CONTENTS

Part 1: Editorial and Announcements

4  Editorial
12  Announcements

Part 2: Articles and Documents

18  Music, Dance and Politics in Georgian Britain
24  Una Marson in London
30  Pathways to Preston West: How Preston’s West Indian community challenged the colour bar
46  Ras Daniel Heartman’s work launched African history Classics and Inspired Generations in the Struggle for Black Liberation
48  Who was Jackie Berkeley? The Black Parents Movement versus Greater Manchester Police, April 1984 – May 1985
57  Caught in the Storm of the Education of the Black Child: Interview with Waveney Bushell
61  The National Archives: Records in Focus
64  Black British history: student perspectives
75  Black History Matters: Then and Now

Part 3: Reviews

80  Claudia Jones: A Life in Exile
83  This Lovely City
87  Blackening Britain: Caribbean Radicalism from Windrush to Decolonisation
PART 1: EDITORIAL AND ANNOUNCEMENTS
This edition of the *History Matters Journal* goes to press in the aftermath of the very successful Third History Matters Conference, entitled New Perspectives on the History of African and Caribbean People in Britain which was held online in October 2021. This was the first time that the History Matters initiative has organised a conference entirely online and so many thanks must go to the entire team which conceived, organised and chaired the event, designed the posters, selected and played the music, whilst many also presented papers at the conference itself. This is all in keeping with History Matters’ thinking that those who write history must also do everything possible to present it to a wider public, while also assisting young and emerging historians to showcase their work. The questions that emerged from the audience over the three days, as well as comments on social media and elsewhere, suggested that the conference was a resounding success. Synopses of the conference proceedings are presented in this edition and show the great breadth of topics and periods that is currently being researched. It was particularly noticeable that many of the papers focused on women and gender issues, a very welcome development, several focused on areas outside London, as well as on those of African heritage.

We hope that these positive developments will encourage many other researchers, not just those who are postgraduate students to present their own perspectives on history. In this regard, congratulations should also go to all those connected with the Young Historians Project who rounded off their current research on African Women in Healthcare with a stunning mural that was unveiled at the Royal United Hospital in Bath (more details appear elsewhere in this edition), even the BBC took note. Many of the papers from the History Matters Conference will be presented in a new book to be published by Pluto and we must take this opportunity to thank Neda Tehrani and her colleagues for their support. Their approach was very different to various other publishers who, despite many fine words about their own good intentions, were not only uncooperative but in some cases reneged on agreements that had already been made. The less said about them the better, instead we look forward to more new perspectives in print.
The New Perspectives Conference, held virtually on 7 - 9 October 2021, was a three-day event of excellence in black British History. To quote a number of Twitter reviews, conference speaker Sue Lemos said it was: ‘inspiring to listen to the myriad of ways historians are expanding our knowledge and conception of ‘Black British History”. There are a range of comments on Twitter from delegates remarking on what they got out of the event. Most identified it as an opportunity for learning and EadbhardNMC said of Day 1 proceedings: ‘Tonight’s opening session of #HistMatters21 was so well curated but equally fascinating in terms of understanding the history of black struggle’. Nathan Bassica said of Day 2: ‘really amazing talks this evening at this event. So much rich black British history being uncovered by both older and younger scholars in the field! Very encouraging to witness’. Finally, Arista Ajidele said: ‘Wow! A spectacular last day to the #HistMatters21 Conference! I learnt so much today, that I wouldn’t be able to learn anywhere else’.

In addition to the learning opportunity presented, conferences such as this aim to inspire emerging scholars, and others working in the field of black British history to get involved and make contributions. The range of topics reflect those that have meaning.
in the lives of black people across a broad spectrum.

**Day 1: Organisation, Politics & Resistance**

The conference began with an energetic start on Thursday 7th October, with special guests Zainab Abbas and Ansel Wong. Their individual presentations formed a wider narrative entitled: Black Footprints: a Trio of Experiences, which incorporated reflections from Tony Soares as well. Abbas, Wong and Soares’ dynamic activist careers have spanned over fifty years and taken many different forms. All three are former members of the Black Liberation Front (BLF), a Pan-African, internationalist and socialist organisation formed in 1971, that the Home Office described as an ‘extremist organisation’. Abbas and Wong, during their presentations, located their experiences growing up, the prevalence of racism and Eurocentric education, and the fundamental role that organisations such as the BLF played in providing the means to challenge these conditions. Arriving from different backgrounds, locations and set of experiences, these three activists were drawn together in a struggle for black liberation.

Panel Two of the conference consisted of four presentations. The presentations included discussions on the organisational skills, methods of resistance used in Britain, political activism and types of resistance encountered. Each panellist presented a thoroughly researched and succinctly delivered discussion.

The second panel session began with Dr Kesewa John, Associate Lecturer in Caribbean History at the Institute of the Americas at UCL and Programme Director for the MA in the Caribbean and Latin American Studies. Dr John’s paper entitled ‘Self-Determination, Freedom and ‘Colonial Transfers’: Black Agency and the Aftermath of the 1919 Versailles Conference’. Two decades after the 1919 Versailles Conference, people in the Caribbean and British colonies were actively involved in challenging the continual practice of imperialism. As far as they were concerned, the transfer of German colonies to the victors of the Great War was still detrimental to their well-being. After all, German control passed over to British and French hegemony. The colonised people understood their position. They fought and supported a war that replaced one master with another. John sifted through The National Archives in Kew to consult many letters from African and Caribbean people protesting the right to self-determination. Such letters denounced these colonial transfers—John’s preceptions about this period were germane.

Rochelle L Malcolm is a PhD researcher in the Modern European field and co-chair of New Directions in African Diaspora Studies at Columbia University in New York. Malcolm’s
paper was entitled ‘Building Home: Race, Housing and Black Resistance 1970 – 2000’. The paper highlighted Black British citizens’ issues accessing housing between 1970 and 2000, particularly in the Huddersfield district of West Yorkshire in England. Also, it discussed what difficulties Black people had in obtaining mortgages, especially from Building Societies. For example, a method employed by local building societies was called ‘blue zones’, where it was difficult for Black lenders to acquire mortgages from these lenders. Malcolm argued that Black British Citizens faced restrictions and opposition when attempting to access housing. However, if one wanted to own property, Black house owners became creative and developed innovative strategies to overcome existing prejudices in the housing market.

Perry Blankson is studying for a MA in Modern History at the University of Leeds, paying particular attention to radical Black British Power movements since WWII, and is a member of the Young Historians Project. Blankson’s presentation: ‘The ‘Black Power Desk’ - State Surveillance of the British Black Power Movement’ focused on the British Black Power movement and how the various British government departments had them under surveillance. Researching the source documents of the Special Branch Files Project gave insightfully detailed information about surveillance issues. Blankson’s points out that in the 1970s, however, British ‘Black’ people were those of African, Caribbean and South Asian origins, the alliance defined itself as a ‘Political Blackness’. Furthermore, the Black Power Movement was under surveillance
by various government departments: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Home Office, the Metropolitan Police, the Director of Public Persecutions and the Central Criminal Court. This original presentation was timely and brought attention to a neglected area in Black British history.

Dr Christian Høgsbjerg is a Critical History and Politics lecturer at the University of Brighton. Dr Høgsbjerg’s paper was entitled ‘Comrade Algerine Sankoh of West Africa’ - Britain’s first black revolutionary socialist? In this presentation, Dr Høgsbjerg discussed the possibility that Sankoh may have been the first black revolutionary socialist in Britain. Algerine Kelfallah Sankoh was from Sierra Leone, and as a Saro, was a descendant of freed enslaved Africans who had settled in the Niger Delta. We learn that Sankoh’s birth name was Isaac Augustus Johnson, but he had changed it for an African name. Høgsbjerg detailed Sankoh’s travels through the United States and Britain, studying law. However, eventually returning to Nigeria in 1932, Sankoh became a Christian pastor and journalist for the Nigerian Observer. In addition, the presentation attempted to frame Sankoh as part of a slight black revolutionary socialist movement in Britain during the 1920s. Further research suggests drawing out the networks of these black socialists in Britain of the 1920s.

Day 2: Early Modern Black Presence, and Politics, Archives and Publication

The first panel of presenters on Friday 8th October 2021 centred around the Early Modern Black Presence, an area of Black British history which has often been neglected in favour of more recent narratives. Annabelle Gilmore’s paper, ‘Where are Warwickshire’s Black People? An examination of the Black Presence in Warwickshire into the Long Eighteenth Century’ was a local study aimed at uncovering, locating and contextualising the presence of Black Africans in Warwickshire during the ‘Long Eighteenth Century’. While only ‘the beginning of a much larger project’, in the words of Gilmore, this paper generated much interest amongst audience members and panelists alike.

