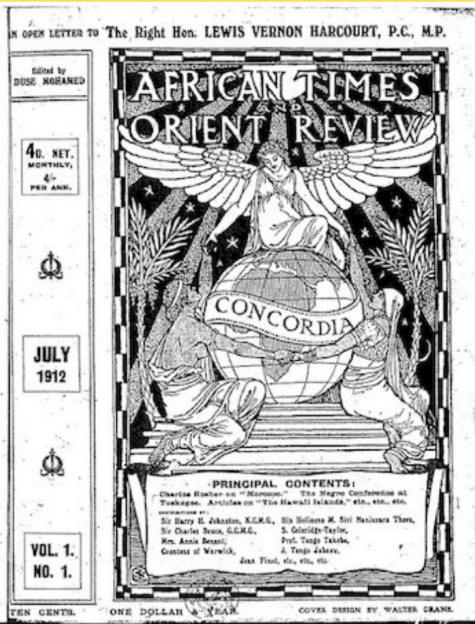


HISTORY

MATTERS



History Matters Journal

*Presenting the history of African and Caribbean
people in Britain*

Vol. 1, No. 2 Winter 2021

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2

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First edition

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History Matters Journal Editorial Working Group

Honorary member:

Marika Sherwood

Members:

Hakim Adi - University of Chichester

Rey Bowen - University of Chichester

A.S. Francis - University of Chichester

Aleema Gray - University of Warwick

Montaz Marché - University of Birmingham

Kevin Searle - The National Archives

Christopher Roy Zembe - De Montfort University

Perry Blankson - University of Leeds

List of Journal Contributors

Hakim Adi is Professor of the History of Africa and the African Diaspora at the University of Chichester.

Michael Siva received his PhD from Southampton University, where he explored the role of the Maroons in the Jamaican resistance movement against slavery. Michael has previously worked at Middlesex University, Muslim Aid, Theatre Royal Stratford East, Amnesty International UK, Jamaica Observer, Radio Jamaica, the National Water Commission, the Montego Bay Marine Park, and the Jamaica Gleaner.

Rey Bowen is a PhD History researcher at the University of Chichester, researching for a thesis entitled 'Dusé Mohamed Ali's Pan-Africanism 1912-1945: His influence Across the African Diaspora'

Emily McCulloch is a first year BA History undergraduate student at the University of Chichester, and gender and social history are just the start of her interests into history as a whole

Alex Douglas Bailey is a member of the Young Historians Project (YHP), a non-profit organisation formed of young people of African and Caribbean descent, which aims to encourage other young people to engage in underrepresented aspects of Black

British history

Kesewa John is a Dissertation Fellow at the Université des Antilles in Guadeloupe interested in the intersections of Black feminist and Black radical histories of early 20th-century Caribbean activism. Kesewa recently completed her PhD thesis 'People Papers: The Pan-African Communities and Afro-Caribbean Radicals between Paulette Nardal and George Padmore c.1918-1948' at the University of Chichester.

Ellie Kramer-Taylor is a Ph.D. student at King's College London researching transnational political activism between the Caribbean and its diaspora in Britain. Her doctoral thesis is provisionally titled, 'The Duties of Exile: Nationalism and Decolonisation amongst the Caribbean left in Britain'.

Natasha Howell is a married mother of a near 5 year old daughter; secondary school trained teacher with primary school teaching experience who is passionate and committed to supporting young adults from Black and ethnic minority communities to fulfil their personal and academic goals with tailored support from within the local community and beyond.

Marika Sherwood was a founding member of the Black and Asian Studies Association (BASA), and has written widely on the history of African and Caribbean people in Britain. She is currently writing an article about the visit of Booker T. Washington and his wife to the UK in 1899, which History Matters are looking forward to featuring in the next edition of the *Journal*

Claudia Tomlinson is a PhD candidate at the University of Chichester, researching for a thesis entitled: 'Journey from Communism in British Guiana to Black Radicalism in the Global North: A Political Biography of Jessica Huntley (1927 – 2013)'

Annabelle Gilmore is a PhD History student at the University of Birmingham. her thesis 'Slavery and Empire on Display at Charlecote Park, Warwickshire', funded by Midlands4Cities AHRC, traces the links between slavery and imperialism to a country house display, exploring how these institutions underpinned British elite consumerism in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

I

Announcements, Articles and
Documents

Editorial

Welcome to the second edition of History Matters Journal. We would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who have contributed to the first two editions. Thanks must also be given to the Editorial Working Group and especially to Marika Sherwood for all her proof-reading and editorial work.

We hope to improve and expand the contents of the Journal, step by step, but that depends on your contributions. If you have comments, or constructive criticisms, please send them to us. If you come across historic documents, as well as other interesting historical material, or you have begun working on a new area of research, please let us know so that this information can be shared more widely. We are particularly interested in presenting more shorter articles and contributions, as well as pictures, photos and other visual forms of information.

We have already had a very good response to the call for papers to the 2nd New Perspectives Conference, which will be held in October later this year. However, there is still time to send us a proposal if you would like to participate. As always, we are particularly interested in showcasing the work of young researchers, so if you have something new or exciting to contribute

please do get in touch.

History Matters Presents: 2nd New Perspectives on the History of African and Caribbean People in Britain Conference



Speakers at 1st New Perspectives on Black British History

October 2021, London (venue tbc)

Call for Papers

Through a series of presentations and discussions, this conference seeks to provide a platform for the sharing of knowledge regarding the histories of African and Caribbean peoples in Britain.

The first New Perspectives conference convened by History Matters (2017) brought together scholars and activists to explore how young and emerging scholars of Black British History, particularly those of African and Caribbean heritage, were pushing the boundaries of knowledge and redrawing the field. Many of the conference's presentations were subsequently published in [*Black British History: New Perspectives*](#), edited by Prof. Hakim Adi. This second conference will be open to the public, and will again focus on highlighting research produced by young and emerging scholars, particularly those of African and Caribbean heritage, who remain poorly represented within the wider history field as well as in academia.

Call for papers - 2nd Conference:

History Matters invites paper proposals for the 2nd New Perspectives on Black British History conference which will take place in October 2021 (location tbc). Proposals for papers are due by **31st March 2021**.

History Matters particularly welcomes research papers focusing

on historical periods before 1900; on women and gender history; on LGBT+ histories; on the history of African and Caribbean people outside London; on the history of continental African communities and organisations in Britain; and the historical relationships established by those of African and Caribbean heritage in Britain with the African continent and the wider African diaspora. However, proposals covering all fields of Black British History are welcome.

BLACK BRITISH HISTORY

NEW PERSPECTIVES



EDITED BY HAKIM ADI

Following on from the 2017 conference, selected papers from this prospective conference will be included in a second volume of *New Perspectives* edited by Prof. Hakim Adi and published by Bloomsbury.

Proposals should be submitted via email to hismatters@gmail.com by Wednesday 31st March 2021. Accepted proposals will be confirmed by 1st May 2021.

Individual proposals should include an abstract of up to 350 words and a one-page CV. They must include the author's full name, email address and institutional affiliation (if applicable). Please also include the title of the presentation. (It is not certain if the conference will be live, or online, but also include any equipment needs.)

For all further inquiries, please contact hismatters@gmail.com or visit our website for more information.

The African Diaspora in Britain

Hakim Adi

The following is a transcript of a lecture given by Professor Hakim Adi, at Gresham College during Black History Month 2020. The lecture video can also be viewed on [Youtube](#).

It is perhaps unusual to present a lecture of this type by focusing on personal experience, but I am one of the consequences of the hidden history that I will speak about. When I was young and at school there was no Black History Month. In fact, when I started my research into this subject over forty years ago there was still no Black History Month. The history of Africa, as well as the history of all the African diaspora in Britain – what today some people call ‘Black British History’ certainly existed but was largely hidden from view. I might add that the existence of BHM, which showcases such history for only one month is merely a recognition that for the other eleven months it is largely hidden. It is a symptom of the problem of Eurocentrism that still faces us rather than a cure. I decided at a young age that I wished to uncover that hidden history not just for my own enlightenment

but also for the enlightenment of others. It did not seem right to me then, and does not seem right to me now, that my family, my ancestors, Africans and those of African descent in general, should be excluded from history, nor on the periphery of history. In the last forty years some progress has been made but, as has become even more apparent during the course of this year, there is still a long way to go.

I have deliberately chosen to entitle my lecture the African diaspora in Britain, I refer to all people of African heritage in Britain. Of course, it might be claimed that if we go back far enough in history everyone is of African heritage and so this term applies to all humans. That is a persuasive argument but an approach not normally adopted, not least because the Africans that I refer to have generally been hidden from the Eurocentric rendering of history. The image which has been used to publicise this lecture is a useful start because nobody really knows who this African man is – he might represent every African in the 18th century and for me he represents something about the history of the African diaspora in general. We don't know anything about who he is and where he came from but we can all agree that he was an African. He was certainly significant enough to be painted but even if he was not immortalised in this way, we should still wish to know about the thousands of Africans who were here in Britain at that time. There is no reason why they should be excluded from history.

The history of these diverse Africans goes back at least to Roman time and quite possibly one thousand years before that. Peter Fryer has even claimed that Africans were in Britain before the ancestors of the English, perhaps a rather provocative way

of making the point. The Museum of London has recently illustrated its recent Roman Dead exhibition with the image of a woman of African heritage in order to highlight the many Africans who lived and died in Roman London. In particular that image highlights recent tests on the remains of the 'Lant Street Teenager,' as she is known who was only fourteen at the time of her death, had been born in North Africa but probably had sub-Saharan African ancestry. The teenager had only been living in London a few years prompting questions about the circumstances of her migration. Another skeleton found in Roman London is of a middle-aged African man who had probably grown up in London and suffered from diabetes. DNA analysis of such remains show the diversity of population at the time and that Africans could be found living in many parts of Britain.

Recent analysis of human remains also suggests that not only those of North African origin found their way to Britain but also others from sub-Saharan Africa such as 'Beachy Head Lady.' The lady in question refers to skeletal remains first discovered near Eastbourne in southern England. The remains are thought to date from the mid third century CE in the middle of the Roman period and are of a young woman. Although she is thought to have grown up in the area analysis of her remains suggests that her origin was clearly African, and from a part of Africa that was not included within the Roman empire, but she was probably either born in Sussex, or brought to Britain at a very young age. Such evidence poses fascinating questions about the past and the possibility of families of African living in Britain in ancient times.

Such examples are being found all over the country, most notably in the city of York where the remains of the African Ivory Bangle Lady, as she is known, have become well-known. At the beginning of the 20th century people digging in a street in York discovered a 1700-year old stone coffin of a woman. She had been buried with jewellery, including jet and ivory bracelets, as well as other possessions and was undoubtedly of elite status. It was not until 2010 that archaeologists were fully able to analyse the skeleton which they found to be of a young woman, probably 18-23 years old and of North African origin. The archaeologists were even able to make a reconstruction to show us what this African 'ivory bangle lady' may have looked like. This and other research have shown that those of African heritage, including African women of all classes, were a settled population before the arrival of the Angles and Saxons. These findings prompted one leading archaeologist to conclude that 'analysis of the 'Ivory Bangle Lady' and others like her, contradicts common popular assumptions about the make-up of Roman-British populations as well as the view that African immigrants in Roman Britain were of low status, male and likely to have been slaves.

Such finds not only show that Roman Britain was 'multicultural' but that Africans not only lived in Roman Britain but were almost certainly born here too. Some were clearly of high status and at least two of those who migrated from Africa, Septimius Severus and Quintus Lollius Urbicus were rulers of this country.

All this suggests that histories of Britain need to be presented in a rather different way than they have in the past. In short, that Africans cannot and should not be excluded from the history of Britain, nor as the makers of history in Britain. An even more interesting development is the recent revelation in February

2018 that the those whom might be considered some of the first Britons, that is the first to provide genes that can be found amongst some of the modern inhabitants of Britain, had 'dark to black' skin, as well as dark hair and blue eyes. Indeed, one newspaper headline boldly proclaimed that according to the latest DNA study 'the first Britons were black.' The research analysed the skeletal remains of Cheddar Man, first discovered in a cave in Somerset in 1903, who is thought to have lived in England some 10,000 years ago amongst a population of only 12,000. That study showed that migrants who originated in Africa, and came to Britain via western Asia and Europe, maintained darker skin pigmentation for much longer periods and that the development of pale skin pigmentation took place much more recently that was previously thought. The research into the origins and appearance of Cheddar Man, suggests that the population of western European hunter-gatherers of that period almost certainly looked similar to Cheddar Man, with dark to black skin. The earliest Europeans just like the earliest Britons could also be considered black people. Notions of Britishness and Englishness once more need to be re-thought.

Early history also reveals key individuals who had a major influence throughout ancient Britain. Reports such as those from the Venerable Bede record that the North African abbot Hadrian was sent by the Pope to accompany the new Archbishop of Canterbury to England in 668 CE. Hadrian, it is reported, was initially asked to become archbishop himself but refused the post. He later become the abbot of St Peter and St Paul's in Canterbury. Bede described him as 'vir natione Afir,' which has been translated as a 'man of African race.' His exact origins are however unknown and some historians suggest that he was a

Berber from what is today Libya. It is thought that Hadrian had a major influence on the structure of the Christian church in England, which he helped to reform, as well as on education and Anglo-Saxon literature. It is thought that he brought with him some important North African literary works and introduced students to new ideas in various subjects from astronomy to philosophy.

It is now evident that Africans were in Britain in very ancient times but what of the modern period? I began by mentioning my own experience and I want to return to that now. When I started research there were very few other researchers, very few books and a popular idea that the African diaspora, those of African and Caribbean heritage, only arrived in Britain in the post-war period. For me at that time there were several important considerations. I wanted to look into my own family history in the sense that I needed to know more about those Africans who came to Britain as students and for other purposes in the twentieth century, just as my father had when he arrived from Nigeria. Second, I was concerned to provide more evidence to refute the notion that an African diaspora only existed in Britain in the post-war period and was mainly connected with those who migrated from the Caribbean. Third, and perhaps because I came from a background studying African History, I rejected the idea that the study of African History generally excluded the diaspora, a notion that still persists today, or that the history of Britain could also exclude the history of the African diaspora. For me there was just one inter-related history, I didn't see how it could be understood in any other way and I wanted to find out more. I also wanted to find out much more about the political activities of the African diaspora and how

people had struggled against racism and all the consequences of colonial rule. I wanted to learn from history in order to address the racism and other related problems that I faced growing up in Britain.

African students have been coming to Britain since the 16th century. It even became fashionable in the 18th century and prospective students such as William Ansah tell us much about the exploitative relationship that then existed between Britain and West Africa at that time. Ansah was the son of a human trafficker who was himself enslaved and then rescued by human traffickers in Britain so that his father would again allow the resumption of human trafficking. We can see that from his portrait that he was well looked after in London, before being returned to his father in West Africa. In short, we can see that the human trafficking which provided the wealth allowing Britain's economic transformation was generated throughout a relationship between the rich and powerful in Britain and their counterparts in Africa, although much to the advantage of the former.

We can discover much about Britain's history by investigating the history of Africans in Britain. The main features of Britain's history in the 18th century are the struggles that developed around liberty and human rights and the struggle against slavery was one of the most important aspects of this struggle. Indeed, it was one of the largest political campaigns in Britain's history, involving men, women and children and with Africans, such as Olaudah Equiano and Ottobah Cugoano, Jonathan Strong and James Somerset, playing an important role but often largely hidden from view today. When this country commemorated

the Parliamentary abolition of the slave trade in 2007 much was made of the great and good, such as Wilberforce and other Members of Parliament, and much less about the role of Africans and their allies amongst the working people of this country. At that time Equiano and his comrades in the London Corresponding Society clearly understood and advanced the principle that their security was based on their joint struggle and that it was vital to fight for and defend the rights of all. This principle was further developed in the 19th century by the Chartists and their leaders such as William Cuffay. It has also been an important principle of advanced political thinking throughout the 20th century.

But what of the African diaspora in the twentieth century. In that century the activities of those of African heritage was again a central part of Britain's history because it involved a struggle against two significant and inter-related phenomena – colonialism and racism, which in the early part of the century was referred to as the colour bar. Although I was particularly interested in those who came to Britain from West Africa, those who organised themselves into various groups such as the Nigerian Progress Union, West African Students' Union and Committee of African Organisations. It became evident that they often collaborated with those from the Caribbean and elsewhere, indeed, the Nigerian Progress Union was jointly founded by a Jamaican woman living in Britain, Amy Ashwood Garvey. They formed Pan-African organisations such as the African Association, the International African Service Bureau, the Pan-African Federation and they also organised and participated in Pan-African congresses. These organisations also established links with those in Africa, the Caribbean, Europe, the US and

similar elsewhere as well as others in Britain campaigning against racism and colonialism such as the Fabian Colonial Bureau, the League Against Imperialism and perhaps most importantly the Communist Party, which in the period before the mid-1950s was the main champion of the struggle against racism and colonialism and was connected to a global movement. My initial interest in African students and the African diaspora in Britain led me into the global history of Pan-Africanism and the history of international communism. It led me to examine the activities of those who struggled against the status quo, women like Alice Kinloch, Amy Ashwood Garvey, Olu Solanke, Irene Ighodalo, or men such as Bandele Omoniyi, Ladipo Solanke, George Padmore Obi Egbuna, not forgetting communists such as Desmond Buckle, who lived in London most of his life and Len Johnson, who was born in Britain and Claudia Jones who was deported to Britain. In short, my interest in the African diaspora could not be understood apart from some understanding general history of Britain as well as global history, and of course without some reference to the modern history of Africa and the wider African diaspora. I found that this history could not be researched and written about just from archives in Britain but some of the most important finds were from archives in Nigeria, Russia, Holland, France, the USA etc.



West African Students Union (WASU)

To give just one example the WASU was based in London but it established branches throughout West Africa, which in turn led to the creation of anti-colonial organisations such as the Nigerian Youth Movement and Gold Coast Youth Conference. Perhaps most importantly when the WASU in London needed finance, it sent its secretary-general, Ladipo Solanke to West Africa to raise money. It was that support that enabled the Union to open its first hostel in Camden in 1932. When those in West Africa wanted to agitate for some political change in the colonial system, they might telegram their concerns to the WASU in London. In turn these would be passed onto sympathetic MPs. A problem occurring in Lagos one day might be posed as a parliamentary question the next, to the astonishment and concern of the Colonial Office.

The period after 1948 is often termed, quite arbitrarily the

Windrush era, or perhaps the era of the Windrush generation. In Britain's history it might perhaps also be seen as a time of the intensification of post-war racism directed against the African diaspora, as well as against others, but in effect directed against all Britain's citizens, since it created divisions and confusions as to the source of the problems confronting people. Key events include the large-scale attacks that starting in Liverpool in 1948, and in London and Birmingham in 1949 and these attacks in different forms have continued to the present time, as the events of this year have highlighted. This is an aspect of the history of Britain and its African diaspora that I do not have time to go into here. However, one aspect of it is the effect that it has on the presentation of history. We are often presented with a hierarchy of history, or perhaps histories, a reflection of the fact that history is often contested as highlighted in the proverbial expression. 'Until the lions produce their own historian, the story of the hunt will glorify only the hunter.'

