firefighter.

Through hard work and support, I am making a difference in my life, the lives of others in the fire service and those outside of the fire service.

Currently, I am a Station Manager and I am the only Black Station Manager in GMFRS. In our rank

structure, I have a higher-ranking officer who is also Black. This small but important representation gives hope to those who come after us.

I am surrounded by great officers who come to work every day to do their best and when I have asked, they have been there to support me.

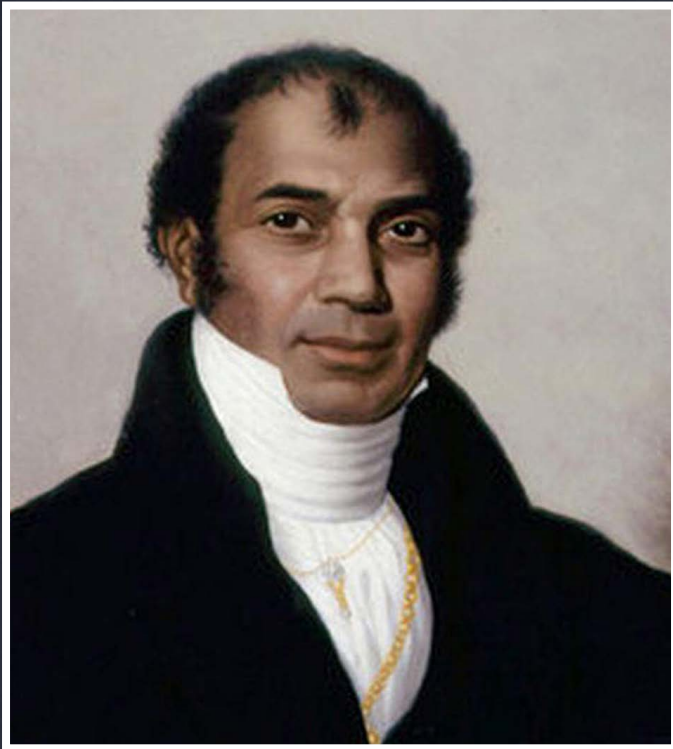
However, have I reclaimed the narrative that the fire is a place for Black people? Not yet, but together, that narrative is changing and over the next 10 years, I want to see the rank structure in GMFRS visually diverse with those who can make a huge positive difference to GMFRS and our communities.”

***Carl Petch, Protection Manager Technician***

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Firefighter Recruitment Queries: 0161 608 4146 <https://manchesterfire.gov.uk/join-us/careers-at-gmfrs/>

# George Bridgetower

## The Prodigy who defied boundaries



From the moment he first picked up a violin as a child, it was clear that George Bridgetower possessed a rare and remarkable brilliance. Born in 1778 to an African father, often described as a prince, and a European mother, George's prodigious talent was evident from an early age. By the time he was just nine years old, he was already dazzling audiences across Europe with his extraordinary skill, defying the expectations of both his youth and his heritage.

### Early life and promise

George's rise to fame was no accident. His father, determined that his sons should excel, ensured they received the best musical training available. While George's younger brother, Fredrick, became a talented cellist, it was George's mastery of the violin that truly set him apart. His performances captivated audiences, and by the age of ten, George was performing for royalty. One notable concert in 1789 at Bath saw him play before King George III and an audience of over 550 guests, astonishing them with his virtuosity.

The *Bath Morning Post* described him as a "boy wonder," while the *Bath Chronicle* went so far as to say that his performance was perhaps superior to that of any adult musician of the time.

In an era where society was steeped in rigid class structures and racial prejudice, George's talent transcended these boundaries, allowing him to occupy spaces that were rarely accessible to people of African descent. The very fact that his musical gifts were able to rise above such significant barriers is a testament to the extraordinary level of his skill and determination.

### Success in Britain

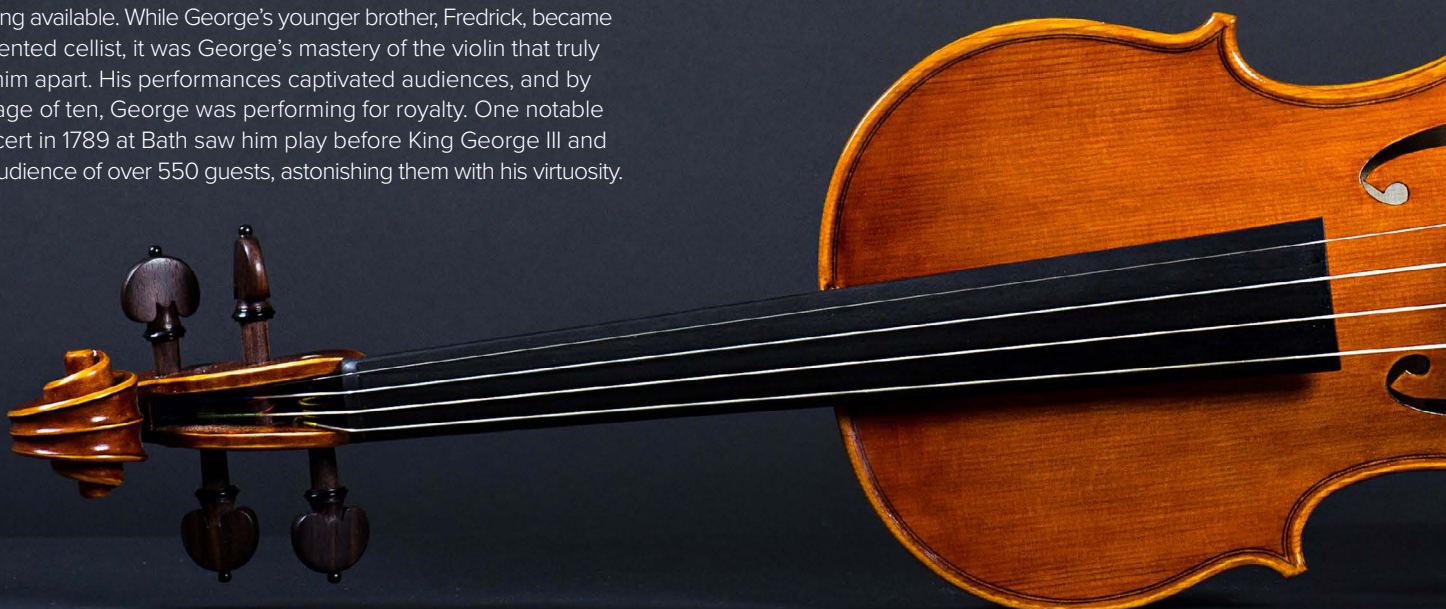
In 1790, George moved to London, where his talent continued to flourish. For fourteen years, he performed in the Prince's band at the Royal Pavilion in Brighton, solidifying his place in the upper echelons of British musical society. His playing was known for both its technical precision and emotional depth, setting him apart from many of his contemporaries.

One of the most notable events of George's career came in 1803, when he formed a brief but important friendship with Ludwig van Beethoven. The two met when George was just 23, and their collaboration led Beethoven to compose the famous *Kreutzer* Sonata with George in mind. Beethoven, recognising George's immense talent, wrote the original manuscript with the inscription, "Sonata mulattica composta per il mullato," highlighting George's Afro-European identity. The two performed the piece together, and it was clear that Beethoven admired George deeply, praising him as "a very capable virtuoso" who had mastered the violin.

Yet, despite their initial closeness, a personal disagreement led Beethoven to revoke the dedication, renaming the sonata after the violinist Rudolf Kreutzer, who ironically never performed it. The episode reflected the volatility that often accompanied the intense creative relationships of the time.

### The challenges of a career

Despite this setback, George's career continued to thrive. His performances across Britain and Europe were highly regarded, and his reputation as a master violinist remained intact. However,





as newer talents emerged and societal interest shifted, his name gradually faded from the forefront of public recognition. Nevertheless, George's role in expanding the violin's prominence in classical music was undeniable, and his ability to navigate the complexities of his time with grace and skill marked him as an exceptional figure in the world of music.

One can only imagine the mixture of pride and isolation George might have felt as a young boy performing before royalty and receiving acclaim that both acknowledged his talent and simultaneously marked him as an outsider. He occupied a rare space, celebrated for his abilities but never fully allowed to belong.

### A Legacy of talent and resilience

George Bridgetower's life stands as a powerful example of how talent and determination can transcend even the most rigid social limitations. His ability to excel in a society that often marginalised people of African descent speaks to his resilience and strength of character. His story is a reminder that classical music's history is far richer and more diverse than is often acknowledged.

Although George's name may not be as well-known today as some of his contemporaries, his influence on the classical music world is enduring. As contemporary musicians continue to grapple with issues of race and representation, George's legacy offers inspiration to those breaking down barriers and challenging the status quo in the arts.

In 1973, a letter from Beethoven to George, along with a miniature portrait, was auctioned at Christie's in London for £3,600. These remnants of his career serve as poignant reminders of the profound mark he left on classical music. George passed away in London on 29 February 1860, but his remarkable life continues to inspire. His story, intertwined with the great Beethoven and marked by his astonishing abilities from such a young age, is a testament to his enduring legacy as a pioneer of African-European musicianship.



## SOUTH YORKSHIRE POLICE TO MARK BLACK HISTORY MONTH WITH CELEBRATION EVENT



Black History Month is fast approaching and South Yorkshire Police is once again hosting a celebration event to mark the occasion. Knowledge and allyship for officers, staff and community members is crucial to reduce racial inequality both within the force and in South Yorkshire, and the force continues in its work to strengthen relationships with Black communities and become a more diverse workforce.

If you would like to attend the event, please email [Race\\_Inclusion\\_Equity@southyorks.pnn.police.uk](mailto:Race_Inclusion_Equity@southyorks.pnn.police.uk). This is a time to honour and enjoy in good company.

South Yorkshire Police continues to recruit for a number of police officer and police staff roles across the force, please visit our website to find out about current vacancies. Alternatively, you can email [Shakeel.Ahmed@southyorks.pnn.police.uk](mailto:Shakeel.Ahmed@southyorks.pnn.police.uk).



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# ARMY BE THE BEST

The British Army knows having a diverse workforce brings together individuals with a wide range of backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives. This diversity of thought, expertise, and perspective fuels innovation, problem-solving, and adaptability, which ultimately enhance the Army's operational capability.

More fundamentally, diversity and inclusion in the Army is vital to ensure that all communities and groups within the nation the Army serves are represented and have equal opportunities for recruitment, career progression, and leadership roles.

The British Army is committed to upholding the principles of equality and fairness, ensuring that all personnel are treated with dignity and respect irrespective of their background. The importance that all members of the Army enjoy a career based on merit has led to a wholesale review of inclusive policies and practices so everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed and thrive. We are proactively breaking down barriers and engaging with communities and demographics who either have limited knowledge of today's modern British Army, or possibly have negative perceptions of it.

There are a great deal of positive examples of diversity within the long history of the Army, but also incidents that have damaged our reputation and demand our time and best efforts to address. We are continuously looking for ways to improve our relationship with under-represented groups and work towards enhancing our culture to be as inclusive and diverse possible. We will strive to promote equality of opportunity and address any barriers that may exist head on to actively encourage individuals from all backgrounds to both consider a career in the military, and thrive when they join – reaching their full potential. We are constantly striving to maintain a culture that values and celebrates diversity.

One way we will achieve this is through engagement events, actively speaking with individuals from parts of UK society



that are under-represented. The most recent example was an ethnic minority leadership event held at The Royal Military Academy Sandhurst (see main image). Attendees included people from industry, education and the charity sector including the Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Hertfordshire, Luther Blisset, a former professional footballer who played for Watford and AC Milan. This event was designed to further understand outside perceptions of the organisation in order to look to break down barriers, provide awareness of the opportunities in the British Army and build positive relationships with key communities. The insights from such events will inform how the Army plans and resources holistic engagement with those groups who are not appropriately represented within the Army workforce. These will not be one off occurrences, but building blocks as the Army enhances relationships that are foundational to future trust and support.

Not many will know that the stereotypical image of a soldier, wearing body armour, helmet, weapon and carrying a heavy rucksack is not how most soldiers spend most of their time. We are all soldiers first, but 70% of the Army works in supporting roles such as high-tech communications, logistics, engineering, and intelligence.

Included in this are 19 Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) roles. Did you know that we have pharmacists, blood specialists, veterinarians, and cyber specialists? The Army is also incredibly proud of being named the leading provider of apprenticeships in the UK – for an unprecedented fourth year in a row. More information of the opportunities within the Army can be found at <https://jobs.army.mod.uk/>.

Ultimately, the Army wants to represent the society it serves. A culture, informed by a broad range of perspectives will be more creative, more dynamic, and more resilient. And it increases our operational effectiveness. It will also be more understood and trusted by the population through a more robust and deeper connection. If you would like to find out more, please email The Army Engagement Group at [RC-AEG-Mailbox@mod.gov.uk](mailto:RC-AEG-Mailbox@mod.gov.uk).



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**SEARCH ARMY JOBS**

# Tired of the mainstream's negative Black narrative? Don't get mad, get creating



**B**lack people living in the UK, it's time we take back control of our narrative. We have the collective power to challenge the negative Black narratives pushed by mainstream media and the harmful rhetoric they perpetuate about us.

This year's Black History Month UK theme, "Reclaiming Narratives," couldn't be more timely or necessary. Let's not just see it as a theme, but as a call to action.

For far too long, traditional media has had a firm grip on the stories that shape how the world sees us. These stories often dictate how Black and Brown people are perceived and treated.

But the landscape is shifting. We now have a new form of "mainstream media" that is driven by the people, for the people—thanks to independent content creators, citizen journalists, and digital activists.

After leaving a career in mainstream TV news, I founded Our Version Media in 2019. Our mission is clear: to reframe Black narratives by empowering individuals and communities that are often misrepresented or demonized by the press.

The impact of the media's negative portrayal of Black people is profound. It affects our wellbeing, our sense of identity, and our self-worth.

In 2020, we conducted a media and wellbeing study in Southampton to see how local press coverage impacted people. The results were eye-opening. More than three-quarters of participants felt that the media's portrayal of Black people was overwhelmingly negative, focusing primarily on crime, gangs, drugs, and violence.

The real shock wasn't the content of the stories, but the emotional toll they took. When asked how these stories made them feel, people described feelings of sadness, depression, concern for younger generations, and a sense of being devalued.

Our research clearly links the media's negative output to people's wellbeing. When people saw positive stories about Black people, they felt inspired, proud, and seen.

Yet, it's rare for a week to go by without another race-baiting headline in the British press.

Before you join the online outrage, which only amplifies these stories, take a step back. Protect your peace.

Instead, file a complaint with the relevant media regulator. Each complaint is investigated, and even if it's not upheld, your voice adds pressure and keeps the media accountable.

Don't get mad. Get creating. Digital platforms and social media have democratized media, giving us the power to shape our own narratives and reach wide audiences.

We can use these tools to share our authentic stories. These stories are crucial—they help correct the distorted narratives and highlight our real experiences.

We deserve to see our lives represented accurately and diversely, not just through the narrow, often harmful lenses that have long dominated.

It's well known that UK newsrooms are predominantly white and middle class, and that Black stories are frequently filtered through biases and cultural misunderstandings.





Sometimes this is intentional, other times not. But journalists are aware that sensationalist images of Black and Brown faces attract attention and clicks. This practice damages our communities but goes unchecked because it's a quick fix for media outlets.

I urge the Black community to harness the power of digital media. You don't need to be a professional videographer to share your stories. Even small snippets of your daily life or personal experiences can challenge and dismantle stereotypes. Our stories reveal the truth behind the headlines—they show what real lives look like.

Digital media empowers us to reclaim and redefine our narratives. Let's use it. It's our chance to authentically create the history of tomorrow, today.

**Veronica Gordon is a former journalist and social entrepreneur. With 15 years in broadcast media and community activism, she founded Our Version Media to empower marginalised communities to reshape their narratives.**

# B:M 2024 RECLAIMING NARRATIVES

Order your Black History Month resource pack now

## DIVERSE TALENT. MADE RIGHT HERE IN GB.

At CCEP, we celebrate individuality and embrace everyone for who they are. Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity are central to our people strategy, and we strive to create a culture where everyone feels welcome, valued, and a sense of belonging. We actively listen to our colleagues from Black, Asian, and other ethnicity groups, transforming words into actions to build a more inclusive company together.

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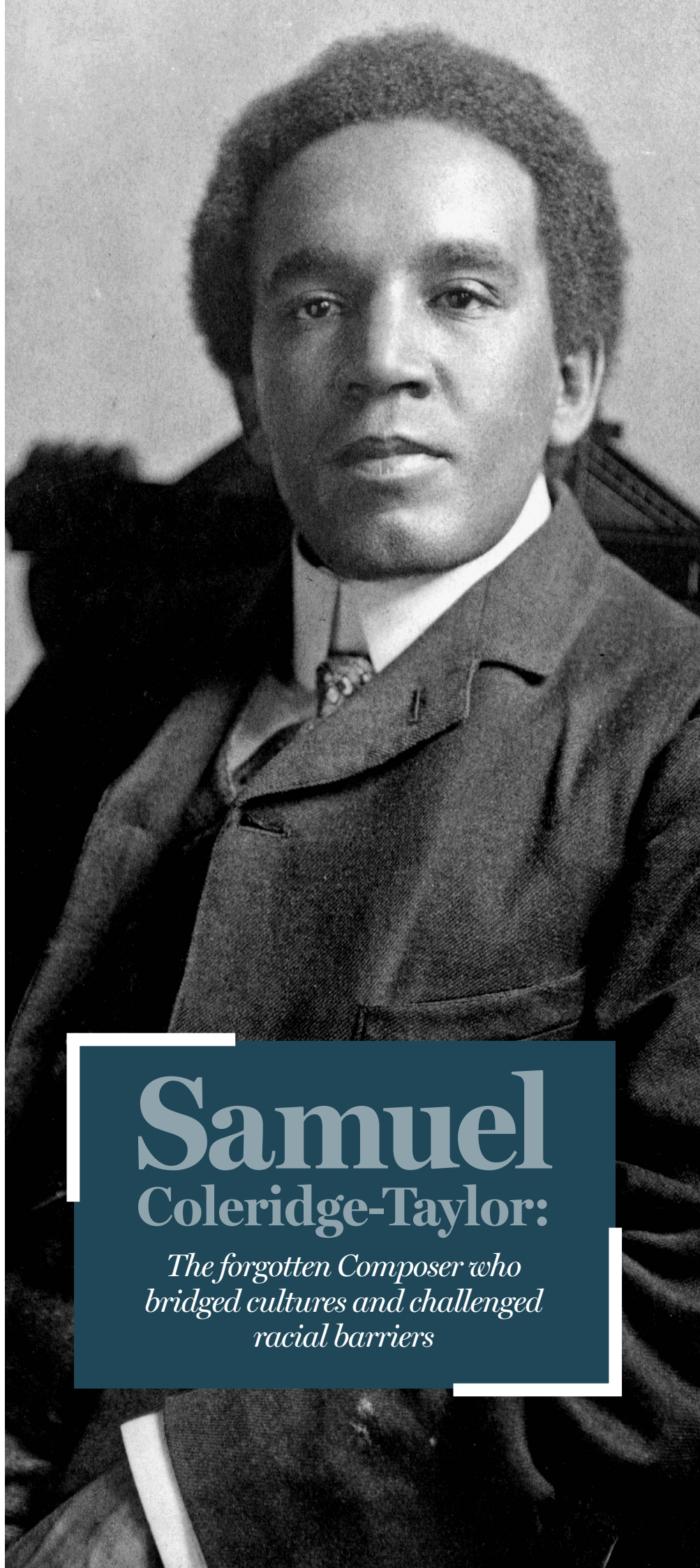
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Samuel Coleridge-Taylor was a man whose life and work challenge our assumptions about race, culture, and identity in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Born in 1875 in Holborn, London, to an English mother and a Sierra Leonean father, his life unfolded during an era defined by colonialism, racial hierarchies, and the rigid social order of the British Empire. Coleridge-Taylor's story, though little known today, serves as a powerful testament to the complexities of Black identity in Britain and the triumphs and struggles of a Black artist working within a white-dominated society. His life and work echo across the generations, illuminating aspects of Black British history that have been all too often forgotten.