Subsequently, Kate Bernstock’s paper was entitled ‘Conducting a regional Black history of Falmouth and Penryn during the packet boat years of 1688-1850’ and similarly took the form of a local study. Central to this paper was Bernstock’s analysis of the archive, as they sought to avoid ‘reproducing the reductivity of the archive that makes our subjects knowable only in a state of racialisation.’ The final paper, delivered by Montaz Marché was titled “A Diamond in the Dirt”: The Experiences of Ann Sancho in Eighteenth Century London.” In
Publication reflecting outstanding original work from archival sources which brought a broader understanding of the perspectives of Black British History that has been silent in the immigration discourse. Naomi Oppenheim’s paper titled 'Black publishing in Britain: a longer story' located Publishers within Black British History. Rey Bowen’s ‘The African Times and Orient Review and the British Government’ paper captured the challenges of the publication’s editor against the British intelligence agencies. Rebecca Adams’ paper ‘Black Caribbean womanhood within the archives: Mollie Hunte and working with her archives as a Black, female Archivist’ provided access to the marginalised Black people in contrast to the broad regional histories which preceded it, this paper was a more focused individual history exploring the life of Ann Sancho. While her source material was limited, Marché’s presentation led to a lively discussion which soon opened up to become a general Q&A session. Overall, the level of interest generated from all three papers illustrated that there is a healthy appetite for this much maligned period of Black British history as well as the possibility for further research in the field.

The second panel of presenters on Friday 8th October 2021 developed a clear analytical framework on the topic of Politics, Archives and...
British archives. The three themes did considerably well in addressing concerns on traditional Black British History narratives that have been failing to fully acknowledge its diversity.

Day 3: Gender, Activism and Memory, and Community dynamics and Power

On Day 3, A.S. Francis spoke about Manchester’s network of Black radical women during the 1960s – 1980s, shifting the too frequent focus on London and recognising other centres as highly involved in black struggles. Aleema Gray’s positioning of Rastafari in her talk ‘Rastafari Women Speak: Resistance, Self-Reliance and Unity in a Babylon’ was a true roots, Pan-African look at a movement still regarded as being on the unacceptable margins of black people’s lives in Britain. Further, to look at women’s resistance activities in this movement pushes back on conceptions of what qualifies as scholarly research, validating the experience of many.

Theo Williams’s talk on ‘Race, Gender and Pan-Africanism in Britain, c. 1935-1945’ deconstructed the existing portrayal of Pan-African movement in Britain as a male-led enterprise, examining the nuanced contexts of gender during this period.

There was a marked gear change away from women and gender discussions with Desmond Felix’s talk entitled ‘Three Lions in the Ring: Benn, Eubank, Watson: Managing social identities in British’ Felix Abasindi Collective
This successful conference, organised by the History Matters editorial group, provided opportunities for learning about black British history, for making connections and networking, albeit remotely. It also enabled delegates to draw connections between scholarship and activism and promoting racial justice for all black people.

deftly ensured that whilst there was a focus on racism in boxing, the speaker was able provide a discussion on the broader societal context.


The final three talks of the morning, including Claudia Tomlinson's, also focused on the strengths and challenges in black-led community organising. Tomlinson's talk: 'Fitting in or Getting Ahead: West Indian Students and the West Indian Migrant Community in Britain, 1955 – 1970' intersected well with that of Ellie Kramer-Taylor’s on: 'British and Caribbean Black Power: establishing connections, 1968-1970'. They both considered how the West Indian student and immigrant communities harnessed their power to resist the anti-blackness culture of these periods in Britain. The section on community organising was rounded off by the 2021 Olivette Otele Prize winner Sue Lemos, who spoke about an under researched field within black history: 'Feeling a strength in numbers': The London Black Lesbian and Gay Centre, 1985-1995', providing inspiration about approaches to recovering and documenting the history of organisations at risk of erasure.
ANNOUNCEMENTS:
MRES: THE HISTORY OF AFRICA AND THE AFRICAN DIASPORA

UNIVERSITY OF CHICHESTER

The MRes in the History of Africa and the African Diaspora is a unique and exciting programme, and the first of its kind to be delivered completely online.

You will explore the historical relationships between Africa and its diaspora in the modern period by conducting your own supervised research in this important field. You will be encouraged to critically re-evaluate existing narratives that have marginalised the study of the African diaspora, especially in Britain, and often totally separated the history of Africa from that of its diaspora.

On this course you will:

- Study a unique and rewarding subject matter, exploring the historical relationships between Africa and its diaspora in the modern period.
- Develop into a specialist historian with the ability to carry out your own supervised research, whilst honing your analytical and written skills. Many of our students go on to do a MPhil/PhD research degree.
- Learn directly by the only professor of the History of Africa and the African diaspora in Britain, Professor Hakim Adi, a leading internationally recognised scholar in the field.
- Study from anywhere in the world as it is delivered completely online.
ANNOUNCEMENTS:
YOUNG HISTORIANS PROJECT
UNVEILS MURAL AT ROYAL UNITED HOSPITAL, BATH

YOUNG HISTORIANS PROJECT
On 17th November 2021, the Young Historians Project are proud to unveil the first mural for our project, A Hidden History: African women in the British health service, at Royal United Hospital Bath. When we started out this project in 2018, and began thinking about impactful, educative and creative ways of presenting this history, we became committed to the creation of a series of commemorative murals. And we are so excited that we’ve finally been able to deliver. YHP are also proud to have the opportunity to work with Heritage Interpreter and Bristol based artist, Michele Curtis, who painted this mural with assistance from consultant artist Nadia Lloyd. Michele is the artist and architect behind the Seven Saints of St. Paul’s creative and digital place making project, and the Iconic Black Britons initiative developed to celebrate Black British history through art.

We have been so lucky to have commissioned Curtis for the mural who has been amazing, strong-willed and resilient during the mural production process. Moreover, Curtis has been incredibly open during the process with the Young Historians Project team, excellently portraying the creative vision of our team of young historians.

Curtis said about the project: “It's been an absolute honour to work with the Young Historians Project to create this mural and help their vision materialise. I champion this project and I’m very excited to be a part of its evolution.” The mural features four African women who have worked within Britain’s healthcare system, and have ties to the South West of England. Princess Tsehai Selassie was the daughter of Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia and during their exile in Bath during
the 1930s, she trained to become a registered children’s nurse. Bijou Bidwell of Gambia, was a registered nurse and state certified midwife, who also campaigned against Female Genital Mutilation. Hannah Jawara, nee Mahoney, also of Gambia, was also a state registered nurse and a feminist playwright. Providing a link between past and present in this mural, Nigeria-raised Olugbemisola Kolade currently works at the Royal United Hospital, Bath as a Transformation Support Officer.

We chose to portray both 20th century and contemporary women in this mural, to highlight the long historical presence of African women who have worked within Britain’s Healthcare Service. The mural was unveiled on Wednesday 17th November and we hope it will highlight these women and the efforts of the Young Historians Project in undertaking this project. We encourage you to visit the mural at Royal United Hospital Bath, and take in this beautiful art piece and important history in person.

Mia Henderson, one of the newest members of YHP, reflected on the significance of the mural unveiling: "As a recent addition to the Young Historian Project team, it was a privilege to attend the mural unveiling at the Royal United
Hospital. Not only did I have the chance to see the work of the talented artists Michele Curtis and Nadia Lloyd, but also to meet Olugbemisola Kolade (who was featured in the mural and currently works at the hospital). To me, this mural is a token of appreciation and a celebration of the skilled, hardworking African women in the NHS who tirelessly give of themselves to help heal our communities. I am glad to be a part of the YHP who’s committed to recording the achievements of Black women that frequently go unnoticed in British history. Especially when that record is as beautiful and detailed as this mural is". 
PART 2: ARTICLES AND DOCUMENTS
During the Georgian period, music and dance served as a means of entertainment and celebration that gave emotional support to those early black communities residing in Britain at the time. Set against the backdrop of John jingoism and issues surrounding emancipation, in many ways, music and dance fulfilled the same functions as the shabeen’s or blues parties did for their future counterparts of the Windrush generation. Then as now, music would be one of the outlets in which those within the black community could express themselves with black musicians, no doubt influencing some of the musical trends of the day. At this time Gretchen Gerzina maintains that in London the black population was, ‘somewhere between 10,000 and 30,000, although the accurate figure is probably closer to 15,000.’ (1)

But though the population was small in comparison to that of the host nation, just as today there existed a mentality that was in fear of the racial ‘other’. Robert Winder states that in 1723 the Daily Journal wrote, ‘A great number of Blacks come daily into the city, so that ‘tis thought in a short time, if they be not suppress’d the city will swarm with them.’ (2) The essence of such statements would again resurface for those of the Windrush generation and be expressed in Enoch Powell’s ‘Rivers of Blood’ speech (3) and Margaret Thatcher’s comments about white Britons’ fears of the country being ‘rather swamped by people of a different culture’. (4) Like now music would have played an important role in relieving some of the racial tension that the community may have encountered.