In our concern for the hidden history of the African diaspora in Britain we often grasp what appears to be most visible. The arrival of the *Empire Windrush*, for example, which was filmed by *Pathé* and caused something of a stir in government circles. There were troop ships returning to Britain from the Caribbean before June 1948 but their significance has become hidden. There is also the unfortunate consequence that the history of the African diaspora in Britain after 1948 all too often becomes a history only of those with close connections with the Caribbean. That history and those connections are important, of course, but they do not make up the total history of the African diaspora in Britain which, especially in the 21st century, increasingly has direct connections with the African continent. What are the

dangers of this single story? One danger is that other important histories become neglected and hidden and therefore history becomes distorted. We end up with a hierarchy of histories, with some apparently more visible and therefore seen as more important than others.

Let me provide one example. 1948 was also the year when the NHS was created and the NHS therefore now has a history of over seventy years duration. Most people would quite rightly consider that the NHS has been built by everyone in Britain including the many migrants who have come to this country from all over the world. Indeed, migrants have often been recruited from all over the world including Africa and the Caribbean. If we take the example of the history of female health-workers, it would be unthinkable today to exclude those nurses and other professionals from the Caribbean. Indeed, the BBC even produced a documentary which is regularly aired entitled *Black Nurses: The Women Who Saved the NHS*. I'm sure that everyone involved was concerned to tell the complete story but the overwhelming majority of those who featured in the programme were of Caribbean heritage – the testimonies of those of African heritage were almost completely hidden. There appeared to be few lions to tell their story.

The consequence is that then there is an effort to perhaps counter that one-sided and incomplete presentation of the history. Perhaps people look for the most visible African women at the time of the creation of the NHS. They seem to have decided upon Kofoworola Abeni Pratt, a distinguished nurse from Nigeria who was one of the first to train at the Nightingale School of Nursing in London from 1946-1949, later became the

Chief Nursing Officer in Nigeria and ‘the first black women to become a vice-president of the International Council of Nurses.’ As a consequence, she has often been named as ‘the first black nurse to work for the NHS.’ However, close investigation and the research carried out by the Young Historians Project (YHP) recently has perhaps no unsurprisingly uncovered several other African nurses who were training in Britain at that time and might equally be awarded the title of ‘the first black nurse to work for the NHS’ if such a title was useful. The YHP was itself created as another consequence of this hidden history – the fact that so few young people of African or Caribbean heritage seek to engage with history, enter those professions associated with it, or become teachers of history. Of course African women had been training as nurses in Britain for many years before 1948, as is evident from the recorded exploits of Tsehai, the daughter of the Ethiopian emperor Haile Selassie, and the sadly lost film *Nurse Ademola*, made during the Second World War to record the training of Adenrele Ademola, the daughter of the Alake of Abeokuta. One African women, Lulu Coote, spent her entire life nursing in Britain from the time of the First World War. There is unfortunately not time the many African women doctors and other health workers. The African diaspora includes women of both Caribbean and African heritage and these women continue to be recruited to work in the NHS not just in Britain but also as part of the ‘brain drain’ from their countries of origin even in the 21st century.

At the start of this lecture I indicated that I had deliberately chosen the topic the African diaspora in Britain. Of course, it is impossible to cover it in one lecture, or even in one Black History Month, just as it would be possible to cover the history of Britain,

or the history of Africa in one lecture, or one month. No doubt some will say that this lecture should have included this or that and I can only agree. The history of the African diaspora in Britain is immense, dating back thousands of years, integral to an understanding of Britain's past and present and connecting Britain not only to Africa and the Caribbean but also the rest of the world. It is important for all of us to gain a view of history that is not distorted or one-sided, one that not only allows us to understand the past but also provides an outlook on the present, which helps us to understand the world and, we hope, to change it.

Further Reading:

<https://blog.nationalarchives.gov.uk/african-princess-in-guys-the-story-of-princess-adenrele-ademola/#comments>
<https://www.younghistoriansproject.org/african-women-and-the-health-servic>

H. Adi, *West Africans in Britain 1900–1960: Nationalism, Pan-Africanism and Communism* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1998) ebook now available

H. Adi, *Pan-Africanism: A History* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018)

H. Adi, *Pan-Africanism and Communism: The Communist International, Africa and the African Diaspora 1919–1939* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 2013)

H. Adi (ed.), *Black British History: New Perspectives* (London: Zed Press, 2019)

H. Adi and M. Sherwood, *Pan-African History – Political Figures from Africa and the Diaspora from 1787* (London/New York: Routledge, 2003)

H. Adi and M. Sherwood) *The 1945 Manchester Pan-African Congress Revisited* (London: New Beacon Books, 1995)

H. Adi, *Many Struggles: African and Caribbean People in Britain – An Introductory History* (London: Penguin, Forthcoming)

P. Fryer, *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain* (London: Penguin, 1984)

Why did the Black Poor of London not support the Sierra Leone Resettlement Scheme?

Michael Siva

The Sierra Leone Resettlement Scheme was a project set up in the late eighteenth century to facilitate the colonisation of a section of the coast of West Africa, while at the same time offering an opportunity for poor Black Londoners to forge a new life in a new world. Initial reports indicated that over 700 passengers signed up for the Scheme, but when the ships were finally ready to sail in 1786, just over 400 turned up to board the ship, and of that number even less were actually black, because of the white wives who accompanied some of the black men.¹ When the first expedition failed, and there was a need for reinforcements, the authorities decided to look elsewhere. There was a lack of enthusiasm for the Scheme from Black

¹ James Walvin, *Black and White: the Negro and English Society 1555-1945* (London: Butler & Tanner, 2003), p. 148.

Londoners, so the organizers recruited replacement settlers from the Black Pioneers of Nova Scotia for their relief expedition in 1791, and after a series of trials, this settlement eventually took root, and was the genesis of the country we now know as Sierra Leone.²

THE BLACK POOR OF LONDON

While Great Britain was reaping profits from its involvement in the slave trade, it was a different matter having black people living so close to home in the capital city, and while this black community grew during this period of time, there was a certain amount of unease in English society.³ Concerns were raised about black people living in London as early as 1596, when Queen Elizabeth I complained about “blackamoors” cluttering up the streets of the kingdom, and issued a Royal Proclamation ordering the removal of “those kinde of people”.⁴ There is no evidence that the Queen’s orders were carried out, and the black community of London grew around the Mile End area of the eastern part of the city, and Paddington in the west in the century that followed.⁵ However, in 1731 the Corporation of London, responding to former Barbadian slave John Satia becoming a tradesman, ordered that “for the future no Nigros or other Blacks be suffered to be bound apprentice at any of

² Simon Schama, *Rough Crossings* (London: BBC Books, 2005), pp. 255–383.

³ Folarin Shyllon, *Black People in Britain 1555–1833* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p.132.

⁴ Liza Picard, *Elizabeth’s London: Everyday Life in Elizabethan London* (London: Butler & Tanner, 2003), p.110.

⁵ Walvin, *Black and White*, p. 48.

the Companies of this City to any freeman thereof.”⁶ While tradesmen were strictly regulated in the cities to protect local businesses and discourage migration, this Proclamation closed a number of professions to free blacks, forcing them to seek employment in the domestic service and at sea.⁷

The numbers of black Londoners were regularly increased by runaway slaves, such as the one described by American founding father Benjamin Franklin, who was describing a runaway slave who fled his English family home in 1760.⁸ Several references are made to “balls” and “bawdy-houses” attended by blacks, throughout the 1760s and 1770s.⁹ Writing in 1769, a judge named John Fielding suggested that black Londoners were “troublesome and dangerous,” formed “Societies,” and enticed slaves to run away and join their community.¹⁰ In 1787, about 40 black seamen prevented constables from arresting

⁶ Marika Sherwood, ‘Historic Documents: Negro Apprentices’, *Black and Asian Studies Association (BASA) Newsletter*, 42 (2005), p. 24.

⁷ Gretchen Gerzina, *Black England: Life before Emancipation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 19; Marika Sherwood, ‘Blacks in the Gordon Riots’, *History Today*, 47, no.12 (1997); Walvin, *Black and White*, p. 59.

⁸ Benjamin Franklin, *The Life and Writings of Benjamin Franklin* (1818), ed. by Albert Smyth (New York: MacMillan and Co, 1905), pp. 23-4.

⁹ John Baker, *The Diary of John Baker (1712-79)*, ed. by Philip C. Yorke (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1931), p. 15; James Boswell, *The Ominous Years 1774-76*, ed. by Charles Ryskamp (London: William Heinemann, 1963), p. 118; ‘London’, *London Chronicle*, 16-18 February 1764, p. 6.

¹⁰ John Fielding, *Extracts From such of the Penal Laws, particularly related to the peace and good order of this metropolis* (London: Woodfall and Strachan, 1769), pp. 143-5.

one of their own at a pub in East London.¹¹ A memorial to a rector in Middlesex made the boast that “no clergyman in England ever baptized so many black men and Mulattoes.”¹² In the 1770s, Julius Soubise, the free black servant of the Duchess of Queensbury, was subjected to unsubstantiated allegations that he raped one of the Duchess’s white maid-servants.¹³ In 1786-7, at the time of the formation of the Sierra Leone Re-settlement Scheme, there were concerns that black Londoners were responsible for a significant proportion of the crime in the capital, possibly because whenever a black person committed a crime, the newspapers of the day made sure to highlight the person’s race.¹⁴ James Tobin, a member of the pro-slavery lobby noted that “three Negroes died in Newgate on the same day; two of them under sentence of death, and the third committed for a capital offence.”¹⁵ There was a perception that people of colour contributed significantly to violent crime in the 18th century, a view highlighted by the sensationalist coverage given to the trial of a “mulatto” named John Hogan for a brutal murder in

¹¹ Michael Flynn, *The Second Fleet: Britain’s Grim Convict Armada of 1790* (Sydney: Library of Australian History, 1993), pp. 110, 232.

¹² *The Orthodox Churchman’s Magazine* (London: J. Spragg, 1802), II, p. 30.

¹³ ‘London’, *Morning Post*, 22 July 1777, p. 2.

¹⁴ ‘London’, *General Evening Post*, 15 December 1787, p. 1; ‘Old Bailey’, *The World*, 18 July 1787, p. 3.

¹⁵ James Tobin, *Cursory Remarks upon the Reverend Mr. Ramsay’s Essay on the Treatment and Conversion of African Slaves in the Sugar Colonies* (London: G. and T. Wilkie, 1785), p. 118.

early 1786.¹⁶

Members of the pro-slavery lobby expressed fears that the Mansfield ruling of 1772 would lead to blacks flocking to England in huge numbers, which would result in white English servants missing out on employment and starving as a result.¹⁷ In the 1780s, James Tobin, Gilbert Francklyn and Gordon Turnbull tried to blame anti-slavery campaigners for the increasing numbers of black poor sleeping on the streets of London.¹⁸ A London newspaper predicted that unless some action was taken, then “London would, in another century, have the appearance of an Ethiopian colony.”¹⁹ Some even claimed that black Londoners made a fortune from begging, and accused humanitarians of being more concerned about black Africans than their own “suffering countrymen.”²⁰ Anti-slavery campaigners such as

¹⁶ *London Chronicle*, 3-5 January 1786, p. 11, 12-14 January 1786, p. 46, 14-17 January 1786, pp. 50, 55; ‘London’, *General Evening Post*, 14 January 1786, p. 3; ‘Old Bailey Intelligence’, *General Advertiser*, 14 January 1786, p. 3; ‘Old Bailey Intelligence’, *Public Advertiser*, 16 January 1786, p. 4, 17 January 1786, p. 3; ‘Old Baily Intelligence’, *Morning Herald*, 16 January 1786, p. 3.

¹⁷ ‘Letter’, *Morning Chronicle*, 21 May 1772, p. 2.

¹⁸ Tobin, *Cursory Remarks*, pp. 117-8; Gordon Turnbull, *An Apology for Negro Slavery: or the West-India Planters vindicated from the charges of Inhumanity* (London: J. Stevenson, 1786), p. 32; Gilbert Francklyn, *An Answer to the Rev. Mr Clarkson’s Essay on the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species, particularly the African* (London: J. Walter, 1789), p. 165.

¹⁹ ‘London’, *Morning Post and Daily Advertiser*, 22 December 1786, p. 2.

²⁰ James Grant, *Sketches in London* (London: William Tegg, 1838), pp. 26-7; John Thomas Smith, *Vagabondiana: or, Anecdotes of Mendicant Wanderers Through the streets of London* (London: J. & A. Arch, 1817), pp. 33-5; ‘London’, *General Evening Post*, 26-28 August 1773, p. 3; ‘Extract of a Letter from a Gentleman in Truro, to his Friend in London, dated May 30’, *London Chronicle*, 7 June 1788, p. 2.

Granville Sharp, who personally provided assistance to about 400 black Londoners, observed in 1788 that many “fell into extreme poverty, and were starving about the streets, till they were relieved, for some time, by a voluntary subscription of charitable people.”²¹ A black letter-writer was full of praise for Sharp and his colleagues for the support they gave to those blacks in need, and for their campaign to end the slave trade.²² Another free black, Ottobah Cugoano, thanked “that humane society of worthy and respectful gentlemen, whose liberality hath supported many of the Black poor about London.”²³

²¹ Prince Hoare, *Memoirs of Granville Sharp* (London: Henry Colburn, 1820), p. 260.

²² ‘For the Public Advertiser’, *Public Advertiser*, 13 February 1788, p.2.

²³ Ottobah Cugoano, *Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil of Slavery* (1787), ed. by Vincent Carretta (London: Penguin, 1999), p. 104.

WHY DID THE BLACK POOR OF LONDON NOT SUPPORT THE SIERRA...



Granville Sharp

Among the “Black People Who have Received the Bounty from Government,” throughout 1786, there were 678 men, 233

women, and six of unknown gender.²⁴ Given that there were many more black men than women in London, it is not surprising that most black men found white wives and partners, leading to concerns being expressed about miscegenation in the newspapers, and the need to expel black people from England “to save the natural beauty of the Britons from the Morisco tint.”²⁵ Edward Long complained in 1772 that “the lower class of women in England, are remarkably fond of the blacks, for reasons too brutal to mention; they would connect themselves with horses and asses, if the laws permitted them.”²⁶ Two years later, Long further expounded on his low opinion of black men, stating that “their faculties of smell and taste, are truly bestial, nor less so their commerce with the other sex; in these acts they are libidinous and shameless as monkeys, or baboons.”²⁷ Tobin worried about “the strange partiality shewn for them by the lower orders of women, and the rapid increase of a dark and contaminated breed.”²⁸ Novelists and newspapers worried about the possibility of England become a “mongrel race”.²⁹

²⁴ Graham Russell Hodges, *The Black Loyalist Directory: African Americans in Exile After the American Revolution* (London: Garland, 1996), pp. 227–238; Gretchen Gerzina, ‘Black Loyalists in London After the American Revolution’, in *Moving On: Black Loyalists in the Afro-Atlantic World*, ed. by John Pulis (London: Taylor and Francis, 1999), p. 88; Tobin, *Cursory Remarks*, pp. 117–8.

²⁵ *London Chronicle*, 19–22 October 1765, p. 5, *London Chronicle*, 13–16 March 1773, p. 2.

²⁶ Edward Long, *Candid Reflections Upon the Judgment lately awarded by the Court of King’s Bench in Westminster Hall, On What is Commonly called The Negroe-Causes, By a Planter* (London: T. Lowndes, 1772), pp. 48–9.

²⁷ Edward Long, *The History of Jamaica* (London: T. Lowndes, 1774), p. 383.

²⁸ Tobin, *Cursory Remarks*, p. 118.

²⁹ C.P.J. de Crebillons fils, *Sopha: A Moral Tale* (London: T. Cooper, 1787), I, p. 38; ‘To the Conductor of the World’, *The World*, 9 May 1789, p. 2.

In a letter to Dr Samuel Johnson, Hester Piozzi complained about black people and their “tawny children”, while noting with amusement that Dr Johnson’s free black servant, Francis Barber, was a success in love with a number of working class white women.³⁰

The American War of Independence, which occurred between 1776–83, led to a further influx of several hundred Black Pioneers, who had fought on the British side. Lord Dunmore offered slaves their freedom if they fought on the side of the Loyalists, and as a result thousands of blacks flocked to the British banner.³¹ The problem arose of what to do with these Black Pioneers after the War: most were sent to Nova Scotia, some were sent to Britain’s colonies in the Caribbean, and a few found their way to Britain, where an observer complained about “how the city of London, and the country about it, was lately infested with American negroes.”³² The increasing number of

³⁰ Hester Piozzi, *Anecdotes of the Late Samuel Johnson* (London: T. Cadell, 1786), p. 130; Paul Edwards, ‘Black Personalities in Georgian Britain’, *History Today*, 31, (1981), 9 (p. 41).

³¹ ‘Extract of a Letter from Philadelphia’, *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*, 20 January 1776, p. 6.

³² On the Caribbean, see Marika Sherwood, ‘Jamaicans and Barbadians in the Province of Freedom: Sierra Leone 18012–1841’, *Jnl. of Caribbean Studies*, 13/3, Winter 1998–Spring 1999, pp.219–236; Candidus, *A Letter to Philo Africanus, Upon Slavery; In Answer to his of the 22d of November, in the General Evening Post; Together with the Opinions of Sir John Strange, and other Eminent Lawyers upon this Subject, with the Sentence of Lord Mansfield, in the Case of Somerset and Knowles, 1772, with His Lordship’s Explanation of That Opinion in 1786* (London: W. Brown, 1788), p. 17; Robin Winks, *The Blacks in Canada* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1971), pp. 31–55; James W. St.G. Walker, *The Black Loyalists* (London: Longman & Dalhousie Univ, Press, 1976) .

black poor on the streets of London led to the establishment of the Committee for the Relief of the Black Poor in January 1786, which tended to poor blacks who ended up in hospital, and provided relief to those who were destitute.³³ In 1786, the numbers of black Londoners receiving assistance from the Committee were as high as 460.³⁴

Opponents of Sharp such as Samuel Estwick claimed there were between 14–15,000 black people in England, while Francklyn put that figure at over 40,000.³⁵ This unsubstantiated estimate was repeated by other members of the pro-slavery lobby.³⁶ Historians have differed in their calculations, putting the numbers as between 5,000 and 50,000.³⁷ There was no census in the 18th century, so these calculations were only estimates.³⁸ Nonetheless, there is evidence to show that the black presence in England, and in London in particular, was a significant one, and this visible presence so concerned the authorities that they

³³ Norma Myers, *Reconstructing the Black Past: Blacks in Britain 1780–1830* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 23; Gerzina, 'Black Loyalists in London', p. 95.

³⁴ 'Black Poor', *Public Advertiser*, 18 April 1786, p. 2.

³⁵ Samuel Estwick, *Considerations of the Negro Cause* (London: J.Dodsley, 1772), p. 94; Gilbert Francklyn, *Observations, occasioned by the attempts made in England to effect the Abolition of the Slave Trade* (London: J.Walter, 1789), p. Xi; H.G. Tuke, *The Fugitive Slave Circulars* (London: Stanford, 1876), p. 63.