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor's upbringing was marked by a unique tension between his African heritage and his British surroundings. His father, Dr Daniel Peter Hughes Taylor, was a descendant of liberated African slaves who had settled in Sierra Leone, a country that was itself a complex symbol of British abolitionism and colonialism. Taylor's father came to England to study medicine but, due to racial prejudice, was unable to secure employment in the UK and returned to Africa before Samuel was born. Raised by his mother, Alice Hare Martin, in Croydon, Samuel's childhood was spent far from his African roots, but his heritage would come to shape his identity and inspire his later work.

From a young age, Samuel demonstrated a precocious musical talent. Despite the difficulties of his background, he was fortunate to come into contact with patrons and mentors who recognised his abilities. At just 15, he gained a scholarship to the prestigious Royal College of Music, where he studied under the eminent composer Sir Charles Villiers Stanford. It was here that Coleridge-Taylor honed his craft, finding his voice as a composer at the intersection of European classical music and African influences. It was also here that he began his lifelong struggle against the racial prejudices that existed within the British music establishment, which was not used to seeing a Black man achieve success in this domain.

Coleridge-Taylor's rise to prominence in the British music world came with the success of his 1898 cantata *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast*. The work, inspired by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's *The Song of Hiawatha*, was a remarkable achievement for a man of his background. Its success resonated deeply with audiences in Britain and America, where it became an instant favourite in choral societies, and Coleridge-Taylor found himself briefly compared to great composers like Handel and Mendelssohn. Yet, despite this success, Coleridge-Taylor



# Samuel Coleridge-Taylor:

*The forgotten Composer who bridged cultures and challenged racial barriers*

remained acutely aware of his outsider status, both racially and culturally. His success was constantly tempered by the knowledge that his race set him apart from the predominantly white society in which he lived and worked.

As a man of mixed race, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor occupied an ambiguous place within British society. In some respects, his success allowed him to transcend the racial hierarchies that dominated the time. He was lauded as a musical prodigy, yet even as he received praise, he was never fully accepted into the highest echelons of the British musical elite. He faced subtle and overt forms of racial prejudice throughout his career, from struggles to secure commissions to challenges in being taken seriously as a composer on par with his white contemporaries. His journey was emblematic of the way race operated in Britain during this period—where formal legal barriers to advancement did not exist, but pervasive social and institutional racism still held sway.

Coleridge-Taylor's later works reflected a growing awareness of his African heritage and an increasing commitment to the global Black diaspora. Influenced by the work of African American thinkers like W.E.B. Du Bois and Paul Laurence Dunbar, whom he met during his tours of the United States,

Coleridge-Taylor began to integrate African American spirituals and African-inspired melodies into his compositions. His *Twenty-Four Negro Melodies* (1905), dedicated to Du Bois, was an ambitious attempt to bring the music of Africa and its diaspora into the classical tradition. In doing so, Coleridge-Taylor was not merely engaging with his heritage but actively working to broaden the horizons of classical music, asserting the value and importance of Black culture within a white-dominated field.

### *'He remains an inspirational figure in Black British history'*

This engagement with Black cultural identity was revolutionary for its time. Coleridge-Taylor's embrace of African and African American music challenged the widespread belief in European cultural superiority and anticipated the cultural movements that would come later in the 20th century, such as the Harlem Renaissance. His works became a source of pride for Black communities, particularly in the United States, where he was celebrated as a symbol of Black achievement. He demonstrated that Blackness and artistry could coexist powerfully within the highest traditions of

European music, a radical notion at a time when Black contributions to culture were systematically overlooked or marginalised.

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor's legacy is thus not only a musical one but also a cultural and political one. He became a transatlantic figure, revered in both Britain and America for his music and for what he represented as a Black artist in a world shaped by racial prejudice. His death in 1912 at the age of just 37 was a profound loss, and yet his influence did not end with his passing. He remains an inspirational figure in Black British history, a reminder that Black Britons have been an integral part of this country's cultural and artistic life for centuries. His life and work challenge us to rethink our understanding of British history, forcing us to recognise the ways in which race and identity have shaped, and continue to shape, the stories we tell about our past.

In remembering Samuel Coleridge-Taylor during Black History Month, we honour a man whose life was defined by creativity, struggle, and resilience—a man who, through his music, transcended the limitations imposed on him by the society in which he lived. His story is a reminder of the rich and complex history of Black Britain and the enduring contributions of Black Britons to the cultural fabric of the nation.

## Celebrating Daphne Steele

### The first Black matron in the NHS

**1927 Born in Guyana**

**1953 Trained in South London**

**1964 Appointed as matron in Yorkshire**

Daphne Steele made history 60 years ago when she became the first Black matron in the NHS and again, earlier this year, when she was honored with the first blue plaque in Historic England's new national scheme.

Historic England's national blue plaque scheme celebrates people throughout history who have made a significant contribution to human welfare and happiness.

Together we can reclaim the narrative around who we remember in history. Anyone can submit a nomination for a national blue plaque on the Historic England website when the scheme re-opens to the public in Spring 2025.

**Who will you nominate?**

 Historic England



**Find out more about**

**Daphne Steele**





# PERSONAL NARRATIVES AND IDENTITY:

Finding your voice in the professional world

BY JANE OREMOSU AND DR MAGGIE SEMPLE, OBE

*'Language plays a key role in one's sense of belonging and feelings of safety. It is the way by which people communicate with one another, build relationships and create a sense of community.'*

Everyone loves a story because it tells us something about ourselves and others. Stories tell us things about the society in which we live, the life experiences and opinions of people like us, or those who are different, presenting other truths. Stories shape our thoughts and actions, we remember and retell them in our own ways.

Everyone is a storyteller, our personal narratives can start from life as lived, or as we say in our book, lived experience/lived reality.

We construct our own narratives through stories of experience. We select events, organise, connect and evaluate them. We occasionally create moral tales, how the world should be, based on personal narratives.

At times, the stories we find ourselves repeating are outdated, they need to be

reset or perhaps deleted. Our lived experiences shape personal narratives and identity.

Finding your voice in the workplace is both exciting and challenging. You will develop confidence, as you understand the value you bring to a role and nurture the ability to adapt your style of communication. Language has a vital role as you find your voice.

There is a need to help people in organisations and companies across the world, as they discuss difference, race and inclusion. *My Little Black Book - A Blacktionary* was written to do that, an A-Z pocket guide through the intricacies of the language of race. It is for people entering the workplace, exploring their identity, who feel overwhelmed by changing phrases and definitions, for Black people who want to focus the language of lived realities. Our book explains the impact of Black fatigue, describes a culturally competent individual and defines the Halo Code.

As Black women, we have faced challenges working in organisations. Colleagues might say "I don't see colour I just see people", thinking that being 'Colour Blind' is a positive attribute. *A denial of thought when seeing someone's skin colour*

*especially when it's Black, and being unaware of the challenges that come with it', is our definition. The truth is that everyone sees skin colour. Not acknowledging skin colour implies that only chosen parts of a person are 'seen', not the whole person. Heritage, experiences, cultural differences are ignored. If this occurs in your workplace have a conversation about why it is important that your skin colour is 'seen' and what it means when it is not.*

And, if you are a young Black professional, try to express your narrative with confidence. Identify your core values through self-discovery and reflection. What matters to me and why? Where are my boundaries? Who am I? Does this person come to work with me? What are my strengths? Write these down and place them where you can see them every day. Build confidence in your ability. Shape your narrative.

Contribute to discussions and observe how your ideas are received. Positive reinforcement from these experiences helps build self-assurance. A mentor can provide support as you navigate the workplace, offer advice, share their own experiences, help you develop communication skills.

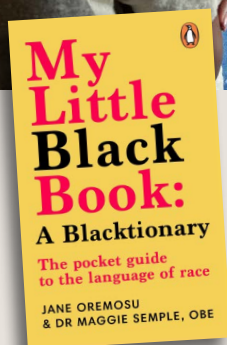
To establish your authentic self in the



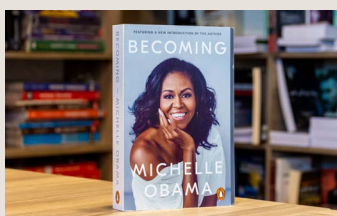
workplace, be equipped with appropriate language of expression, know what you want to convey and why. Our Blacktionary Show was created for this reason, a monthly event where people come for 90 minutes with *My Little Black Book - A Blacktionary* and an openness to extend their knowledge, share experiences and gain understanding around the language of race. We assert provocations to engage our culturally diverse audiences in discussion: “Who we are today, may not be who we were yesterday or will be tomorrow.” We talk about life as lived and life as told by ourselves and others.

Everyone can contribute to a diverse and inclusive workplace environment. Here are our tips:

1. Has your organisation signed up to the Halo Code? Initiate a discussion about the benefits.
2. Identify someone you like professionally because they demonstrate inclusive behaviours. Replicate this behaviour.
3. Be curious about terms that are used to stereotype individuals or behaviour, challenge the thinking behind them.
4. Learn about different cultures by reading or attending events.



Jane Oremosu and Dr Maggie Semple, OBE, are the co-authors of *My Little Black Book: A Blacktionary*, a pocket guide to the language of race. They are dedicated to reshaping narratives around race and fostering inclusive workplace cultures.



*“Your story is what you have, what you will always have. It is something to own.”*

**(MICHELLE OBAMA, BECOMING)**

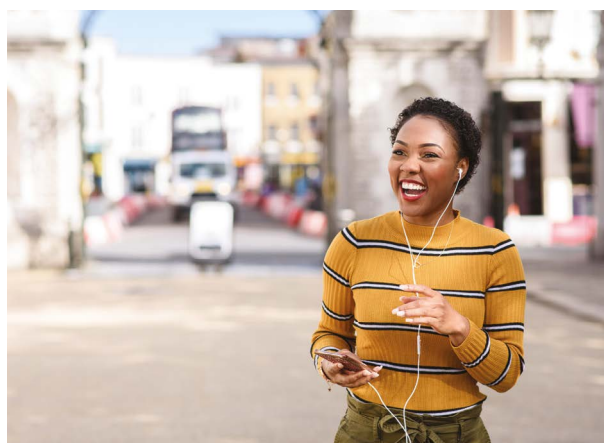
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# RECLAIMING THE NARRATIVE

BY LJ MARK



## WHAT IS A NARRATIVE?

As a history student, I have come to realise the significance of the word “narration.” A narrative could be the result of “Chinese whispers,” resulting in a fact embellished through time that bears no relation to the historic event it relates to. Everyone has narrated an event in their life, whether it is conscious or unconscious, however the key thing to note is that narration is not always factual. This might seem obvious to some, but the obviousness of the statement is what makes us overlook it. Consequently, when we hear something that follows the stereotypical pattern of the “beginning, middle and the end, featuring the villain and the hero or victim and perpetrator” the likelihood of us believing and repeating the narrative increases. So here is my list of three key things we should acknowledge and be wary of when reclaiming our narrative.

## INFLUENCE OF RACISM AND COLOURISM

History is global much like every other subject in the curriculum. However, the opportunity to examine and celebrate the contribution of Black people historically during the month of October (Black History Month) is controversial for many. In addition, there are people who believe that this segregation of one month from the others is unnecessary when looking at history holistically. As a Black student studying history, I have learned that not everything is “black and white” – no pun intended.

Nonetheless, being able to not only credit Thomas Edison for the creation of the lightbulb, but also note Lewis Latimer’s contribution to the innovation exposes the need for differentiation due to the overwhelming dominance of white narratives. This dire change is also evident with the contrast of international recognition between nurses Florence Nightingale and Mary Seacole, despite both working during the Crimean War. A clear difference between these four individuals is that Seacole and Latimer were black and overcame obstacles due to their race, while Edison and Nightingale benefited from white privilege. Yet, all are of historical significance emphasising the fact that the world is not and thus should not be viewed at with a monochromatic gaze; there are a spectrum of colours in between, as seen with Ansel Adam’s “Grayscale.” Within each shade

there are variations scaling from the intensity of light. This is the first thing I would like to acknowledge when it comes to the process of reclaiming our narrative – colourism.

I remember last year, when my peers organised events for Black History Month encompassing the theme of “Celebration.” The events included an assembly about significant figures that should be recognised, the figure that stuck with me was the story of Rosa Parks. Growing up, I was taught that Rosa Parks was the first Black woman to refuse to move to the back of the bus. However, as my curiosity of Black history increased, I learned that it was in fact Claudette Colvin who did this, 9 months prior to Parks in 1955. Having discovered this, I became intrigued as to why I had never heard of Colvin before; so, I researched and came to understand the differences between the two. Colvin was a fifteen-year-old pregnant girl, which assumingly was condemned at the time, thus Parks is more known. Nevertheless, the key differences between the women were in reference to their appearances. Colvin was described as someone who did not have “good hair” or “fair skin” in comparison to Parks, who eventually became *the* significant figure in the Civil Rights Movement. As someone who shares the same complexion as Colvin, this completely shocked me, as I did not realise the extent of colourism within a movement that was fighting racism. This lack of unity within our community and the subsequent limitation of the knowledge of key black figures is disappointing. This is not the only instance



LEWIS LATIMER



of colourism within Black History that has led to historical inaccuracies due to mislabelling people as “first” (because they are of a lighter complexion). Subsequently, darker skinned individuals who helped and encouraged others to follow actions are less visible. Both Parks and Colvin contributed to the movement yet only one is globally acknowledged, this is a major misconception that requires addressing to truly reclaim our narrative.

### **BROADENING THE SUBJECT SPECTRUM**

The second thing that has troubled me, especially with the education system is that slavery is not a synonym of Black History but a part. Initially, the history I was learning during my secondary education was European-centred. However, due to the Black Lives Matter Movement more schools and exam boards began introducing new topics such as “immigration” or would promote non-European topics for teachers and schools to select. One year, my history teacher created a presentation that would be shown to every form in the school for Black History Month. This felt like a fresh opportunity to learn new historical events within a culturally limited curriculum, however the slides predominantly focused upon slavery.

In addition to the slides, during history lessons we would watch the tv series “Roots” or look at pyramids to note the hierarchy during slavery. At this point, I became frustrated as this topic was a repeat of what I had learned during previous Black history months during earlier phases of my education. This resulted in my school peers (which included Black students like me) believing that Black history began in a plantation field. Fortunately, my college did not fall into this trap, but my argument still stands. While slavery is a significant event as it led to our liberation, it is also the beginning of a period of a lot of innovation

and achievements within the Black community. Yet these successes have been downplayed and we are instead limited to our former physical shackles, consequently tightening our metaphorical ones.

### **ACKNOWLEDGING PREVIOUS NARRATIVES AND USING THEM TO STRENGTHEN NEW ONES**

A-Level History has also taught me that even the most partisan narratives hold value; quoting my teacher Ms Jackson they are valuable in terms of PANDA (Purpose, Author, Nature, Date and Audience): Purpose of the narrative, for example is it to inform or to warn? The author of the narrative: was it an extremist or someone in need? The nature of the narration: is it a diary or memoir written in retrospect? Does the date indicate the narrative being impacted by censorship or propaganda? Finally, the audience, is it for conformers or an enemy? All of these emphasise the value of narratives, and my point is that even faulty narratives are part of our history and highlight either the suppression and burdens we faced or hidden truths that need to be exposed.

This relates to my stand on the “tear or stay” memorial statue movement that occurred not long ago in Britain. Personally, I believe that tearing down statues of individuals like Christopher Columbus, or vandalising Winston Churchill’s statue could have been managed in another way. That way being, placing a plaque explaining the faults of the individual depicted, in addition to why their statues were built in the first place. This creates a sense of trajectory and chronological order, so that instead of erasing the statue as whole - which removes the historical reference and

doesn’t address the sins of the individual - you show how attitudes have changed, how certain parts of the individual’s past were selected and removed, and how history is developing as a whole.

I personally do not believe that statues are a symbol of respect on the forefront, they are simply a part of history, and no history is purely good or bad. Therefore, just like the curriculum is broadening their specification because of reflection, the statues could have been symbolic of a moment of transition, growth, and reflection too. Acknowledging, the historical narratives written for us in the past and combining it with our developing knowledge of Black history, will strengthen the value of reclaiming our narratives now and in the future.

### **HOW TO USE THE THREE STEPS?**

Narrative may not be objective, but it is valuable in revealing the attitudes of the time, helping us realise what we missed, thus aiding us to discover and learn more. There will always be unknown parts but disregarding our mistakes in uncovering them only contributes to the misinterpretations and misunderstandings when it comes to October. Furthermore, acknowledging the influence of colourism and the need to expand topics discussed during Black History Month, can benefit all our knowledge when looking at our history. Finally, despite the distinction between “Black” and “white” history, at the end of the day history is history and the narrative will always be incomplete.

Understanding that the process of uncovering hidden truths and recognising that history is a combination of facts and opinions, will help us all learn and begin the process of reclaiming our narrative.



# JOHN ANTHONY LA ROSE:

*A pillar of cultural reclamation*

BY CHRISTOPHER WILLIAMS

As we commemorate Black History Month, it's vital to honour the life and legacy of John Anthony La Rose (1927-2006), whose work profoundly influenced the cultural and political landscape of Britain. La Rose, a Trinidadian-British poet, publisher, and activist, was more than just a figurehead; he was a foundational pillar in the struggle for cultural recognition and social justice within the Black community. His pioneering initiatives, such as New Beacon Books and the Caribbean Artists Movement (CAM), challenged entrenched colonial narratives and fostered a renewed sense of pride and identity among Black Britons.

## Early Life and Awakening

Born in Trinidad and Tobago, John La Rose was shaped by a rich cultural heritage and the complexities of colonialism. His migration to Britain in the 1950s coincided with the arrival of the Windrush generation, a pivotal moment in British history that highlighted the need for recognition and equality for Caribbean immigrants. La Rose, witnessing the systemic marginalisation of Black voices, dedicated his life to uplifting our community and preserving its rich cultural heritage. He understood that to be truly seen and respected, we needed to assert our narratives and celebrate our histories.



## Challenging Colonial Narratives

La Rose's work was a direct challenge to the damaging colonial narratives that had long sought to undermine Black culture. The myth of cultural inferiority was one such narrative he tirelessly opposed. Through New Beacon Books, La Rose published works that showcased the depth and diversity of Caribbean and African cultures, countering the harmful myths that had



been perpetuated. His publishing house became a bastion for voices that mainstream publishers often ignored, offering a platform for stories and perspectives that celebrated our intrinsic value and rich traditions.

In education, La Rose tackled the pervasive Eurocentrism that often excluded or distorted the histories of non-European peoples. He sought to rectify this imbalance by advocating for a more inclusive and accurate portrayal of global histories. His work was not just about filling gaps in the record but about reclaiming the dignity and agency of Black people throughout history.

La Rose also stood against the "civilising mission" narrative, which falsely portrayed European colonisers as benefactors to "backward" societies. He highlighted the sophisticated cultural and intellectual traditions of the Caribbean and African regions, challenging this patronising view and affirming the inherent worth of our cultures.

Moreover, La Rose worked diligently to recover and highlight the rich histories of resistance, resilience, and creativity within the Black community. He combated racial stereotypes by supporting literature and art that portrayed Black people as complex, multifaceted individuals, thus challenging the dehumanising depictions often seen in mainstream culture.

He celebrated the diversity within the Caribbean and African diaspora, countering the monolithic view often imposed by

colonial perspectives. La Rose's efforts illuminated the distinct languages, traditions, and histories of various groups, fostering a deeper appreciation for our cultural diversity and solidarity.