George Bridgetower would have been just one of the many musicians that were part of eighteenth-century Britain. Commenting on the evidence of these black Georgian communities Gerzina maintains, ‘Britain’s population consisted mainly of
servants and former servants, musicians and seamen.’ (5) For the purpose of this essay it is important to note that musicians appear on this list and as this thesis has illustrated, music has been the common cultural denominator that has consistently supported and shaped the development of African diasporic communities. During this period Rodrèguez King-Dorset argues:

Not only did the black community develop a strong sense of its own identity and continue to use music and dance as it always had done, as an important way of dealing with issues which affected it... In dealing with this widespread prejudice against them, blacks had little chance but to develop a collective sense of their own identity... Dance continued to be the cement which did much to hold the black community together. (6)

In later times this sentiment would be echoed by the children of the Windrush through the medium of sound system culture. Parties and gatherings have consistently played a seminal role, within the context of the African diaspora, a space where they could come together and entertain themselves with others of their community. An example, in 1764, the London Chronicle ran an article entitled ‘Blacks only party’ which read:

Among the sundry fashionable routs or clubs, that are held in town, that of the Blacks or Negro servants is not the least. On Wednesday night last, no less than fifty-seven of them, men and women, supped, drank, and entertained themselves with dancing and music, consisting of violins, French horns, and other instruments, at a public-house in Fleet-street, till four in the morning. No Whites were allowed to be present, for all the performers were Blacks. (7)

Rodrèguez King-Dorset argues, ‘The fact that the blacks were able to enforce the no-white colour bar suggests that the public house was at least managed, if not owned by a
black publican.’ (8) While the contemporary observations of Phillip Thicknesse noted, ‘London abounds with an incredible number of... black men, who have clubs to support those who are out of place.’ (9) These black owned social spaces provided a safe haven against the racism of the time, just as blues parties would for their counterparts in the later centuries. In another instance, when Lord Mansfield, who had presided over the famous Somerset Case of 1772, (10) ruled that chattel slavery was unsupported by the common law in England and Wales, the local black community held a ball/dance in celebration of this small but significant legal victory. The London Packet reported that;

'Near two hundred blacks with their ladies gathered at a public house in Westminster to celebrate the triumph which their brother Somerset had obtained over Mr. Stewart his master. Lord Mansfield’s health was echoed round the room and the evening was concluded with a ball. The tickets to this Black assembly were 5s each'. (11)

It could be assumed that the profits from such ticket sales might have gone to pay the publican for his services and the hiring of the musicians; just as is done today, for venue hire and payment to sound system. However, such proceeds may have gone to finance other purposes for example Robert Winder comments on ‘an impromptu whip-round to raise funds,’ for two black people who had been sent to Bridewell correctional facility for vagrancy. (12) Also, it must not be forgotten that these were the times of abolitionist politics, it therefore could be surmised that such proceeds may even have gone towards fundraising in support the movement, for example, payment towards the costs of putting advertisements in newspapers, or towards the printing of pamphlets for the abolitionist cause. Robert Winder continues, ‘African immigrants in Britain agitated hard to persuade others of their right to a better life... The Abolition Committee had a black twin, the Sons of Africa, a group of ex-slaves who wrote letters and speeches on their own behalf.’ (13)

Once the legal ruling, in 1833, the Slavery Abolition Act finally abolished the practice of slavery in most British colonies, it can be assumed that even greater celebrations would have taken place, as Georgian Britain’s black community revelled in the 'blues parties' of their day. (14)

Against this backdrop of abolition politics, which can be viewed as the Black Lives Matter movement of its day, Rodriguez King-Dorset makes an interesting point, 'In order to understand why dance and black balls played such a vital part in
reinforcing a collective sense of black identity, it should be enough to look at... black political activists.’ (15) such activist was the Robert Wedderburn known for his publication Axe Laid to the Root, which linked ‘the suffering of African slaves in the colonies to the privations felt by the British working class during the establishment of capitalism, and identifying the overthrow of slavery and capitalism as one and the same.’ (16) Wedderburn who was a passionate and ardent radical stated:

Oh, ye Africans and relatives now in bondage to the Christians because you are innocent and poor; receive this the only tribute the offspring of an African can give, for which, I may ere long be lodged in a prison; for it is a crime now in England to speak against oppression. I am a West-Indian, a lover of liberty, and would dishonour human nature if I did not show myself a friend to the liberty of others. (17)

Within such writings and speeches, Wedderburn’s strong views on the politics of identity and oppression are clearly seen. Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker continue, ‘Wedderburn adopted biblical passages... from Baptist and Methodist preachers and took them in new, rebellious directions.’ (18) This utilising of biblical scripture in its revolutionary context as well as themes of Africanness and the fight against repression, would later be expressed within the religious/political genre of roots reggae and sound system culture. Music and dance were essential elements for black Georgians and would prove just as crucial during the Windrush period. Rodríguez King-Dorset states, ‘In the 1950’s a fresh influx of Blacks from the Caribbean and from Africa have brought back both African and Caribbean dances, which originally helped to bond together that early community in London in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.’ (19) In recent times, more people have come from continental Africa, bringing a variety
of musical forms from the diverse populations of the various countries. Added to this, the influences of their Black Atlantic cousins from the Caribbean, America and the UK music and dance continue to be supportive elements for the peoples of these communities, just as they had for their forebears.

Karl Arthur is a PhD History candidate at DeMontford University. Arthur’s main areas of research have included the military involvement of Caribbean soldiers both in the 18th Century and during each of the World Wars. Arthur has also explored the art of Afro-Caribbean music and how it has been utilised as a form of sonic resistance by sections of the Black Atlantic community throughout history. Both of these areas of study have gone on to influence and serve as the foundation for a number of arts and heritage projects including: The winner of the 2018 VR Expro award, Empire Soldiers project by the Leicester based Metro Boulot Dodo arts organisation. As well as the Distant Drums, digital heritage installation by the Leicester/Liverpool based Whispered Tales group.
NOTES:
12. Winder, Bloody Foreigners, 137.
13. Winder, Bloody Foreigners, 134.
15. Dorset, Black Dance in London, 123.
UNA MARSON IN LONDON

LYNETTE MILLS

In spring of 2022, in the public square between Walworth and Old Kent Road in London, Southwark Council will open the new Una Marson Library. This acknowledgement of Marson’s contribution during her sojourn in London from 1932 to 1936 and 1938 to 1946 celebrates her as feminist thinker, poet, playwright, campaigner for equality and the first black woman programme maker at the BBC. However, these accomplishments came despite the hostile environment that characterised treatment of black persons in the metropole in the 1930s, whether British or not. Undeterred, Marson sought and carved out spaces for her social justice activism, through tremendous resilience, from her position at the intersection of race, gender and social class.

When Jamaican-born Marson arrived in London in 1932, she was already a published author and pioneer in magazine publishing, in Jamaica. (1) The sexism and racism in London made it almost impossible for her to find employment. (2) However, she volunteered with the League of Coloured Peoples (LCP) as contributor and editor of its official journal, The Keys, from its launch in 1933. This gave her a significant platform for the expansion of both her literary work and social justice advocacy, as the LCP became a leading organisation in the anti-racism struggle of the black community in Britain. She used the opportunity to promote female authors in particular and organised artistic, political and intellectual activities which fueled a growing Caribbean intellectual and literary tradition in the metropole. One such event was the fundraising performance of At What Price - a play co-written with Horace D. Vaz. While it did not raise substantial funds, it made history as London’s first play written, produced and performed by a black team. (3) In a similar spirit of self-determination, Marson, concerned by Mussolini’s invasion of Abyssinia in 1935, offered her skills to the Ethiopian Legation in London to assist Abyssinia in its fight and later
travelled with Haile Selassie in 1936 to the League of Nations in Geneva. She made history as the only black woman to be one of the collaborators there.

While in London, Marson also cultivated a wide network of women activists through memberships in organisations such as the Women’s Freedom League, the Women’s Peace Crusade, the Women’s International Alliance, and the British Commonwealth League to advance the position of black women.