³⁶ 'To the Conductor of the World', *The World*, 9 May 1789, p. 2.

³⁷ Dorothy George, *London Life in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1930), p. 40; Edward Scobie, *Black Britannia: A History of Blacks in Britain* (Chicago: Johnson, 1972), p. 63; Shyllon, *Black People*, p. 117; Steven Braidwood, 'Initiatives and Organisation of the Black Poor 1786–7', *Slavery and Abolition* 3 (1982), pp. 212–3; Schama, *Rough Crossings*, p. 31.

³⁸ Gerzina, *Black England*, p. 127.

authorised the organisers of the Sierra Leone Resettlement Scheme to recruit black Londoners.

THE SIERRA LEONE RESETTLEMENT SCHEME

The Sierra Leone Resettlement Scheme was formulated in 1786 because humanitarians like Sharp saw it as a means of showing the pro-slavery lobby that black people were the intellectual equal of their white counterparts, and could contribute towards the running of the new colony of Sierra Leone.³⁹ Black Londoners initially expressed support for the Scheme, and they discussed it enthusiastically with Sharp.⁴⁰ However, government officials, such as prime minister William Pitt the Younger, became involved because they saw the Scheme as a useful tool to remove the black poor from the streets of London, and repatriate them to Africa, since “it was necessary they should be sent somewhere, and be no longer suffered to infest the streets of London.”⁴¹ The government offered a price of £14 a head for every black Londoner recruited to this Scheme.⁴²

Among the black Londoners who actually turned up for this first voyage to Sierra Leone were a substantial number of Black

³⁹ Hoare, *Memoirs of Granville Sharp*, p. 263.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 261.

⁴¹ Carl Wadstrom, *An Essay in Colonization* (London: Darton and Harvey, 1795), II, p. 220; ‘London’, *London Chronicle*, 16 January 1787, p. 2.

⁴² John Pugh, *Remarkable Occurrences in the Life of Jonas Hanway, Esq.* (London: T. Cadell, 1798), p. 162; Gerzina, *Black England*, p. 146; ‘To the Printer of the Public Advertiser’, *Public Advertiser*, 17 February 1786, p. 2, ‘Theatrical Intelligence’, *Morning Herald*, 14 February 1786, p. 3.

Pioneers from the American War of Independence.⁴³ According to Sharp and William Thornton, one of the Scheme's organisers, there were about 600 Black Pioneers in London at the time, and historians estimate that they made up half of the black Londoners who joined the Scheme.⁴⁴ James Walvin speculates that these Black Pioneers had less ties to England than the black Londoners, who had been living in the capital for much longer and had white partners who did not want to leave their native England, and take on the life-risking challenges of starting up an African settlement.⁴⁵ Including these Black Pioneers, according to the organisers, about 700 black Londoners initially signed up to the Scheme.⁴⁶

However, two ships arrived in the Thames in October 1786 to collect those black Londoners who were ready to sail for Sierra Leone, newspapers noted that 400 of the 700 who had signed up "had declined the embarkation, and came on shore again."⁴⁷ The press at first openly pleaded with black Londoners to support the project, and some writers bitterly claimed that they preferred "nakedness instead of cloathing (sic)."⁴⁸ The Secretary of the Committee for the Relief of the Black Poor

⁴³ *Public Advertiser*, 6 April 1787, p. 3.

⁴⁴ William Thornton, *The Papers of William Thornton (1759-1828)*, ed. by C.M. Morris (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995), I, p. 36; Hoare, *Memoirs of Granville Sharp*, p. 260; Schama, *Rough Crossings*, p. 194; Ellen Gibson Wilson, *The Loyal Blacks* (New York: Capricorn, 1976), p. 143.

⁴⁵ Walvin, *Black and White*, p. 154.

⁴⁶ 'Bath Intelligence Extraordinary', *Public Advertiser*, 18 December 1786, p. 4.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 4; 'London', *Public Advertiser*, 22 December 1786, p. 3.

⁴⁸ *Public Advertiser*, 18 December 1786, p. 4, 1 January 1787, p. 4.

responded by calling on Londoners to “suspend giving alms” to the black poor in order to force them to board the ships, and resorted to rounding up black beggars to supplement the numbers.⁴⁹ The two ships made their way to Portsmouth, from which only one left for Sierra Leone. However, in Portsmouth there were also ships bound for Botany Bay, and many black Londoners feared they were about to be tricked into transportation alongside convicts, or to be sent to Africa as slaves. Several black Londoners were among those convicts being transported to Australia. Articles about the ship bound for Sierra Leone and the convict ship to Australia were often side by side in newspapers, unsurprisingly leading to confusion.⁵⁰ Thornton wrote a letter in 1786 which referred to the Sierra Leone Resettlement Scheme and “another settlement...to be made in Botany Bay...whither we are about to transport about 1000 convicts”: In January 1787, a newspaper scolded “enemies to public tranquillity...who strenuously endeavour to fill the minds of these poor people with apprehensions of slavery, in the intended settlement on the banks of the Sierra Leone.”⁵¹ Another newspaper lamented that “it seems there is no law to compel them to embark or to detain them aboard, to be transported to a military government,

⁴⁹ *Morning Herald*, 15 December 1786, p. 1; 2 January 1787, pp. 2-3; *Public Advertiser*, 6 April 1787, p. 3.

⁵⁰ Wadstrom, *An Essay in Colonization*, II, p. 220; Hoare, *Memoirs of Granville Sharp*, p. 315; Thomas Pettigrew, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the late John Coakley Lettsom* (London: Nichols, 1817), II, p. 237; *Public Advertiser*, 6 December 1786, pp. 2-3, 9 December 1786, p. 4, 12 January 1787, p. 4, 17 January 1786, p. 3, 29 January 1787, p. 4; Flynn, *The Second Fleet*, pp. 231-2, 385, 501, 566-7, 618; ‘London’, *Morning Herald*, 9 December 1786, p. 3.

⁵¹ Thornton, *The Papers of William Thornton*, I, pp. 4, 37.

like the White Felons to New Norfolk.”⁵²

OPPOSITION FROM EQUIANO, CUGOANO AND GORDON

Literate black Londoners such as Olaudah Equiano and Ottobah Cugoano were strident critics of the Scheme. Equiano was appointed a commissary for the expedition, with responsibility for provisions and clothing “for the support of the black poor.”⁵³ However, black passengers accused the organisers of advancing Equiano £60, and they insisted “upon being paid as well.”⁵⁴ Equiano soon discovered corruption in the distribution of provisions, and he criticised Captain Thomson when he found that many of his fellow black passengers “wanted beds, and many more clothing and other necessities.”⁵⁵ Equiano alleged that Joseph Irwin, the leader of the expedition, misused funds and failed to provide the proper quantity or quality of medicine, clothing and bedding.⁵⁶ In the fallout that resulted, Equiano’s position was terminated, and he was put on shore.⁵⁷

⁵² ‘Bath Intelligence Extraordinary’, *Public Advertiser*, 18 December 1786, p. 4.

⁵³ Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative and Other Writings of Olaudah Equiano* (1789), ed. by Vincent Carretta (London: Penguin, 1995), p. 227.

⁵⁴ ‘London’, *Morning Herald*, 29 December 1786, p. 2; ‘Bath Intelligence Extraordinary’, *Public Advertiser*, 18 December 1786, p. 4.

⁵⁵ *Public Advertiser*, 4 April 1787, p. 3; Equiano, *Narrative of Olaudah Equiano*, pp. 227–8.

⁵⁶ Wilson, *The Loyal Blacks*, p. 149.

⁵⁷ Equiano, *Narrative of Olaudah Equiano*, p. 228.



Olaudah Equiano

Equiano continued to criticise the Scheme, accusing the organisers of intending to treat the black Londoners as West Indian slaves, and said, “I wish I had never been involved in it.”⁵⁸ The government apparently believed Equiano was correct in his criticism, because they paid up his expenses without question, totalling £50, without a hearing.⁵⁹ Sharp supported the dismissal of Equiano at Plymouth, claiming that “the jealousies and animosities between the Whites and Blacks had subsided”

⁵⁸ *Public Advertiser*, 4 April 1787, p. 3.

⁵⁹ Wilson, *The Loyal Blacks*, p. 150.

as a result. Equiano was subjected to a storm of racist abuse as a result of his stance, referring to his black complexion, and claiming that the journey would be a happier one without Equiano. Unfortunately, that was not the case, and there was a high death rate on the journey to Sierra Leone. Two years later, the captain that Sharp subsequently hired to take relief supplies to Sierra Leone in 1788 was accused of corruption. However, Sharp blamed the settlers for accepting Captain Taylor's corrupt dealings instead of Taylor himself.⁶⁰ Both Cugoano and Equiano questioned the wisdom of establishing a free black colony in close proximity to slave-trading forts and garrisons.⁶¹ Cugoano bluntly pointed out that Europeans "have such a prejudice against Black People, so that a Black Man is scarcely ever safe among them."⁶² A London newspaper quoted black Londoners as expressing concern "that Government would establish a free colony for them, while it supports its forts and factories to wrong and ensnare, and to carry others of their colour and country into slavery and bondage." Equiano brought back with him statements from black passengers expressing strong reservations about being coerced on to the voyage to Sierra Leone.⁶³ However, Prince Hoare, who was Sharp's biographer, looked at a letter that was signed by twelve free black Londoners,

⁶⁰ Wadstrom, *An Essay in Colonization*, II, pp. 223-4; Hoare, *Memoirs of Granville Sharp*, pp. 312-3, 347; Pettigrew, *John Coakley Lettsom*, II, pp. 238-9; 'Extract of a letter from a gentleman on board the ship Atlantic, off Santa Cruz, Teneriffe', *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*, 3 July 1787, p. 3; 'London', *Public Advertiser*, 11 April 1787, p. 2.

⁶¹ Equiano, *Narrative of Olaudah Equiano*, p. 227; Cugoano, *The Evil of Slavery*, pp. 104-6.

⁶² Cugoano, *The Evil of Slavery*, p. 106.

⁶³ *Public Advertiser*, 6 April 1787, p. 3.

including writers such as Equiano and Cugoana, and came to the conclusion that it was too well written to have penned by a black man.⁶⁴ Faced with such condescending attitudes from the friends of abolitionists, it is probably not surprising that black Londoners questioning the motives of this Scheme chose to seek advice from radical white campaigners, such as Lord George Gordon, who was the leader of the Protestant Association.

Gordon had previously led an anti-Catholic demonstration which ended up in rioting in 1780, and counted among his supporters large numbers of seamen.⁶⁵ The rioters had attacked Newgate prison and freed hundreds of convicts, a number of whom were under sentence of death or transportation, an action that was criticised by many commentators, including another black leader, Ignatius Sancho.⁶⁶ Significantly, a large number of black men in England at the time were seamen, and at least three of the 326 rioters put on trial afterwards were described in court records as “black”.⁶⁷ Gordon also hated the institution of slavery, an attitude he developed during a six-month residence in Jamaica. He called for Britain to follow the example of the National Assembly in Revolutionary France, and abolish slavery as an institution, and went on to accuse the British Cabinet of cheap talk while they really intended

⁶⁴ Hoare, *Memoirs of Granville Sharp*, p. 374.

⁶⁵ Percy Colson, *The Strange History of Lord George Gordon* (London: Robert Hale, 1937), pp. 140-1; *Public Advertiser*, 11 July 1780, p. 3.

⁶⁶ Ignatius Sancho, *Letters of the late Ignatius Sancho, an African* (1782), ed. by Paul Edwards and Polly Rewt (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994), pp. 230-4.

⁶⁷ Myers, *Reconstructing the Black Past*, p. 68; Sherwood, ‘Blacks in the Gordon Riots’, p. 25.

“that they should remain slaves, and breeders of slaves, from generation to generation.”⁶⁸ Gordon played upon the fears of many black Londoners that they would be transported back into slavery in Sierra Leone. Several newspapers reported that the black Londoners signed up to go to Sierra Leone sought Gordon’s “advice and opinion on the subject.”⁶⁹ Drawing on his negative experiences of slavery and colonialism in Jamaica, “His Lordship advised them not to go; and pointed out to them the various miseries, rebellions, calamities, discredit, and final loss of liberty, which had uniformly attended the settlement of foreign colonies by the different nations of the earth.”⁷⁰ Irwin countered by attacking the integrity of the black leaders who sought his advice.⁷¹ According to one of the newspapers, more than half of the black Londoners registered to depart for Sierra Leone decided not to go, based largely on the advice of Gordon.⁷²

⁶⁸ Robert Watson, *The Life of Lord George Gordon* (London: H.D. Symonds, 1795), pp. 5, 126.

⁶⁹ ‘London’, *Morning Herald*, 29 December 1786, p. 2, 2 January 1787, p. 3; ‘Bath Intelligence Extraordinary’, *Public Advertiser*, 18 December 1786, p. 4.

⁷⁰ ‘Bath Intelligence Extraordinary’, *Public Advertiser*, 18 December 1786, p. 4.

⁷¹ ‘For the Morning Herald’, *Morning Herald*, 13 January 1787, p. 4.

⁷² ‘Bath Intelligence Extraordinary’, *Public Advertiser*, 18 December 1786, p. 4.

WHY DID THE BLACK POOR OF LONDON NOT SUPPORT THE SIERRA...



Lord George Gordon

FAILURE OF THE SCHEME

The actual number of black Londoners who went to Sierra Leone represented less than five percent of the estimated black population of Britain at the time, and it did not achieve the Committee's stated objective of removing poor blacks from streets of London. After four months in the Thames, in January 1787, the *Belisarius* and the *Atlantic* sailed for Portsmouth with only 441 of the 700 black Londoners scheduled to go, but bad weather forced a diversion to Plymouth, during which time more than 50 passengers died.⁷³ Sharp noted that 24 were discharged for various disagreements in Plymouth, and that another, "23 ran away", but that there must have been some recruits, since 411 sailed from Plymouth for Sierra Leone in April 1787. On the voyage between Plymouth and Sierra Leone, 96 passengers died. A black passenger named Abraham E. Griffith wrote that "the people in general are very sickly, and die very fast indeed, for the doctors are very neglectful to the people."⁷⁴ On 16 September 1787, when the ships left them in Sierra Leone, the colonists had been reduced in number "to 276 persons, namely 212 black men, 30 black women, 5 white men and 29 white women."⁷⁵ A further 86 settlers died within the first four months of their arrival.⁷⁶ A ship with further supplies was sent out by Sharp and his colleagues in April 1788, but they were only able to recruit a further 39 black Londoners to add to the colonists.⁷⁷

⁷³ Pettigrew, *John Coakley Lettsom*, II, pp. 238-9; 'London', *London Chronicle*, 16 January 1787, p. 2; Wadstrom, *An Essay in Colonization*, II, p. 221.

⁷⁴ *Public Advertiser*, 4 April 1787, p. 3

⁷⁵ Wadstrom, *An Essay in Colonization*, II, p. 222.

⁷⁶ *Substance of the Report of the Court of Directors of the Sierra Leone Company to the General Court, held at London on Wednesday the 19th of October, 1791* (London: James Phillips, 1791), pp. 5-7.

⁷⁷ Pettigrew, *John Coakley Lettsom*, II, p. 242.

The settlers forcibly captured land from the native Africans at a place they named Forá Bay. However, a local chieftain attacked the settlement, dispersing the rest.⁷⁸ The numbers at the colony were further reduced to only 64 settlers, comprising 39 black men, 19 black women, and six white women. Black settlers were captured by unscrupulous traders and sold as slaves, and the remaining colonists were forced to arm themselves for their own protection.⁷⁹

Members of the pro-slavery lobby mocked the failure of the Scheme to secure the support of black Londoners.⁸⁰ Supporters of the Scheme, including Sharp, sought to explain away the black Londoners' rejection of the Sierra Leone project by questioning the character of black people in the capital, blaming the high death rate on "disorders brought with them, which appear to have been aggravated by excessive drinking and other debaucheries."⁸¹ John Clarkson, brother of anti-slavery campaigner Thomas, and the man put in charge of the second phase of the Sierra Leone Resettlement Scheme, argued that it would be better to recruit Nova Scotian blacks, since the morals of blacks from England were questionable.⁸² Nova Scotia was home to about 3,000 Black Pioneers, and they lived in terrible conditions in segregated societies, and felt no loyalty

⁷⁸ *Substance of the Report of the Court of Directors of the Sierra Leone Company to the General Court, held at London on Wednesday the 19th of October, 1791* (London: James Phillips, 1791), pp. 5-7.

⁷⁹ *Report of the Sierra Leone Company*, pp. 8, 33-6

⁸⁰ Francklyn, *Observations*, p. xiii.

⁸¹ Hoare, *Memoirs of Granville Sharp*, pp. 270, 313, 347-8; Wadstrom, *An Essay in Colonization*, II, p. 228.

⁸² Walvin, *Black and White*, p. 154.

to the land which had not welcomed them.⁸³ The Nova Scotian colonists fared better, but Clarkson banned the ‘old settlers’ from Granville Town from mixing with the new colonists of Freetown. Eventually, Griffith persuaded Clarkson to allow the surviving black Londoners to join the Nova Scotians.⁸⁴ Aside from this intervention, very little is known about Abraham E. Griffith, except that his white wife Rebecca was among those who died during the first year of colonisation, and that he may also have been the Abraham Elliott who also served as a secretary to Sharp. As Elliott, he wrote several letters to Sharp complaining about the poor conditions in the colony.⁸⁵ Griffith or Elliott ended up marrying the daughter of a local chieftain following the death of his English wife, and played a supporting role in the relief expeditions from Nova Scotia.⁸⁶

The government’s attempt to empty London’s streets of the thousands of black people failed, and the vast majority chose to stay in the capital. In 1789, there was the familiar claim by supporters of slavery that “the Blacks are an indolent set of people.”⁸⁷ On a visit to London in 1805, an American visitor expressed concern that “alliances are formed between them and white girls of the lower orders of society,” and that black

⁸³ Winks, *The Blacks in Canada*, pp. 62-7.

⁸⁴ Schama, *Rough Crossings*, p. 341; *The Gentleman’s Magazine* (London: John Nichols, 1793), LXIII, p. 80.

⁸⁵ Schama, *Rough Crossings*, pp. 192, 204; Hoare, *Memoirs of Granville Sharp*, pp. 320-1, 365.

⁸⁶ Schama, *Rough Crossings*, p.208.

⁸⁷ ‘Continuation of the Evidence before the Commons, on the Slave Trade’, *The World*, 25 July 1789, p. 2.

beggars populated the streets of London.⁸⁸ Joseph Marryat complained about an abolitionist function which was attended by a black man, his white wife, and their mixed-race child, a fear echoed in nineteenth century literature.⁸⁹ Throughout the nineteenth century, black Londoners served in the British army and navy, some receiving medals of distinction. They also made their impact on the sporting arena, particularly boxing.⁹⁰ Eventually, according to one historian, as a result of generations of intermarriage between blacks and whites, the community of black Londoners was assimilated and ceased to be a visible presence by the time Victoria became queen in 1837.⁹¹

⁸⁸ Benjamin Silliman, *Journal of Travels in England, Holland and Scotland, and of Two Passages over the Atlantic, in the Years 1805 and 1806* (New Haven: S. Converse, 1820), pp. 271-2; Grant, *Sketches in London*, pp. 26-7.