### The Caribbean Artists Movement (CAM)

In 1966, La Rose co-founded the Caribbean Artists Movement (CAM), a revolutionary initiative that provided a platform for artists, writers, and intellectuals from the Caribbean and African diaspora. CAM wasn't merely an artistic endeavour; it was a cultural revolution that confronted Eurocentric narratives head-on and promoted authentic portrayals of Black life. The movement created a critical space for dialogue about identity, history, and the legacies of colonialism. Kamau Brathwaite, a poet and cultural theorist, aptly described La Rose as "a guiding light for all of us," highlighting his unwavering commitment to cultural authenticity and community empowerment.

### New Beacon Books: A Platform for Black Literature

New Beacon Books, founded in 1966, was one of the first Black publishing houses in Britain. This venture was crucial in providing a platform for Caribbean and African voices, often overlooked by mainstream publishers. The press published works exploring the effects of colonialism and celebrating the rich cultural tapestry of our community. John Agard, a poet and playwright, remarked, "John La Rose's vision for New Beacon Books was transformative. He provided a platform that celebrated our stories and struggles, offering a powerful counter-narrative to the dominant voices."

### Activism and Cultural Advocacy

Beyond his cultural work, John La Rose was a dedicated activist, deeply intertwined with his commitment to combating racism and promoting social justice. He played a crucial role in key movements, such as the Black People's Day of Action and the New Cross Massacre Action Committee, which responded to the tragic deaths of 13 young Black people in the New Cross Fire of 1981. Linton Kwesi Johnson, known for his groundbreaking contributions to dub poetry and activism, described La Rose as "a cultural warrior" and mentor, noting his significant influence on Johnson's growth as a writer and activist. Johnson fondly remembers La Rose as a man of great dignity, who commanded respect and inspired many within the community.

### Legacy and Passing

John La Rose passed away on 28 February 2006, leaving behind a legacy that continues to inspire and influence. His work not only laid the foundation for the cultural and political empowerment of the Black community in Britain but also left an indelible mark on the global landscape of literature and activism. Linton Kwesi Johnson summarised La Rose's legacy, stating, "John La Rose was a cultural warrior. He fought tirelessly for the recognition and respect of our heritage. His work has left an indelible mark, not just on our community, but on the entire British cultural landscape."

John Anthony La Rose's life and work stand as a testament to the power of cultural reclamation and political activism. His contributions have significantly shaped a more inclusive and representative cultural landscape in Britain. As we celebrate Black History Month, we honour his legacy and reaffirm our commitment to preserving and promoting the rich cultural heritage of our community.



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# UNVEILING HEROISM:

Nicole Avant on bringing *The Six Triple Eight* to the screen

In celebration of Black History Month, we are excited to explore *The Six Triple Eight*, a film set to make waves on Netflix. This compelling story shines a light on the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion, an all-Black, all-female unit whose heroic efforts during World War II have long been overlooked. Nicole Avant, the producer behind this impactful project, shares her journey and the significance of bringing this remarkable story to a global audience. Read on to discover how *The Six Triple Eight* will captivate viewers and honor these unsung heroes.

**What inspired you to bring the story of the all-Black, all-female battalion in *The Six Triple Eight* to life?**

"I was fortunate to grow up in a household where Black contributions in the U.S. and around the world were celebrated. My parents had a large wall in their home with photos and artifacts dedicated to many unsung heroes in all areas of life: business, finance, literature, science, armed forces, theatre, and civil rights. I was inspired by these people every day, and they filled me with the determination and inspiration that fuels me and the decisions I make today."

**As *The Six Triple Eight* approaches its Netflix premiere, how do you see the film**

**expanding our understanding of Black contributions to the war effort, particularly in a British context?**

"It's incredibly fulfilling to know that the 6888th battalion will be honored globally, including in the U.K., where these brave women served. It's crucial that we recognize and celebrate all historical contributions, ensuring that those who made a significant impact are no longer overlooked."

**The film highlights the courage, resilience, and achievements of Black women whose stories were largely overlooked. How do you hope this film reshapes the narrative of Black excellence and empowerment in today's society?**



"True and uplifting stories have always given me the strength to persevere in my own life, and I hope this film does the same for others. By celebrating unsung heroes, we acknowledge the many contributions of Black women that have been lost to history. My goal is to help tell those stories and inspire others with them."



**What was the research process like for *The Six Triple Eight*? How did you ensure that this chapter of history was portrayed in a way that resonates with modern audiences?**

“Tyler Perry and his team went above and beyond to gather as much information as possible to bring this story to life. Our focus

was on honouring the women of the 6888th battalion by capturing their courage, perseverance, and sacrifice in a way that will resonate across generations. Their values are timeless and universal.”

**Was there a particular moment or story from the 6888th Battalion that deeply resonated with you during the film’s development?**

“When I received the sizzle reel from my friend Keri Selig, I was overwhelmed with goosebumps. That moment confirmed our commitment to telling this story. Despite having no writer or director at the time, we knew this film had to be made. It was a turning point that solidified our determination.”

**What do you hope audiences take away from *The Six Triple Eight*? What message about resilience and representation do you hope to convey?**

“I hope audiences understand that we are

all part of a greater promise. Regardless of race, religion, or gender, we carry the legacy of our ancestors. By honoring their sacrifices and moving forward with gratitude and resilience, we can better appreciate and reflect on their contributions.”

**As Black History Month is celebrated in the UK, is there a particular figure in Black history who has inspired you throughout your career?**

“Ruby Bridges stands out to me because of her courage at such a young age. Integrating a segregated school at six years old was an act of profound bravery. Her story has always been inspirational and a reminder of how far we’ve come, and how far we can go.”

***The Six Triple Eight* will debut on Netflix on 20th December 2024, offering a powerful tribute to the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion. Be sure to catch this inspiring film when it streams on Netflix later this year.**

# Winifred Atwell



## THE PIANO VIRTUOSO WHO BROKE BARRIERS AND WON HEARTS

Winifred Atwell wasn't just a pianist; she was a force of nature. In a post-war Britain that was still finding its feet, this dynamic woman from Trinidad lit up the music scene with a vivacious style that broke all the rules—and broke down barriers in the process. Her charm, her talent, and her honky-tonk piano made her a household name, and she won over a nation that was far from welcoming to Black artists at the time.

Born on 27 February 1914 in Trinidad, Atwell was a classically trained pianist who was anything but conventional. While her early years saw her mastering the works of the great composers, she felt a stronger pull toward the rhythms and melodies of popular music. She knew that her honky-tonk sound—produced by her beloved “other” piano—was something special. It was playful, joyful, and brought a sense of fun to every performance. And it was this distinct sound that captured the hearts of audiences across the UK.

When she moved to London in the 1940s, Atwell brought with her not just classical training but a deep understanding of the music that connected with everyday people. Post-war Britain was a country searching for hope and escape, and Winifred Atwell's music provided just that. She wasn't playing for the elite. As she proudly declared, *“I'm not concerned with music for the elite, but for the man in the street.”* And she meant it. Her music resonated with the working class, who saw in her a kindred spirit—someone who didn't put on airs, someone who was making music for everyone, not just the privileged few. Atwell became the first Black woman to have a



number one hit in the UK Singles Chart with her 1954 smash, *“The Poor People of Paris.”* This was no small feat. At a time when Black artists were often sidelined in the music industry, Atwell’s success was nothing short of revolutionary. She was more than just a performer—she was a trailblazer who helped pave the way for future generations of Black artists in Britain. Her vibrant personality and lively performances on stage and television made her a national treasure.

But Atwell’s impact was about more than just music; it was about connection. She had a way of bringing people together, regardless of race or class. With her upbeat rhythms and infectious energy, Atwell crossed boundaries and broke down walls. She knew how to make people feel good, and that was her secret. As she once said, *“It was the ordinary people, the poor people, who liked my honky-tonk sound best, and I played for them.”* She played for the people, and the people loved her for it.

Her performances were full of joy and vitality. Atwell didn’t just sit at the piano—she brought it to life. Whether she was playing a ragtime tune or giving a classical piece her unique twist, Atwell made music feel approachable and fun. It was this combination of extraordinary talent and an ability to connect with audiences that made her a true star.

But success didn’t come without challenges. Atwell knew all too well what it meant to face barriers as both a woman and a Black artist in a predominantly white industry. Yet, she never let that stop her. Her determination was clear: *“I was determined to be a success, no matter what it took.”* And succeed she did—leaving a legacy that still resonates today.

Winifred Atwell didn’t just break into the music scene—she shattered expectations and opened doors for future Black artists in Britain. Her legacy is not just one of incredible music but of resilience and triumph over adversity. She showed that talent,

when combined with passion and determination, can break through even the toughest barriers.

Winifred Atwell may have passed away in Australia in 1983, far from the country where she had made her name, but her influence continues to resonate loud and clear. She didn’t just pave the way for future generations of Black artists in Britain—she showed that success could be achieved in the face of adversity, no matter the obstacles. Her music was more than a soundtrack; it was a statement. It was proof that talent, determination, and a pioneering spirit could overcome even the toughest barriers.

Winifred Atwell’s legacy lives on, not just as a key part of Black history, but as an integral part of British history as a whole. Her vibrant sound, her boldness, and her joy in music continue to inspire, reminding us all that breaking barriers is possible—and sometimes, all it takes is a honky-tonk piano and a whole lot of heart.



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## Nika King on faith, resilience, and her role in *Sound of Hope*

Nika King's portrayal of First Lady Donna Martin in *Sound of Hope* is a deeply personal and powerful performance. Drawing from her own experiences and beliefs, Nika shares the significance of this role, its connection to Black history, and how she hopes to inspire future generations of Black creatives. Through her work, she continues to blend art with activism, championing stories that resonate and drive social change.

### **What initially drew you to the role of First Lady Donna Martin in *Sound of Hope*, and how did her story resonate with your own beliefs and experiences?**

First Lady Donna Martin's journey resonated deeply with my own experiences being fostered as a child. I immediately connected with her strength, compassion, and unwavering belief in God. Like First Lady, I have often found myself in situations where I had to fight for God's calling on my life. Her journey gave me permission to keep fighting for what I believe in.

### **As an actress portraying strong Black women, such as Donna Martin in *Sound of Hope*, how do you feel these roles contribute to the larger narrative of Black history and culture?**

I feel these roles provide a counter-narrative to the often one-dimensional stereotypical portrayals of Black women in media. Roles like First Lady Donna Martin are a celebration of the countless Black women who have been at the forefront of change, often without receiving the recognition they deserve. It's time we give her all the flowers.

### **Black History Month is a time to reflect on the achievements of Black leaders. How does your portrayal of Donna**

### **Martin reflect the legacy of Black women who have made significant contributions to their communities?**

I am beyond honoured to portray this dynamic Woman of God. By bringing her story to life, we get to inspire others to see the richness of our history and culture. By embodying nuanced and complex characters like First Lady Donna Martin, I have the opportunity to highlight the strength and commitment that have defined Black women throughout history.

### **In *Sound of Hope*, faith and community are central to the story. How do you think the film speaks to the historical and current role of the Black church in supporting and uplifting vulnerable children, especially within the Black community?**

Historically, the Black church has been a cornerstone of the community, but I feel that has changed dramatically. It seems like they've forgotten about the people Jesus said we should be taking care of. There should be more churches involved to help solve the foster care crisis. Every church, whether Black or White, should be concerned about helping families and vulnerable children. It's our duty as followers of Christ.

### **Portraying real-life trauma, particularly in scenes involving foster children, must have been emotionally intense. How did you prepare for these moments, and what impact did they have on you personally?**

Portraying real-life trauma required a deep level of emotional preparation and sensitivity. I knew these moments had to be handled with authenticity and care because they actually happened to the families and children living in Possum Trot. I wanted to get it right; I had to get it right. Creating a safe space where everyone felt comfortable to bring their A-game was important. We laughed and joked, but when it was time to do those difficult scenes full of raw emotions, we all knew this was bigger than us.





**You've been involved in a variety of projects, from comedy to drama. How did your experience on *Sound of Hope* compare to other roles, such as your work in *Euphoria*, and how has it shaped your approach to acting?**

My experience on *Sound of Hope* was truly unique because it was a true story. It significantly shaped my approach to acting in ways that were both challenging and transformative. It wasn't just about delivering lines or playing a part—it was about fully inhabiting a woman who carries the weight of her community and personal struggles while maintaining grace and determination.

**Black History Month encourages us to look at both the past and the future. How do you hope your work, especially in films like *Sound of Hope*, will inspire the next generation of Black storytellers and leaders?**

Black History Month is a time to honour the legacy of those who came before us and to imagine the possibilities for those who will come after. Through my work, I hope to inspire the next generation to embrace their voices, tell their own stories, and continue to push boundaries in how our narratives are told. I hope my career encourages them to be bold, to take up space unapologetically,



and to challenge the status quo by bringing fresh narratives to film, writing, art, or any other medium.

**Given your advocacy for mental health and social issues, how does a project like *Sound of Hope* align with your mission as both an actress and activist?**

For me, advocacy is about creating spaces for underrepresented voices to be heard and recognised. *Sound of Hope* humanises the issues that are prevalent in this country and attempts to break down the stigma surrounding mental health and racism.

*Sound of Hope* aligns with my mission of merging art with activism, showing how powerful storytelling can be when it comes to shaping perceptions, inspiring empathy, and driving social change.

**Looking back at your career, which Black creatives have inspired you the most, and how do you honour their legacy through your work and the roles you choose?**

Pioneers like Cicely Tyson have left an indelible mark on me. She inspired me with her unwavering commitment to portraying strong, complex Black women who defied the stereotypes that Hollywood often imposes. She chose roles that told the truth of our experiences, ones that reflected both the pain and triumph of being a Black woman in America. I honour her legacy by being intentional with the roles I choose and the stories I tell.

**What advice would you give to young Black creatives who want to make their mark in the entertainment industry, particularly those who want to tell stories that celebrate Black culture and address critical social issues?**

My advice is to not let Hollywood put you in a box or dilute your stories to fit a certain agenda. Resist that. Know that there is strength in your truth, and the world is hungry for diverse and different stories from Black creatives. Bring your full self to your work, embrace your heritage, and don't be afraid to explore the depth and complexity of the Black experience—its beauty, its struggles, and its realness.

The release date in the UK and Ireland is the 11th October and people can find out more and purchase their tickets at [www.soundofhopemovie.co.uk](http://www.soundofhopemovie.co.uk).



In a world where the winds of history often blow harshly on those least able to protect themselves, there are always those extraordinary souls who rise above the storm, who make a stand in the eye of it and say, “No more.” Sybil Phoenix is one such woman. Her life is a testimony to that strength, a testimony to love, to faith, to an undying belief that every person—every single one—deserves the chance to bloom.

You see, Sybil Phoenix’s life began in what would become modern-day Guyana. Georgetown, British Guiana as it was then, must have seemed both too small and too vast to a young girl whose mother died when she was only nine years old. An orphan of sorts, with a father working far from home, Sybil was left to the care of the local Congregational Church. There, in a place fondly called “the Big House,” her faith was nurtured by her grandfather, a preacher, and the larger community that gathered around the church. The seed of her spirituality was planted in that house, and it would grow into something far-reaching and powerful.

It’s strange how loss can shape a person, how it can set us on a path we would never have imagined. For Sybil, it was music that first offered her solace. And how serendipitous it must have felt when two English missionaries, catching wind of

# Reverend Sybil Phoenix OBE

her talent while she sang at a YMCA in Georgetown, offered her free voice training in exchange for her service to the Methodist Church. Sybil, a classically trained singer by now, found herself giving not only her voice to the church but also her heart. Her life of service had well and truly begun.

But this was not the end of the road for Sybil Phoenix, and her path soon led her far from the familiar shores of Guyana. In 1956, with her fiancé Joe Phoenix by her side, she embarked on a journey to Britain. You might think that her arrival in London would have been full of hope and optimism, but like so many of the Windrush Generation, she was met instead by a cold, indifferent Britain. The colour of her skin became the first thing people saw, and it was this colour that made life hard.

Racism was not new to Sybil, but it was Britain’s particular brand of exclusion that

cut deep. Still, she pressed on, answering the call of the Methodist Church in Shepherd’s Bush, who had heard of her work in Guyana. Sybil started a youth club for them, “Clubland,” a space for young people to find their way in a country that seemed intent on pushing them to the margins. And when she and Joe moved to Lewisham in 1962, she did it all over again.

## **Fostering over 100 children**

It’s often said that some people are born to nurture, and Sybil Phoenix was undeniably one of those people. By the early 1970s, she had begun fostering children. Over the years, she opened her home and heart to over 100 children, creating a space of warmth and stability in a world that often gave them little of either. Many of those children saw Sybil not just as a carer, but as the mother they never had. The love and stability she provided were lifesaving, the kind of anchor that can change the course of a young person’s life.

Her fostering work was deeply personal, but Sybil’s caring nature didn’t stop at the door of her home. In 1979, she founded the Marsha Phoenix Memorial Trust, a supported housing project for young women aged 16 to 21. It was named in memory of her foster daughter Marsha, who had tragically died in a car accident in 1974. The Trust became

a sanctuary for vulnerable young women, offering them not just a roof over their heads, but also the tools to rebuild their lives.

### **Moonshot: Rising from the ashes**

But perhaps Sybil's most public act of resilience came in the form of the Moonshot Club. Founded in 1972 as a youth centre for Black British youth in New Cross, it quickly became a pillar of the community. It was a place where young people could find support, education, and empowerment at a time when so many doors were closed to them. The Moonshot Centre was a symbol of possibility, a place that told Black youth: "You belong."

*'...if history teaches us anything, it's that people like Sybil Phoenix do not fall. Instead, they rise—again and again, from the ashes.'*

However, Britain in the 1970s was a hostile environment for such progress. The far-right National Front was on the rise, and hatred reared its ugly head in places like New Cross. In 1977, the Moonshot Club was deliberately burned down by members of the National Front. This wasn't just an act

of vandalism; it was a brutal reminder of the hate that simmered just beneath the surface of British society.

But if history teaches us anything, it's that people like Sybil Phoenix do not fall. Instead, they rise—again and again, from the ashes. "My name is Phoenix," she declared, "and so help me God, out of the ashes, I will rebuild Moonshot." And rebuild it she did. In 1981, Prince Charles himself attended the reopening of the Moonshot Centre, a gleaming, state-of-the-art facility that stood as a testament to Sybil's strength and her belief in the power of community.

### **The new cross fire and the fight for justice**

The story of Sybil Phoenix cannot be told without mentioning the tragic New Cross Fire of 1981, an event that would shake the very foundation of Britain's Black communities. Thirteen young Black people lost their lives in the fire, and the lack of attention or action by the authorities only highlighted the deep-seated racism that permeated British society. The Moonshot Centre became the gathering place for those seeking justice. Sybil was at the forefront, lending her voice and her presence to the fight, ensuring that the victims were not forgotten and that their lives were honoured.

### **A life of recognition and unwavering service**

Sybil Phoenix's life of service has not gone unnoticed. In 1973, she became the first Black British woman to be awarded the MBE (Member of the Order of the British Empire) for her contributions to the community. She was later elevated to OBE (Officer of the Order of the British Empire) in 2008, in recognition of her lifelong dedication to fostering, community service, and racial equality. Along the way, she also received the Medal of Service from Guyana and was granted the Freedom of the City of London and Honorary Freeman of the Borough of Lewisham.

But titles and accolades are not what define Sybil Phoenix. What defines her is her faith, her love for people, and her unshakeable belief in the power of community. As Angie Le Mar, a member of the Moonshot Club in the 1970s, once said: "She helped me ensure I had a future."

Sybil Phoenix's story is more than a biography; it's a testament to what it means to stand tall in the face of adversity, to rebuild when the world is determined to tear you down. It is the story of a woman who did not just rise from the ashes—she soared.