Through this network, the counter-hegemonic messages of her many public speeches often made their way to a wider public via newspaper

Una Marson, photographed c. 1940
Through this network, the counter-hegemonic messages of her many public speeches often made their way to a wider public via newspaper reporting. One of her most notable speeches was made at the 1935, Twelfth Annual Congress of the International Alliance of Women for Suffrage and Equal Citizenship in Turkey. She was the first black woman to attend the conference and used her platform to articulate the challenges of women in the African diaspora. (5) She highlighted the dire social conditions of black women in Jamaica (6) and called for the inclusion of the struggle of black women in the international feminist movement. In 1938, as a delegate in the British Commonwealth League conference in London she challenged the dominant representation of the Caribbean in British society as mystical/exotic, island paradise and playground of the rich White colonials. (7) She highlighted the poverty and economic neglect of the Caribbean colonies. She chided: ‘At present it seems as though we in the colonies are not regarded as members of the empire, and it is only when an earthquake, a hurricane or a riot occurs that the Colonial Office sits up and takes notice of us’. (8)

Marson’s tenacity was most evident at the BBC where, as the first black woman broadcaster, she faced opposition inside and outside the organisation. Marson had worked with the BBC on a freelance basis since 1939, with Cecil Madden and Joan Gilbert. She began working full time as an assistant in the Empire Production Unit in 1941. However, because she was a ‘coloured’ woman from the colonies, her position was downgraded and she was made to serve a probationary period of five months instead of the usual two months. In her first weeks, Marson was criticised for not controlling her ‘temperament’ or ‘feelings’, ‘for being impolite: her interview technique was sometimes regarded as too direct, while her attitude in the studio was occasionally regarded as rude’. (9) Her lack of neutrality was also identified as a shortcoming. (10) She would face persistent racial intolerance from co-workers documented in BBC’s confidential reports and exemplified in the utterance of Gilbert, who claimed that Marson ‘seems to have got an exaggerated idea of her own position and her own authority. (11) Quite frankly, I wouldn’t let anybody speak to me in the way Una does, and certainly not a coloured woman’. (12)

Nonetheless, she earned a promotion to the position of West Indies Producer in 1942, was ‘regraded on the pay scale and allocated a personal assistant’. (13) As the Calling the West Indies with its Caribbean Voices segment began to establish itself, Marson faced complaints about racial representation from the London audience. The director of Empire Services acknowledged having an ‘undue proportion of coloured West Indians’ in the programmes. (14) However, people in the Caribbean occupy a creolised space cradling
several diasporas. As such, racial or colour representation was not their concern. Complaints from the Caribbean were about ‘too many speakers from some particular island.’ (15) Marson worked to reach the precarious balance between her Jamaican identity and role as producer of programmes representing a multicultural region with its own inter-island tensions. She tried to mitigate these complaints by recommending programmes focused on locales around the Caribbean rather than a broad regional focus.

Marson continually faced the problems of balancing white and black interests and ‘the jealousies and dissensions that rack the West Indian community, particularly the coloured community in London.’ (16) On both issues, the West India Committee (WIC) in London launched the accusation of: ‘the most persistent and organized instance of trouble-making against Marson’ accusing her of discriminating against white servicemen in her programming. (17) The WIC called for ‘the inclusion of more messages by white West Indians as well as the use of white broadcasters’. (18) This view was also shared by a BBC collaborator working with Marson. However, Marson stood her ground insisting the WIC did not represent the interests of the majority of Caribbean people as ‘their membership is largely of the wealthy Planter set. People who are largely responsible for the low standard of living in the West Indies’. (19) She was exonerated. Her managers at the BBC took her side after their investigation concluded envy and resentments at her success were at the root of the WIC’s complaints. Yet, they still recommended her removal from prominent roles producing and presenting the Caribbean radio programmes, in the interest of preserving the BBC’s reputation for impartiality and balance. (20)

By 1945 she was relegated to behind the scenes duties and the famous weekly Caribbean Voices she founded, no longer carried her name as producer. Yet Marson’s frustration with her diminished responsibilities did not stymie her commitment to Caribbean Voices. She was granted a few months’ leave in 1945 and embarked on a tour of the Caribbean before returning to London:

Marson’s frantic trip around the Caribbean in 1945 ... was partly to promote and gather a wider range of literary materials for Caribbean Voices. She returned to London clutching a batch of new manuscripts from across the islands that might have allowed her to further democratize the program by de-centering Jamaica. (21)

However, when Marson returned to London and the BBC in late 1945, her on-going battle with mental illness
intensified and she soon required hospitalization. (22) She was diagnosed with schizophrenia in early 1946. After a prolonged period of treatment, including hospitalizations, and despite the support of the BBC, her illness persisted. She reluctantly left London in October 1946. (23) Ultimately, the battle in the private innerspace was the one that she would not be able to conquer in London.

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NOTES:
6. *International Woman Suffrage News*, April 1, 1938
7. See for instance, films such as *Pleasure Cruise to Trinidad and Tobago* (c1930) *Cameos of the Caribbean London to Leewards* (c1930) and *Jamaica: A wonderful Welcome* (1931) and White Zombie (1932), Colonial Film Moving Images of the British Empire, colonialfilm.org.uk
8. *The Scotsman*, November 16, 1938, p. 16
9. WAC L1/290/1 for Una Marson’s ‘Annual Confidential Reports’ between 1941 and 1944, in Procter, pp. 12, 28
10. WAC L1/290/1 for Una Marson’s “Annual Confidential Reports” between 1941 and 1944, in Procter, pp. 12, 28
11. Ibid
13. Procter, “Una Marson at the BBC,” p. 11
17. Procter, “Una Marson at the BBC,” p. 14
18. Procter, “Una Marson at the BBC,” p. 15
20. See BBC WAC L1/290/1 for Una Marson’s “Annual Confidential Reports” between 1941 and 1944 in Procter, pp. 11 and 16
When Marson left Britain in 1936 to return to Jamaica, she was experiencing severe depression and told *The Daily Gleaner* Newspaper in Jamaica of the toll the experience of supporting Selassie at the League of Nations and the disappointing outcome had taken on her emotionally. See *The Daily Gleaner* September 17, 1936, 17 and September 28, 1936, 5. Also see Procter, “Una Marson at the BBC”, which indicates that emotional/mental distress was also part of the reason she asked for leave in 1945, anticipating a return to the Caribbean would be improve her sense of wellbeing.
22. Procter, “Una Marson at the BBC,” 18 - 21
PATHWAYS TO PRESTON WEST: HOW PRESTON’S WEST INDIAN COMMUNITY CHALLENGED THE COLOUR BAR

STEPHEN POLEON

History is a journey that ebbs and flows like a river that meanders from its source in the hills down to the sea. Like the river, it has many tributaries that add their own little piece of the story along the way. The establishment of a West Indian community in Preston is a perfect example of this analogy. During the Second World War, servicemen and women from the Caribbean were stationed in Preston. After the war, some stayed and by 1951, the census figures show that 0.01% of Preston’s population were West Indian. This rose to 0.72 in 1961. (1) An article in the Jamaican Daily Gleaner in 1957, highlighted at the time of writing 200 West Indians, mostly from Dominica and Montserrat were living in Preston. (2) This community would grow to include other islanders from across the Caribbean. Individually and collectively, this group of people overcame many adversities to make a life for themselves in Preston.

Discrimination in housing, employment, education, religious and social activities was rife in Preston and a direct consequence of this led to the creation of many community institutions. Two social clubs, the Seventh Day Adventist Church, three cricket teams, Preston’s Caribbean Carnival with various carnival bands all emanated from a small but vibrant community of West Indian migrants who made their lives in what was then a decaying mill town that needed their industry but did not really welcome them. Migrants from Poland, Hungary, Ukraine, and even former enemies from Germany were more welcome than West Indians, who were British subjects. This is a strong sense of pride that can be seen in oral testimonies gathered from within this diverse community.

These testimonies are a rich vein of social history that when combined serve to tell a partial story of this
community. Everyone not only has a different story to tell but also when looking back may not have a similar outlook on the experience of migrating from the Caribbean to Preston. Some highlight the overt racism that was prevalent in the 1950s and 60’s, whilst others found no problem whatsoever and were almost grateful just to get along in relative harmony.

Most of the history of this community in this article has been gleaned from oral testimonies available in the Lancashire Records Office and the Harris Museum. This archival material has also been supplemented by several informal conversations that reflect the informal nature of the Caribbean. These stories come from migrants from Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Dominica, and Montserrat. Migrants from St. Vincent’s the Grenadines and Barbados also made Preston their home. Whilst each island has separate identities and customs, the men and women who left their homes in the Caribbean to travel to Britain, are collectively known as the Windrush Generation.