⁸⁹ Joseph Marryat, *More Thoughts Occasioned by Two Publications which the authors call "An Exposure of some of the numerous Misstatements and Misrepresentations contained in a pamphlet, commonly known by the name of Mr. Marryat's Pamphlet, entitled thoughts etc," and "A Defence of the Bill for the Registration of Slaves"* (London: J.M. Richardson, 1816), pp. 105-6; Pierce Egan, *Tom and Jerry: Life in London or the Day and Night Scenes of Jerry Hawthorne Esq and his Elegant Friend Corinthian Tom in their Rambles and Spree through the Metropolis* (London: John Camden, 1821), p. 321.

⁹⁰ *Black and Asian Studies Association (BASA) Newsletter*, 27 (2000), pp. 18-9, 31 (2001), pp. 24, 39 (2004), pp. 29, 42 (2005), pp. 22, 57 (2010), pp. 18-23, 31 (2001), pp. 9-14, 27 (2000), p. 15; 'Pugilism: Fight between Randall and Turner', *Surrey, Southwark, Middlesex, Surrey Gazette*, 12 December 1818, p. 1; Pierce Egan, *Boxiana, or Sketches of Ancient and Modern Pugilism* (London: G. Smeeton, 1812), pp. 100-9.

⁹¹ Walvin, *Black and White*, pp. 192-8.

The African Times and Orient Review: A Pan-African and Pan-Asian Journal

Rey Bowen

During late summer in 1911, Duse Mohamed Ali was approached by a West African businessman from Sierra Leone, John Eldred Taylor, who wanted to finance a West African trade journal and have Ali as its editor.⁹² Taylor knew Ali as ‘Professor Dusé Mohamed’, during the time that they were committee members of the Imperial African Club.⁹³ Three years earlier, Taylor had become the Managing Director of The Sierra Leone Deep Sea Fishing Industries Limited. The Articles of Association were

⁹² Ian Duffield. ‘Dusé Mohamed Ali and the Development of Pan-Africanism 1866-1945’, p.175. Ali, D.M. ‘Leaves from an Active Life’ in Abdelwahid, M. *Dusé Mohamed Ali: 1866-1945* (Trenton, N.J.: Red Sea Press, 2011), p.122.

⁹³ *The Sierra Leone Weekly News*, April 22, 1911, p. 5. Very little is known of the Imperial African Club. The Secretary was a Barrister Cambridge who had chambers at Gray’s Inn and the Treasurer a ‘Professor’ Skerry was most likely Mr George Edward Skerry (1856-1930) founder of the Skerry’s College. Also named as part of the committee was L.E.V. McCarthy who in the 1930s was the Solicitor-General of the Gold Coast.

drawn on the 26th August 1908 to modernise fishing methods on the West African coast to benefit Sierra Leoneans and other coastal British West Africans.⁹⁴ The formation of the company was significant on two levels: firstly, the importation of cured fish from the North Atlantic, which was being controlled by Europeans, and, secondly, it would establish an African owned company with profits going to those investors in Sierra Leone. Taylor formed many other companies and eventually became the *African Telegraph* owner, published in London between 1915 and 1919.⁹⁵

Taylor had ongoing business concerns with exporting and importing raw materials and foodstuff between Britain and West Africa. He realised the necessity for a commercial organ based in Britain to advertise his business interests and express the West African educated elite's views. Taylor may have wanted a favourable journal to accurately promote African-owned business because one of his Sierra Leone companies had been misrepresented in the *Nigerian Times* and wanted to re-address this matter.⁹⁶ However, it seems many of his businesses failed, because he was up against the giant monopoly of the Lever Brothers. Nevertheless, Ali explained to Taylor that he knew nothing about West Africa and commerce, but more about "social and political conditions in Africa and the

⁹⁴ BT 31/18534/99532. J.E. Taylor Memorandum and Articles of Association for the Sierra Leone Deep Sea Fishing and Industries Limited 26th August 1908.

⁹⁵ Duffield. 'Dusé Mohamed Ali and the Development of Pan-Africanism 1866-1945', pp.622-626.

⁹⁶ Ibid, p. 175. See also letter by Taylor in *The Sierra Leone Weekly News*, April 22, 1911, pp. 4-5.

Orient at large”.⁹⁷ The two men immediately began discussions on what type of journal it was going to be. Ali gave Taylor an outline and agreed that they would commence further work on the journal on the former’s return as an actor from a tour with George Dance’s Theatrical Company.⁹⁸ However, on Ali’s return to London, he found that Taylor had gone ahead in an attempt to create a mock-up of a first edition of the journal including hiring an artist who produced a “rather crude design”. The design itself depicted an African woman carrying produce on her head and an almost bare background covered in palm leaves. Ali saw the plan as a “wonderful production” but commented that it reminded him of a ‘missionary tract’ rather than a journal fit for a general readership on matters discussing Africa and the Orient. Subsequently, Ali commissioned the Art Nouveau artist Walter Crane to produce the work but claimed he designed the front cover, which would embody the idea of concord between Europe, Asia, and Africa by combining three winged female figures, hands entwined encircling a globe with the motto ‘Concord’ on a streamer across its centre.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ D.M. Ali. ‘Leaves from an Active Life’, p.122.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid, p. 123.



DUSÉ MOHAMED ALI AS
A YOUNG MAN, AGED
ABOUT 34
From The Hull Lady, June 1902

Duse Mohamed Ali

It seems that what Taylor had in mind was a design based on a possible trade journal while Ali had his heart on discussing the social and political conditions of Africans and Asian peoples of the world. Ali distrusted Taylor because he had gone ahead without his knowledge or agreement in producing the journal's mock-up copy. From that point on, Ali was to tread carefully with their working relationship. Still, Ali completed the *African Times and Orient Review* (ATOR) preparation, and its publication was on 1st July 1912. The *Review* met the "need for a Pan-Oriental Pan-African journal at the seat of the British Empire"¹⁰⁰, to speak in the name of 'the Black, Brown, and Yellow races'. Besides, the journal aims included:

...Pan-African or Pan-Afro-Asian mutual cooperation and self-help to beat the threatening forces of white capitalism... (i) defence of the national rights of subject Afro-Asian peoples, (ii) defence of the dignity and human rights of Africans and Orientals, and (iii) defence of African and Asian culture and religion.

Ali's notion of Afro-Asian unity has its antecedence in how he perceived Britain was ruling its empire. In Ali's view, British colonial rule grouped all people of colour into one homogenous entity when it came to unfair treatment. Ali wrote, "whether, therefore, we look East, West, North, or South, the man of dark skin is being oppressed in one form or another by the Anglo-Saxon"¹⁰¹. Moreover, Ali was able to view the common economic,

¹⁰⁰ D.M. Ali. 'Forward', *The African Times and Orient Review*, Vol 1, No 1, July 1912, p.1.

¹⁰¹ *The New Age*, February 23rd 1911, p. 389.

political and social issues faced by people of colour, brought about by what he called, the rule of force by the Anglo-Saxons. He believed that the only way to bring change to their oppression was a unity of all coloured peoples of the empire. However, before recognising Afro-Asian unity, Ali had to ensure people were aware of the current situation. For example, just over a year before the *ATOR* launch, Ali accepted that Asian-Indians were no exception to the rule when it came to racial discrimination. As far as he was concerned Asians, like African Americans, were despised by white people whether in India or in other parts of the empire where they made their homes. Ali wrote about the Indians: In British East Africa they are treated with as little consideration as the Negroes in the Southern States of America, and in South Africa, where many of them were born and were engaged in commercial pursuits, they are being expatriated in the interests of a “White South Africa”.¹⁰²

So there in 1911 is an early conception of Afro-Asian unity - forty-four years before the Bandung Conference! At the conference held in Bandung, Indonesia between 18th and 24th April 1955, newly independent African and Asian states met to discuss “political self-determination, mutual respect for sovereignty, non-aggression, non-interference in internal affairs, and equality”.¹⁰³ If the conference organisers had read the *ATOR*, how surprised they would have been finding the groundwork for

¹⁰² Ibid, p. 388.

¹⁰³ Office of the Historian, Department of State, United States of America, ‘Bandung Conference (Asian-African Conference), 1955’, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1953-1960/bandung-conf> (accessed 30 December 2018). <https://bandungconference.com/about/> (accessed 30 December 2018).

many of their laid-out principles. In the inaugural issue of the *ATOR*, Ali said: “As for YOU of the Black race, the Brown race and the Yellow race, this is YOUR VERY OWN JOURNAL. The more humble you are, the more need you have of us and the more readily shall we extend our sympathy and advice.”¹⁰⁴

According to Ali, after having sent the completed manuscript for the second issue of the *Review* and not receiving the proofs, the printer notified him that Taylor had not paid for the first issue. Therefore, only after receiving payment for the first issue would Ali receive the second. Obviously, Taylor was no longer a financial backer of the *Review*, so Ali sought other funders. Finally *ATOR*'s ownership was by a syndicate consisting of Dusé Mohamed Ali and a group of West Africans. The group of West Africans who were to save the *Review* consisted of Fran and Fred Dove, C.W.Betts, Dr Oguntola Sapara, the Yoruba barrister Rotimi Alade; from the Gold Coast Dr Quartey-Papafio, the barrister E.J.P. Brown and most notably Casely Hayford. The last three were members of the Gold Coast Aborigines' Rights Protection Society (CGARPS) in London protesting against the ill-devised Gold Coast Forest Bill of 1911.¹⁰⁵ According to Ali, the group warned that his dealings with Taylor “would be fraught with considerable harm to the *Review*”. So, after discussion with his new backers, Dove called in an English solicitor, with whom he did business; the Articles of Association were prepared, and within forty-eight hours the new company was registered.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ *ATOR*, Vol 1, No. 1, July 1912, p. 2.

¹⁰⁵ Derrick, J. *Africa, Empire and Fleet Street: Albert Cartwright and West Africa Magazine* (London: Hurst & Co, 2018), pp.117-119.

¹⁰⁶ Ali. ‘Leaves from an Active Life’, p.126.

On the 26th August 1912, The African Times and Orient Review Limited was official, with its office at 158 Fleet Street, London, in the empire's newspaper district's heart.¹⁰⁷ Both Fran Dove and Casely Hayford stand out from the others. The Sierra Leonean Frans Dove (1869–1949), who lived in the UK, was a successful Barrister-at-Law, eventually practising at the Gold Coast Bar. He successfully paid for the education of two younger brothers Drs Arthur and Horace Dove.¹⁰⁸ The most significant member of Ali's *Review's* financial backers was Joseph Ephraim Casely Hayford (1866–1930). Born in what was then known as the Gold Coast, he was a successful lawyer who between 1893 and 1894 read economics at Cambridge University before studying law at the Inner Temple. He returned to the Gold Coast in 1897 as a legal adviser for the anti-colonialist group the GCARPS, whose aim was “to safeguard the land rights of Africans from the colonial authorities”.¹⁰⁹ He made frequent visits to London. On one such visit in 1903 became a member of the British-based African Society and had time to write the introduction to Edward Wilmot Blyden's *West Africa before Europe*. Moreover, his most notable book was his novel *Ethiopia Unbound*. This was one of the first African novels with a strong Pan-African theme: it was

¹⁰⁷ BT 31/20888/123943/1 Memorandum and Articles of Association

BT 31/20888/123943/2 Directors of the ATOR Ltd

BT 31/20888/123943/11 Contract between Dusé Mohamed and F. Dove, 21st August 1912.

¹⁰⁸ 'Gold Coast Worthies', AOR, Vol 1, No 4, April 1920. pp. 11. See also Bourne, S. *Evelyn Dove: Britain's Black Cabaret Queen* (London: Jacaranda, 2016), passim.

¹⁰⁹ Hakim Adi and Marika Sherwood, M. *Pan-African History: Political Figures from Africa and the Diaspora since 1787*. (London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 82–84, p. 82.

dedicated to the “sons of Ethiopia the world wide over”.¹¹⁰ In 1919 Hayford was awarded the Member of the British Empire (M.B.E.) for his public service. Ali saw these men as valuable allies and friends.¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ ‘Gold Coast Worthies’, *AOR*, Vol 1, No 5, May 1920. pp. 25–26.



PRINCIPAL CONTENTS.

- BASIS FOR COMMON INDIAN NATIONALITY, By ZAFAR ALI KHAN, B.A.
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ONE DOLLAR AND A HALF A YEAR.

COVER DESIGN BY WALTER CRANE.

Zaria Whippings

The group of West African investors were drawn to Ali's *ATOR* because he exposed Britain's role in the Zaria floggings and he convinced them that a journal owned and run by Africans in the British Empire was to their advantage.¹¹² The Zaria incident, which on the face of it seems insignificant did, however, have far-reaching consequences especially among the British-educated elite in British West Africa. It highlighted the difficulties and to what effects indirect rule had on the general population at the time. The incident occurred in Zaria, Northern Nigeria on 14th February 1912, centred on two African clerks, Hall and Taylor, for ignoring and not prostrating when walking past a 'third class' white 'Resident'.¹¹³ 'Residents' were the government's European administrators who worked to manage a province. There were three levels of Residents, First, Second and Third Class. Subsequently, the Resident issued orders that all native clerks in the area had to prostrate themselves before him. Meanwhile, the two clerks were arrested and eventually stripped naked and publicly flogged. Consequently, all clerks in Zaria went on strike and sent a petition to the Governor arguing against the orders they had to prostrate before 'third class' Residents on meeting them. The punishment was for going on strike was to pay a fine and their ringleaders were imprisoned

¹¹² Duffield, I. 'John Eldred Taylor and West African Opposition to Indirect Rule in Nigeria', *African Affairs*, Vol 70, No. 280 (Jul, 1971), pp. 252-268, p. 260.

¹¹³ Apata, Z.O. 'Lugard and the Creation of Provincial Administration in Northern Nigeria 1900-1918', *African Study Monographs*, Vol. 11, No. 3, 1990, pp. 143-152, p. 148. <https://doi.org/10.14989/68067> (accessed 20 December 2018)

for a year.

The Zaria incident was reported some weeks later on 13th March by the *Lagos Standard*, it was eventually taken up by Ali, as one of his first significant campaigns, in the inaugural issue of the *ATOR* in July 1912.¹¹⁴ In an ‘Open Letter’ to the ‘Right Honourable Lewis Vernon Harcourt’, the then Secretary of State for the Colonies, Ali described the crux of the matter: Resident Laing ordered their arrest for failing to show those marks of homage which he considered himself entitled to as a third class Resident having previously given them a severe thrashing with a walking stick.¹¹⁵

Although the Colonial Office found the whippings unfortunate, what concerned them was Resident Laing beat the clerks with a walking stick. Ali reports that other African clerks telegraphed the Governor about the incidence and type of punishment meted out to the clerks, Taylor and Hall, by the “dogaries”,¹¹⁶ a kind of police force for the Hausa King of Zaria. However, the clerks would receive no answer, but the Governor and Resident communicated to each other in code.¹¹⁷ Between October and November of that year, the *Review* provided information to

¹¹⁴ Duffield, I. ‘John Eldred Taylor and West African Opposition to Indirect Rule in Nigeria’, pp. 252–268, pp. 256–257. *ATOR*, Vol 1, No 1, July 1912, p. 8. *Lagos Standard*, Vol XVIII, No 27, March 13, 1912, p. 6.

¹¹⁵ *ATOR*, Vol 1, No. 1, July 1912, p. 8.

¹¹⁶ For an explanation of a ‘Dogari’ see: Adebayo, I & Birnin Kebbi. ‘The hierarchy and flamboyance of Argungu’s dogaris’ Daily Trust, Jun 17, 2018, <https://www.dailytrust.com.ng/the-hierarchy-and-flamboyance-of-argungus-dogaris.html> (accessed 15 December 2018)

¹¹⁷ *ATOR*, Vol 1, No. 1, July 1912, p. 8

Members of Parliament (MPs) in addressing the main concerns of the case in Parliament. As one of Ali's allies, Joseph King the MP for Somerset, England, brought the issue to the House of Commons' attention.¹¹⁸ King wanted to know whose idea was it to order the whippings, were the clerks struck with a walking stick and who decided whether the case be heard in a Native Court without keeping written records. Such matters had to be exposed, because they did not follow official Government guidance. As a result, the Government reconsidered that their methods during the incident were inadequate.

On the 18th November 1912, in a confidential note sent by Governor Lugard, the Governor-General of the British West African colony of Nigeria (1912-1914), to Lord Harcourt, he states: "With regard to the recent events in Zaria...I am of opinion that this Officer acted most unadvisedly, although no doubt the measures he adopted were within the law as it stands."¹¹⁹ Consequently, the Zaria incident began the most extraordinary campaigning effort of the *Review's* early life. On 5th May 1914, almost two years after the *Review's* launch, Ali's editorial was still waving the flag over the Zaria whippings. He considered the agitation led by the *Review* a triumph of its campaigning work and in his usual exuberant manner wrote that "the *African Times and Orient Review* has 'been and gone

¹¹⁸ Joseph King to Mr Harcourt, The Secretary of State for the Colonies. Nigeria (Public Whipping), 7 November 1912, Vol. 43. [https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1912-11-07/debates/92aeae6-dc4e-495d-ad84-5a350f1d9a31/Nigeria\(PublicWhipping\)?highlight=zaria#contribution-a43e06ba-14d3-4d67-b9b0-14caa37ecef4](https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1912-11-07/debates/92aeae6-dc4e-495d-ad84-5a350f1d9a31/Nigeria(PublicWhipping)?highlight=zaria#contribution-a43e06ba-14d3-4d67-b9b0-14caa37ecef4). (accessed 19 January 2019)

¹¹⁹ CO 446/107/39033 Lugard to Harcourt, Confidential, 18th November 1912

and done it', with the Whipping Ordinance even as it scotched the aggressive methods in Zaria some eighteen months ago...

”¹²⁰

The *ATOR* was now the major international campaigning organ for the group of investors, who were mainly West Africans, all advocating Pan-Africanism. The Editor of *The Gold Coast Leader*, Dr Richard Akinwande Savage, who attended the 1900 Pan-African Conference, believed that Ali's journal would follow Henry Sylvester Williams's footsteps *Pan-African* journal of the Pan-African Association. However, he wanted the journal to enthuse those in British West Africa. Savage wrote “the *African Times and Orient Review* has inspired us with such confidence that we hope that Mr. Dusé Mahomed may succeed where the late Henry Sylvester Williams failed”;¹²¹ and that the *Review* would “support our people on the Gold Coast”. Dusé Mohamed Ali was becoming a hero because he exposed the Zaria incident. In July 1920, on his first trip to Lagos, he was recognised as such; there was even a suggestion that there be an annual celebration called ‘Dusé Mohamed Day’, in the wake of his campaigning efforts published in the *ATOR*.¹²²

¹²⁰ *ATOR*, 5th May, 1914, p.147.