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An interview with

# Nathan Powell

on Directing *The Mountaintop*



PHOTOGRAPHY BY ELLIE KURTZ

In celebration of Black History Month, we are thrilled to feature Nathan Powell, the director behind the new production of *The Mountaintop*. Katori Hall's acclaimed play offers a profound exploration of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s final hours, presenting a deeply human perspective of a revered hero. Powell shares his insights on the artistic and emotional challenges of directing this powerful work, discussing how the production engages with contemporary issues of race and social justice.

**"*The Mountaintop*" delves into Dr. King's final hours. What aspects of this portrayal do you find most compelling or challenging?**

What I love about what Katori Hall has made is that it offers us the chance to see Dr King in a way that surprises us. We see a really human version of a man that has been mythicised by many.

**What has been your approach to directing *The Mountaintop*, and how have you worked to bring out its emotional and historical depth?**

I'm very blessed to be working with two incredibly generous and intelligent actors who make directing this show... dare





Jack Baxter  
(Sound and  
Video Designer)

Ollie Kurshid  
(Assistant Director)

Justina Kehinde (Camae) and Ray Strasser-King (Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.)

I say it... easy! So my approach has been to provide a space for the two of them to explore these characters and this world in as much detail as we can, to give them the freedom to play a story that feels truthful. It is an academic history many of us know well, but my focus for this production is to offer the human story in a captivating way.

**Can you share any specific challenges you've faced in bringing *The Mountaintop* to life, and how you've addressed them?**

We all have our own perception of who Dr King was, so to find our freedom in presenting what the text offers is a challenge. An exciting one though. The text is so detailed and alive, so all of the answers are inside of it!

**How do you see the themes of *The Mountaintop* resonating with contemporary discussions on race and social justice?**

This country has a difficult time discussing race and the legacy of colonialism as a society. I think it's why it's easier for us to make plays in the American context, like this one. We are determined not to ignore British complicity in this play, and we have been having many conversations about the British context. In a year when we have seen hateful racist riots across our country, this play feels like equal parts protest and a show of our resilience.

**How has your experience working with young people influenced your approach to directing and writing?**

I think it has allowed me to be truly collaborative in how I make work. I make work with young people to offer them the space to explore their worlds creatively, so that must be a collaborative process to be important to them. That carries through to my other work and I'm very grateful for that being the work that has developed my practice.

**What do you believe is the most important quality for a director to possess, and how do you cultivate this in your own practice?**

Being kind and open. Understanding that all of the answers don't sit in your head, and don't need to, is incredibly freeing. Once you release yourself from the fear of not knowing the answer, so many more options present themselves to you.

**How do you approach collaboration with actors and other creatives to ensure a cohesive vision for a production?**

I like to throw ideas around. Big ones, small ones, ones that we will never achieve but allow us to explore what we want from a production. I like everyone in the room to be a part of the creation. We all have expertise in different areas, but we can all offer so much more.

**What role does theatre play in engaging audiences with important historical and social issues, especially in the context of this production?**

It's vital. We are storytelling creatures. It's how we understand the world and dream of a better one. So to understand our history through story, and how that has impacted and resonates with our current circumstance is something that theatre, in its live form, can do better than anything - I think!

**How do you plan to use the post-show discussions to further explore the themes of the play and their relevance to today's social climate?**

I'm open to the discussion being led by the audience. I have no agenda. I think the work will speak for itself, but I imagine they will sometimes be decompression spaces, for us to be together and share hope together.

**As the Creative Director at Liverpool Everyman & Playhouse, how do you balance your responsibilities between this role and directing projects like *The Mountaintop*?**

Well I'm brand new in my role at the Everyman and Playhouse so I don't know yet haha! I had agreed to do this show before I got that job and it's such an important piece of work that I wanted to honour. I won't be doing much moonlighting after my current commitments are finished, my heart and priorities will be making the Everyman and Playhouse the most exciting buildings to see and make theatre in the UK. Being at Curve and seeing Nikolai and Chris work over the past couple of years in various capacities has been incredibly inspiring. I look up to them very much!

**How does your work on this production at Curve Theatre influence your vision and plans for Liverpool Everyman & Playhouse?**

I think telling stories of this stature and importance will always be something I aim to do in my work. I will continue to tell meaningful stories in a variety of ways with and for audiences in Liverpool. It's the most exciting challenge I've ever faced and I can't wait to be truly embedded in the organisation.

*The Mountaintop* will be performed at various locations: Curve, Leicester from 21st September to 5th October, MAST Mayflower Studios, Southampton from 9th to 12th October, and Stratford East, London from 29th October to 2nd November. For tickets and more information, visit [curveonline.co.uk](http://curveonline.co.uk) (Box Office: 0116 242 3595), [mayflower.org.uk](http://mayflower.org.uk) (Box Office: 02380 711811), and [stratfordeast.com](http://stratfordeast.com) (Box Office: 020 8534 0310).

# Honouring the Black Education Movement: Pioneering Change and Promoting Equity in UK Schools

From historical struggles to modern advocacy: examining the efforts to address racial disparities in UK schools and the role of Black teachers



The Black Education Movement in the UK began in the late 1960s when it became clear that black children were being discriminated against in the education system. The movement took on the challenge of prioritising the interests of black children and ending racial disparities in the education system. Bernard Coard's non-fiction book, *How the West Indian Child Is Made Educationally Sub-normal in the British School System: The Scandal of the Black Child in Schools in Britain*, published in May 1971 by New Beacon Books in the UK, highlighted issues of institutional racism and inequality. The book outlined the disparities involving 'educationally subnormal' (ESN) or 'special schools' into which black children were wrongly and unlawfully enrolled. Investigations revealed that these schools were used to discriminate against black children. The West Indian Standing Conference (WISC) and the North London

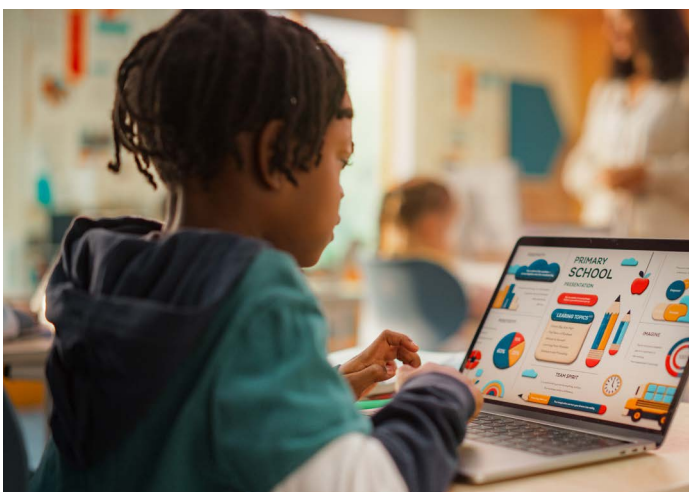
West Indian Association (NLWIA) organised protests against these schools and the institutionally racist system. They also made a formal complaint to the Race Relations Board in 1970, which concluded that the Race Relations Act 1968 had been breached. The Caribbean Education and Community Workers Association (CECWA) was another organisation established to address issues within the education system and advocate for black families. It fought to ensure that curricula and teaching materials were inclusive and that parents were involved in decisions regarding their children's education. Bernard Coard was also one of the founding members of CECWA. The organisation also spearheaded the Black Supplementary Schools, set up as part of an Emergency Schools Programme to support black children who had been wrongly placed in special schools.

Today, in the UK, supplementary

schools—often called Saturday schools—remain an important and prominent movement, with black-led supplementary schools spread across the country. Historically, these schools were open on Saturdays as a supplement to the regular school system. Today, they operate both on weekends and weekdays. Other grassroots organisations, such as Black Education CIC and The Black Curriculum, are also working hard to include Black History in school curricula in the UK through workshops and seminars.

## THE SCHOOLING SYSTEMS & RACIAL BIAS

Schools can be seen as a reflection of society. If minorities are ostracised and oppressed, deprived of good facilities, housing, jobs, and healthcare, and trapped in a racially driven economic failure, schooling systems are not independent of this injustice. The schooling systems are





influenced by political, judicial, and healthcare systems, among others. If these systems are systematically discriminatory, it affects all other areas of society, including schools, family, crime, debt, and unemployment.

Today, black boys are still almost three times as likely to be suspended as white boys, and black girls are four times as likely to be suspended as white girls. Black students' misbehaviour is often criminalised, with black students being referred to law enforcement and not receiving the same benefit of the doubt that white students receive. This blatant discrimination often causes black students' enthusiasm for school and learning to diminish quickly. Black students are labelled as unmotivated with bad attitudes and are frequently categorised as having learning difficulties. When black children lose interest in academics, they often turn to sports as an escape.

### THE IMPACT OF BLACK TEACHERS

It is crucial for educators to understand both contemporary struggles and the history of racism and discrimination in order to become part of the solution. Often, teachers can be part of the problem, with both unconscious and conscious biases that have persisted for decades. This has contributed to the black and white achievement gap, which is not due to inherent differences in ability but rather to the discriminatory nature of the education systems.

It is important for policymakers to prioritise increasing the number of black teachers in schools through government-funded and incentivised teaching programmes. These teachers are often better equipped to address the racial trauma that students experience, as they can relate more closely to black students. Black students are more likely to engage effectively in schools and curricula when they see better representation in their school environments. Psychologically, it is important for black students to see themselves reflected in their teachers and understand that they too can achieve academic success.

Additionally, there is an argument that, as part of reparations for the black community, extra educational resources and funding should be allocated by policymakers to compensate for the losses experienced by these underserved communities. This includes funding for Saturday schools, supplementary schools, black history educational programmes, and workshops.



# University of Sheffield

## Reclaiming Narratives

At the University of Sheffield, our work to tackle racism, racial inequality and promote positive action is a core strand of our equality, diversity and inclusion work and is a golden thread in making Sheffield a great place to work and study.



Being a black African female I know first-hand the difficulties faced by ethnic minorities in UK higher education. The potential outcomes of our race equality work for BAME students are transformational, leading to improvement in degree awards, continuation rates and employment outcomes.

**Professor Amaka Offiah, Co-Chair of the Executive Coordinating Group for the Race Equality Charter**

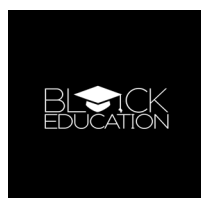
Creating an inclusive, supportive and collaborative environment in which we all can succeed and flourish can only be achieved if we all play our part. Allyship isn't always easy, and we won't always get it right, but it is crucial to building a more equitable world.

**Zaidah Ahmed MBE, HR Manager for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion**



Racism permeates almost every aspect of our lives - personal, social, economic and political. Black History Month is an occasion to celebrate the past progress and acknowledge the future challenges to guide and direct our efforts towards the goal of universal equality.

**Mohammad Rajjaque, Co-Chair of the Staff Race Equality Network**



Written by  
**Stacey Bernard,**  
Founder of Black  
Education CIC



Find out more about our work and how you can join us by going to [www.sheffield.ac.uk/inclusion](http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/inclusion) or scanning the QR code.

# Ayanna

is a singer songwriter and has been named as one to watch. *BHM Magazine* caught up with her to find out more about this rising star.



### **Who are your music influences?**

I'm influenced a lot by the music my dad and brother listened to when I was growing up. My dad was a massive pop fan. He loved air supply, toto, Michael Jackson and my brother loved Erykah Badu, Jill Scott, Mary Mary and Kierra Sheard. So that's pop, soul and RnB, and Gospel overall. I sang a lot in school choirs as I went to religious schools growing up, as well as church. That feeling of singing songs that are deeply rooted in spirituality has stuck with me. Ultimately, I see music as very spiritual and regardless of genre or subject matter I think it's very important that the integrity of that feeling is never lost. As I perfect my craft over the years that becomes one thing, I am more and more certain about.

### **Explain your creative process.**

It's different every day. I have a lot of ideas when I'm dreaming so I often have to rush to record those ones on a voice memo. Sometimes a song starts with what I want to say, my song party tricks started with the hook. I didn't have any music for it, the idea just came whilst I was walking down the street. So, the process is definitely fluid. As an artist I think you must be prepared to get inspiration anywhere, any time.

### **You've been cited as one to watch; what has it taken to get you to this point?**

A lot of clarity. I've been preparing for this since I was a small girl in primary school. I always knew I wanted to be a singer. So since then, it's just been a lot of refining. I was in competitions at 11, I wore heeled shoes to all my dance and stage coach classes because I knew I'd be on stage one day, and I wanted to be glamorous and have heels like Beyoncé.

From a young age I've been crystallising my craft. Over the years the focus has shifted across different areas of my artistry. One year I may be mainly focused on my pen, the next year it may be my brand, performance style, my look, etc. I just want to get better. I can't really say I've failed yet because I don't feel like I've had any notable failures. I learn from the slightest friction or discomfort I may feel in any given situation, and I appreciate contrast. I'm going at a steady pace. I'm honoured that people say I'm one to watch, that is really touching.

### **Who would you like to perform with (living or dead)?**

Right now, I think Doja Cat is great. I love her presence and I'd have fun with her on stage. I think she has a really good balance of polished movement and



quirky personality moments that she flows seamlessly between on stage. Her personality also comes through in her music too which I love. We're similar in some ways so I think in music and on stage we'd complement each other.

I'd also love to sing with Adele. I'm a big proponent of keeping vocals alive in pop music. Big ballads and songs that pull on your heart strings. In my opinion, Adele represents that because her music is so raw. I'd love to sing a song with her on stage.

### **The theme for BHM is reclaiming narratives. What does this mean to you?**

Reclaiming narratives means telling the world who you are instead of letting the world tell you. That's actually very important to me. I can say I've felt dictated to at times, when it comes to my identity as a black young lady in western society. I use my art as a way of telling people exactly who I am, and creating visibility for people who may feel the same.

***'I use my art as a way of telling people exactly who I am, and creating visibility for people who may feel the same.'***

### **Why is Black History month important? Do we still need it?**

I think black history month is important because it forces and encourages us to remember who we are. Whenever you're surrounded by people who may not understand or have compassion towards you or your story, it's so important to know yourself in that space. It's about identity and visibility and then finding community within that. We will always need that.

Follow Ayanna on Instagram and X  
**@ayanna**

# SILENT STRENGTH:

*Amplifying the voices of good fathers in a noisy world*



BY  
**MARVYN  
HARRISON**  
FOUNDER OF BLACK  
DOPE DADS

In a world where the loudest voices often belong to those who spread hate and division, the quiet strength of good men—those who are present, active, loving, and supportive—can sometimes be drowned out. Yet, it is these men who are the bedrock of their families and communities, silently doing the work that sustains and nurtures future generations. As we celebrate Black History Month and the theme of “Reclaiming Narratives,” it’s time to amplify the voices of these men and recognise the progress they’ve made, while also addressing the challenges they continue to face.

## **Dope Black Dads: A vision of empowerment**

Dope Black Dads was born out of a desire to redefine and reclaim the narrative around Black fatherhood. Our mission is simple yet profound: to empower Black fathers to be present, active, loving, and supportive (PALS) in the lives of their children and families. We believe in the power of community and the importance of showing up for one another, not just as fathers but as men who are committed to being the best versions of ourselves.

## **The Framework: Present, Active, Loving, Supportive (PALS)**

Our framework is built on four pillars that guide our strategy and behaviour as fathers:

- **Present:** Being present means more than just physically being there. It means engaging with our children, being emotionally available, and providing the support they need to thrive. It’s about putting down the distractions and truly showing up for our families, day in and day out.
- **Active:** As fathers, we are involved in the day-to-day lives of our children. We are there for school events, sports practices, and bedtime stories. We take an active role in their upbringing, ensuring that they grow up feeling loved, valued, and supported.
- **Loving:** We show love in all its forms—through our words, actions, and presence. We break the stereotype that Black men are emotionally distant or unavailable. Our love is a source of strength, stability, and security for our families.
- **Supportive:** We uplift and support our families, acting as a stabilising force even in difficult times. We understand that being supportive means being there through the highs and lows, providing a shoulder to lean on and a voice of encouragement.

## **The progress of present fathers**

Black fathers are more present and involved than ever before. Despite the negative stereotypes that often dominate the conversation, the reality is that many of us are stepping up and taking an active role in our children’s lives. Studies have shown that Black fathers are just as involved, if not more so, in the day-to-day activities of their children compared to fathers of other ethnicities. For example, a study by the CDC

found that Black fathers were more likely to feed, bathe, and play with their children daily than fathers of other races.

However, the challenges we face are real. Wage stagnation, a psychologically unsafe society, and a failing capitalist system in the UK make it difficult for many of us to fulfil the traditional roles of protector and provider. The constant state of survival that we find ourselves in can lead to stress, burnout, and a sense of disconnection from our families. These challenges show up in our homes, affecting our relationships with our partners and children.

### The danger of disconnect

As good men, we are often too busy doing the work—focusing on our families, careers, and communities—to engage in the broader conversation about masculinity and fatherhood, which has come to our detriment as the story of all men is being told by the people who survive the experiences of ‘bad men’. It is impossible to ask those who survive the worst of us to ‘put in a good word’ for the best of us. Meanwhile, harmful ideologies like toxic bravado and red-pill culture gain traction, dominating the conversation and distorting the narrative around what it means to be a man.

This is dangerous. When good men are silent, it allows these toxic voices to shape the conversation and influence the next generation. We cannot afford to be silent any longer. We must stay engaged, share our stories, and support one another to avoid becoming disconnected from our mission. Our voices are needed now more than ever.

### The cost of silence

The conditions we face under patriarchal rule are harsh. Suicide rates among men are alarmingly high, as are rates of mental health issues, homelessness, and family abandonment. These are real problems that cannot be dismissed or minimised. We must address

these challenges head-on, not just for our own well-being but for the health and stability of our families and communities.

Being a good man—a good father—means more than just providing for our families. It means taking care of ourselves, speaking out against injustice, and creating a better world for our children. It means ensuring that our voices are heard, even when it feels like we’re swimming against the tide.

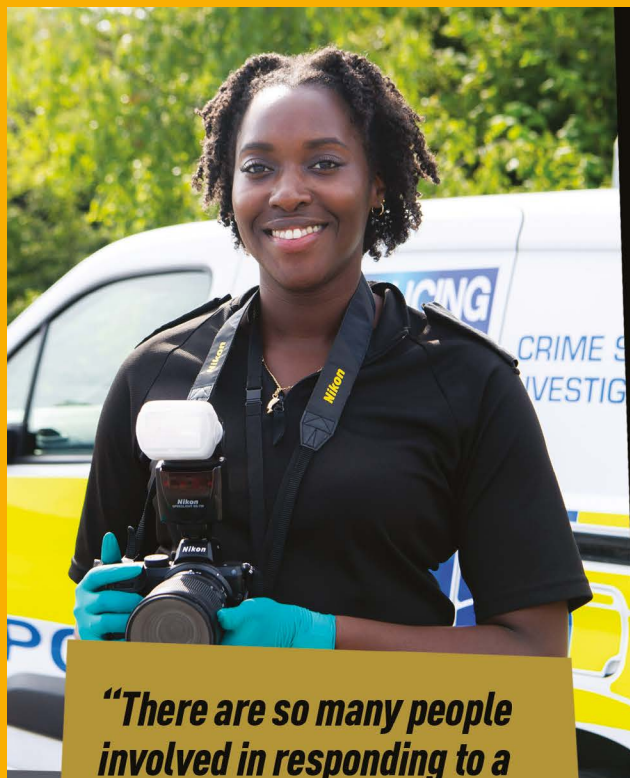
### Thank you to the men who are doing the work

To all the men who are present, active, loving, and supportive: thank you. Your work does not go unnoticed. You are making a difference in the lives of your children and families, and in the world around you. You are the example that others look up to, and your efforts are laying the foundation for a better future.