The SS Empire Windrush, a former German troop carrier docked in Kingstown Jamaica in 1948. An advertisement appeared in the Jamaican Gleaner, alerting the newspapers readers of a chance to sail to England for the sum of £28 10s on the troop deck or £48 Cabin Class. A total of 492 people, mostly ex-

servicemen who served in Britain during WW2, took this opportunity to return to England and make a better life for themselves. They dreamt of life in the mother country, as they were British after all. These men had come to help rebuild their spiritual homeland after the devastation she suffered at the hands of German bombers in the last war. The arrival of the Windrush passengers is heralded as the start of multiculturalism. Between 1948 and 1971, 500,000 West Indians followed on their wake. Settling in diverse places such as London, Manchester, Birmingham, Sheffield, Reading, Derby, Coventry, Northampton,
Huddersfield, Leeds and Preston, these migrants were as Donald Hinds stated chasing a myth on a journey to an illusion. (3)

The illusion was one that they would be welcomed in Britain and that this country, would be comparatively superior in relation to the conditions they left behind in the Caribbean. Dilapidated and decaying Victorian back-to-back housing stock flourished in Preston. Many of the West Indians arriving here found homes in areas with poor housing stock. It was quite a shock to the system. How could the England that all West Indian children were indoctrinated with have such poor living conditions? Terraced houses with a door opening up on the street, possessing outside toilets and damp cellars were in abundance. It is what can only be described as slum like conditions, how could English people live like this? Moreover, if things were this bad, why did people leave the Caribbean to make their home in a decaying, dilapidated mill town?

One short answer to this question is the availability of work. All of Preston’s mills employed West Indians, one in particular, Courtaulds employed many members of this community alongside Indians, Pakistanis, Italians, Hungarians, Poles and Ukrainians. Courtaulds was responsible for the development of a south Asian community in Preston.

In 1957 they moved Asians from Coventry to Preston and as such were responsible for the first Asian community in Preston. This company also actively recruited workers from Barbados. Courtaulds pioneered the commercial production of viscose rayon. Due to the acid content in this process, this mill was a dreadful place to work in.

Some people lost their hearing due to the noxious chemical fumes they were exposed to in the viscose making process. Furthermore, using their bare hands, workers had to put acid on the thread to make the yarn that was then sent to the spinners to weave. (4) The experience as described by Mr Bully from Dominica makes for interesting reading. Mr Bully worked at Courtaulds for a total of seven years from 1966 to 1973. He noted that a lot of people who worked here got ill. This gentleman also revealed the process undertaken to actually make the viscose.

This process involved the workers dealing with acid and various kinds of chemicals. The wood pulp would come with a big sheet of cardboard measuring around two feet long and three feet wide. This would then be put in a press to soak up caustic soda. It would then be pressed and shredded and then put into a churn turning the pulp into a yellow liquid. The next step would be to open the churn from which a toxic vapour emanated from. As the fumes ensconced in this churn escaped, the
unfortunate worker operating this machine could not breathe in. To do so could have been catastrophic and may have resulted in a collapsed lung. Irrespective of these life changing injuries one would be exposed to, there was no choice but to simply get on with the job. This task would be performed at great risk as no protective clothing, gloves, goggles or even masks were available to the workforce overseeing this procedure. It was only possible to wear nylon shirts as any other type of clothing would simply burn. Most English people refused to work in the room where the viscose was made. (5)

Possessing the appearance of buckwheat honey with the consistency of glycerine, viscose produced terrible burns on workers hands. In a similar fashion to phosphorous, viscose eats away at the flesh down to the bone. It also causes burns to a person’s arms, face, and throat. It can also cause blindness and many gastric complaints. (6) Despite this truly dreadful conditions West Indians were forced to work under, some members of this community in Preston have nothing but good memories of working in Courtaulds.

Elaine Marshall remembers the kindness of the management whom according to her were very kind and very approachable. Mrs Marshall, affectionately known in Preston as Aunty Elaine, contended that Courtaulds was the best firm in Preston to work for. She worked in the coning department and earned £8 a week, whilst her husband working in spinning department earned £15 a week. (7) Mr Marshall’s wage was just over the double of the average weekly wage for unskilled workers in Preston. The factory operated on a shift basis and generous regular overtime pay was also available. At a recent community meeting, a Dominican gentleman Mr Toussaint, revealed that working a lot of overtime at Courtaulds enabled him after four years of saving to buy his house at auction. Prior to this he was sharing a room with some friends. Having friends or indeed family in Preston was another reason for West Indians to migrate here.

Lewis Walker was an apprentice electrician in Kingstown Jamaica. Reasonably happy with his life and learning his trade and earning in the region of £3 to £6 a week. Originally from St Mary parish in the countryside, leaving here aged sixteen to go and live with his elder sister in Kingstown. After Lewis’s sister left for Preston in 1960, he stayed on in Kingstown to finish his apprenticeship only for his sister to decide two years later for him to join her in Preston. The trouble was that Lewis was extremely reluctant to leave. It was to no avail. His sister had worked hard and saved his fare of £75 and money for his passport to travel to England. After a two-week
journey, the ship he sailed on docked at Southampton. After getting the boat train to Euston Station in London, it was then a seven-hour journey to Preston. A short taxi ride from the station at 4am in the morning brought Lewis to his sisters shared accommodation in Deepdale.

Greeted by his cousin he was then introduced to the custom of sharing a bed on a shift basis. (8) As most of the factories and mills worked on various shifts, this practice was commonplace for some migrants, West Indian or otherwise that came to live and work in Preston. Regardless of the sleeping arrangements Lewis Walker was lucky enough to have a place to go to. He did not have to suffer the indignity of witnessing signs stating no blacks, no dogs, no Irish. The Irish in Preston along with the Poles and Hungarians readily rented rooms to West Indians at a cost of £1.50 a week. This was £3 a week cheaper than a room that Mr and Mrs Jeffers paid for in London.
When Mr Jeffers first came to London from Montserrat, he was sharing a room with three others. Mr Jeffers, a sheet metal worker back home in the Caribbean, found work as a welder in Enfield, north London. Being a member of the Seventh Day Adventist Church, he lived a pious life and was a prolific saver. Mr Jeffers saved money for a girl he had intended to marry to come and join him in London. This money was sent to his mother who promptly gave it to another lady whom she favoured to be her future daughter in law.

Mr Jeffers duly married this the lady his mother sent for him and went on to have a small family. They lived in a succession of rooms when his cousin already living in Preston suggested he move there. Moving to Preston first, he left his wife and family behind whilst he looked for somewhere suitable to live. The Jeffers family bought a house in Deepdale Preston. (9) The family were happy in Preston; they now had more space. More importantly for Mrs Jeffers she had a kitchen to prepare her family meals.

She could do so without the worry of friction from some other West Indian woman wanting to use the stove on the landing or having to put a shilling or two in the gas metre, or as In Aunty Elaine’s case pay the money to the person who lived in the room with a gas stove and then stay there and continuously until you have used your money’s worth. If someone else came in and saw that there was available gas, they would use what another person had already paid for thus, forcing them to pay out more money. If a person wanted to boil peas overnight, the use of a paraffin lamp was ideal. Peas of course being an integral part of any West Indian dish, especially as an accompaniment to rice. A staple that is readily available today, was not always the case in the 1950s.

A friend of Aunty Elaine’s, Mrs. Preston would travel to Manchester on a regular basis and would return with yams, sweet potatoes, and growing bananas. Rice could be purchased in Liverpool, and to maximise the journey the rice would be placed in a pillowcase. This particular journey would usually take place every three weeks. (10) In the early 1960s rice could be purchased from a Polish shop in Avenham. Other staples were available from a West Indian man, who travelled to Manchester on a regular basis selling his produce from door to door. (11) It came at a premium because after the short-lived venture of Booths supermarket in the centre of Preston stocking West Indian foodstuffs, there was no other store stocking this food. Bananas from the Caribbean were however, in plentiful supply in Preston.

The Port of Preston was one of the premier destinations for the importation of bananas from the Windward Isles and Jamaica. Geest
Industries were responsible for the importation of bananas, coconuts, eggplants, grapefruits, peppers, oranges, and limes. Preston was important in this trade because of the reputation of the dockers and the transport system they utilised in getting the fruit from the ship to various retailers right across the United Kingdom. (12) The M.V. Barbara Bovig arrived in Preston on 18th September 1962. Her manifest details that she carried 47,596 stems of bananas, a further 70 boxes of bananas, and 66 tons of grapefruit. The manifest also reveals that she carried three British passengers. (13) The people travelling on board from the Caribbean were paying passengers, unlike the estimated 150 West Indians whom it was reported had stowed away on banana boats visiting Preston in 1960. (14) The arrival of banana shipments into Preston docks, also provided employment opportunities for West Indians.