¹²¹ *The Gold Coast Leader*, August 31, 1912, p. 5.

¹²² Duffield. ‘John Eldred Taylor and West African Opposition to Indirect Rule in Nigeria’, pp. 252-268, pp. 261-262. See also: *AOR*, Vol 12, December 1920, pp. 53-56.

Black women and the Suffragette Movement

Emily McCulloch

The Suffragette Movement was a widespread movement in the early 20th century, which fought for the “Votes for Women”. It is a highly acclaimed movement that succeeded through laws in 1918 and 1928. Suffragists believed in constitutional campaign methods, but after they failed to make significant progress, the suffragettes emerged, who were willing to take direct, militant action for the cause. To my knowledge, existent writings on the movement offer no mention of Black women from Britain being involved. But if this was a fight for all women, it is difficult to believe that no Black women participated. Were there any Black Suffragettes and if so, why is it that their identities and roles in the movement remain hidden from public knowledge?

When I think of the suffragettes, a few images immediately come to mind. The leader of the movement, Emmeline Pankhurst and her daughters, protesting and fighting for women’s votes, and Emily Davidson, who died after jumping in front of the King’s

horse, making her a martyr of the movement. The majority of photographs from the time show white middle class women protesting. But yet to be discovered, are the faces of women of African or Caribbean heritage. Why is this? There had been a longstanding presence of Black people in Britain for centuries, and Britain was already a multicultural country by the 1900s, especially in London and Manchester,¹²³ with a substantial population of immigrants from the Caribbean and Africa. In the early 20th century, the Black population in Britain stood at around 20,000 people.¹²⁴ So why are Black women invisible in the history of the Suffragette and Suffragist movement?

¹²³ Natalie Leal, 'Women's Suffrage: Women of Colour', <https://votingcounts.org.uk/suffrage-women-of-colour>

¹²⁴ Find My Past, 'Were there Black Suffragettes in Britain?' date accessed: 07/01/2021 <https://www.findmypast.co.uk/blog/history/black-suffragettes>



Sarah Parker Redmond

Sarah Parker Remond, an American abolitionist and anti-slavery campaigner, was present in the UK during the movement, and signed the first suffrage petition in 1866. It

received 1,521 signatures,¹²⁵ and Parker Remond was the only *known* Black woman to sign it. Yet this does not mean she was the only Black woman signatory. Census records didn't include a person's skin colour, only their place of birth, which is unhelpful when attempting to uncover the heritage of a person, as many white Britons were born in the colonies.¹²⁶ It wasn't until the 1991 census that ethnicity was included, meaning during the Suffragette Movement, there may have been a number of Black women who signed petitions in support of women's suffrage, but the available records make no indication towards their heritage.¹²⁷ Hence, the role of Black women in the movement remains invisible, but never not mentioned.

Despite this, there is definite evidence that some involved in the suffragette movement were of Asian descent. Princess Sophia Duleep Singh, the daughter of the last Maharaja of the Sikh empire in Punjab, was an active member of the Women's Social and Political Union (the militant organisation led by Emmeline Pankhurst).¹²⁸ In 1910, Sophia was alongside Emmeline Pankhurst when the Suffragettes marched on Parliament,

¹²⁵ UK Parliament, 'Presenting the 1866 Petition', date accessed: 07/02/2021 <https://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/transformingsociety/electionsvoting/womenvote/parliamentary-collections/1866-suffrage-petition/presenting-the-petition/>

¹²⁶ Yomi Adegoke, 'Have Women of Color Been Written out of the Women's Movement?', date accessed: 07/02/2021, <https://artsandculture.google.com/theme/have-women-of-color-been-written-out-of-the-women-s-movement/IwJyavWeK7cmKg?hl=en>

¹²⁷ Find My Past, 'Were there Black Suffragettes in Britain?'

¹²⁸ 'Have Women of Color Been Written Out of The Women's Movement?'

which later became known as Black Friday.¹²⁹ Sophia's picture was taken outside of Hampton Court, selling the suffragette newspaper, 'The Vote' became one of the only pictures of a woman of Asian descent fighting for women's rights. She was an incredible woman who described her life's purpose as "the advancement of women". Sophia dedicated her life to the movement and was a close friend of Emmeline Pankhurst and yet there is still insufficient research about her.

Although there is not a lot of evidence of racism within Britain's Suffragette Movement, British colonialism was experiencing its glory days and the ruling elite were unfurling racist justifications for the brutality of colonialism, into all aspects of British society. Meanwhile in the United States, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who was one of the first leaders of the women's rights movement, believed that "all women were not created equally".¹³⁰ From the imperialist ideologies stemming from the British Empire and the racist attitudes from the American Suffrage Movement, it is little wonder that Black women might not have been so eager to be involved in the British Suffragette Movement. Not only this, but Black women also faced greater social, economic and political challenges that may have prevented them from accessing visible leadership roles.¹³¹ However, Sylvia Pankhurst spoke openly on issues of colonialism. She responded to the invasion of Ethiopia by fascist Italy, publishing 'The New Times and Ethiopia News'. She pursued a socialist feminist course,

¹²⁹ Natalie Leal, 'Women's Suffrage: Women of Colour',

¹³⁰ Lori D. Ginzberg, *Elizabeth Cady Stanton: An American Life*, (Hill and Wang: 2010)

¹³¹ Find My Past, 'Were there Black Suffragettes in Britain?'

organising with working-class women in London's East End and was an outspoken opponent of racism, imperialism and fascism throughout her life.



Princess Sophia Dhuleep Singh selling "The Suffragette" outside Hampton Court Palace, where she has a suite of apartments.

Princess Sophia

I chose to write about this part of history because I am very

passionate about equality and justice. From learning about the Suffragettes Movement at a young age, I was hooked. The fact that it took until 1918 for a woman to be able to vote astonishes me. My great-great-grandmother was a suffragette and I always hold a sense of pride in my familial connection to the movement, and the fact that her and every suffragette fought so hard to get the right to vote so future generations of women could have a seat at the table. I am driven to research this topic further, due to the fact I'm unable to name one single Black British Suffragette. More investigation is needed, to resolve the questions: how could this movement, who advocates for equality and justice, seemingly not include Black British women? How can historians uncover the names of Black women participants? And what role might Black women have played in the movement?

The impact of Imperialism and the media on our understanding of the NHS, and African contributions

Alex Douglas Bailey

On the 21st October, 2020, I spoke at an event for the University of Bristol's History Society as a representative of the Young Historians Project

When I was invited to speak at the University of Bristol's History Society event for Black History Month on the 21st October as a representative for YHP, two talking points had been on my mind. Firstly, how historical events or institutions are often viewed as isolated within the contexts in which they exist, and secondly, how this then impacts minoritised peoples. I decided to frame my talk, which centred on our project about African Women and the Health Service, around these two talking points, to discuss how we came to look at this topic, and provide a brief insight into some of the research we've conducted on the recruitment of African women by the NHS. The University of Bristol's History

Society were very receptive to the work of the Young Historians Project. They were particularly interested in what it meant to be a member of YHP and I was excited to share my journey with them:

“We want to build on the work of our elders and continue to share and uncover important knowledge of our history, our struggle and our triumphs. A space to develop our skills, our knowledge and tell our own stories. To investigate the parts of our history we would like to know more about.”

“Organisations like ours are integral to filling in the gaps in the “official record” and I think challenging the narratives that develop from situations such as Windrush – with our current project called, African Women and the Health Service, it challenges how Windrush has framed black history and the contributions of Black people in Britain. Black history in modern Britain didn’t begin with Windrush, it extends beyond those of Caribbean heritage and deserves nuance and depth in the narratives.”

I described how I joined the Young Historians, having met YHP’s Project Coordinator in Chatham as we worked together on an exhibition detailing the Untold Stories of Black people in Kent in collaboration with the Medway African and Caribbean Association. I was invited to join a call discussing their latest project, since that call I’ve been part of the YHP team, and it’s completely enhanced my life post-degree.

I spent some time introducing our current project and the work we’ve carried out:

“The NHS has recently celebrated 72 years since its creation in post-war Britain, it’s been a huge topic of discussion in regards to leaving the European Union and immigration, and then the Windrush Scandal cast a spotlight on how Britons understand Black history, Black immigration and the contributions of African individuals to rebuilding post-war Britain.”

“We’ve been gathering oral histories by interviewing women who have worked or trained in the health service in Britain, and in some cases, whose parents did so. These interviews cover the decision and structure of coming to Britain, their training and work here, relationship with their home nations, experiences of racism, etc. In addition to this we spent time setting research questions and topics for us to explore through archival and research material to produce a timeline of key events and individuals, write ups on recurring narratives, material for schools and teachers to use, and we’re currently working on producing a documentary that brings all of this work together into a story.

Team members have been conducting research at the National Archives, the Royal College of Nursing, the Black Cultural Archives, the British Library, the BFI Archives and the British Newspaper Archives. We’ve conducted and taken part in workshops building on our shared knowledge and skillsets – our motto is ‘each one, teach one’.

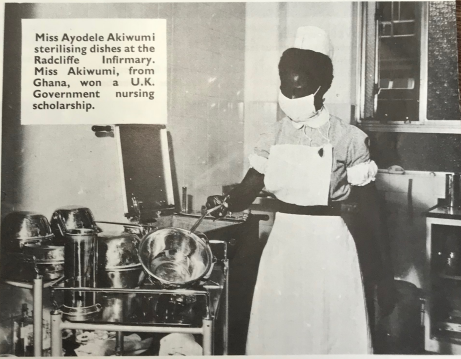
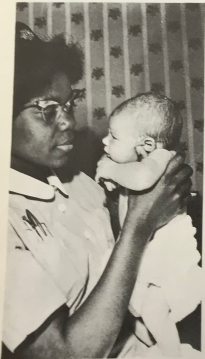
By uncovering this ‘hidden history’, we aim to encourage more research in the area and influence the public memorialisation of black women’s work in the healthcare sector.”



ABOVE: Although only 5 ft. tall Theodora Bartels, from Ghana, is a fully qualified ward sister. And she commands the respect of all her patients.

BELOW: Pupil midwife Susan Lartson, from Accra, Ghana, holds up another successful delivery at Ilford, Essex.

RIGHT: Four Ghanaian nurses training in Britain. Left to right Theresa Yadanoo, Ayodele Akiwymi, Grace Siayor and Gloria Nash.



Miss Ayodele Akiwumi sterilising dishes at the Radcliffe Infirmary. Miss Akiwumi, from Ghana, won a U.K. Government nursing scholarship.

Flamingo, October 1961

WINDRUSH, PROJECT ORIGINS

We've had a number of our incredible members speak at events over the last two years, as part of panel discussions, to present our project and methodologies on African Women and the Health Service, and other times to put forward our viewpoint as a African and Caribbean History organisation. For my talk I was presented with an opportunity to emphasise the excellent work we as an organisation were doing, and explore our research in relation to the constant scrutiny on the NHS, and the ongoing Windrush scandal.

The NHS has been a major topic of conversation in Britain since its creation, it has been twisted and moulded to suit those that have the power, it has grown and shrunk with time, and because of its political power it is uniquely difficult to analyse. If you think about how difficult the discussions were to have about Edward Colston and the slave money that so benefited the city of Bristol, imagine trying to critically discuss the longevity of the 'national treasure' that is the NHS to the detriment of African and Caribbean nations' medical systems. This a complicated topic against the backdrop of colonisation and a Western bloc influencing the international community through institutions like the World Bank and IMF.¹³²

A part of our job as historians is to tell stories unheard, to counter false claims, and to critically analyse the who, what, when, how. History is often rewritten and this can influence the collective memory, I'd argue that the collective memory of the

¹³² **Richard Swedberg**, 'The Doctrine of Economic Neutrality of the IMF and the World Bank', in *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 23, No. 4 (Dec., 1986), pp. 377-390.

United Kingdom swings like a pendulum between celebrating its glory and remembering its crimes. Once it swings one way history again is rewritten as the momentum changes, and as information is uncovered and digested in the mainstream, we as historians must set the record straight or more often regurgitate the same points from the last time around. Especially historians of ethnically minoritised individuals in Western nations, we see our existence and histories rediscovered and dropped at whim.

When the Windrush scandal really took form in the media I often wondered why it was that they picked this arbitrary event to draw a line in the sand for the beginning of black modern experiences in the UK. The scandal itself was the institutional and vicious attack on Caribbean individuals' rights as British citizens, the intentional destruction of documents and a hostile environment created by the British government.

The unfolding of the Windrush Scandal created public outcry at the inhumane actions by the hands of the government, rightly so. But what followed, I'd argue, was an intentional utilisation of this particular issue held up to the spotlight to cast a shadow over the repeated wrongdoings and historical racism of the British government. The fallout created activities that could be characterised as positive with potentially negative outcomes on the collective memory in the mainstream. The voices of the Windrush scandal victims were elevated, as they should, the history of Caribbean migration and contributions to the British nation was told and explored in the media, but it also created a generic term that characterised the modern black British experience and compacted the behaviour of the government to a moment in time rather than systemic actions.

As the 70th anniversary of the NHS came around at the height of Windrush discussions, the two came together quite well as an opportunity to publicise the role and influence of Caribbean women in the NHS. These women deserve to be celebrated and uplifted. Our role as Young Historians was to uncover the history that wasn't being told, to look at the African women who also played an integral role in the Health Service in the UK, both prior and post the creation of the NHS but were lost in the archives and oral histories not yet captured.

SECOND POINT ON RECRUITMENT AND BRAIN DRAIN

I looked to set the context in which women from African and Caribbean nations were recruited or travelling to the UK to train in the Health Service, as across the century the migration patterns would have changed and the reasons why would be nuanced. The largest influx of women and active recruitment took place with the creation of the NHS and whilst rebuilding post-war Britain.

In brief I started with:

“There was a need for the labour in particular roles - even when African women had more experience and higher qualifications from their home nations, the options for them was limited. So they had come to work in Britain, in many cases invited to work, taking away skills and knowledge from their home nations, and then kept in low earning roles doing the work that white practitioners were unwilling to do.”

“The creation of a National Health Service in 1948 saw

the demand for health professionals increasing in unprecedented terms. Severe labour shortages existed in unpopular specialisms such as nursing the mentally ill, chronically ill and geriatric care. There was an estimated shortage of 48,000 nurses. With a national campaign failing to make much of an impact, the Ministries of Health and Labour in conjunction with the Colonial Office, the General Nursing Council and the Royal College of Nursing placed advertisements in the Nursing Press encouraging candidates from colonies to come to Britain for training. Recruitment campaigns were pursued with senior nurses visiting Commonwealth countries for this purpose. The number of people working in nursing and midwifery increased by 26% in less than a decade (1949 – 1958). The British Nationality Act of 1948 came into force on the 1st of January 1949. Section 4 provided that a person became a citizen of the UK and the colonies by birth if they were born within the UK and colonies”.

“With respect to health care workers, the Act effectively created an imperial market of workers. Amendments to the 1949 Nurses Act allowed fast recruitment of nurses from colonies. Where the colonies themselves did not meet General Nursing Council standards, individual nurses were placed on adaptation training programmes on arrival in Britain.

The 1949 initiative by the National Advisory Council on Nurses and Midwives encouraged colonial territories to send student candidates to the UK for nurse training. This would allow the trained nurses to provide care in their countries, sparing British nurses, and while training,

serve the NHS. Between 1948 and 1973, as many as 100,000 nurses arrived from Africa, South East Asia and the West Indies to work in 'Cinderella' specialities such as sexual and mental health where there were acute shortages of staff. This focus on nursing is important, as many of the women we have interviewed, including ones who now practice in other disciplines, such as GPs, midwives or scrub nurses, started their training in nursing and subsequently moved."

My intention was to provide some insight into a few of the issues that would have impacted these women who had been recruited to the UK. Firstly, the limited roles and opportunities afforded to these women were often less desirable. For women who had higher qualification or the equivalent to their white counterparts, they still found themselves doing work that their counterpart wouldn't do. Secondly, on an institutional and interpersonal level the colour bar would affect the home and professional lives of these women, as issues of migration, government spending, integration, and numerous social issues became 'colour' issues. The final thing I wanted to discuss was how the changing state of these women's home nations would then influence the experience of training or practicing in the British Health Service. I used the story of Princess Tsehai Selassie as an example of how the context of the Ethiopian occupation by Italy, the Selassie family's expulsion and her role in Public Health influenced her training in England. From this point onwards we were able to discuss in what instances would African women return to their home nation and when they wouldn't. There are a number of factors that would influence this: British government policy, the stability of their

home nation, opportunities afforded to them pre and post-independence, the standards of training and hospitals, etc.



Princess Tsehai Selassie, 1938

Although we cannot apply broad strokes, some patterns seemed to emerge about the circumstances which led to African women returning to their home nation. I had argued that having hospitals ran by the Colonial Office in their home nation had provided *opportunities for women to travel to the UK for training and return to a similar standard to practice*. Additionally, the UK government had created contracts that stipulated African students were to work in the NHS for a set time frame before returning home, and used this as a method to prop up the work-

force without worrying about the future issues around settling migrants. Lastly, some women had clear intentions to return home for the sole purpose of utilising their newly acquired training and contributing to the national infrastructure.

We did not have enough time to discuss what this meant for the African nations that were then left to experience the aftermath of Brain Drains but its something I'm deeply interested in and definitely do not have all the answers to. A Brain Drain broadly means skilled individuals migrating to live and work in another country where there are more opportunities, and likely better pay. This results in a gap in the industries and skills for the nation of origin, and can result in poor development of those fields as they cannot compete to keep these individuals or attract new workers. In the context of our project we've defined Brain Drain as the recruitment of African healthcare professionals resulting in detrimental impact of healthcare on the African continent.



Nurses School at Sekondi, Gold Coast (Ghana) 1956

In relation to the contemporary ideology behind the NHS as this beacon of a social welfarism, there are two things we should add to the discussions around a post-Brexit NHS without migrant workers, and the ongoing issue of the cost of the NHS. For me, the NHS exists to the detriment of others, it's an entirely privileged system that we in the UK benefit from, as the funding and labour can in many ways be attributed to the British Empire. And with this in mind, are we advocating for and celebrating an

institution built and upheld by colonialism and exploitation? If so how do we move forward?

As other institutions in Britain exist and benefit from its privileged position in the global market, the NHS does too, and the development of this capitalist nation cannot be separated from colonialism. The mass recruitment of staff in the 1940s and 50s in an effort to rebuild post-war Britain could even be considered as intentional underdevelopment of newly independent nations as part of the decolonisation process.