As we move forward, let’s continue to reclaim the narrative around Black fatherhood and masculinity. Let’s ensure that our voices are not just heard but amplified. Together, we can create a world where our children grow up knowing the strength, love, and support of good men.



Marvyn Harrison



***“There are so many people involved in responding to a crime and we all have our part to play – both police officers and staff.”***

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## Bringing August Wilson's Legacy to the Screen: Malcolm Washington's Vision for

# THE PIANO LESSON

As Black History Month highlights significant achievements and cultural reflections, Malcolm Washington's directorial debut, *The Piano Lesson*, emerges as a profound tribute to August Wilson's influential play. Set to premiere on Netflix on December 20, 2024, the film offers a fresh and evocative adaptation that delves into themes of legacy, family, and identity. Washington, known for his

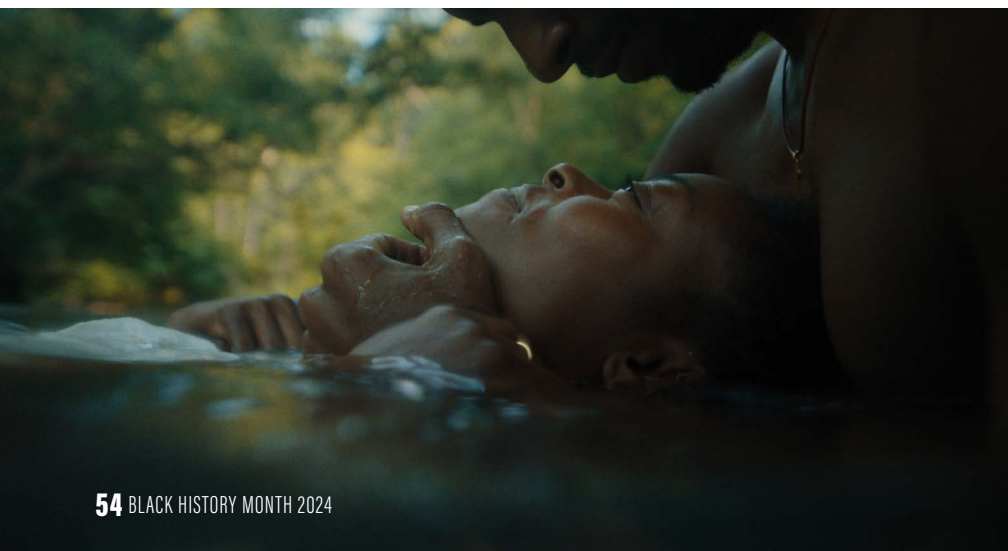
artistic curiosity and dedication, has translated his deep respect for Wilson's work into a visually compelling and emotionally resonant film.

Washington's journey to this film began with personal introspection and artistic exploration. "I was in a reflective mood," Washington recalls. "Going through old family photos of my great grandparents and so on, digitizing them and putting them in

context." This personal exploration of family history was paralleled by his first encounter with Wilson's Pulitzer Prize-winning play. "Reading the story really impacted me because I thought about my ancestors and their legacy," he explains. "It felt like something I needed to spiritually engage with."

This engagement led to Washington's first feature film, an ambitious adaptation co-written with Oscar-nominated screenwriter Virgil Williams. Produced by his father, Denzel Washington, and longtime collaborator Todd Black, the film features a star-studded cast, including Samuel L. Jackson, John David Washington, and Danielle Deadwyler. This ensemble, coupled with Washington's meticulous vision, promises to offer a new dimension to Wilson's work.

Adapting *The Piano Lesson* presented the challenge of honouring Wilson's original play while infusing it with cinematic vitality. "Genre is a great way to speak to something deeper," Washington says. "It's a metaphor you can use that can be both thrilling and exciting, and when you finish the film, it





sticks to your bones a little bit.” His vision sought to amplify the ghost story aspect of the play, blending drama with supernatural elements to create a compelling cinematic experience.

The film’s narrative centres on the Charles family’s conflict over a priceless family heirloom—a piano intricately carved with the images of their enslaved ancestors. The piano becomes a symbol of both the



family’s history and their ongoing struggles. Boy Willie, played by John David Washington, wants to sell the piano to buy land and secure his family’s future. In contrast, his sister Berniece, portrayed by Danielle Deadwyler, clings to the piano as a tribute to their family’s legacy and sacrifices.

**“MY INTENTION FROM THE BEGINNING WAS TO DO SOMETHING NEW AND PRESENT THIS WORK IN A WAY AUDIENCES HADN’T SEEN BEFORE”**

Washington’s adaptation explores the emotional and supernatural layers of Wilson’s play, using the ghost story to delve into themes of heritage and memory. “I had an idea for the opening, ideas for pushing at the limits of theatre and crossing it over to cinema,” Washington says. He aimed to make the film not just a visual spectacle

but a powerful emotional journey. “I needed somebody next to me who was going to protect me and fight for me,” he adds about enlisting his sister Katia Washington as an executive producer. “We trust each other, and there’s nobody I felt stronger about than Katia.”

Washington’s meticulous approach involved assembling a distinguished team. From legendary production designer David Bomba to acclaimed costume designer Francine Jamison-Tanchuk and evocative cinematographer Mike Gioulakis, every element was tailored to bring Wilson’s world to life. “My intention from the beginning was to do something new and present this work in a way audiences hadn’t seen before,” Washington explains. The film immerses viewers in the 1930s Hill District of Pittsburgh with intricate details and atmospheric settings that enhance the narrative’s impact.

One of the standout features of Washington’s adaptation is the casting, which includes actors from the Broadway revival of *The Piano Lesson* and new talents. John David Washington, who plays Boy Willie, reflects on his brother’s direction with admiration. “He was born to do this,” he says. “His cinematic vision definitely exceeded my expectations. If he was nervous, I couldn’t tell. He was very calm, focused, and in the moment every time.” Samuel L. Jackson, reprising his role as Doaker from the Broadway production, praises Washington’s work. “The gentleness and the loveliness that Malcolm walks around in this world with is present in this film,” Jackson observes.

Washington’s adaptation also features





a notable ensemble, including Danielle Deadwyler as Berniece and Corey Hawkins as the preacher Avery. Deadwyler describes her experience working with Washington and the cast as transformative. “All of the men in the cast were completely loving and warm,” she says. “They bring a great power, and I was able to step in and do the things that I do with the power that I possess.” Hawkins adds, “It’s like working with your brothers. The dynamic is different on film, but the trust and camaraderie are palpable.”

For Washington, bringing *The Piano Lesson* to the screen was about more than adapting a beloved play; it was about

continuing Wilson’s legacy. “Making a movie is a tremendous endeavour,” he notes. “You galvanise a community to make something that’s going to be consumed by people that don’t know you.” His dedication to Wilson’s work and his personal connection to the material drove him to create a film that both honours the original play and resonates with contemporary audiences.

Denzel Washington, who produced the film alongside Todd Black, hopes that the adaptation will inspire viewers to explore more of August Wilson’s work. “If this is their first time with August Wilson, I hope it leads them to finding out more,” he says. This sentiment reflects the broader

aim of the film: to deepen the audience’s understanding of Black history and the impact of artistic legacies.

In conclusion, Malcolm Washington’s adaptation of *The Piano Lesson* stands as a testament to his creative vision and dedication to August Wilson’s work. With its rich storytelling, striking visuals, and powerful performances, the film promises to be a significant contribution to both cinema and the ongoing conversation about Black heritage and identity. This Black History, as we endeavour to reclaim narratives about our history Washington’s film offers a poignant reflection on the past and its relevance to the present.





# Saluting Our Sisters: An Anthology

CELEBRATING THE STRENGTH AND  
RESILIENCE OF BLACK WOMEN

**B**lack History UK CIC is delighted to unveil *Saluting Our Sisters*, a compelling new poetry anthology that honours the spirit, strength, and resilience of Black women. This inspiring collection brings together voices from across the UK, celebrating the rich legacy and enduring impact of Black women in our communities and beyond.

*Saluting Our Sisters* features a diverse array of original poems reflecting both the historical and contemporary experiences of Black women. The anthology highlights their roles as trailblazers, caregivers, leaders, and nurturers through powerful verses exploring themes of identity, empowerment, love, and struggle. It offers readers an emotional journey into the lives and stories of Black women.

This collection is more than just a book—it's a movement. It calls on us to recognise and uplift the contributions of Black women who have shaped our world. Each poem is a testament to the unique and collective experiences of Black women providing both solace and inspiration to readers of all backgrounds.

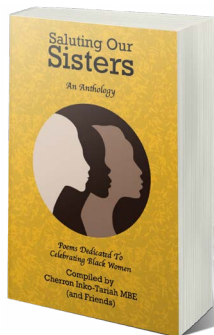
## FEATURED POETS

In honour of Black women's invaluable contributions, *Black History Month Magazine* ran a national poetry competition, spotlighting emerging talents from young people and the African and Caribbean communities. Engaging over 3,000 poets across the nation, the competition underscored the crucial role of poetry in fostering education and cultural expression. The anthology includes works from winners, finalists, and highly commended poets, ranging in age from 6 to over 60. Their poems resonate with authenticity, passion, and a profound sense of purpose, celebrating the diverse experiences of Black womanhood and its impact on culture, society, and history.

Former Children's Laureate Joseph Coelho remarked, "This is a poetry collection to be savoured. It is an invitation to think about, pay tribute to, honour, and learn about the lives of Black women. So often, the many accomplishments of Black women have gone horrifically unsung."

Cherron Inko-Tariah MBE, editor of the anthology, said, "*Saluting Our Sisters* is more than a collection of poems—it's a tribute to the indomitable spirit of Black women throughout history and today. I am honoured to have curated this anthology, which not only showcases the extraordinary talents of our poets but also serves as a powerful reminder of the profound impact Black women have had on our society. This project marks the beginning of a series of initiatives aimed at celebrating and amplifying Black voices."

Ian Thomas commented, "I was truly impressed by the exceptional number of participants from across the UK and the high calibre of their submissions. This competition is just the first of many projects we have planned to celebrate and elevate Black voices, recognising their invaluable contributions to our culture and society."



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\*homeforgood.org.uk

## JOIN THE MOVEMENT

Published by Brilliance Book Publishing, *Saluting Our Sisters* will be released on 1st October 2024. Preorder your copy now through Black History UK CIC.

# BISHOP WILFRED WOOD:

## A Black History Month reflection on faith, justice, and resistance

WRITTEN  
BY PAULINE  
THOMPSON

As Black History Month unfolds, it is crucial to spotlight figures whose lives transcend mere historical interest and illuminate the ongoing struggles for justice and equity. Bishop Wilfred Wood, the Church of England's first Black bishop, is a beacon of how faith can be wielded as a tool for resistance and transformation in the face of systemic injustice.

Wilfred Denniston Wood's journey from Barbados to becoming a key figure in the Church of England epitomises the complex interplay between personal faith and the broader struggle for racial justice. Born on 15 June 1936 in colonial Barbados, Bishop Wilfred's upbringing in an Anglican family instilled in him values of service and resilience. His father, a sexton, and his mother, a teacher, laid the foundation for a life devoted to service—a commitment that would define his career and activism.

When Bishop Wilfred arrived in the UK in 1962, he joined the Windrush generation—a group whose arrival was heralded with promises of opportunity yet marred by entrenched racism and exclusion. For Bishop Wilfred, the experience was a stark confrontation with the reality of Britain's racial hierarchies. Yet, it was precisely this encounter with racial injustice that deepened his resolve and shaped his faith. Reflecting on these formative experiences, Bishop Wilfred articulated, "My faith was the cornerstone of my life. It gave me purpose and showed me that service to others was how I could best serve God." His faith was not just a personal refuge but a call to action against the systemic inequities that confronted him.

### Faith in the face of structural racism

Upon his arrival in Britain, Bishop Wilfred found a society deeply divided along racial lines. His ministry, however, was not confined to the traditional roles of pastoral care but extended into a proactive engagement with social justice issues. Ordained as a deacon in 1962 and a priest in 1963, his approach to ministry was rooted in a radical interpretation of Christian doctrine—a faith that demanded not only prayer but concrete action against social injustices.





The 1960s and 1970s were fraught with racial tensions, exemplified by the rise of far-right groups and violent clashes in communities. Bishop Wilfred's ministry placed him at the epicentre of these struggles. He invoked the Epistle of James—"Faith without works is dead"—to argue that true faith necessitates an active resistance to injustice. His work with Black communities in London highlighted the systemic nature of racism and the urgent need for church-led activism. Bishop Wilfred's commitment to confronting these issues was not merely a personal choice but a reflection of his belief that faith must challenge and dismantle societal inequities.

### **Breaking barriers: The first Black Bishop**

In 1985, Bishop Wilfred Wood's consecration as Bishop of Croydon marked a historic moment for the Church of England. As the first Black bishop, his appointment represented both a personal triumph and a significant shift in institutional representation. This milestone was not achieved in isolation but as part of a broader struggle against racial exclusion and for greater inclusivity within religious institutions.

For Bishop Wilfred, the role of a bishop transcended the ceremonial; it was a platform for advocacy and service. "Being a bishop is not about wearing robes or sitting in a grand chair," he remarked. "It's about being a servant of the people, caring for them, and fighting for justice in their lives." This perspective underscored his approach to leadership—a commitment to using his position to challenge and address the systemic issues affecting his community.

### **Faith-driven activism and moral leadership**

Bishop Wilfred Wood's activism was inextricably linked to his faith. His support for the anti-apartheid movement and his vocal opposition to South Africa's apartheid regime were direct extensions of his Christian principles. His activism was not a peripheral aspect of his ministry but a central component, driven by a profound belief in the Church's role as a moral force in society.

In Britain, Bishop Wilfred became a prominent advocate for police reform following the Brixton riots of 1981, which exposed the systemic racial profiling of Black communities. His advocacy was marked by a forthright challenge to the status quo, asserting, "The Church must be a conscience for society. We cannot remain silent in the face of injustice,

for silence in such times is a betrayal of our faith." This stance exemplified his belief in the Church's duty to actively engage with and rectify systemic injustices.

Bishop Wilfred's advocacy extended beyond racial justice to include broader issues of social inequality, such as housing, healthcare, and education. His faith-driven perspective viewed these issues as interconnected, reflecting a holistic approach to justice that encompassed both racial and socio-economic dimensions.

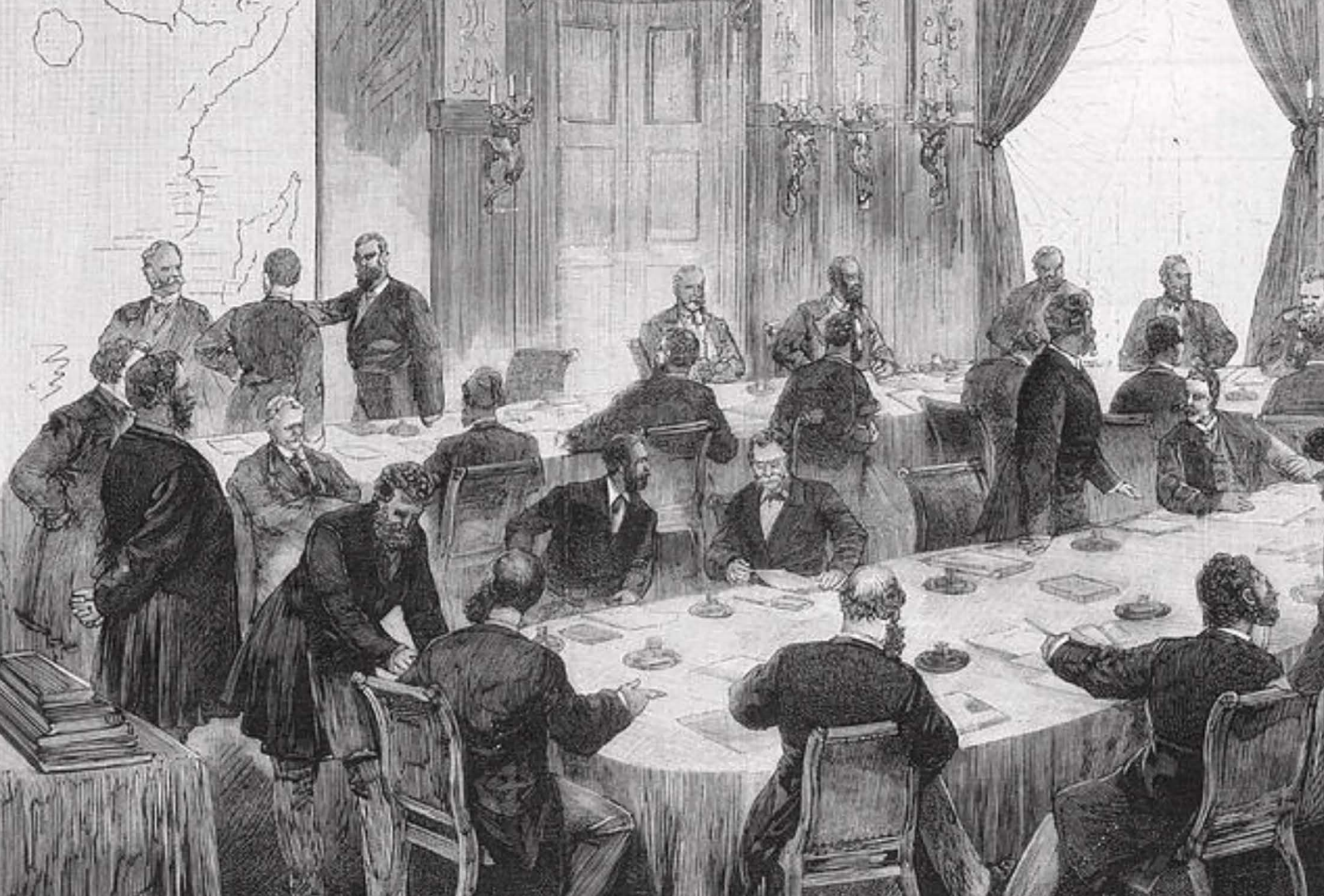
*"My faith was the cornerstone of my life. It gave me purpose and showed me that service to others was how I could best serve God."*

### **Enduring legacy and continued relevance**

Though Bishop Wilfred Wood retired in 2003, his legacy endures as a testament to the intersection of faith and social activism. His unwavering commitment to justice and equality continues to resonate, highlighting the ongoing relevance of his work. Even in retirement, he remains a vocal advocate for racial justice and a source of inspiration for those committed to social change.

Bishop Wilfred's legacy is a powerful reminder of the potential for faith to drive systemic transformation. His leadership opened doors for greater diversity within the Church of England and set a standard for moral courage and action. As he aptly stated, "The Church must be at the forefront of the struggle for justice. We are called to love our neighbour, and that love must be expressed through action—through standing up for those who are oppressed and working for a world where everyone is treated with dignity and respect."