Julius Prevost from Dominica for three months worked as a banana inspector on the dockside. Every fortnight when a shipment of bananas arrived, it was his job to arrange the bananas into their respective grades. They were, Lacatan, Taivan and Gros Michel. The latter was the most prestigious banana. (15) The employers here at the docks were one of a number that employed West Indians in menial positions. Leyland Motors, BTR and Whittingham Hospital and all of the towns mills employed West Indians. Regardless of a person’s educational
status, intelligence, or previous experiences all migrants were expected to accept menial low paying jobs. The more skilled jobs were the preserve of union members. A great excuse from employers was that unionised workers would simply not accept non-union men. West Indians were invariably denied union membership therefore, finding skilled work was impossible. Therefore, this was tantamount to a colour bar in the workforce. It was also prevalent in Preston’s many pubs and dance halls.

In 1963 the Lancashire Evening Post reported on the existence of an open colour bar being run in the Old Britannia on Heatley Street. This street situated is just off Friargate, which in itself was reported as a no-go area for Caribbean migrants. A sign above the bar simply stated no coloureds. When asked about it the barman stated it was for their own good. Trouble was caused when Caribbean migrants entered the bar, therefore, his logic was that he was protecting them by not allowing service. (16) Out of a reputed 365 bars in Preston only the Mitre on Lancaster Road and the Jazz Bar was safe spaces for Black people. Caribbean migrants were only welcome at Regents Ballroom and Saul Street baths. This venue operated in summer when boards were placed over the baths to make a dancefloor. The Crown Court occupies this site presently. Apart from these two venues most

Regent Ballroom, Preston
socialising took place at Blues parties. West Indians in Preston when they could afford it purchased a Blue Spot radiogram. On Saturday nights parties were held where hundreds would attend to listen to the latest Blue beat and reggae records. They were very loud and lively, typically went on until the early hours of the morning. It has been noted that quite a few English people attended the parties. Roland Thomas would hold island carnival parties in his house.

Caribbean Carnival in Preston has been a regular occurrence on the streets of Preston since 1974. It was first officially sanctioned by Preston Borough Council in 1975. This carnival was a short carnival of a couple of hundred yards but still managed to start late. It grew and grew to the carnival that is a regular fixture on the streets of Preston today. However, the first carnival to take place in Preston was during the 1972 Guild. Prior to that the carnival took shape in Roland Thomas’s house.

The important thing to understand about carnival that in the Caribbean it is a predominantly Eastern Caribbean affair. Each island has its own tradition hence the monthly island carnival parties being held by Mr Thomas. One of the big things in Montserrat was the Montserrat masquerade. Dominica and St
Vincent and the Grenadines etc. have different traditions. Carnival in Preston is a vibrant expression of Caribbean culture. It helps bring the community together in the spirit of togetherness and pride of their culture. Preston’s Caribbean carnival grew out of the West Indian front room.

The West Indian front room was a very important space in the development of the various Caribbean communities nationwide. It was a symbol not just of pride but of achievement. It was a safe space for the community to meet in party but also to congregate in prayer. In a similar fashion to being denied entry to pubs, dancehalls, and clubs, it was also commonplace for God fearing pious West Indians, to be turned away from churches. A lot of Caribbean migrants in Preston were originally Anglican, Catholic or Seventh Day Adventists. There is anecdotal evidence that suggests the Catholic Church in Avenham was very accommodating and extremely helpful to its new Caribbean parishioners. The Methodist Church in Lune Street was also extremely welcome to black parishioners. Being in a central location it attracted many Anglcians from the Caribbean who were asked not to come back to the Church of England. Some Seventh Day Adventists also attended Lune Street Methodist Church until 1967 when they obtained a venue for their church.

This venue was initially a house in St Mary’s Street. Jane Nelson states that this house was purposefully bought and designated as a place to worship at. As the congregation expanded this house was not suitable for the church’s needs. The Seventh Day Adventists then began to worship in Roper Hall for several years until they purchased a church on Newton Road, Preston. This would be home for thirty years, until a move to a new church on Grimshaw Street materialised. (17) This sojourn is similar to that taken by Jalgos West Indian Cricket Club in search of a permanent home over a twelve-year period from 1964-1976.

A group of young Jamaicans regularly met to play cricket together on Avenham Park in Preston. Gladstone Afflick, whilst working at Horrocks Mill at the time, would visit Heaton’s newsagent for a newspaper before work. The proprietor Mr. Heaton was a member of the Preston District Cricket League board. He wondered why Gladstone and his friends did not form a team and apply to join the league. A meeting was held at 172 London Road Preston and Jalgos was formed. An application to join the league was duly submitted. This application was being duly approved at the next board meeting. Jalgos then became the first West Indian team in Lancashire to play league cricket. Playing their first game in the third division against St Pauls, they were trailblazers that paved the way for
other teams across the county to do likewise. One of those teams was the Caribbean Club in Preston who applied to join the league in 1965 and started in the 1966 season.

There are some ambiguities surrounding the formation of this club. The Caribbean Club moved into their own purpose-built home on 30th of July 1972. That is an undeniable fact. However, the origins of the foundation of the cricket club are somewhat strewn with misinformation. The Caribbean Club were predominantly Dominican whilst it is always claimed that Jalgos are predominantly Jamaican. This is a myth yet like all myths there is a modicum of truth in this.

The initial founders of Jalgos were all Jamaican and that the very name Jalgos has origins in that. However, this name was drawn out of a hat, the team could well have been called Ajax, after the Dutch soccer team. The last founding member of Jalgos hails from Dominica. He played for the team for a year before his friends, possibly out of inter-island rivalry talked him into leaving Jalgos to play for another team. Mr. St Louis was not the only Dominican to play for Jalgos before the Caribbean Club was formed. Alwin Mondesire played for Jalgos before becoming involved with the Caribbean Club when it was formed in 1965. The forerunner of this club was Dominican United FC.

The
Caribbean Sports and Social Club
KENT STREET . PRESTON
invites you to its
30th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION DANCE
ON SATURDAY, 10TH AUGUST, 2002
4 Raffles ★ 8.00 till late
★ Disco by PRINCE WARREL ★
Admission £5 INCLUDING Free MEAL

Ticket for the anniversary dance at Preston Caribbean Sports and Social Club
In Preston’s Harris museum, a display relating to cricket in the Caribbean community, states that this club was formed in the late 1950s. Gladstone Afflick, a founder member of Jalgos also states that he was involved with founding Dominican United FC. He played in goal for this team and arrived in Preston in 1960. A photograph taken to mark the occasion of their first match, clearly shows a Mr. Afflick as the goalkeeper. Therefore, a question mark is raised over the information regarding the founding of this team. There is no question that the football team was formed before the cricket team, however, there is some misinformation contained in oral testimonies surrounding the founding of the Caribbean CC in Preston.

Two players state that that founding of this team has its origins in a visit to see friends in Bradford. Already being an established team, the Dominicans from Preston witnessed their friends make easy work of beating an indigenous team. Following this it was decided to form a team of Dominican players in Preston. Julius Prevost, states that the team was initially called Dominican Utd and changed the name when more players from other Caribbean islands sought to join the team. It is also within the realms of possibility that the name grew out of a myth surrounding Jalgos being all for Jamaicans and whilst the Caribbean Club was predominately Dominican.

Each Caribbean island and islet has a separate identity. Most islands with the exception of Jamaica are eastern Caribbean. There are many similarities throughout the Caribbean however, each island has its own distinctions. Preston even today in 2021, is rife with differences due to inter island rivalries. Therefore, it is reasonable to suggest they decided to call themselves Caribbean to assert their claim to be truly more representative of the other islanders living in Preston compared to Jalgos and seeming to be more inclusive. Nonetheless, these were both rival clubs that possessed striking similarities.
Both clubs were born out of cricket. They brought the community together and gave them a sense of pride in their achievements on the cricket field. Each club provided venues for christenings, birthdays, marriages, and funerals. Each club provided facilities for the youth to meet together in a place of safety. Jalgos however, went one further and provided Preston with a third Caribbean cricket club. This team was Caricom.

In the late 1970’s, Mr. Morelese noticed young Black youth’s roaming the streets when they should have been in school. As he was self-employed and not tied down to the shift patterns of the local factory’s and mills, it was not uncommon for him to witness this scene. As a result, he decided to form a youth team to give the players and outlet and bring them in off the streets. The reason they were on the streets or possibly in arcades was due to the treatment Black children received from the education system. With regard to Preston’s Caricom, more research needs to be undertaken in this field; however, my understanding is that it was a short-lived venture. One reason given was the lack of respect the youth had for their elders. Another was the heavy-handed approach from Mr. Morelese did not go down too well with the youngsters. It does, however, highlight the disconnect between the generations which is something that is still keenly felt today.