Militant Diaspora: Britain's International African Service Bureau and the Caribbean Labour Rebellions of the 1930s

Kesewa John

Scholars have long recognised the 1930s as a decade, as a major turning point in Caribbean history. The 1930s were tumultuous for the entire Caribbean; from the Bahamas in the north of the region to francophone Guyane at the southernmost tip, Caribbean colonies and their centuries-old power structures shook throughout the 1930s and well into WWII and beyond as workers downed tools and demanded social as well as industrial change in phenomena historian O Nigel Bolland has termed the Caribbean Labour Rebellions.¹³³ In this paper I will offer a little background on the Labour Rebellions, then introduce the Negro Welfare Cultural and Social Association, one of the

¹³³ O Nigel Bolland, *On the march: labour rebellions in the British Caribbean, 1934-39* (Kingston: Ian Randle, 1995).

most prominent organisers of the strikes in Trinidad. I'll then explain the link between the NWCSA and the International African Service Bureau, and some of the advocacy the Bureau undertook in Britain as it sought to publicise the causes of the rebellions, and demand redress. The essay will conclude with a brief reflection on later traces of diasporic activism.

The following is a classic description of the Labour Rebellions, which typically excludes the rebellions in the neighbouring French colonial Caribbean isles:

Between 1935 and 1938 labor unrest raced throughout the Caribbean like fire on a windy day. In 1935 the sugar workers in St. Kitts and British Guiana went on strike, followed by a coal strike in St. Lucia, and a strike against an increase in customs duties in St. Vincent. In 1937 the oilfield workers in Trinidad went on a strike that widened into a general strike, and eventually merged into widespread labor unrest in Barbados, St. Lucia, British Guiana, and Jamaica. In 1938 Jamaican dock workers refused to work without better pay and better working conditions. The colonial authorities panicked. Military reinforcements rushed to the colonies to support the local law enforcement officers. Order was restored at a cost of 115 wounded, 29 dead, and considerable property damage.¹³⁴

¹³⁴ Franklin W. Knight, *The Caribbean: The Genesis of a Fragmented Nationalism*, (New York, 1978), 179. Cited in Edward Cox, 'The Press And The St. Vincent Labor Disturbances Of 1935.' (*Conference Papers - Caribbean Studies Association*, 1994 Annual Meeting).

The decade also marked 100 years since the abolition of African enslavement in the English-speaking Caribbean. The uprisings were initially industrial in nature because the mass of the population had inherited labour conditions only marginally improved since emancipation, and social relations which remained largely unaltered. This was of course quite deliberate. Scholar George Belle traced Samuel Jackman Prescod's fight to prevent the Barbadian plantocracy's attempts to maintain the advantages of slavery following the emancipation of the enslaved. Belle's work offers a very useful insight into *how*, for the majority of the population across the Caribbean, at emancipation the master simply became the boss.¹³⁵

Shocking levels of absolute poverty for the poor while the elite lived in world-class luxury was the cause of the labour rebellions, but a key trigger, particularly in the English-speaking Caribbean, was the Ethiopian Solidarity Campaign which had mobilised and united Caribbean people of African descent in particular from mid-1935.¹³⁶ In his 1930 pamphlet assessing the working and living conditions of Black people globally, *The Life and Struggles of Negro Toilers*, George Padmore wrote this:

In no section of the Black World are class lines more

¹³⁵ George AV Belle, "Samuel Jackman Prescod," in *The Empowering Impulse: The Nationalist Tradition of Barbados*, eds. Glenford D. Howe, Don D. Marshall, (Kingston: Canoe, University of West Indies Press, 2002), 56-102.

¹³⁶ Kesewa John, "Caribbean Women and the Ethiopian Solidarity Campaign," *Women's History Network*, 21 October 2019, <https://womenshistorynetwork.org/caribbean-women-and-the-ethiopian-solidarity-campaign-by-kesewa-john/>, accessed 28 December 2020.

sharply defined than in the Caribbean colonies...Throughout all of the West Indies one is confronted with the shocking spectacle of whole populations living on the verge of starvation. In the rural districts we find thousands of pauperised down-trodden natives, huddled together in company-owned barracks on the sugar plantations or scattered round the countryside in mud shacks...Forced to labour long hours on the smallest pittances the West Indian worker is scarcely able to provide himself with the most elementary necessities of life...The same conditions which exist in the British colonies also prevail in the French islands of Martinique and Guadeloupe, where agriculture is the main occupation. All of the large sugar plantations are owned by French companies, which make great profits by robbing the Negro workers, who receive a few francs per day.¹³⁷

The Labour Rebellions of the 1930s thus represented a new, fundamental disruption. Across the region working-class people collectively demanded change. From early 1930 in Guadeloupe to the Bahamas in 1942 Caribbean workers nominated representatives, sought meetings with the Governor or the Administrator, and their employers, and collectively withdrew their labour.

Elma Francois emigrated to Trinidad and Tobago from St Vincent in 1919.¹³⁸ She worked as a laundress and quickly joined

¹³⁷ George Padmore, 'The Life and Struggles of Negro Toilers,' George Padmore Archive, marxists.org, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/padmore/1931/negro-toilers/index.htm>, accessed 6 August 2020.

¹³⁸ Rhoda Reddock, *Elma Francois: the NWCSA and the worker's struggle for change in the Caribbean* (London: New Beacon Books, 1988).

the Trinidad Workingmen's Association, which was then led by Andrew Arthur aka Captain Cipriani. Although paternalistic in approach, Cipriani was an early champion of workers' rights, in his advocacy on behalf of 'the barefoot man.' More interested in facilitating workers fighting for their own rights, Elma built an organisation which went on to rival the TWA. By the end of the decade, she was the undisputed leader of the Negro Welfare Cultural and Social Association (NWCSA), an anti-imperialist Marxist grouping which actively recruited women and embedded gender equality into the ethos of the organisation itself.

Elma Francois and the Negro Welfare Cultural and Social Organisation led hundreds of Trinidad's unemployed people on hunger marches. They also created a register of the unemployed, and crucially, organised support for former NWCSA member Uriah Butler and the workers from the oilfields in the South whom he led to strike in June 1937, ultimately turning the movement into a general strike that lasted three weeks. Elma Francois was probably the most prominent woman in the Caribbean labour movement in the 1930s, and one of the few Caribbean women to be the recognised leader of an internationalist leftwing organisation which she directed politically and organisationally. As the name hints, the organisation had links with the UK's Negro Welfare Association, but Elma Francois had inserted 'Cultural and Social' into the title of the Trinbagonian grouping, in order to appeal to women.¹³⁹

The link to the UK's Negro Welfare Association was through

¹³⁹ Reddock. *Elma Francois*, 17.

Jim Headley. One of the earlier vocal organisations in the UK advocating for Black self-determination, the Negro Welfare Association was founded through the Communist Party of Great Britain around 1931 by two Barbadians, Arnold Ward and Chris Braithwaite.¹⁴⁰ Jim Headley worked closely with Braithwaite, and George Padmore. A fellow seafarer, Headley was elected Secretary of the Seaman's Minority Movement's 'Committee of Coloured Seamen,' an organisation set up by the Communist Party of Great Britain and linked to the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers, sometimes referred to as the Black International.¹⁴¹ Headley also set up the International Seamen's Club in Poplar, a few miles from Braithwaite's base in Stepney. Through their network therefore, several Black organisations in Britain in the interwar years were linked to the international communist movement. This was also true of organisations in France and Germany at the same time; some of Europe's most prominent interwar Black activists were also committed communists.¹⁴² Of the Twenty-One Conditions of Admission to the Communist International, the eighth condition's strong wording explicitly recognised the equal humanity of people from colonised countries.

¹⁴⁰ Communist Party of Great Britain papers, Labour History Archive, People's History Museum. See also Christian Hogsbjerg, "Mariner, Renegade, Castaway: Chris Braithwaite, seamen's organiser and Pan-Africanist," *Race and Class*, 53, no. 2 (2011), 36-57.

¹⁴¹ Hogsbjerg, "Mariner, Renegade, Castaway," 47-8.

¹⁴² Hakim Adi, *Pan-Africanism and Communism* (Africa World Press: Trenton, 2013) and Holger Weiss, *Framing a Radical African Atlantic: African American agency, West African intellectuals, and the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers* (Leiden: Brill, 2014) offer comprehensive introductions to interwar Black communism.

A particularly marked and clear attitude on the question of the colonies and oppressed nations is necessary on the part of the communist parties of those countries whose bourgeoisies are in possession of colonies and oppress other nations. Parties in countries whose bourgeoisie possess colonies and oppress other nations must pursue a most well-defined and clear-cut policy in respect of colonies and oppressed nations. Any party wishing to join the Third International must ruthlessly expose the colonial machinations of the imperialists of its "own" country, must support—in deed, not merely in word—every colonial liberation movement, demand the expulsion of its compatriot imperialists from the colonies, inculcate in the hearts of the workers of its own country an attitude of true brotherhood with the working population of the colonies and the oppressed nations, and conduct systematic agitation among the armed forces against all oppression of the colonial peoples.¹⁴³

Furthermore, condition no. eight also asserted their right to political liberty from a domination which the mainstream political discourse of the day described as primarily benevolent – ‘the white man’s burden’ or ‘tutelage’ as the League of Nations

¹⁴³ The Terms of Admission are attributed to Lenin, and were adopted by the Second Congress of the Communist International in 1920. Lenin’s [Collected Works](#), 4th English Edition, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1965, [Volume 31](#), pages 206–211. VI Lenin Internet Archive <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1920/jul/x01.htm> 2002, last accessed 4 April 2018.

Covenant labelled imperialism.¹⁴⁴ As a condition of acceptance to the Comintern, condition number eight also placed a duty on all communist parties to support people from the colonies who were agitating for an end to imperial rule. Such commitment to anti-imperialism and antiracism, shared across national or imperial borders made international communism and Soviet Russia politically appealing to those colonial subjects determined to organise for freedom, including Africans and people of African descent in Africa, the Caribbean, North and Latin America, and in Europe. The ITUCNW, the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers, the Comintern apparatus George Padmore led, and which will be discussed in more detail later, was intensely interested in their liberation struggles.

¹⁴⁴ Article 22 of the League of Nations Covenant stated 'The following principles apply to those colonies and territories which...are inhabited by people **not yet capable of governing themselves** in the particularly difficult conditions of this modern world. The well-being and the development of these people constitutes a sacred civilising mission, and it is appropriate to incorporate into the present Covenant the guarantees for the fulfilment of this mission.' (author's translation and emphasis)

The best method of giving practical effect to this principle is that the **tutelage of such peoples should be entrusted to advanced nations** who by reason of their resources, their experience or their geographical position can best undertake this responsibility, and who are willing to accept it, and that this tutelage should be exercised by them.' 'League of Nations Covenant', United Nations, <https://treaties.un.org/doc/source/covenant.pdf>, accessed 14.01.20



International African Opinion: Educate - Co-operate - Emancipate, 1938

In 1934 Jim Headley was back in Trinidad, and with comrades Elma Francois, Dudley Mahon and Jim Barrette, he co-founded

the National Unemployed Movement, which a year later became the Negro Welfare Cultural and Social Association. Although Britain's Black population was comparatively small in the 1930s, among them were a group of activists who advocated fearlessly, ceaselessly and effectively for justice for people both from and in colonised countries – and with whom the NWCSA had a relationship. The British-based response to the Caribbean Labour Rebellions provides a clear example of their transnational collaboration.

In late 1937, a security services officer mentioned in a confidential memo that the speed of the response of the International African Service Bureau, and the accuracy of their information about the uprisings in the Caribbean, was so thorough that the colonial office were not entirely convinced that the Bureau hadn't had a hand in organising them in the first place.¹⁴⁵ A secret 'Report on Investigations into 1) Political influences in connection with Trinidad Labour Disturbances 1937 2) Communist activities affecting industrial interests generally in British Colonies' was therefore commissioned.¹⁴⁶

The Bureau's response had certainly been rapid. The issue of *Africa and The World* published in London on 14th August 1937, was only the paper's third edition, and it dedicated a section to 'Strikes in the West Indies',¹⁴⁷ In addition to a detailed report on

¹⁴⁵ TNA CO 295/606/4 Colonial Office file on communist activity in the British West Indies.

¹⁴⁶ TNA CO 295/606/4. The final report was considered to consist largely of incorrect and out-of-date information.

¹⁴⁷ 'Strikes in the West Indies', *Africa and The World*, 14 August 1937.

the shocking unrest in Barbados two weeks earlier, the article informed readers of a public meeting in London held on 9th August. At the meeting, various members of the executive committee of the Bureau (George Padmore, CLR James, Chris Braithwaite), Arnold Ward of the Negro Welfare Association and Reginald Bridgeman of the League Against Imperialism all spoke in support of the Caribbean's working class. The meeting passed the following resolution:

This meeting of British and Colonial workers, held at Trafalgar Square, on Sunday, August 9th, under the auspices of the International African Service Bureau, sends fraternal greetings to the toiling workers of Trinidad and Barbados, and other West Indian colonies, and pledges its wholehearted support in their heroic struggle for the right to Trade Unionism, collective bargaining, and general economic and social advancement.

It condemns the repressive measures adopted by the representatives of vested interests in these islands in trying to prevent these native workers from securing their legitimate demands for increased wages and shorter hours, and calls upon the Colonial Office to institute enquiries into the labour conditions in the West Indies.¹⁴⁸

The prelude to the article 'Since the publication of the last issue of *Africa and the World*, labour unrest continues to sweep over the West Indies'¹⁴⁹ indicated that either or both of the previous issues had previously brought the news to readers in the UK of

¹⁴⁸ 'Strikes in the West Indies' *Africa and The World*, 14 August 1937.

¹⁴⁹ 'Strikes in the West Indies' *Africa and The World*.

the uprising in Trinidad.

Two weeks later, *Africa and the World* published a special 'West Indian Edition'.¹⁵⁰ Contextualising the background and events immediately preceding the labour rebellions which had shaken Barbados and Trinidad in June and July respectively, the special edition also elaborated on the response of the local representatives of the British state.¹⁵¹ The presenting of events, particularly injustices in the colonies to the wider British public, the identification of likely allies, and the sending of resolutions to the concerned authorities was, by 1937, a well-established and effective campaign strategy for Caribbean radicals in Europe. As was the use of a regularly produced publication to disseminate information, educate and, in today's parlance, create a sense of community amongst those people struggling for justice in the colonial Caribbean on both sides of the Atlantic ocean.¹⁵² The International African Service Bureau was comprised of people in close proximity to the centre of imperial power, and determined to use that position to advocate for justice for their native lands.

This was a continuation of George Padmore's earlier work. In 1930, the Bureau's unofficial leader had been head of the Communist International's 'Negro Bureau' of the Profintern, the section concerned with developing trade unionism globally, the previously mentioned International Trade Union Committee

¹⁵⁰ *Africa and the World: West Indian Special Edition*, 1st September 1937.

¹⁵¹ *Africa and the World: West Indian Special Edition*, 1st September 1937.

¹⁵² For a detailed account of the IASB's use of publishing as a campaign strategy, see Carol Polsgrove, *Ending British rule in Africa: writers in a common cause* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009).

of Negro Workers. A large part of Padmore's job had been to understand the conditions of Black workers worldwide, write about them in the *Negro Worker* newspaper he was responsible for editing, and establish and maintain connections with those Black activists hoping to improve them. A Trinidadian émigré to the US initially, Padmore had been based in Europe since 1929, living first in Russia, then Austria before settling in Weimar Germany in 1931.¹⁵³ He lived in Hamburg until just weeks after Adolf Hitler's 1933 ascent to the German chancellorship when, as a British colonial citizen and therefore foreigner, he was arrested, and deported to the UK. Padmore went immediately to Paris, where he spent some 18 months working among France's leftwing and pan-Africanist organisations of the early 1930s. Despite his years heading up the communist International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers, it was in Paris where, in Padmore's own words, he confessed to having been most impressed by the sophistication of Black political organising. In a 1934 letter to African American scholar-activist W.E.B. DuBois he wrote

The French Negroes recently held a conference...the Negro problem was discussed relative to the present economic

¹⁵³ For more on George Padmore's life and work see Leslie James, *George Padmore and decolonization from below: pan-Africanism, the Cold War, and the end of empire*. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), Hakim Adi, *Pan-Africanism and Communism: the Communist International, Africa and the diaspora, 1919-1939*, Trenton: Africa World Press, 2013), Brent Hayes Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora: literature, translation, and the rise of Black internationalism*. London: Harvard University Press, 2003), and Holger Weiss, *Framing a radical African Atlantic: African American agency, West African intellectuals, and the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers*. (Leiden: Brill, 2014).

*and social crisis the world over, and the fascist danger which threatens our racial extermination. It was the most serious political discussion which I have ever listened to among Negroes.*¹⁵⁴

The speed of the London-based group's response was particularly impressive because in June 1937 the International African Service Bureau was a new organisation.¹⁵⁵ The Bureau had been established only three months earlier, effectively replacing the International African Friends of Ethiopia, which had been co-founded by C.L.R. James and Amy Ashwood Garvey, to coordinate their organising in support of Ethiopia. But George Padmore was certainly not new to international nor internationalist political organising. As the Ethiopian Solidarity Campaign de-intensified, the executive regrouped and re-oriented their energies. The second issue of their first newspaper, *Africa and the World*, included a report on the Emergency meeting of Trinidad's Legislative Council, which was 'called to enquire into the causes of the strikes'.¹⁵⁶ The article highlighted that

¹⁵⁴ Padmore, George, 1902-1959. Letter from George Padmore to W. E. B. Du Bois, February 17, 1934. W. E. B. Du Bois Papers (MS 312). Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries. Available online at UMass Amherst's digital DuBois archive: <http://credo.library.umass.edu/view/full/mums312-b071-i393>.

¹⁵⁵ For more on the IASB see Adi, *Pan-Africanism and Communism*, Weiss, *Framing a radical African Atlantic*, Susan Pennybacker *From Scottsboro to Munich: Race and Political Culture in 1930s Britain* (London: Princeton University Press, 2009), Marc Matera *Black London: the imperial metropolis and decolonization in the twentieth century* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015).

¹⁵⁶ 'Labour Unrest in the West Indies', *Africa and the World*, 27th July 1937.

*The Governor strongly criticised the island's big business men on the way they have been exploiting their native workers...The Governor told the council that the Abyssinian War which has created great racial feeling throughout the coloured world...as well as the rising cost of living in the island, were the political and economic factors back of the unprecedented wave of strikes in the colony.*¹⁵⁷

Also highlighted were Secretary Nankivell's unexpectedly supportive comments. Echoing criticisms of Trinidad's plantocracy, his frank words had seemingly elicited cheers at the meeting: 'The sugar industry was not subsidised by the tax-payers to enable vested interests to reap big profit. It...has no right to pay dividends at all unless it pays fair wage to labour.'¹⁵⁸ Thus going into quite intricate detail of the local political context and consequences, in 1937 Caribbean radicals in London used their newspapers to publicise the workers' revolts in the English-speaking Caribbean, and the justice of their cause, which even the Governor had acknowledged.

In addition to public meetings to raise awareness among the British public and generate solidarity with workers in the Caribbean, the IASB advocated through their contacts with British politicians. Since December 1935 C.L.R. James had been the chair of the Independent Labour Party's Finchley branch, and the Bureau enjoyed a close relationship with both Labour Party and Independent Labour Party MPs. They contributed

¹⁵⁷ 'Labour Unrest in the West Indies', *Africa and the World*, 27th July 1937.