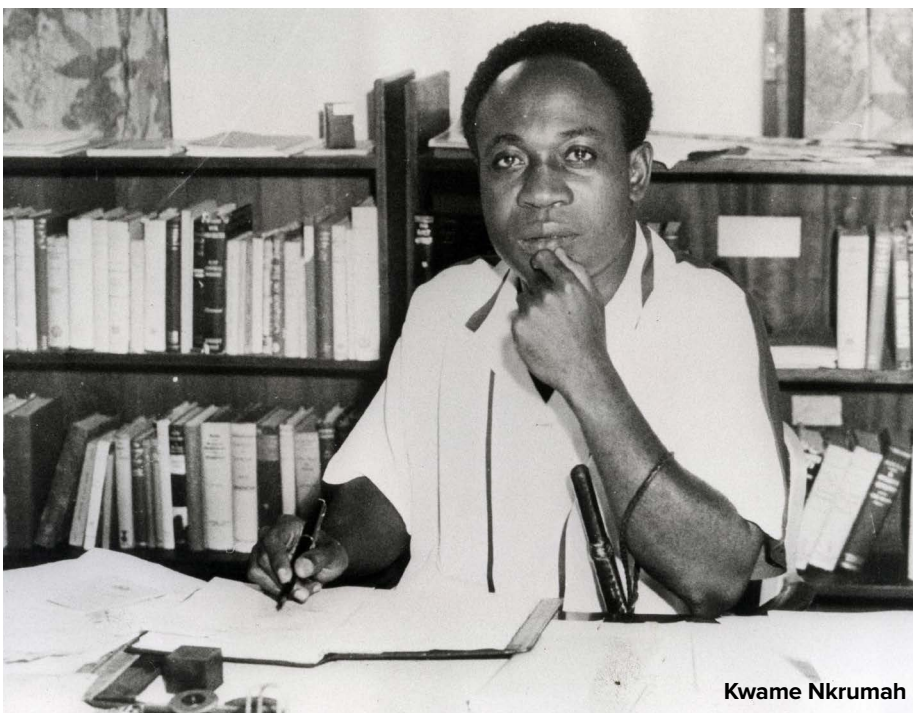
As we reflect on Bishop Wilfred Wood's life this Black History Month, we are reminded of the dynamic interplay between personal faith and collective struggle. His journey from Barbados to the British episcopate illustrates how individual conviction can confront and challenge systemic inequities. Bishop Wilfred's life teaches us that faith is not a passive belief but an active force for social change—a call to serve, uplift, and dismantle injustice. His enduring legacy inspires us to continue the fight for a just and equitable society, embodying the true spirit of faith in action.



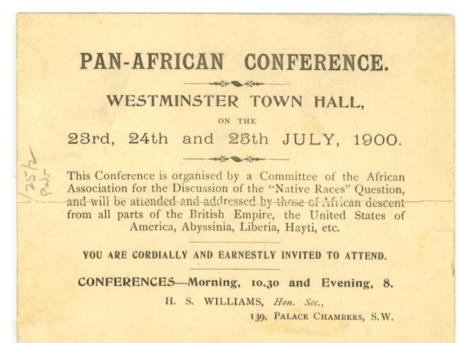
# The Berlin Conference: Africa's Partition and the Birth of Pan-Africanism

In the winter of 1884, European diplomats gathered in the grand drawing rooms of Berlin to divide the African continent among themselves. Without a single African representative present, these men carved up Africa with little regard for its people, cultures, or histories. Maps of the continent were unfurled on polished tables, and with the stroke of a pen, ancient kingdoms were dismantled, ethnic groups divided, and borders drawn by those who had never set foot on African soil.

The Berlin Conference formalised the “Scramble for Africa,” launching a wave of colonial domination that would exploit the continent’s people and resources for decades. But while the borders drawn in Berlin still define Africa today, they also sparked a powerful response—a movement of unity and resistance known as Pan-Africanism.



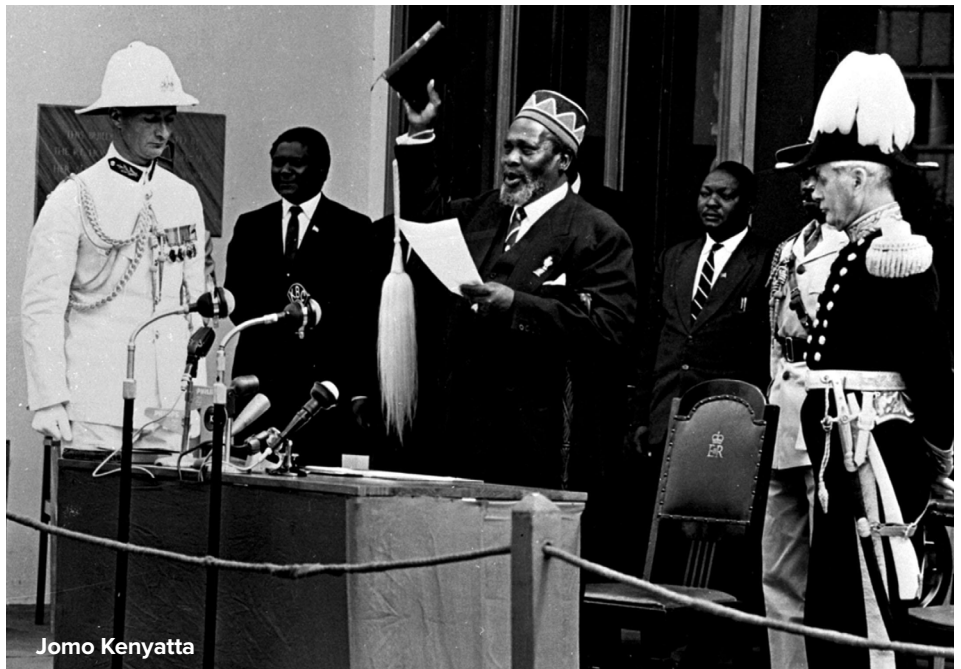
**Kwame Nkrumah**





## The partition of Africa

By the late 19th century, Europe's imperial ambitions were at their height. With the industrial revolution in full swing, Africa's vast resources became essential to the economic expansion of European powers. The Berlin Conference, held between 1884 and 1885, was convened to prevent conflict among European nations as they raced to claim territory across the continent. But for Africans, the outcome of this conference brought decades of exploitation and upheaval.



Jomo Kenyatta

Britain, France, Germany, Belgium, and other European powers divided Africa without consideration for the people living there. Britain secured territories like Nigeria, Kenya, and Egypt, while Belgium claimed the Congo Free State, a colony that became notorious for its brutal exploitation under King Leopold II. Traditional governance systems were dismantled, ancient cultures were disrupted, and millions of Africans were forced into labour to support Europe's industrial ambitions. The borders drawn by the Europeans would later fuel conflicts that still affect the continent today.

## The birth of Pan-Africanism

Even as Africa was being divided, a new movement began to take shape—one that would challenge the colonial powers and call for the reunification of African people. Pan-Africanism, a movement focused on the unity, independence, and self-determination of African people, emerged as a direct response to the fragmentation and oppression caused by colonial rule.

The seeds of Pan-Africanism were sown in the African diaspora. In 1900, Trinidadian lawyer Henry Sylvester Williams organised the first Pan-African Conference in London. This gathering brought together intellectuals, activists, and leaders from Africa and the diaspora to discuss the challenges posed by colonialism and to advocate for the rights of African people globally. While small in scale, this meeting marked the formal beginning of the Pan-African movement.

Figures like W.E.B. Du Bois argued that the struggles faced by African people across the globe were interconnected. Du Bois saw Pan-Africanism as a powerful vehicle for uniting Africans and people of African descent in a collective fight for equality, justice, and self-determination.

Simultaneously, Marcus Garvey championed Black pride and economic self-reliance, laying the groundwork for a nationalist vision of Pan-Africanism. His founding of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) and promotion of the "Back to Africa" movement reflected his belief that African descendants could reclaim their identity and power by building a strong, united Africa.

## Pan-Africanism in action: The fight for independence

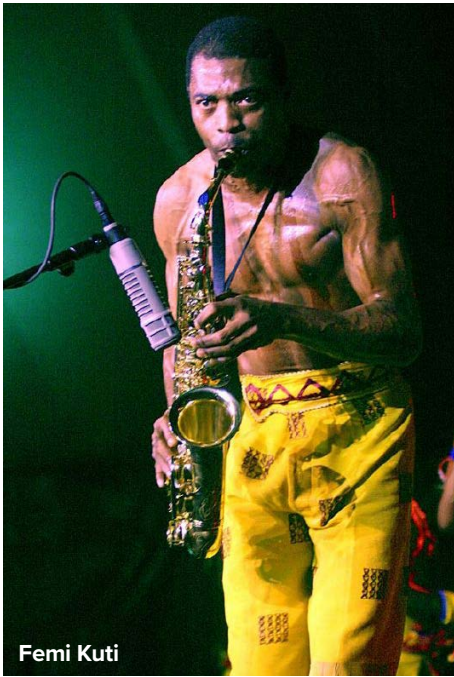
As the 20th century progressed, the ideals of Pan-Africanism became a rallying point for African leaders fighting for independence. Kwame Nkrumah led Ghana to become the first sub-Saharan African nation to gain independence in 1957. Nkrumah, deeply influenced by Pan-African thought, envisioned a United States of Africa—a political and economic federation that would stand as a powerful force on the global stage. He saw Pan-Africanism as the key to overcoming the divisions imposed by colonial borders and achieving true sovereignty.

Nkrumah wasn't alone in this vision. Leaders like Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya and Julius Nyerere of Tanzania played pivotal roles in their countries' liberation and were staunch advocates of Pan-Africanism. Kenyatta, after leading the struggle against British colonialism, became Kenya's first prime minister and later president, pushing for African unity. Nyerere, known for his principles of "Ujamaa" (African socialism), helped to shape the decolonisation of Africa and remained a vocal supporter of Pan-African unity throughout his life.

These leaders helped create the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in 1963, an institution designed to foster cooperation among African states and support

W.E.B. Du Bois

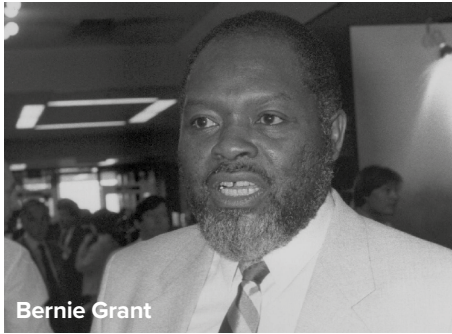




Femi Kuti



Olive Morris



Bernie Grant

decolonisation efforts. Though the dream of a fully united Africa remains unrealised, the OAU—now the African Union—continues to carry forward the legacy of Pan-Africanism, fostering political and economic collaboration across Africa.

### Pan-Africanism and the Black British experience

In Britain, while Pan-Africanism inspired movements abroad, it also shaped the fight for civil rights and racial equality at home. Black British communities, composed of people from Africa, the Caribbean, and beyond, drew upon these ideas as they organised against racism and discrimination.

Figures like John La Rose, who founded New Beacon Books and championed Black literature and education, were crucial in promoting Black cultural identity in Britain. Olive Morris, an activist and co-founder of

the Organisation of Women of African and Asian Descent (OWAAD), fought for the rights of Black and Asian women and played a key role in campaigns around housing, education, and policing. Stuart Hall, a pioneering cultural theorist, influenced how race and identity were understood in Britain and internationally. Meanwhile, Darcus Howe and Bernie Grant worked tirelessly to address the issues facing Black communities in Britain, advocating for systemic change in policing, education, and political representation.

While not all of these figures were directly tied to Pan-Africanism, their work contributed to the broader goals of Black empowerment and solidarity. Their efforts helped lay the foundations for today's Black British identity, a rich tapestry of cultures and histories united by a shared commitment to equality and justice.

### The cultural influence of Pan-Africanism

Pan-Africanism's reach extended beyond politics into the arts and culture. Figures like Fela Kuti, the Nigerian musician and activist, used his music to address social and political issues in Africa, often drawing on Pan-African themes. Kuti's Afrobeat music became a powerful form of resistance, promoting African pride and challenging corruption and colonial legacies.

In the Caribbean and the United States, Pan-Africanism influenced the work of writers, poets, and musicians who sought to reclaim African heritage and express solidarity with the struggles for independence and civil rights. This cultural influence helped galvanise movements for racial justice worldwide, reinforcing Pan-Africanism's role as a global force for change.

### The legacy of Pan-Africanism today

The Berlin Conference may have divided Africa, but Pan-Africanism arose as a force that sought to reunite its people. The movement's ideals of unity, self-determination, and liberation continue to inspire activists and leaders across Africa and the diaspora. In a world where the legacies of colonialism still cast long shadows over global politics, Pan-Africanism remains a vital philosophy for those working to build a more just and equitable future.

Today, the African Union continues the work begun by Pan-Africanists over a century ago, promoting peace, development, and integration across the continent. Meanwhile, in the diaspora, the principles of Pan-Africanism remain central to movements for racial justice and Black empowerment. From the streets of Accra to the communities of London and New York, Pan-Africanism endures as a symbol of resilience, resistance, and hope.



# TIME TO S.HI.NE

Within higher education, there is still a lack of understanding of the particular issues faced by Black women. These issues, which include cultural and structural barriers, are not clearly recognised or fully addressed by our institutions. There is also a stark lack of role models, and Black females who enter higher education are sometimes surprised by the absence of other Black female academics in their institutions. This can lead to feelings of isolation, with some cases progressing to withdrawal from the institution or profession altogether.

Recognising these issues, the Sisters in Higher Education Network (S.HI.NE) work together to explore, address, and discover solutions to the deep barriers and challenges facing Black females. Through our webinars, workshops, and conferences, we identify and discuss strategies to overcome racial exclusions and other forms of marginalisation experienced by members. At these meetings, we also share experiences that help develop skills in teaching and other scholarly activities, as well as mentoring and coaching. Most important is the building of friendships and networking with other organisations to help support our future careers and leadership prospects. As one Sister stated: “S.HI.NE feels like home, and being part of it is refreshing.”

## THE CHALLENGES WE FACE AND WHO SUPPORTS US

As a network, the main challenge we face is adequate funding. Without this, our reach and impact are limited. Particularly, as the network is run by a group of Sisters who volunteer their time, there are implications for workloads. Outside these volunteering roles, and in general, Black females in higher education encounter many challenges, which include but are not limited to feelings of isolation, mental and physical health issues, being passed over for promotion, and so on. This is a struggle, and it is essential that we keep working with our institutions to address these issues.

Despite these challenges, S.HI.NE is made up of several like-minded Sisters who are passionate about championing our cause, which is to enhance the visibility of Black women in higher education, showcase our contributions, and support our development and progression.

We believe in the saying that “It takes a village.” Hence, as a village, we support each other—Sisters who are driven by passion, working together to support each other’s growth.

## OUR ROLE AND WHAT WE HOPE TO ACHIEVE

Higher education can be a lonely place, so it is important to be part of an institution or network that gives you a sense of belonging and makes you feel valued.

Starting out in 2020, our network was and is still one of the few networks offering a platform solely for Black women in higher education to come together to support each other.

As well as support with mentoring and coaching, we also serve as role models to each other. Having other Sisters who understand your culture and background can be empowering,



inspire confidence, and increase one’s sense of belonging. Hence, we offer a safe space for Sisters to discuss any issues, be they negative or positive. Sisters who attend our meetings have spoken of how exhilarating and refreshing these meetings are.

S.HI.NE is also focused on identifying and eliminating structural barriers, as well as on mental recolonisation. By doing so, we examine our self-identity and work towards removing ourselves from the shackles of our own cultural limitations, merging this ‘new’ cultural environment with ours. We use our own lived experiences to share our understanding of mental liberation, which can mitigate the feelings and/or perceptions of imposter syndrome. This further helps with fostering inclusion as well as a sense of belonging.

We also work together with many institutions and organisations, both within and outside higher education, to reach and support as many Black females as possible, offering a ‘home’ in our village. We will continue to work on increasing the visibility of Black women and supporting each other in various ways. In addition, we plan to continue hosting our yearly conference, as well as our quarterly meetings, to ensure that we provide continued services to all.

## MESSAGE TO CURRENT AND ASPIRATIONAL BLACK PROFESSORS

Stay motivated and be part of a trusted network, as the power of networking is incredible. An active support network within one’s place of work or industry/sector helps to provide a sense of belonging, which can increase job satisfaction, performance, and motivation.

Most importantly, please make space for some ‘me’ time. Remember, your health is your wealth. Be kind to yourself and never give up, as it will get better.

For aspiring academics, we say, “Go for it.” Academia is a great place to be, and if it fuels your passion, then pursue it.

Finally, we would like to say that it is time to take control of your story and reclaim our narratives. And to all our Sisters out there, please continue to S.HI.NE.

**By The Sisters in Higher Education Network (S.HI.NE)**



# HISTORY: RECLAIMING THE NARRATIVE OF A CONTINENT

For centuries, the history of Africa has been told predominantly through the lens of outsiders, often diminishing the continent's rich cultural heritage, achievements, and contributions to world civilisation. This external narrative has perpetuated stereotypes and misconceptions, overshadowing the true story of a continent teeming with diversity, innovation, and resilience. Yet today, a vibrant and growing movement is reclaiming and retelling the narrative of Africa's past—a narrative that recognises its deep contributions to humanity and celebrates the enduring spirit of its peoples. African historians, scholars, and cultural leaders, including figures like Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, Achille Mbembe, Toyin Falola, and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, are leading this crucial effort, reshaping our understanding of Africa's history and its rightful place in the world.

## The cradle of humanity

Africa is universally acknowledged as the cradle of humanity, the place where our earliest ancestors first emerged. The significance of Africa in the human story cannot be overstated. In the vast landscapes of Kenya, stone tools dating back 3.3 million years have been discovered in Lomekwi—tools that represent the earliest known technology. Meanwhile, in Ethiopia, the emergence of the Homo genus around 2.8 million years ago places Africa at the very heart of human evolution. These milestones, often overshadowed in mainstream narratives, affirm Africa's central role in the history of human innovation and adaptation. They remind us that the continent's story is not just Africa's story, but the story of all humanity.

## Ancient civilisations and knowledge

When we think of the ancient world, the pyramids of Egypt often dominate the imagination. These monumental structures are a testament to the engineering genius of the ancient Egyptians, a civilisation that was undeniably African. Yet, Egypt is just one chapter in Africa's vast historical narrative. Beyond the banks of the Nile, the continent boasts other significant civilisations that have left indelible marks on history.

Consider the Kingdom of Kush, located in what is now Sudan. This powerful empire, with its own pyramids rising in Nubia, was not merely an echo of Egypt but a civilisation in its own right. The Kushites were masters of architecture, governance, and culture, establishing a legacy that would influence generations.

Further east, the Aksumite Empire in Ethiopia emerged as a major trading power, its monumental obelisks standing as silent witnesses to a civilisation that played a

critical role in the spread of Christianity across Africa and into the Arabian Peninsula. The influence of Aksum extended far beyond its borders, contributing to the religious and cultural fabric of both Africa and the Middle East.

And then there was the Kingdom of Mali, under the legendary rule of Mansa Musa. Known as one of the wealthiest men in history, Mansa Musa's reign from 1312 to 1337 transformed Mali into a global centre of wealth, culture, and scholarship. His famous pilgrimage to Mecca in 1324, where he distributed so much gold that it caused inflation in the regions he passed through, is a story often told. But what is less frequently highlighted is Mali's significance as a beacon of learning. The city of Timbuktu, with its vast libraries and centres of Islamic scholarship, became synonymous with knowledge. Manuscripts from Timbuktu, covering subjects from astronomy to law, are not just relics—they are living testimonies





to a time when Africa was at the forefront of global intellectual life.

The civilisation of Great Zimbabwe, flourishing between the 11th and 15th centuries, stands as a powerful testament to Africa's architectural ingenuity. The massive stone walls of the Great Enclosure, constructed without mortar, are an enduring symbol of the kingdom's sophistication and its role as a major trading hub.

Strategically located near gold mines and along vital trade routes, Great Zimbabwe connected the interior of Africa with the wider world, exporting gold and ivory in exchange for luxury goods from as far afield as China and Persia. The conical towers and the iconic Zimbabwe Bird carvings reflect a society rich in religious and political complexity, with a legacy that stretches far beyond its borders.

The Benin Kingdom, located in what is now southern Nigeria, is another example of Africa's advanced artistic and technological traditions. Reaching its height between the 13th and 19th centuries, Benin is particularly renowned for its intricate Benin Bronzes—masterpieces of metalworking that have captivated the world. Created using the lost-wax casting technique, these bronzes are not merely beautiful; they are powerful expressions of the kingdom's history, mythology, and royal power. The Benin Kingdom was a highly organised and centralised state, with a sophisticated system of governance and a military capable of defending its interests. Its capital, Benin City, was described by European visitors as one of the most impressive cities they had ever seen, with wide streets, grand palaces, and an extensive system of walls and moats.