The disconnect between the youth and their elders is not widespread as some of the generation born in this country have some affinity with the parents’ generation. Others simply feel resentment for this generation for excluding them as they have been left out by the indigenous population. Some Windrush children born in England struggled with a sense of identity and belonging. Having to conform to a Caribbean upbringing at home which may have been alien to them in comparison to a white English society, they also felt excluded from this society. A subculture was born that allowed them to carve out a new identity for themselves. Concomitantly, this singled them out as something of a threat to the authorities and resulted in a lot of negative police attention. This led to the riots of 1981 in Preston. Small in comparison with other places, however, it must be acknowledged that this took place. On the other side there was various youth groups and activities like break dancing and musical groups facilitated by the youth themselves. This is a rich vein of social history that needs to be explored. The sands of time are flowing fast and me must act to capture and develop this narrative. It is in danger of being hidden and lost. Preston’s sole remaining West Indian social club was almost lost a decade ago.

Ten years ago, in 2011, the very future of Preston’s sole surviving West Indian social club was under
threat from the local council. Preston city council were in the midst of planning a redevelopment of Preston that they hoped would transform the fortunes of this former mill town. Known as Tithebarn, this venture proposed to transform the landscape of Preston city centre, with new shops, houses, offices, a revitalised market, and a new bus station. The bus station in Preston whilst having many drawbacks is a beloved piece of 1960’s architecture and a local campaign swung into action to save this iconic structure. The Council argued that too many repairs needed to be carried out in the bus station. It was pointed out that the cost of this work would be £4m compared to an estimated cost of £36m for a new station located on Preston’s Manchester Road. Adjacent to the proposed new bus station is a West Indian social club that had been in situ since 1976. Jalgos Sports and Social Club would be soon informed that they would be the subject of compulsory purchase.

The building would be demolished for buses to use the space to reverse into. In the eyes of Preston City Council, this building was just bricks and mortar. The club would simply have to relocate in a city where real estate at that time came at a premium price that did not reflect the offer made to the club. The council’s communications officer, in response to an article in Blog Preston, that highlighted the plight of Jalgos Sports and Social Club, stated that the Chief Executive had met with the people of Jalgos and he was aware of their concerns would do everything to help and assist the club during the next stages of Tithebarn.

A key component in this next stage was the destruction of the very club that Preston City Council’s Chief Executive had allegedly taken on board the concerns of the committee and patrons. A move that would be detrimental to the history and culture of Preston’s Caribbean community.
A few years prior to this proposed takeover, the Caribbean Club, the first venue of its kind had closed their doors for the very last time. If the local authorities were successful in their quest, Jalgos may not have ever recovered and followed suit. The closing of these doors may have resulted in the loss of a half century of history.

Just like the river that continuously flows from a source in the hills down to the sea, history continuously flows and new stories emerge. Historians are correspondents of the past. It is our job to bring the past to life and present it to a modern-day audience. The story of the Windrush Generation is an ongoing process. The oral testimonies so graciously provided by these pioneers are only part of this story. There is more work to be completed, more stories that need brought to life and presented to the wider world. Therefore, this is only a partial story. The Windrush Generation throughout their journey, firstly from their home islands to the Mother Country, carried not just their possessions but a dream of a brighter future. They have overcome so much adversity and still hope and dream that their story will be adequately told. One can only hope that this narrative, can be the catalyst for a more in-depth history of Preston’s vibrant West Indian community to emerge. The history of Jalgos, the now defunct Caribbean Club, the development of carnival and a more complete history of the Seventh Day Adventist Church need to be told. Within this narrative like those of the individuals behind these institutions, is the history of how one small community in a Lancashire mill town, not only challenged an overwhelming colour bar, but also welcomed the indigenous population into the heart of all their social and religious activities.

Stephen Poleon is an Irish historian, currently studying as a PhD student at Lancaster University. Poleon's thesis is related to the 1916 Easter Rising. In addition, Poleon is passionate about the history of the Caribbean diaspora in Britain. This article was inspired by a micro history of Preston’s Caribbean community Poleon researched in 2008.
NOTES:

2. Kingstown Daily Gleaner, West Indians Plan International Club, 14.01.1957
4. Lancashire Records Office, DDX 141/115 Shades of Memory George Afflick
5. Lancashire Records Office, DDX 141/126 Shades of Memory Mr Bully
8. Lancashire Records Office, DDX 141/112 Shades of Memory Lewis Walker
9. Lancashire Records Office, DDX 141/107 Shades of Memory Mary Jeffers
11. Lancashire Records Office DDXX 141/117 Shades of Memory, Jane Nelson
12. Lancashire Evening Post, How Preston made a fortune from bananas, 21/05/2021
13. Lancashire Records Office DDPP ,5/11 Correspondence, with accounts and ships manifests concerning the shipment of bananas and other goods by Geest Industries Ltd., 30 Jul.1961 - 4 Sep. 1963
14. Manchester Guardian, Shippers Move to Stop Racket Stowaway Syndicate 05/03/1960
15. Lancashire Records Office, NWSA North West Sound Archive 2006.0027 Julius Prevost
16. Lancashire Evening Post, Preston Colour Bar is for own good, 29/4/1963
17. Lancashire Records Office DDX 141/117 Shades of Memory Jane Nelson
Ras Daniel Heartman (1942 – 1990) was a prominent artist from Jamaica whose works were at the forefront of international Pan-African and Black Power movements. He embraced Rastafarianism, and devoted his life to the upliftment of African people, and those in its diaspora. He was also an actor and made an iconic appearance in *The Harder They Come*. His artwork became very popular in Britain, and around the world, from the 1960s, and this document is an example of two of his most popular posters. Bogle L’Ouverture Publications was spearheaded by Jessica Huntley and a radical group of black co-founders. She went on to operate the publishing house over two decades with her husband Eric Huntley. It specialised in publishing Pan-African writing, and it was founded on a commitment of publishing only works by black writers. Its first book was *The Groundings with My Brothers* in 1969, published to bring into focus the reasons for Walter Rodney’s ban from Jamaica in 1968. This flyer was printed by Bogle L’Ouverture Publications, approximately 1971. However, Bogle
L’Ouverture first published Heartman’s work as a poster to fund the publication of Groundings, and continued with this strategy when it published How Europe Underdeveloped Africa, in 1972.

The family of Heartman has developed a project to restore his name and ensure the legacy of the inspirational artist. (1) Heartman’s son, Ato Roberts, also a renowned Jamaican artist, has expressed awareness of the magnitude of the contribution of these posters: ‘this is so epic because proceeds from the sale actually helped to publish such a powerful book from one of the greatest leaders to walk among us Dr, Walter Rodney!’ (2)

Claudia Tomlinson is a doctoral candidate at the University of Chichester, working on a thesis entitled: 'Jessica Huntley, A Political History of Radical Black Activism in British Guiana and Britain (1927 – 2013)’. Her research interests include undocumented and less visible histories within African and Caribbean studies. In addition to creative and political writing, she is a conference contributor and is a member of the History Matters editorial team.

An exhibition held in 2015-2016 in London showed the enduring connection between Heartman, Jessica and Eric Huntley, in their inclusion of Heartman in an exhibition of ground-breaking artists. (3) Ras Daniel Heartman repatriated to the African continent in the 1980s, and lived there for the remainder of his life.

This document can be viewed at both the Huntley Archives at the London Metropolitan Archives, and the George Padmore Institute.

NOTES:

1. Ras Daniel Heartman, Honoring the Life and Legacy of Ras Daniel Heartman: [https://www.rasdanielheartman.com/history](https://www.rasdanielheartman.com/history)
2. Personal communication received from Ato Roberts to the author November 2019.

HANNAH FRANCIS

On Thursday April 19th 1984, 20 year old West Indian woman Jaqueline Berkeley (better known as Jackie) was out in Moss Side, Manchester when two of her friends were suddenly attacked by a surrounding group of women. Although she had made attempts to break up the fracas, she was arrested alongside three other women by Moss Side officers. Whilst the other women involved in the commotion were allowed to go free, Jackie was taken to jail, “racially abused, stripped naked and raped by police officers in Moss Side Police Station.” (1)

Jackie was assaulted and racially abused by two policemen and two policewomen and was detained for two days despite being granted unconditional bail which set the legal impetus for an earlier release. (2) Despite this, she was not taken to court until Saturday morning only to be charged with assaulting an officer and criminal damage to police uniform. After Jackie was released, it took her some time to disclose the horrendous events that took place at the station. The prevention of her earlier release saw her held in custody for two days, forced to process the traumatic physical and emotional stress of sexual assault and racial abuse in isolation.

Despite having to go to the hospital for her injuries, she did not disclose any details of her assault until the following Tuesday when she confided in a youth worker about the ordeal. Initially improperly investigated by the Greater Manchester Police (GMP), Manchester’s working black communities across Moss Side, Whalley Range, Hulme, and more, built a campaign in defence of Jackie and an official complaint investigation was launched with the help of the Black Parents Movement (BPM).