¹⁵⁸ 'Labour Unrest in the West Indies', *Africa and the World*, 27th July 1937.

regularly to the ILP journal *New Leader* where they made the case for colonial freedom. Through their relationships with sympathetic Members of Parliament, the IASB were able to have the issues of working class Caribbean people addressed directly by the British government.

Between June 1937 and July 1938, through MPs like David Adams, Arthur Creech Jones, Benjamin Riley and Reginald Sorensen, over fifty questions were posed to the Secretary of State for the colonies. The questions all focused on working and living conditions in the Caribbean, and what the government was – or wasn't – doing about improving them. It is a testament to the effectiveness of their advocacy that a wide enough section of the British public became interested in conditions in Britain's Caribbean, and MPs such as the liberal James de Rothschild, also began asking questions in Parliament.¹⁵⁹ The following five inquiries demonstrate the types of questions posed:

19 July 1937: *Mr. David Adams asked the Secretary of State for the Colonies whether he has received a full report of the recent debate in the Trinidad Legislature, when the Governor declared that the sugar industry might well consider paying no dividend till labour conditions are better and the Colonial Secretary described the workers' conditions on the sugar estates as economic slavery; and*

¹⁵⁹ *Mr. de Rothschild* asked the Secretary of State for the Colonies whether it is his intention to publish the report of the commission which investigated the recent disturbances in Barbados; and when this report will be made available to Members of this House and to the public of this country?' Barbados, *Hansard, House of Commons*, Volume 331 Column 413-4W, 3 February 1938. Online, <https://bit.ly/36gDwnL>, accessed 29.11.20.

whether, in view of these statements, he will expedite the setting up of a Royal Commission?¹⁶⁰

19 July 1937: *Mr. David Adams* asked the Secretary of State for the Colonies whether there has been any amendment of the Masters and Servants Ordinance in Antigua in the direction of the abolition of the penal clauses for breach of civil contract by employés; and, if so, whether any similar amendment is contemplated in other territories in the West Indies?¹⁶¹

10 November 1937: *Mr. Riley* asked the Secretary of State for the Colonies when he expects to present the Report of the commission inquiring into labour unrest and the recent disturbances in Trinidad?¹⁶²

15 December 1937: *Mr. F. O. Roberts* asked the Secretary of State for the Colonies how many Governors have been appointed to British Guiana since 1928; whether he is aware that widespread dissatisfaction exists in the Colony because of the lack of continuity in legislative policy resulting from short-term governorships; and whether, in view of the urgent need for administrative and economic reform, he will take immediate steps to have these matters

¹⁶⁰ Trinidad (Industrial Disputes), *Hansard, House of Commons*, Volume 326 Column 1795, 19 July 1937. Online, <https://bit.ly/2K4lVqs>, accessed 12.11.20.

¹⁶¹ Civil Contracts (Penal Clauses), *Hansard, House of Commons*, Volume 326 Column 1795, 19 July 1937. Online, <https://bit.ly/3kBIG1D>, accessed 12.11.20.

¹⁶² Trinidad (Disturbances), *Hansard, House of Commons*, Volume 328 Column unknown, 10 November 1937. Online, <https://bit.ly/3lBCuYG>, accessed 12.11.20.

*inquired into by a competent and representative body, preferably by a Royal Commission?*¹⁶³

09 May 1938: Mr. Sorensen asked the Secretary of State for the Colonies whether he will now make a further statement respecting the recent disturbances in Jamaica; when the Special Commission is likely to make a report; and what action he proposes to take to deal with the distress and destitution, and the questions of wages and labour, in the island?¹⁶⁴

Almost a year to the day after the International African Service Bureau's Trafalgar Square rally had called for 'enquiries into the labour conditions in the West Indies'¹⁶⁵ following the labour rebellions in Trinidad and Barbados, and after over fifty questions had been put before the House of Commons on the subject, on 5th August 1938 the royal warrant was signed which officially instructed Lord Moyne

to investigate social and economic conditions in Barbados, British Guiana, British Honduras, Jamaica, the Leeward Islands [Antigua, St Kitts, Nevis, Anguilla, Dominica, Montserrat, Virgin Islands], Trinidad and Tobago, and the Windward Islands [Grenada, St Lucia, St Vincent], and matters connected therewith, and to make recommenda-

¹⁶³ British Guiana, *Hansard, House of Commons*, Volume 330 Column 1173, 15 December 1937. Online, <https://bit.ly/3f1UoBv>, accessed 12.11.20.

¹⁶⁴ Jamaica, *Hansard, House of Commons*, Volume 335 Column 1251, 9 May 1938. Online, <https://bit.ly/3kxS2LN>, accessed 12.11.20.

¹⁶⁵ 'Strikes in the West Indies' *Africa and The World*, 14 August 1937.

tions.¹⁶⁶

In December 1939, after a lengthy tour of Britain's Caribbean colonies taking evidence almost daily for several months, the members of the Moyne Commission submitted their report. However, considered so damning of Britain's management of her Caribbean colonies that it could be used as propaganda by Nazi Germany, publication was suppressed until the end of WWII.

The IASB's advocacy for the Caribbean from their London base continued into the 1940s. When the Pan-African Federation, under the leadership of George Padmore and his Bureau colleagues, organised the 1945 Pan-African Congress at Manchester, the NWCSA sent a member to represent it. The NWCSA after the death of their leader Elma Francois in 1944, also took a new form; her comrades Christina King and Jim Barrette worked closely with John la Rose, a younger activist, in the Workers' Freedom Movement. John la Rose later moved to England, where he continued organising politically. La Rose established New Beacon Books, both a publishing house and shop which is believed to be Britain's oldest Black-owned bookshop, in 1966. He was a key figure in the Caribbean Arts Movement, the Black Parents Movement and organiser of the Black People's Day of Action in response to the New Cross fire of 1981.¹⁶⁷ In 1988 New Beacon Books published Trinidad and Tobago-based historian

¹⁶⁶ Dennis Benn, ed., *Report of the West India Royal Commission*, xi.

¹⁶⁷ Gus John, "John La Rose" *The Independent*, 22 April 2006, <http://news.independent.co.uk/people/obituaries/article359395.ece>, accessed 28 December 2020.

Rhoda Reddock's history book *Elma Francois: The NWCSA and the workers struggle for change in the Caribbean in the 1930s*, and in 1991 John la Rose founded an archive and educational centre whose materials and work focus on Black communities in Europe, named the George Padmore Institute. And thus a new generation continued the tradition of a militating diaspora.

The West Indian Federation and the founding of the West Indian Gazette

Ellie Kramer-Taylor

During the late 1950s, political activism within Britain's Caribbean community surged. Yet, although scholars have widely acknowledged the rise of such activism, when identifying its cause, they have primarily focused on domestic British politics.¹⁶⁸ As Carole Boyce Davies and Edward Pilkington have argued, the racial discrimination experienced by Britain's Afro-Caribbean community, specifically the race riots in Notting Hill and Nottingham, and the murder of Kelso Cochrane, were

¹⁶⁸ Some examples of the organisations that were formed from the late 1950s onwards are: West Indian Workers and Students Association (WIWSA) in 1957, the *West Indian Gazette and Afro-Asian News* in 1958, and the first Caribbean Carnival in 1959. For discussion on the rise in British Caribbean activism in this period see Carole Boyce Davies, *Left of Marx: The Political Life of Black Communist Claudia Jones*, (Duke University Press, 2007) p.172; Edward Pilkington, *Beyond the Mother Country: West Indians and the Notting Hill White Riots*, (I.B. Tauris, 1988); Kennetta Hammond Perry, *London is the Place for Me: Black Britons, Citizenship and the Politics of Race*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016) p.20

undoubtedly key stimulants of their political and cultural activity.¹⁶⁹ However, precisely in this same period, significant political developments were underway in the Caribbean that captivated the diaspora in Britain. Parallel to the infamous riots in 1958, the West Indian Federation, a political union in the British Caribbean, was established.¹⁷⁰ This temporal coincidence gives one reason to question how events outside of Britain, specifically the formation of the Federation, may have evoked a more ‘culturally and politically aware’ British Caribbean diaspora.¹⁷¹ To explore this dynamic, this article will review early publications by the *West Indian Gazette & Afro-Asian News*, a leading black British newspaper whose founding is widely associated with the galvanisation of West Indian society, culture and politics in Britain, in the late 1950s and early 1960s.¹⁷² By considering how the West Indian Federation was discussed by the *Gazette*, this article aims to demonstrate a consequential relationship between the inauguration of the Federation and the increased Caribbean activism in Britain, suggesting that political developments in the Caribbean in the

¹⁶⁹ In her biography of Claudia Jones, Boyce Davies explains that a number of people she interviewed for her research, ‘agree that this series of incidents provided the catalyst for putting in place a more self-directed and culturally and politically aware community.’ She also discusses Edwards Pilkington’s emphasis on the racial hostility on uniting and galvanising British West Indians. Boyce Davies, p.172

¹⁷⁰ Ten out of twelve British Caribbean territories were included in the federation. The *West Indian Gazette* reported on which territories joined the Federation a March 1958 issue See in London, Institute of Commonwealth Studies (ICS), Billy Strachan Papers, 158/14/2 ‘80,000 Good Reasons’, *The West Indian Gazette*, March 1958

¹⁷¹ Boyce Davies, p.172

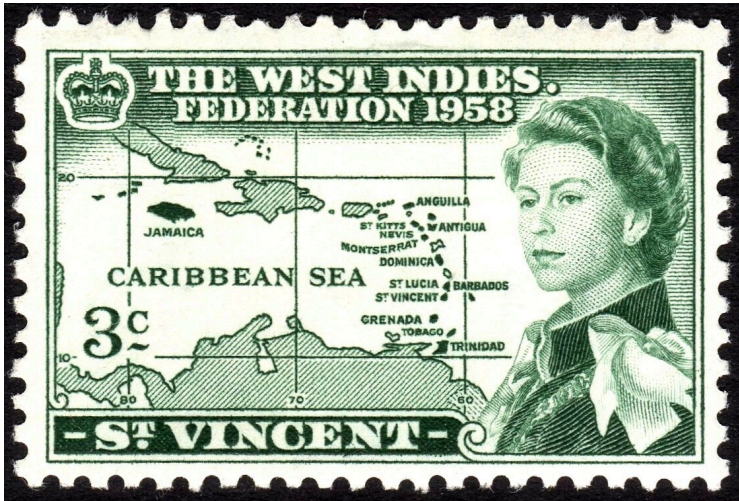
¹⁷² *Ibid.*, pp.172-173

era of decolonisation should be more seriously examined when discussing the diaspora in Britain.

In an article celebrating its one-year anniversary, the *West Indian Gazette* discussed the circumstances of its founding, stating 'our birth one year ago, paralleled the inauguration of the West Indies Federation - the first step towards West Indian nationhood.'¹⁷³ It is immediately clear that the *Gazette* saw the timing of the Federation's establishment as significant to its own; indeed, both were formed in early 1958. Yet this timing is more than coincidental. In an article explaining the newspaper's purpose, it was stated, '...As a W.I. nation comes into being we want more news and fuller news from home.'¹⁷⁴ The emerging Federation was thus prominent in the minds of the newspaper's founders, suggesting that Caribbean activism in Britain was not purely motivated by domestic politics.

¹⁷³ ICS, Billy Strachan Papers, 158/14/1; 'Our First Anniversary' *West Indian Gazette*, May 1959

¹⁷⁴ ICS, Billy Strachan Papers, 158/14/2 '80,000 Good Reasons', *The West Indian Gazette*, March 1958



St Vincent: The West Indies Federation, 1958

From the above we can see that there was a direct relationship between the establishment of the West Indian Federation and the founding of the *West Indian Gazette*. Yet, on top of aiming to provide British West Indians with more “fuller news from home”, the *Gazette* also believed that proactive support for the Federation should be one of its core objectives. As an article from March 1958 stated, ‘We associate ourselves with the ancient dream of...fighters for West Indian Federation.’¹⁷⁵ Documents from the *Gazette*’s first annual general meeting also explain that the publication was ‘Originally conceived...as an instrument for helping to build a united movement at home, roused by the

¹⁷⁵ ICS, Strachan Papers, 158/14/2; ‘West Indies Federation’, *West Indian Gazette*, March 1958

Federation...¹⁷⁶ Clearly stated is that the *Gazette* was in part established to bolster the West Indian Federation by fomenting West Indian unity in Britain. While scholars have acknowledged that the *Gazette* helped solidify the British Caribbean community, that this was an objective motivated by the political situation ‘at home’ demonstrates the extent to which the Caribbean diaspora in Britain remained invested in their homeland’s move towards independence.

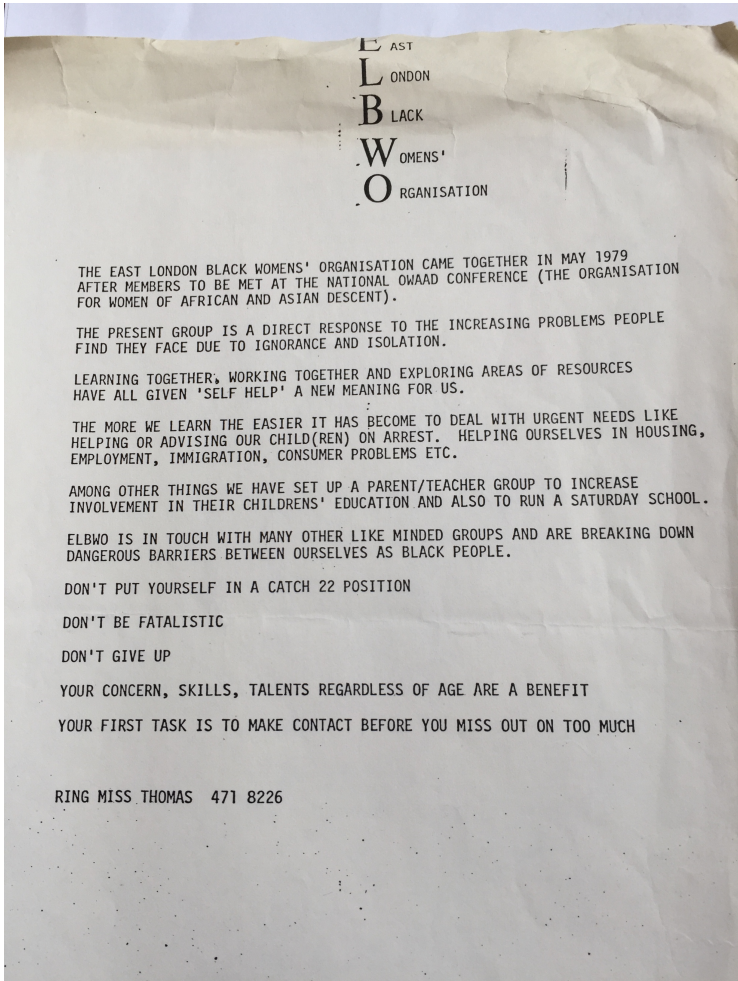
Despite the eventual failure of the Federation, it is evident that in its early years it can be seen as an anti-colonial achievement with transnational significance. And by identifying the relationship between the Federation and the formation of the *West Indian Gazette*, this article suggests a more serious historical attentiveness to the connections between the decolonising Caribbean and its diaspora. Understanding this dynamic may further reveal the influence of Caribbean politics on important developments within Britain’s West Indian community. For example, a relationship between the groundbreaking Caribbean Carnival and the Federation is also discernible. Bill Schwarz has noted that although it was “inspired by particular conditions of London’, Carnival ‘was also conceived as an organic part of... the ambitions to transform the West Indian Federation into an active, living, cultural reality.’¹⁷⁷ Scholars can therefore enhance their understanding of the British Caribbean experience by more fully examining how this community related and

¹⁷⁶ ICS, Strachan Papers, 158/16/2; ‘A.G.M Report on West Indian Gazette’ [Claudia Jones, 1958?]

¹⁷⁷ Bill Schwarz, “‘Claudia Jones and the *West Indian Gazette*’”: Reflections on the Emergence of Post-Colonial Britain”, *Twentieth Century British History*, 14, 3 (2003), 264–285, (p.273)

responded to political developments in their homeland.

History Matters Archive: East London
Black Women's Organisation



Above is a document produced by the East London Black Women's Organisation (ELBWO), aiming to encourage other local Black women to get involved and organise around issues affecting Black people. ELBWO was part of a wider Black radical movement in Britain, and played a leading role in the

development of a connected Black women's movement which was most active during the late 1970s and 1980s. Britain's Black women's movement encouraged women to organise collectively, on local, national and international levels, against racism, sexism, imperialism and economic oppression. The ELBWO in particular was fuelled by Pan-Africanism, and the power of community organising.

We are eager to receive historic documents, photos or other visual material relating to the history of African and Caribbean people in Britain, to showcase in future *Journal* editions as part of our developing archive. If you have anything of relevance to contribute, please do get in touch with us at: **histmatters@gmail.com**

II

Book Reviews

Hakim Adi: The History of African and Caribbean communities in Britain, 4th Edition (London, Hachette Children's Group, 2020)

Natasha Howell

FINALLY...a book that takes you on a journey, as far back as AD 43 England to reveal that, people of colour of varying walks of life, did in fact exist and settle in Britain, despite the negative representations depicted en masse across the ages.

FINALLY...a book that provides credible information relating to people and families of African and Caribbean origins and the reasons why and how they came to become a part of British society and how they were treated once they arrived.

FINALLY...a book that portrays our contribution in a factual, concise, and balanced way, not just reminding us, yet again, of the atrocities of the transatlantic slave trade, but also as positive influencers of their time whose actions have conversely and

positively affected generations to come!