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These civilisations, and others like them, challenge the outdated narratives that have too often portrayed Africa as a passive recipient of external influences. Instead, they reveal a continent that was deeply interconnected with the broader world—a place where knowledge, culture, and innovation flourished.

### **Africa as a beacon of learning and scholarship**

Africa's legacy as a centre of learning is further exemplified by its renowned institutions of higher education, such as the University of al-Qarawiyyin in Morocco and Al-Azhar University in Egypt. These universities, among the world's oldest, were vibrant centres of knowledge that attracted scholars from across the globe.

The University of al-Qarawiyyin, established in 859 AD in Fes, Morocco, by Fatima al-Fihri, stands as a symbol of the continent's intellectual heritage. Fatima al-Fihri, a visionary woman, used her inheritance to create a mosque and university that would become a leading spiritual and educational hub in the Muslim

world. Al-Qarawiyyin played a crucial role in the development of Islamic jurisprudence, mathematics, astronomy, and medicine, influencing intellectual developments far beyond North Africa.

Similarly, Al-Azhar University in Cairo, founded in 970 AD, remains one of the most prestigious institutions of Islamic learning. It has been a beacon of scholarship, particularly in the fields of theology, law, and philosophy. Scholars from all over the Islamic world came to study at Al-Azhar, which became a key site for the exchange of ideas and the preservation of knowledge during the Middle Ages.

These institutions challenge the narrative that positions Africa solely as a recipient rather than a producer of knowledge. They highlight the continent's significant role in global intellectual and cultural exchanges, showing that Africa was not isolated but deeply interconnected with the broader world. The contributions of African scholars and institutions to global knowledge and culture are a testament to the continent's enduring legacy as a centre of learning and innovation.

### **The Transatlantic Slave Trade: A dark chapter**

The Transatlantic Slave Trade marks one of the darkest chapters in African history. Millions of Africans were forcibly taken from their homelands, subjected to brutal conditions, and sold into slavery. This inhumane trade inflicted deep psychological, social, and economic wounds on African societies, tearing apart communities and devastating cultural continuity. Yet, the resilience of those who survived and the rich cultural traditions they maintained and transformed in the diaspora are testaments to their enduring spirit and strength.

## Colonialism and the struggle for independence

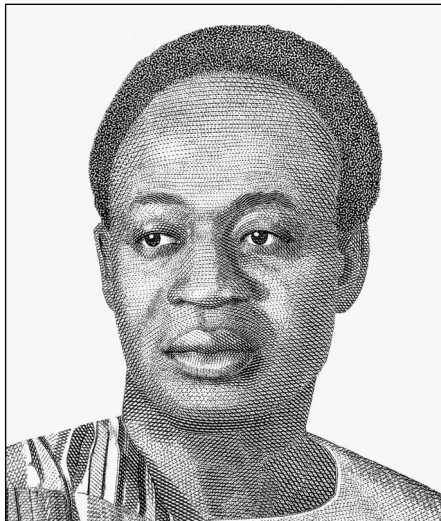
The partitioning of Africa during the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885 imposed arbitrary borders and initiated a period of intense exploitation and cultural suppression by colonial powers. Colonialism sought to erase and replace African identities, instilling foreign governance and ideologies. However, the 20th century witnessed a powerful wave of decolonisation as African nations, inspired by visionary leaders like Kwame Nkrumah and Nelson Mandela, fought for and achieved independence. These leaders championed not only political freedom but also the reclamation of African identity, culture, and history.

## Reclaiming and celebrating African history

Today, the movement to reclaim Africa's history is thriving, led by a new generation of African historians, scholars, and cultural leaders. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, a Kenyan writer and academic, has been instrumental in advocating for the decolonisation of African literature and history, emphasising the importance of African languages in preserving and promoting indigenous narratives. Achille Mbembe, a Cameroonian historian and political philosopher, offers critical analyses of postcolonial Africa and globalisation, providing new perspectives on issues of sovereignty and identity. Toyin Falola, a Nigerian historian, has extensively contributed to the understanding of African history, culture, and politics, while Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, through her acclaimed novels, explores complex themes of history and identity, notably in *Half of a Yellow Sun*.

Other influential figures include Wole Soyinka, a Nigerian playwright, poet, and essayist, whose work has been instrumental in celebrating African culture and critiquing

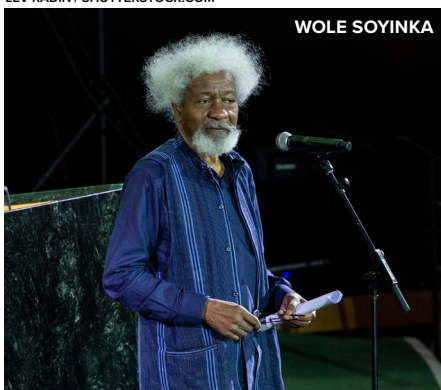
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KWAME NKUMAH

colonial and postcolonial power structures. As the first African laureate to be awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature, Soyinka's plays, such as *Death and the King's Horseman*, illuminate the depth and complexity of African traditions, while his essays and poetry continue to inspire generations. His contributions to literature and thought showcase the resilience and intellectual richness of African societies, reinforcing the importance of reclaiming and honoring African narratives.

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NELSON MANDELA

Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, a Zimbabwean scholar, is a leading voice in decolonial theory, critically examining the lasting effects of colonialism in contemporary African societies. The late Ali A. Mazrui, a Kenyan-born academic, profoundly influenced the understanding of African cultural and political dynamics through works like *The Africans: A Triple Heritage*, which explores the complex interplay of indigenous, Islamic, and Western influences in shaping African identities.

Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, a South African psychologist, has provided crucial insights into the processes of healing and reconciliation post-apartheid, through her research on trauma and memory. Her work, including *A Human Being Died That Night*, delves into the possibilities of forgiveness and the psychological and social dimensions of dealing with historical injustices.

These scholars and writers are vital in the ongoing effort to reclaim and retell the narrative of Africa's history. They challenge long-standing stereotypes and misconceptions, illuminating the continent's rich heritage and significant contributions to global culture. This movement is not merely about correcting historical records but also about asserting a vibrant and diverse African identity that is integral to the global narrative.

Reclaiming the narrative of African history is not just an academic exercise; it is a crucial endeavour that challenges outdated stereotypes and celebrates the continent's rich heritage. By presenting a fuller, more accurate story, we honour Africa's past and inspire future generations. Africa's history is a testament to the strength, creativity, and resilience of its people—a narrative that deserves to be told and celebrated in all its complexity and glory. As we continue this journey, it is essential to support and engage with African voices, ensuring they are central in shaping the global discourse about Africa's past, present, and future.



# Championing change: Jeremy Crook OBE's vision for racial justice

**Jeremy Crook OBE**, Chief Executive of Action for Race Equality (ARE), shares his insights on leadership, managing a charity, and tackling systemic racism. With over 40 years of experience, his perspective on advancing racial equality and driving meaningful change is both powerful and inspiring.



## **What three things are necessary to be a successful leader?**

To lead a national charity, perhaps the three most important ingredients for leadership success are vision, commitment, and humility.

As a leader, the people around you rightly look to me as the chief executive to have a vision of where we are heading and how we intend to get there. I want to see a country that is free of poverty, racism, and racial inequalities. For me, this starts with the state and all of its agencies. A vision isn't worth much unless you are committed to achieving it. I have been involved in racial justice work for over 40 years now, and whilst this can be very challenging and frustrating, as a leader, you have a responsibility to inspire and motivate others to play their part. I do this through showing my commitment every day—commitment to the charity that employs me, and everyone associated with it, to children and young people's support, and colleagues across the public, private, and voluntary sectors. Finally, humility is really important. Solving systemic racism requires all of us to find and deliver the solutions. I do not have all the answers and rely on other people to make their contributions, and this means I need to value, respect, and listen to other perspectives and help to navigate a shared way forward. I must operate within the resource envelope I have, but that's not to say I should not push the boundaries of possibility, be entrepreneurial, and learn from others. I want my charity to be financially self-sufficient, and after 33 years at ARE, I want my legacy to be a building we own to deliver this.

## **The voluntary sector does great work but is often the poor relation. How do you stay focused and motivated given the fiscal constraints?**

I started volunteering as a teenager at a small Black Caribbean 'youth' charity in Walsall, based in a portacabin with minimal resources. Despite limited staff and funding, we provided a safe space and helped the community. This experience taught me that even with limited resources, one can make a difference. The fight for racial justice doesn't have a price tag; we must think and act smart. The UK civil society sector is diverse in scale, resources, and ethnicity, but most Black and Asian charities are small and face systemic marginalisation by the system.

## **As a Black man, what are some of the narratives you want to reclaim?**

I have the honour of engaging with young and older Black men from all working- and middle-class backgrounds. What I see is talent, creativity, humour, and humility.

I also see Black men who are ground down from their lived experience in this country. I get great joy in meeting Black men who are at the top or near the top of their chosen profession. These are all role models and are especially important to young and mature Black men who don't see the pathways to success. I think the narratives all Black men face are the narratives that Black men aren't as intellectually capable as White men, and we should stick to sport and music. Of course, this biological racism goes back centuries and was used to justify the enslavement of African people. The other negative stereotypes persist that we are lazy, irresponsible, and aggressive. This is still a daily battle confronting Black men.

## **What should your generation be passing on to the next?**

The good news is that today there are many more successful Black men and women in every sphere of life. I am not sure it's about passing things on to the next generation! My generation wants to pass on a less racist country and world, but we are witnessing race riots by far-right criminals on our streets setting fire to buildings where people reside. On a practical level, if we are fortunate to pass on property to our children, that's a massive help in these difficult fiscal times. I want my generation to pass on far less poverty and hardship. I want all young people to start their adult journey without massive student debts and have a place they can afford to live independently and thrive.

## **Favourite Quote/Phrase/Adage/Proverb?**

Malcolm X:

*"[...] anytime you find someone more successful than you are, especially when you're both engaged in the same business—you know they're doing something that you aren't."*

The melanin that we carry is a gift! I turned 55 this year and whilst the grey hair and the menopause are doing their best, I know that I don't look my age. Many of us don't and it's one of many reasons why I love the wealth of my Blackness.

Thinking of my younger years that spanned the end of the 60's to 90's. I was one of only a handful of Black children in my schools growing up. But and it is a big but, every Saturday I was in church with people who looked my like me. We were the majority not the minority.

The people I grew up with in church were not only nurses and mechanics they were business owners, teachers, government workers and so much more. My narrative about Black wealth and business growing up was a very positive one.

A few years ago, I sat on podcast talking about women, finances and the Black community. There was another much younger guest and as she talked about her successes, she stated that "Most of us (Black people) come from the estates and grew up poor" (sic).

Whilst that may have been her experience, I didn't recognise it. My instant response was strong "That's not true."

And it's not true. It's important to recognise that there is a large swathe of middle-class Black people who are completely ignored by the media. It's easy to believe that we only live in council estates, not owning property or wealth.

Here's a different narrative. My Mum worked in the NHS, my Dad co-owned his own business and he was an Amway network marketer, my parents also had a growing property portfolio, and that was in the Seventies. They were not the only ones.

When I see the stats about Black wealth, I always wonder where the research was done. Was it just in London or did they look at other cities across the UK. It also strikes me that these stats don't take into consideration the land and property held "back home." You see, it's not the whole story.

Growing up in Leicester much of the Caribbean community, owned their own homes. This was because they supported



## Reclaiming Narratives: Embracing Black Wealth and Business in the UK

each other through finance systems like "Pardner" to purchase homes that provided ownership. This was at a time when mortgages were often refused to them, the interest rates offered were inflated and estate agents purposely over indexed house prices for Black people.

My parents paid more for their home than our white neighbour purchasing at the same time, due to a racist estate agent. Whilst many, like my parents, faced injustice they didn't let it define their narratives or actions.

***'When we focused on what was possible for us, our possibilities and realities changed exponentially'***

As Bob Proctor said, "Thoughts become things." And I will add to that "language matters." Our thoughts become our beliefs, and our beliefs impact our actions. If you say it enough, you'll think it enough and believe it enough to do it! Yes, systemic racism is still impacting us, yet our thoughts and language allow us the option take back control of our wealth narrative and view it differently.

My husband and I have boot strapped

everything that we have. The biggest change came in our business, wealth and lives when we changed our narrative. We recognised that the focus on our struggle kept us struggling. When we focused on what was possible for us, our possibilities and realities changed exponentially.

### **Let me give you some inspiration:**

The wealthiest man in the world was Mansa Musa, Emperor of the Malian empire, in the 14th century. The likes of Jeff Bezos and Elon Musk's wealth are nothing compared to this mans. He still is the number one the wealthiest person in history. He was a Black man. This man was worth so much so that they can't even calculate his value it in today's terms.

The idea of whether or not we can have wealth is formed and cemented in our minds by the conditioning that we experienced growing up, from inside and outside of the Black community. Just look at our history beyond slavery and you will soon find

that we come from vast wealth. That's why I refuse to focus on why we can't build wealth and success and focus on exactly why we can.

Building successful businesses as Black business owners is not just possible but a reality, however, to do so some mental rewiring is required. Changing our narrative, learning more about the business of business, investing in support, technology and developing the mind and action sets that move us forward are required.

Understanding wealth and wealth management are part of the change equation, whether you run your own business or are employed. Learning how to leverage this and trusting that you can achieve it, are all part of changing our narrative.

As we reflect on this Black History Month, let's commit to telling the stories that reflect our true wealth. Embracing and sharing positive narratives, not only honours our heritage but also inspire change as new generations inherit a new story about what's rightfully theirs.

Madeline McQueen is a Transformational Coach, Speaker & Host

# Leading with strength: Bas Sadiq on breaking barriers and leaving a legacy

Bas Sadiq, CEO of Homerton Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, shares her journey from outpatient receptionist to the top of an outstanding NHS trust. In a candid discussion, she opens up about tackling assumptions, reclaiming narratives, and the legacy she wants to leave for future generations of Black leaders.

## **You are CEO of an outstanding trust in London. As a Black female, what do you say to those who assume you are the diversity hire?**

I've learned not to waste my mental energy on those who assume I'm a diversity hire. I know, and those who have been with me every step of the way know, that my journey has been defined by hard work, resilience, determination, and a relentless pursuit of being the best that I can be. My seat at the table is not a right—I have earned it.

I started as an outpatient receptionist in the NHS and have had to work my way up through the system. Along the way, I took risks that paid off, not waiting for opportunities to come my way, but actively seeking them out. With the help of incredible NHS leaders, I moved between organisations and roles to gain as much experience as I could. I've been a digital programme manager, service manager, general manager across various services, divisional director of operations in both community and acute sectors, and finally, I moved into an improvement, innovation, and strategy role.

I don't spend my time trying to prove that I am not a diversity hire. Instead, I focus on the positive impact I've seen and experienced within the community of people of colour every time I've progressed in my career. The messages I've received from people I know and many I don't know, who tell me they've shared my story with their children to encourage them—that is what matters to me.

## **The theme for BHM is reclaiming narratives. In your opinion, how can the Black community reclaim narratives about CEOs and board members more generally?**

I want to start by saying that this is what has worked for me, and it's what I tell my friends and family. Reclaiming narratives starts with rejecting those that limit our potential. In my community, we've rejected the idea that discrimination will hold us back from becoming CEOs, board members, or achieving our dreams. We refuse to carry the burden of believing we must work twice as hard because of the colour of our skin.

*'Acknowledging the existence of racism and discrimination is important, but I refuse to let it define us or limit our future generations.'*

This mindset shift is crucial. The psychological impact of constantly feeling the need to fight can stifle our aspirations. Instead, I encourage myself, my family, and my friends to focus on acquiring the skills, experience, and qualifications needed for the roles we desire. If your goal is to become a CEO, concentrate on that. Build connections, seek out champions and mentors, and find organisations that support your ambitions.

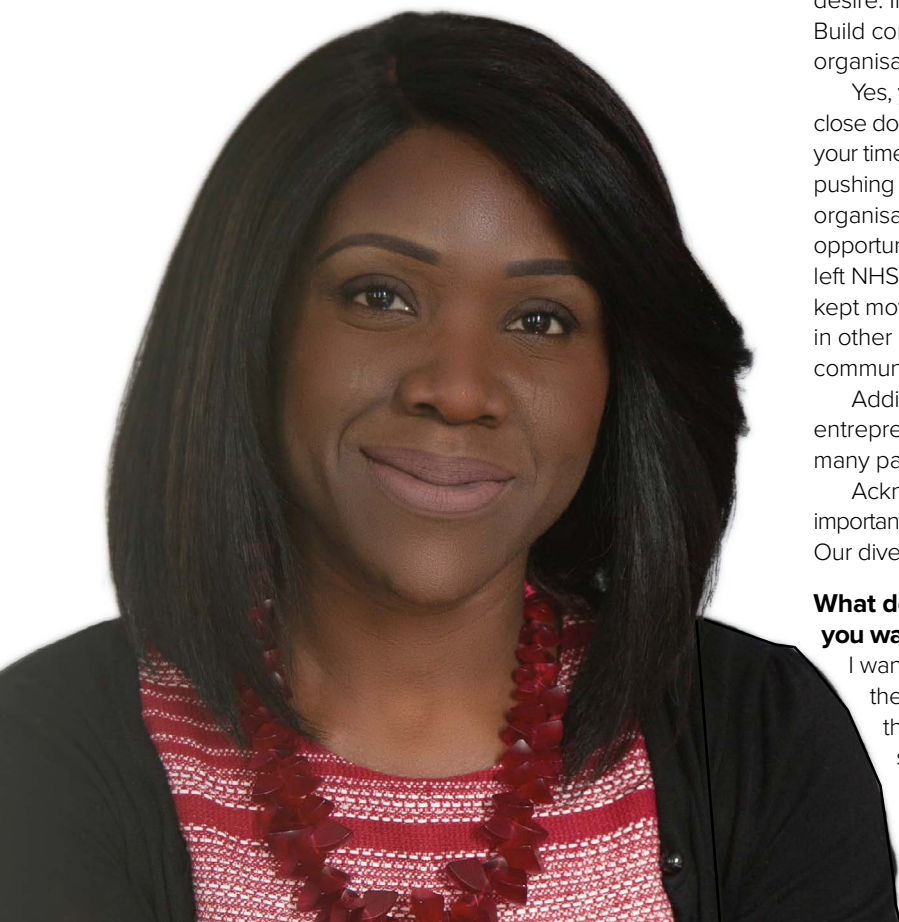
Yes, you will encounter people who try to hinder your progress, close doors, or fail to appreciate your talents. But rather than wasting your time and energy on them, move on. Know your worth and keep pushing forward. Throughout my career, across eight different NHS organisations, I've met incredible leaders who've provided great opportunities. I know two individuals from my immediate circle who left NHS organisations that failed to recognise their potential; they kept moving forward and have since secured higher-band roles in other organisations. I am witnessing more people from our community, particularly the younger generation, doing the same.

Additionally, I see Black CEOs who have risen through entrepreneurship by starting their own businesses. There are many paths to success available to us.

Acknowledging the existence of racism and discrimination is important, but I refuse to let it define us or limit our future generations. Our diversity is one of our greatest strengths—it's our superpower.

## **What do you want your legacy to be? What message do you want to pass on to the next generation of Black CEOs?**

I want my legacy to be one of inspiration—showing others that they can surpass the limitations the world tries to impose on them. My message to the next generation of Black CEOs is simple: Don't let anyone stand in the way of your dreams. Believe in your worth, seize the opportunities before you, and keep moving forward.