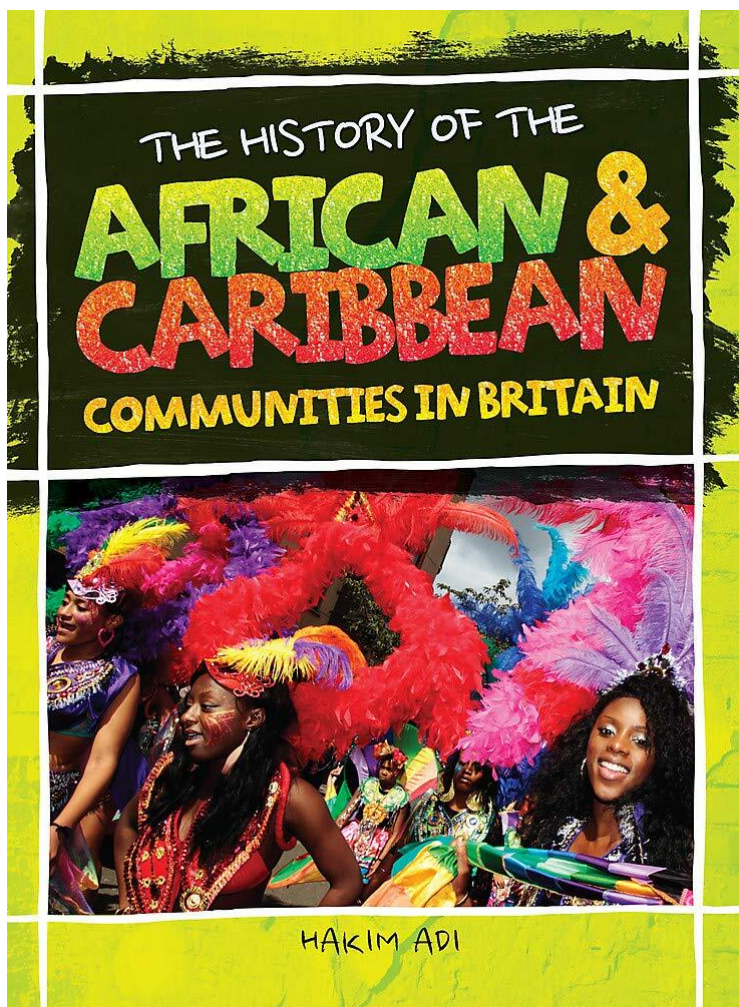
The 'History of the African and Caribbean Communities in Britain' successfully aims to give an unapologetically true insight to the plight of the black experience distinct from the history told often by white educators. Chapters are succinct with just the right number of detailed descriptions for students with enquiring minds to begin their own pathway for self-discovery - educators too, can use the content found in each page, to consolidate pre-existing knowledge and develop critical thinking techniques. Chapter headings like: 'Fighting slavery in Britain' and 'The 19th century black community' conjured up a mixture of thoughts and queries as to what I was soon to learn... that settled Africans (free men and escaped slaves) would often gather together and hold their own social events i.e. weddings etc in an effort to improve their own conditions or that the poor people of London, opposed to slavery too, actively supported and fought alongside runaway slaves in an attempt to end slavery in the law courts. To say, I was inspired to learn of these accounts, is an understatement!

From beginning to end, I genuinely found the book an insightful and fascinating educational journey from ignorance to enlightenment. To learn that Britain's Black communities came to get an education; on business to set up offices in London or Liverpool; to study law or medicine; married British women, therefore, developed their skills and used their influence and status to carve out a better life of their own is mind-exploding! Had I been introduced to such information whilst navigating life's twists and turns from childhood to adulthood, I wonder what kind of a person I could have turned out to be? It is

times like this, I wish I had had access to resources like ‘The History of the African and Caribbean Communities in Britain’ as a personal reference guide to, at least, rebut arguments like ‘Go back to your own country!’ or motivate a personal need to know my history for myself when I was most impressionable as a teenager desperately seeking ‘to know herself, her people and her history’. A resource like this I believe will start, if not, add to conversations on ethnicity, identity and citizenship, if not, change discussions from Black British history to ethnicity and beyond.

In addition to the greats that are so often referenced (Mary Seacole, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor etc...) this book challenged me to, again, acknowledge and accept my own ignorance about Black British history and a failure to commit investigating the undeniably rich contribution Africans and Caribbeans have made to British way of life. Books like this almost take the guilt away of not having done ‘my own research’. Using material taken from within these pages, I believe both young and old, can appreciate even more the mark our ancestors have made that has, and will continue, to reshape Britain’s life and legacy for centuries to come.

I would highly recommend this book as a must-have teaching resource and educational tool for secondary aged, and above, students and learners of all backgrounds, ages and interests. Having said that, even in its current format, I think children towards the upper end of the primary stage, may find this book equally informative, particularly when presented in a more age-appropriate way.



The History of African and Caribbean Communities in Britain

Asher and Martin Hoyles, *Before Windrush West Indian in Britain*, (Hansib Publications, 2020)

Marika Sherwood

This book begins with praises from many people, including Margaret Busby, who advised that the book ‘points the way towards ensuring that all those it names are rightfully given credit due, while perhaps inspiring readers to seek out others also deserving of greater attention’. I totally agree with this, and would add that I hope the book will lead to all the research required on all aspects of the history of peoples of African origins/descent in the UK. And also from India.

The book is divided into sections: Slaves and Servants, Nurses and Doctors, Political Activists, Soldiers and Airmen, Sportsmen and Writers. There are poems in every section, mainly by ‘Asher’, presumably Asher Hoyles. Hansib Publications’ Founder, Arif Ali explains, ‘what is little-known are the stories of those West Indians who were in Britain before the *Windrush*’. (p.15) So

this book is only about *arrivals from the West Indies*. In the Introduction we are told that ‘Caribbean immigration goes back at least a couple of centuries before’ the *Windrush*. And also ‘that the status of slaves in Britain was legally ambiguous’ (p.18); some examples are given of advertisements for escaped slaves and slaves-for-sale here. I wish readers were told of some books/articles they could read about this long history, including the skeletons of Africans here from c.200AD.

The book is an excellent introduction to some of the West Indians settled here. And there are some wonderfully useful quotations from many. And portraits of almost all of them.

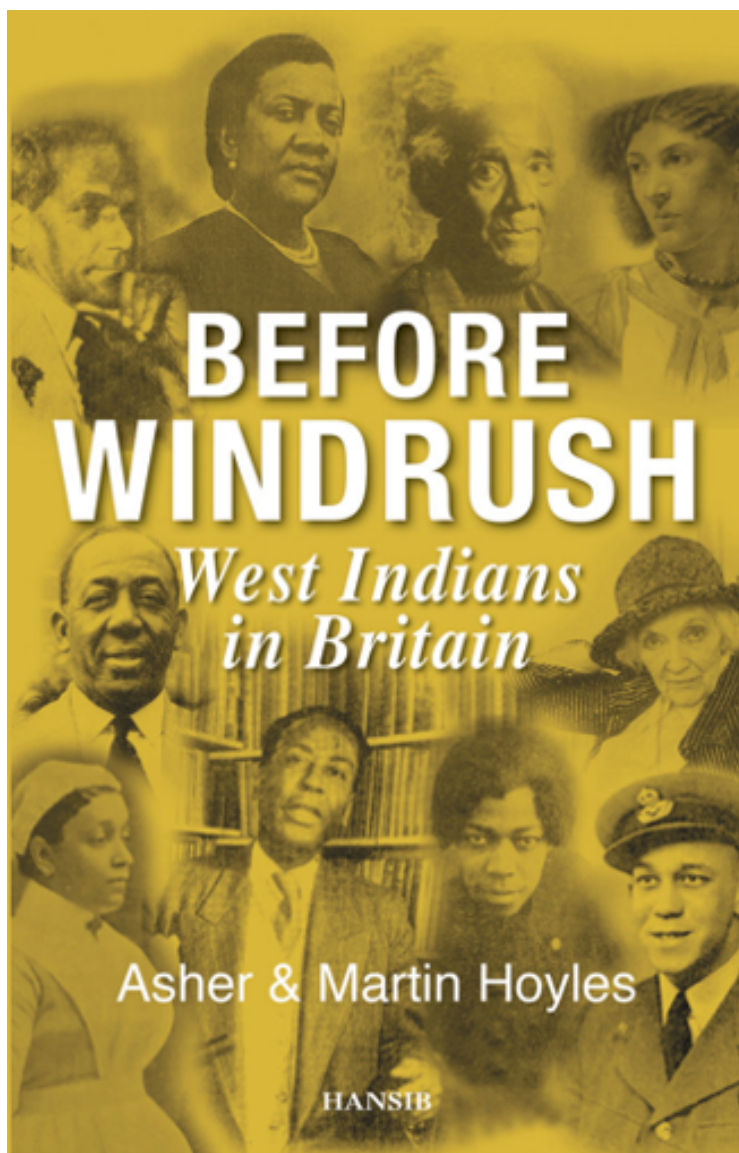
While the ‘general’ reader might not want to ask some of the questions that pop up for me as I am reading, I must give some examples. From page 41: Nurse ‘Annie Brewster’s father, Pharour Chaderon Brewster, was a merchant born in Barbados’: where was the father from? The first two names are certainly not English and Barbados was a British colony. From p.46: how many wives did John Alcindor have? Two names are given. I could ask many many more.

Sadly some of the authors mentioned in the text do not appear in the Bibliography: one example is J.R. Hooker’s book on Henry Sylvester Williams, the organiser of the Pan-African Congress held in London in 1900. (p.65) And no mention of Williams’ residence in South Africa; or of my much more recent book on him. And please, W.E.B. DuBois was *not* one of the *organisers* of the 1945 Pan-African Congress. (p.64)

Some entries also need explanations: for example, what was

the 'Kelso Cochrane Fund'? (p.72) Who was Norman Manley? (p.76) Did Padmore make a living 'by private tuition'? (p.77) Who was Louise Bennett? (p.85) And many more.... And some entries need corrections: eg a law student doesn't 'use Gray's Inn and its common room'. (p.96) And the Hoyles insult Billy Strachan by stating that he was made a 'sergeant' in the RAF! He became a *Flight Lieutenant*. (p.103)

So the book has made me very sad. I so looked forward to it! I think it needs an urgent revision, dealing with my many many questions. And we need a full bibliography, especially of biographies. It might perhaps help readers if the biographies were listed at the end of each section. I think we also need a brief introduction to the history of the 'West Indies', including the fate of the indigenous peoples, and also the reasons for the massive emigration, especially to the USA (1899-1940 = c.42,000; 1943-47 = c.19,000)



Before Windrush: West Indians in Britain

Robin Bunce and Samara Linton: Diane Abbott: The Authorised Biography by (Biteback Publishing Limited, 2020)

Claudia Tomlinson

This biography adopts a conventional chronological approach to telling the story of Diane Abbott's life and times. It takes the reader through Abbott's political life, from grassroots and constituency activism to her significant achievements in the heart of Westminster. It is difficult for some to recall the political landscape in Britain before she was elected as the first black woman MP to Parliament, and indeed young people may not be aware of the significance of this achievement. Black women MPs are not present in representative numbers in Parliament, but the path of those who came later was significantly eased by Abbott's trailblazing. The battles fought by Abbott have thus been long forgotten by many or escaped the notice of others. The onslaught she has faced in the past five years at the hands of a retrograde and hostile political landscape and right-wing media empire has sought to diminish her considerable life and

contributions. This biography therefore is timely and goes a long way towards re-calibrating the story of Abbott's life and journey.

The book tells the journey of Abbott's parents to Britain in the 1950s, like many others, to seek economic improvement, with their description as economic migrants from Jamaica. Whilst a biography needs to limit its scope, greater contextual and framing of the historical forces driving people in the black African diaspora to Britain would have been welcomed.

There is good recounting of Abbott's struggles to secure a place at Cambridge University as a black British girl, despite a track record of academic prowess. The work also charts her political awakening through the women's movements in the 1970s, particularly through white feminist models, and navigating from that more privileged platform to black women's activism, community and left-wing politics and the Labour Party, propelled by opposition to Thatcherism. She was visible in the main campaigns for the rights of black people during the 1970s, through to the 1990s, including the Black People's Day of Action following the New Cross Massacre.

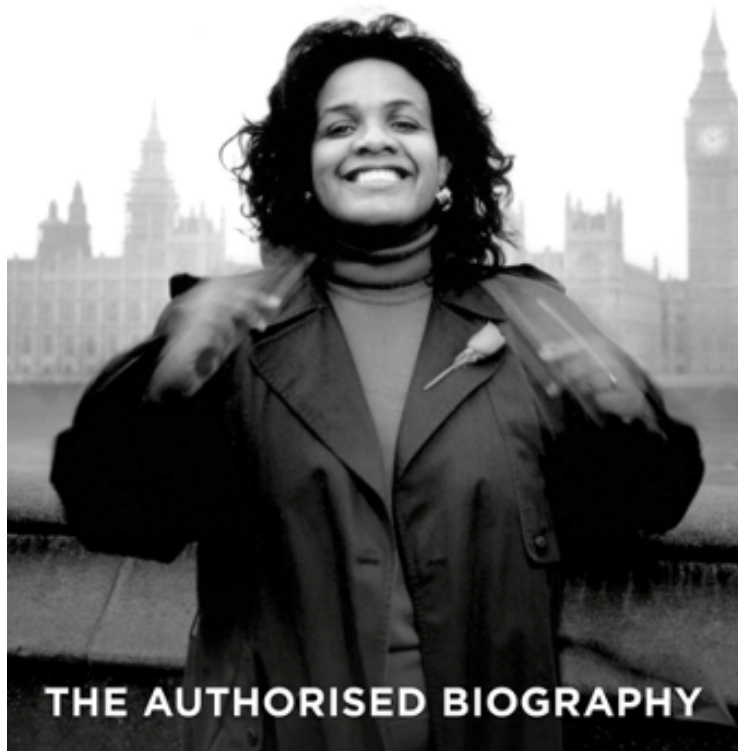
The roll call of Labour leaders who were part of Abbott's journey and story is testimony to her longevity, and the book tells of her journey with Neil Kinnock, Tony Blair, Gordon Brown, Ed Miliband, and Jeremy Corbyn. Her key political associates are described and include those operating at grassroots level including Darcus Howe, John La Rose, Jessica Huntley, Sybil Phoenix, Russell Proffitt as well as the Tony Benn, Ken Livingstone, and the entire Westminster heavyweights.

The book is a prosaic read, informing the general and academic reader what they need to know. It perhaps misses opportunities to set the emotional backdrop to the drama of Abbott's remarkable journey. Her historic success in the general election of 1987, becoming the first black woman MP in Britain and consolidated her position as a trailblazer is rightly the central focus of the book, with her prior life set out as leading up to this point, and subsequent life framed emanating from her position as an enduring, resilient Westminster senior politician.

The personal, and family domain is an area that could have been amplified to enrich this book. This aside, the book will largely satisfy the general reader. The specialist reader in politics, history and sociology will be familiar with much of the black British historical context. However, for a deeper understanding of Abbott's own individual journey and engagement with campaigns, movements, associates, and collaborators, this book is very enlightening.

ROBIN BUNCE AND SAMARA LINTON

DIANE ABBOTT



Dianne Abbott: The Authorised Biography

Gretchen H. Gerzina: Britain's Black Past (Liverpool University Press, 2020).

Annabelle Gilmore

In the introduction to this book, Gretchen Gerzina discusses the process towards the book's development, and how it evolved from the radio series of the same name. She further highlights that the content of this book is intended for a wide readership, regardless of nationality or ethnicity. The contributors are themselves from a variety of backgrounds, including actors and lawyers, not just academic historians. Gerzina is emphatic in her desire to present these contributions in one volume to highlight how Britain's Black past is all part of British history. The work begins positively with an attitude that simply wants to express the new scholarship written within the volume and recognises 'that knowing the past is one important way of shaping the future.' (p.5) The themes across the book focus on identity, the archive, and what the histories of Black people represent today.

It is well known that the archival resources for Black history before the twentieth century are not as prevalent as historians

would like, but the contributors to this book prove that there is nonetheless information to be gained, interpreted, and re-interpreted that provides a rich background for Black history. Madge Dresser's chapter on Pero in Bristol is a fine example, alluding to the scant archival evidence surrounding his life but also what using the information which is available can achieve in presenting Britain's Black past. This is similarly shown in the chapters by Alan Rice and Raymond Costello, discussing Lancaster's Black histories and Liverpool's Black community, respectively. Rice presents the point that although Lancaster had the fourth largest slave port, the Black presence there has had minimal discussion. This is in part because of the minimal archive evidence, but he believes that their stories should be remembered, as the Black history there is so much part of Lancashire's history. For Costello, he speaks of the Windrush myth in relation to Liverpool, the belief that there was not really a Black Presence until the mid-twentieth century. He refutes this, stating there has been an 'uninterrupted black population for some two and a half centuries.' (p.100). Once again, the issue of the archive arises, he mentions that the evidence is there but not utilised by historians. Further complicating this notion is the difficulty in deeply investigating ordinary Black people, there is a variety of information about the visiting African princes but not about the resident Black community, leading to homogenisation of the unknown people. The final chapter, by Kathleen Chater, investigates the use of the archive and the relationship between academics, local and amateur historians, and genealogists. For Chater, there has been somewhat of a disconnect between academics and these other factions; academics rely on funding and are restricted by time, whilst local historians have time but not always access or

funding. Together, the groups could collate working databases that expand Black history, which is also British history on both the local and national level. Chapters throughout the book highlight the necessary work that needs to be done within the archive for development of engaging history to bring out the local stories of Britain's Black past.

Identity, another core theme, is found within the chapters of the book. Some of the less well-known historical figures are presented with all their flaws, which do not necessarily fit within popular ideas of what it means to "celebrate" Black history. Figures such as Nathaniel Wells, Julius Soubise, Pero, and Robert Wedderburn are each given chapters which detail their lives that are perhaps not often given space because their narratives are more difficult to present in the clear cut fashion of slave narratives like Olaudah Equiano, Francis Barber, or Ignatius Sancho, whose histories have been presented as exceptional through overcoming adversity. In contrast, Nathaniel Wells, the son of a Black enslaved woman and a white plantation owner, made his fortune from Black enslaved labour despite once being enslaved himself. Robert Wedderburn, who had a similar lineage to Wells, was a radical abolitionist who advocated for the enslaved to rise up and kill their masters. Anne Rainsbury and Raphael Hoermann, the authors of these two chapters, each emphasise the necessary inclusion of figures like these to express the full picture of Black British and British history.

A chapter on Fanny Coker by Christine Eichelmann, describes Fanny's life as a free servant from Nevis, living in Bristol. An educated and skilled seamstress, Eichelmann describes her as being in a similar situation as Francis Barber. Eichelmann notes

that Fanny's life is not a straightforward narrative, she stayed in servitude to her slave-owning employers when she did not have to, as a skilled woman in financial comfort. Fanny's life and the complex lives of the aforementioned "rogues" of Black British history are not the initial recognisable figures but these authors make great statements for why their stories are so important to Britain's Black past.

The topic of what Black British history means in a wider context is also addressed in this volume. The chapters by Michael Ohujuru and Paterson Joseph in particular discuss these ideas. Ohujuru's work with the John Blanke Project and Joseph's staged monologue of Ignatius Sancho's life emphasise what Black British history brings to the public sphere in presenting these figures in engaging formats away from the usual academic reading. Ohujuru details the reason for developing the John Blanke Project; the failure of many who saw representation of Black people in the Tudor era as inauthentic, the commissioning of artists, and collaboration with historians to present the project to a public audience. Ohujuru notes that although the archival evidence only depicts a small portion of John Blanke's life, what this represents is an opportunity for people at large, through the Project, to project their feelings onto John Blanke. He sees it as a physical presentation of history fostering imagination. Similarly, Paterson Joseph, as an actor, writes his chapter connecting history to the public. His intention to stage a period drama of a Black man met many obstacles, which Joseph states as a fact that has not changed since Sancho's time. He notes that many of the people in his audiences were able to feel a connection to Sancho and Black history through his performance. A number of other chapters also ask what

the legacy of Black British figures means today and how their depiction is part of a wider narrative beyond the plain historical.

The contributors write in an accessible manner that makes the book an easy read for new venturers into history, whilst the detailed research it incorporates will be of great value to established historians. It is written with empathy towards those who suffered, yet it does not shy away from the complexities of Britain's Black past either. The contributors are united in their effort for further investigation of the archive, broadening the scope of Black British history, and engaging a wider audience to relate such histories.



Britain's Black Past