# LEADING WITH INCLUSION:

*Fiona Daniel on her journey from Financial Services to CEO*

## **With Fiona Daniel, CEO & Founder of FD2i Inclusion Business Partners**

**F**iona Daniel is a leading advocate for diversity and inclusion, serving as the CEO and Founder of FD2i Inclusion Business Partners. With a career spanning nearly 25 years in the financial services sector, Fiona made a significant career shift to become a prominent business leader in her own right. Her expertise in fostering inclusive cultures and strategic consulting has made a considerable impact on the organisations she works with. In this interview, we explore her journey from aspiring solicitor to CEO, the challenges she overcame, and her thoughts on reclaiming narratives for black CEOs during Black History Month.

### **Is this a role that was always on the cards for you?**

Most definitely not. I always thought I would be a solicitor. I did a degree in Law and went to work in a bank, only intending to stay for 2 years to save enough money to study for the Legal Practice Course. I stayed in the financial services sector for almost 25 years in a variety of roles. In all that time, being a CEO of a business or my own business never entered my plans. I had a career plan and I learnt early on the importance of having a plan, but having a plan that evolves and grows alongside my own growth and experience. It wasn't until late in my career that I began to seriously consider being a CEO of my own business.

### **What did you have to overcome or master to get here?**

The biggest thing I had to overcome was my own inner thoughts, which ranged from can I do it? how will I manage financially after a monthly income for almost 25 years? what if I don't have any clients? What if it doesn't work? Should I go it alone or work for another company? I invested in an executive coach when I left the safety of my organisation to help me make sense of the inner thoughts and it was the best thing I did. After only two sessions, I had the answers to my own questions and

my business was born. The key question for that unlocked my inner thoughts in a different direction was "What if it worked out and what would the impact be?" The reality has exceeded my expectation and almost five years later I am still the CEO of my own business.

### **What about your role makes you the most proud?**

Being able to demonstrate different styles of leadership in different situations but always having people and our values, vision and mission at its heart. The role is focused on running the business, growing the business, leading the business and I am proud of the opportunity to be able to do that and continue to learn while I do it. I always feel proud though when what we do has made a tangible impact, it's hard leading a business but when what you do makes a difference and clients come back, that for me is the ultimate icing on the cake that makes me beam with pride.

### **Reclaiming Narratives is the theme for Black History Month. What narrative do you want to reclaim about black CEOs?**

I think there is often a myth that black



individuals tend not to do well as CEOs or in senior positions. This is not the case at all; there are many businesses, large and small, being led by amazing black leaders. What we need to do is raise the visibility of black leaders in business. They exist across many sectors, making a huge difference in many different ways. If we perpetuate the message they don't exist or simply focus on the FTSE CEOs (which is lacking), we miss out on the bigger business picture and paint a narrative to others, particularly school-age black individuals, that the business world is not for them.

*"You have to become the author of your own script, one written by your heart, not one directed by society."*

### **What's the one quote, phrase, maxim, or adage that keeps you going?**

I have so many quotes and phrases, but the one that keeps me going is "You have to become the author of your own script, one written by your heart, not one directed by society." I am not sure who said it, but it keeps me going.



# A personal reflection: Fatherhood in the Black community

Fatherhood in the black community is thriving in the UK! This is not something we hear everyday but it's true.

Despite the rhetoric, fatherhood in the black community (for me) isn't shrouded in absenteeism. The majority of the men around me are active practitioners of conscientious guardianship. We actively seek advice from each other on subjects that are present and those that may transpire in the future. Group chats filled with conversations about generational wealth building, sustainable net worth growth, Trust Funds and the school curriculum lay side-by-side with invitations for family days in the park and sleepovers. I'm among a healthy number of 'girl-dads', so conversations about how to raise boys is at the forefront of discussion.

I'd hate for my words to come across as 'naïve. I know there are children with absent fathers and understand the challenges this creates. However, the media, in its attempt to maximise engagement, has successfully sensationalized and spun a narrative that the absentee father is unique to the black community. Not true.

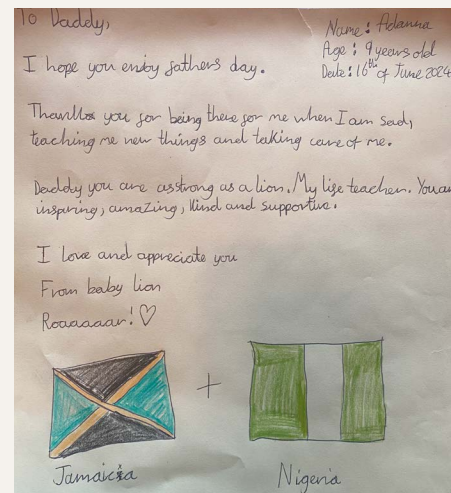
There are many factors that distort the presence of black fathers. Black men die young. There are systemic contributors that make Black men's early deaths even more tragic. "Many historical, social, economic, physical, and biological risk factors shape the life course of Black men and contribute to their increased rates of premature morbidity and mortality," according to national health research in the US.

Also, an unmarried man does not necessarily mean that he doesn't co-parent. Non-resident fathers does not mean that they don't take an active role in raising their children. Present, active fathers in the black community are not the exception. We aren't an outlier that should be celebrated simply for showing up (we don't celebrate active black mothers in the same way). We represent a norm.

Western media has typecast Black men as absentee and then doubled down by creating social conditions that attempt to remove Black men from their families, limit their earning potential and block their participation in achieving a higher socio economic status. Think about the sheer numbers of Black men who are overrepresented in the criminal justice system due to disproportionate scrutiny by police officers and sentencing.

## What fatherhood means to me.

Fatherhood consists of moments that ask many questions encouraging both growth and perspective. It's an honour to be a father. I remember when my daughter asked me what I wanted for Fathers' Day. I told her I didn't want anything. This didn't stop my daughter from making me a card which stated:



My own father didn't expect special things on Fathers' Day and always said "you should celebrate at the appropriate time. If we are all doing our part, we should feel appreciated."

I felt appreciated. My loved ones knew they were loved.

I am proud to be a father but first I am a man; a black man. Hope is driving me to reclaim the narrative about black fathers. Even when we have to have the 'talk' with our young ones or support them when they encounter racism for the first time. Even when we as black men are trying to debunk stereotypes and buck trends. It's painful. It's inevitable. It hurts.

Fortunately, I can draw on my brotherhood. Through each of my personal or parental challenges I've had the privilege of council, whether via my own father, uncles, cousins or brothers - inherent or elected - there has been the respect, love and consideration of conscientious black men to rely on.



**Manassie Wambu** is a Pan-Africanist girl-dad Software Engineering Manager who appreciates travel, loves nature and is overwhelmed with gratitude.

# CELEBRATING AND PROTECTING OUR HAIR HISTORY: THE HALO COLLECTIVE'S BLACK HAIR REVOLUTION

BY KATIANN BARROS ROCHA



The Halo Code explicitly protects students and staff who come to school with natural hair and protective hairstyles associated with their racial, ethnic, and cultural identities. As one of the founders of The Halo Collective, I want to share how the code started and why it is so important.

In 2020, I was 16 years old in my first year of Sixth Form: an eager, angry, bright-eyed teenage girl, frustrated with what she was seeing and experiencing, and determined to change it. Exactly four years ago, a group of five Black girls from South London pooled this energy into creating The Halo Code: the UK's first afro-hair policy, aimed at ending racialised afro-hair discrimination in schools and workplaces across the UK.

Our campaign was rooted in our lived experiences as young, Black girls navigating a British education system that heavily policed us. Black children were deprived of simply existing as children. Far too often, young Black girls and boys were robbed of their joy and their connection to culture and heritage. We created Halo to end blatantly racist school uniform policies and the Eurocentric standards of 'professionalism' that dominated them.

Research from World Afro Day and De Montfort University found that 58% of Black students experienced name-calling or uncomfortable questions about their hair at school. But this discrimination doesn't stop there—it seeps into the private sector, becoming as normalized in the workplace as rules about dress codes. One in four Black adults had a negative experience at school related to their afro-hair texture, and this discrimination often continues into adulthood, with one in five Black women feeling pressured to straighten their hair for work.

Afro-hair discrimination and texturism—defined as 'the discrimination faced by those with coarser and more Afro-textured hair on the premise that hair textures closer to white are more acceptable'—are deeply embedded in systemic racism. At Halo, we knew this long before the campaign began. But after collecting countless stories since the code's launch, we now understand more than ever that these statistics are not just numbers. Racialised hair discrimination follows us throughout our lives, shaping routines and forcing us to meet expectations designed for us to fail.

The Halo Code, launched in 2020, states: 'Our school/workplace champions the right of staff to embrace all Afro-hairstyles. We acknowledge that Afro-textured hair is an important part of our Black employees' racial, ethnic, cultural, and religious identities... We celebrate our colleagues' cultures, heritages, and identities. We are a community built on an ethos of equality and respect where hair texture and style have no bearing on an employee's ability to succeed.'

We set out to eliminate words like 'unprofessional,' 'wild,' 'unkempt,' or 'extreme' from uniform policies and dress codes for good. And we succeeded.

As of 2024, four years since the launch of the code, over 1,000 organisations, schools, and workplaces have pledged to end hair discrimination for good.

We allowed ourselves to dream big, pushing beyond the punitive norms found in institutions we interact with every day. We asked, 'What if we centred celebration? What if our schools and workplaces championed radical hope and acceptance?' We demanded a Black hair revolution that allows young Black children to thrive, moving

beyond mere survival or keeping their heads down and out of trouble. At Halo, our mission is for the next generation of Black and Brown people in the UK to feel empowered as they unapologetically celebrate themselves, their beauty, and their history.

Now, at 20 years old and entering my final year of university, I can say that beyond the very real impact Halo has had on thousands of Black people in the UK, it has also helped heal my younger self. A self who never had the confidence to explore, play, experiment, or tend to a part of me that now means more than words can express. I can now say, in 2024—something I couldn't have said in 2020—that I have a strong chance of starting my career and adult life in a space that protects me from hair discrimination, celebrates my heritage, and encourages me to show up as I am. That, more than anything, is why the Halo Collective does what we do.



**Katiann** is a co-founder of The Halo Collective, where she has worked on the growth and development of "The Halo Code" for three years on the collective's schools and workplaces team.





# TEACHING BLACK HISTORY:

## *Key education programmes across the UK*

As we celebrate Black History Month, it's essential to highlight the vital educational programmes that foster a deeper understanding of Black history and culture. Across the UK, numerous organisations are dedicated to enriching young minds and communities with knowledge that celebrates African heritage, Black history, and cultural traditions. From established supplementary schools in London to innovative online courses, these key education programmes play a crucial role in preserving and sharing the rich tapestry of Black history. Here, we showcase some of the most impactful initiatives making a difference in education and cultural awareness.

### BLACK SECRET EDUCATION PROJECT

**Contact:** Robin Walker

**Email:** [info@theblacksecret.co.uk](mailto:info@theblacksecret.co.uk)

**Website:** [theblacksecret.co.uk](http://theblacksecret.co.uk)

The Black Secret Education Project offers one of the world's most comprehensive online courses on African heritage and Black history. This programme provides in-depth modules covering various aspects of African history, culture, and the diaspora. Accessible from anywhere, it aims to educate a global audience on the significance of Black history and heritage, making valuable resources available to learners worldwide.

### CROYDON SUPPLEMENTARY EDUCATION PROJECT

**Contact:** Jacinth Martin

**Address:** 32-34 Sydenham Road, Croydon, CR0 2EF

**Email:** [jacinch\\_cseppm@yahoo.com](mailto:jacinch_cseppm@yahoo.com)

**Phone:** 0208 686 7865

**Website:** [csep.org.uk](http://csep.org.uk)

Founded by pioneers from the Windrush Generation, the Croydon Supplementary Education Project is one of London's longest-running Black supplementary schools. It offers a comprehensive Black History curriculum, serving students from the age of 5 to adults. Their mission is to empower individuals with knowledge about Black history and cultural heritage, fostering a strong sense of identity and pride within the community.

### CULTURE COMMUNITY

**Contact:** Precious Graham

**Address:** Honey Hill Child and Family Centre, Peterborough, PE4 7DR

**Email:** [culturecommunity21@gmail.com](mailto:culturecommunity21@gmail.com)

**Website:** [culturecommunity.co.uk](http://culturecommunity.co.uk)

Culture Community operates as a Saturday school in Peterborough, focusing on teaching Black history, culture, and traditions. Aimed at children and young adults aged 8-16, the programme provides engaging lessons and activities designed to deepen students' understanding of their cultural heritage. By combining academic instruction with hands-on experiences, Culture Community helps students appreciate the richness and diversity of Black cultures.

### REVOLUTIONARY MINDS

**Contact:** Auntie Jean's Afrikan Market

**Email:** [auntiejeanacm@outlook.com](mailto:auntiejeanacm@outlook.com)

Revolutionary Minds operates within Auntie Jean's Afrikan Market, a Pan-African marketplace in Brockley. Held on the third Sunday of each month, this vibrant market offers an array of resources related to Black history and culture. The market serves as

a hub for cultural exchange and education, featuring books, art, and artefacts that highlight the contributions and experiences of Black communities.

### INSPIRED HISTORIES

**Contact:** Linford Sweeney

**Email:** [inspiredhistories@gmail.com](mailto:inspiredhistories@gmail.com)

**Facebook:** InspiredHistories

Inspired Histories delivers educational courses and workshops that explore ancient African history, Caribbean history, African American history, and Black British history. Based in Manchester, the organisation offers a range of learning opportunities designed to engage students and broaden their understanding of Black history's impact on contemporary society. Through dynamic teaching methods, Inspired Histories seeks to make history accessible and relevant to all.

### YOUTH LEARNING NETWORK LTD

**Contact:** Kwame Ocloo

**Address:** 132 Melbourne Grove, East Dulwich, London SE22 8SA

**Phone:** 00447821623009

**Email:** [kwameocloo@btopenworld.com](mailto:kwameocloo@btopenworld.com)

**Website:** [youthlearningnetwork.net](http://youthlearningnetwork.net)

Youth Learning Network (YLN) is a not-for-profit organisation that focuses on education and cultural heritage to support young people. Based in East Dulwich, London, YLN provides various programmes aimed at fostering personal development and cultural awareness among youth. Their initiatives include workshops and educational resources designed to help young people navigate their world with a strong sense of cultural identity and resilience.

For more organisations, visit [blackeducation.com/supplementary-schools/](http://blackeducation.com/supplementary-schools/)

# **Paul Anderson:** *Leading with purpose and passion*

With over 40 years of experience, **Paul Anderson, CEO of the UK Centre for Carnival Arts and Voyage**, has transformed communities and inspired future leaders. In this interview, Paul reflects on his leadership journey, the challenges he's faced, and the lessons he's learned along the way.

## **CEO: Was this always a role you wanted?**

Becoming a CEO wasn't something I initially envisioned for myself, but I've always been drawn to leadership and never shied away from taking on greater responsibilities. My journey began in the late 1980s with Camden Youth Services, where I discovered a passion for supporting young people. This passion emerged from sharing my own traumatic experiences with my peers. My ability to candidly convey my lived experiences—whether related to policing, prison, or redemption—allowed me to build strong, authentic relationships with young people. As I took on various roles, from Youth Justice Officer to leading arts and cultural projects, my leadership skills developed naturally. These experiences eventually led me to the CEO role I hold today.

## **What did you have to overcome/master to get here?**

To reach this position, I had to overcome significant personal challenges, such as distancing myself from toxic peers, adopting a professional mindset, and returning to higher education. These obstacles weighed heavily on me as I navigated the complexities of youth justice, law, and community development. However, I learned to master project management, fundraising, and strategic planning by consistently proving my leadership abilities. This not only got me noticed but helped build strong relationships with decision-makers wherever I worked.

Balancing multiple roles, both paid and unpaid, was essential to my growth. Managing youth programmes for Camden Council while also directing an African drumming and dance company in my spare time honed my organisational and leadership skills. Resilience, adaptability, and flexibility were key to my success and development as a leader.

## **What about your role makes you the most proud?**

I am most proud of the transformative impact of the initiatives I've led on young people and the communities I've served for over 40 years. At the UK Centre for Carnival Arts, I raised over £14.5 million to create the UK's largest carnival arts team. I also established and ran the UK's first dedicated centre for carnival arts in Luton, for which I was awarded an MBE for my services to the Arts.

At Voyage, I developed a unique strategy for youth progression, steering the charity towards greater independence and stronger environmental credentials, while promoting employability in sectors where young people of colour are

underrepresented. Witnessing the growth, development, and empowerment of the individuals I've served brings me immense joy and satisfaction.

## **What advice would you give to aspiring CEOs?**

My advice to aspiring CEOs is to stay true to your vision and values while maintaining a genuine and empathetic commitment to those you serve. Build a supportive network, seek mentorship, and continuously develop your skills through training.

Embrace challenges—whether from life, love, or loss—and view them as opportunities for growth. It may sound counterintuitive, but I firmly believe in the saying, "what doesn't break you can only make you stronger." So keep going.

## **Reclaiming Narratives is the theme for BHM. What narrative do you want to reclaim about Black CEOs?**

I want to reclaim the narrative that Black and global majority CEOs are exceptional leaders whose insights, talents, and contributions have lasting value in any industry we enter. We must challenge the stereotype that our skin colour limits our opportunities. It's crucial to highlight the diverse experiences and innovative solutions we bring to the table. By celebrating our successes and sharing our stories, we inspire future generations and create a more inclusive narrative about Black and global majority leadership.

## **What's the one quote/phrase/maxim/adage that keeps you going?**

A quote that keeps me going is by Muhammad Ali: "*Don't count the days; make the days count.*" This reminds me to make every moment meaningful, focusing on the positive changes I can bring about each day.

*"what doesn't break you can only make you stronger."*





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 Survival Equipment Specialist ■  
 Vehicle & Mechanical Equipment  
 Technician ■  
 General Technician Workshop ■

## AIRCREW

**Pilot**  
**Remotely Piloted Aircraft System  
 (RPAS) Pilot**  
**Weapon Systems Officer**  
 Weapon Systems Operator  
 Weapon Systems Operator (Linguist)

## AIR & SPACE OPERATIONS

**Air Operations (Control) Officer**  
**Air Operations (Systems) Officer**  
 Air Traffic and Weapons Controller ■  
 Air and Space Operations Specialist  
 Air Cartographer  
 Firefighter ■  
 Air and Space Operations Manager ▲

## CHAPLAINCY

**Chaplain ●**

## CYBERSPACE

**Engineer Officer ●  
 (Communications Electronics)**  
 Communications Infrastructure Technician ■  
 Cyberspace Communication Specialist ■  
 Digital Reserves ▲

## PEOPLE OPERATIONS

**People Operations Officer**  
**Personnel Training Officer ●**  
**People Operations Officer - Media ▲**  
 People Specialist  
 People Specialist - Media ▲  
 Physical Training Instructor ■  
 Photographer

## INTELLIGENCE

**Intelligence Officer**  
 Intelligence Analyst (Linguist)  
 Intelligence Analyst ■

## LOGISTICS

**Logistics Officer**  
 Driver ■  
 Mover ■  
 Supplier ■  
 Chef ■  
 Air & Ground Steward ■

## SECURITY & RESILIENCE

**RAF Police Officer**  
**RAF Regiment Officer**  
 RAF Police ■  
 RAF Regiment Gunner ■  
 Musician

## MEDICAL SERVICES

**Medical Officer ●**  
**Nursing Officer ●**  
**Medical Support Officer (MSO)**  
**MSO Physiotherapist ●**  
**Dental Officer ●**  
**MSO Pharmacist ● ▲**  
 Registered Nurse ● (Adult)  
 Registered Nurse ● (Mental Health)  
 RAF Medic ■  
 Environmental Health Practitioner  
 Operating Department Practitioner  
 Radiographer  
 Biomedical Scientist  
 Pharmacy Technician  
 Dental Nurse  
 Student Nurse

## LEGAL

**Legal Officer ●**

*All information correct at time of publication.*

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