The Jackie Berkeley Defence Committee was launched by the local Manchester section of the national Black Parents Movement (BPM) soon
after her release. First established in London in 1975 by Caribbean-born teachers and activists John La Rose and Albertina Sylvester, the BPM grew out of and continued the legacy of black radical organization in Britain against racist policing, schooling, housing, deportation, and state barbarism. The cataclysm for the movement’s formation was an incident in which 17-year-old West Indian student Cliff McDaniel was apprehended, beaten, and arrested by police in North London on April 17th, 1975. Just three days later, local parents, teachers and activists banded together and formed the movement, with the Black Students Movement forming soon after.

Manchester’s BPM was founded by many local activists and members of black organisations across the city in 1980. This local BPM section was established off the back of the Manchester Black Parents Organisation which sought to style itself upon the Haringey section of the movement. Grenadian education campaigner Gus John, a close contemporary of La Rose, and Eric and Jessica Huntley who headed the Ealing section of the BPM, became convenor of the Manchester section in 1980 and played an astronomical role in much of its political activity up until the late eighties. (3) Alongside local BPM members and Berkeley’s relatives, the defence committee was formed and established Jackie’s case as one of the BPM’s thirteen major national campaigns. Gus John acted as Secretary, Jackie’s mother Violet was treasurer, and many of her friends and family were general members including her father, David.

The committee organised for Jackie to issue her complaint via a solicitor, released a statement in support of Jackie’s recollection of events and, on May 9th, the Greater Manchester Police had responded: “The police appointed Chief Superintendent Glover, to head up an investigating team to investigate Jackie’s complaint.” (4)
investigation was officially launched, with Chief Inspector Birkenshaw and Police Sergeant Christine Knott to assist Glover. Jackie successfully identified one policeman and two policewomen out of the four who had assaulted her; the remaining officer was identified after Jackie gave a statement describing his clothing and appearance.

However, despite Jackie’s honest complaint, the GMP went on the defensive with immediate effect, enlisting the support of state-funded media as their mouthpiece. The history of GMP’s reliance on the media, and British police forces more generally, makes it astoundingly clear that the police existed to respond to black youth, workers and migrants with state-endorsed violence and corruption. Just one day after the investigation was launched, the Daily Mirror had responded stating Jackie’s complaint was “an amazing allegation.” (5) All of the information in this piece came directly from the police who had told various news outlets Jackie had failed to file her complaint immediately; not one journalist or interviewer had engaged with Jackie nor any members of the defence committee. In the weeks to come, an increasing number of national and local papers began to say their piece, in the ever-predictable defence of the police. The Manchester Evening News began to set their sights upon Jackie and her complaint as entirely incredulous stating: “It is believed the police were only told of the alleged incident at least five days later...here we have images of a girl inventing a story five days after her arrest.” (6) It is abundantly clear the media greatly emphasised their judgements of Jackie’s choice to file her complaint five days after her assault as a means to rally the British public against her, and the endeavours of the wider Black Parents Movement for social justice.

It comes as no surprise that Greater Manchester Police (GMP) were largely reliant upon the media to uphold its reputation as a reliable arm of the British police. Both the police and the media possessed the power to silence black youth, workers, and the masses as it was bestowed upon them by state, for the state.

Jackie Berkeley campaign flyer (George Padmore Institute)
It was Moss Side Police Station who were pining to the media to protect them as they had a notorious history of sexual, physical, and racial violence against black youth and other prisoners. (7) During the unrest of 1981 and the youth protests against police violence, Moss Side Police Station was occupied by some 600 people – black and white – all young adults “who were determined to strike a final blow to that police station” as retribution. (8) Chief Constable James Anderton responded to this action using ‘snatch squads’ and vehicular-based dispersal of officers to assault and arrest protestors. Anderton’s adoption of such tactics was celebrated in the media and framed protestors as inciters of unfounded violence. Soon after the unrest in the following year, the station was under further pressure to answer for the appearance of “coshes, chains and clubs” in the lockers of Moss Side officers. (9) Even after this incident, the commonality of battery and sexual assault against black male and female prisoners with the use of weaponry was frequent. By the time of Jackie’s assault, these officers were still employees of Moss Side police force, insinuating that a culture of sadistic violence was ingrained into the very fabric of this institution.

As a continuation of the history of police and media violence in Manchester, the punitive media campaign against Jackie knew no bounds and by September, the GMP had charged her with wasting police time. For the Black Parents Movement (BPM), now was truly a time for action. Jackie had been called to trial on February 25th 1985, so the defence committee had mere months to prepare themselves. The committee released a flyer stating the facts of Jackie’s experience of assault and arrest, as well as notifying BPM members and other protestors to show solidarity.

Much like the tactics adopted in the BPM’s first defensive campaign of Cliff McDaniel, the defence committee called upon the masses to picket every day of the trial. The other side of the document stated a list of alternative ways to support Jackie Berkeley and her family during the campaign months leading up to trial such as monetary donation to go towards the cost of “an independent forensic scientist”, (10) organising locally to publicise the trial and the facts, and an invitation to join the committee. Adopting tactics such as these placed the actions of the Black Parents Movement as, broadly speaking, socialist and much a part of Britain’s black radical fabric.

The BPM worked tirelessly to collect statements from Jackie herself on the event and character references in her defence. In London, John La Rose had established a Defence Support Committee and organised meetings to publicise Jackie’s story as a national plight for the entirety of the
movement. They also released a statement on the facts of Jackie’s assault and arrest in April as the committee knew the police were continuing to build a case against her. After the release of the BPM statement, an undated document that was likely published in early 1985, only the Guardian and the Caribbean Times carried out a story of its contents, alongside the black-led journal *Race Today*. (11) It was clear the media storm had not yet dwindled.

On the day of trial, Jackie was answering a charge for breach of the peace, three charges of assaulting police officers, multiple criminal damage charges and one for making a false complaint. These charges were classed under the Public Order Act, in which it is not legally possible for the defendant to have a trial by jury. A tactic of the courts and jury that the BPM had much experience with, the defence committee did their utmost to build a factually sound account of events. Despite their efforts and the arising fabrication of the facts provided by the prosecution, just two days after the trial began, West Indian World issued an article with the following headline: “Rape Claim was False”. (12) It was clear that press coverage favoured the side of the accuser, and despite “even when those prosecution witnesses, under-cross examination... showed themselves to be totally lying” the press “steadfastly refused to print what the 65 people in the public gallery were seeing and hearing every day”. (13)

The accused officers, female officers PC Dyson and Askew, and male constables Reubens and PC Fellowes, covered up a huge amount of evidence, including the private statements they had self-recorded months after charging Jackie with false complaint and wasting police time. Although the accused had attempted to frame Jackie as “most violent and obscene”, (14) witnesses began to admit they had seen the officer Fellowes beating her up prior to her sexual assault by the four officers. Furthermore, whilst forensic expert Dr. Patterson had no DNA proof, he was “emphatic” that Jackie’s clothing, after examination, had clearly been forcibly removed. (15)

On the final day of the trial, renowned defence lawyer of the Mangrove 9 and Cliff McDaniel, Ian Macdonald, addressed the bench for over three hours, singling out the accused officers and Sergeants Eccles and Donald for unreliable evidence. Over the course of an almost three-week trial, the media reported on strip-searches which never took place, whilst officers claimed in court that strip-searches “never” took place at their station. It was evident that the police and the media’s attempts to disengage the masses in their plight against the state was full of inaccuracies but still as dangerous as history has taught us. However, magistrate Mr. Glynmoor Jones,
came to a verdict which stated Jackie was guilty of all charges except criminal damages to a police van.

On March 14th 1985, the trial came to an end, and Secretary of the Jackie Berkeley Defence Committee Gus John penned a closing statement on the matter. He stated that during this trial “Jackie and her family had to face the fact that what should have been a rape trial... was arranged by the police and Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) as a magistrates court trial with Jackie as defendant and the police and the State as accusers.” (16) Although all of the officers offered conflicting details of the arrest and sexual assault of Jackie, and there were a significant number of press present each day of the trial, Jackie was still in the firing line in the media.

Furthermore, two local collaborative women’s groups Wages for Housework and Women Against Rape (WAR), had advertised that a representative of the Jackie Berkeley Defence Committee would be speaking at a meeting of theirs in Kings Cross on March 28th. Challenged by defence committee Secretary Gus John and Treasurer Violet Berkeley, the committee denied any knowledge in a letter addressed to members Ruth Hall and Wilmette Brown. The co-opting of Jackie’s lived experience was met with great offence, particularly as the defence committee had shown solidarity with both black male and female survivors of sexual assault at Moss Side Police Station and WAR rarely allowed male survivors to attend their meetings.

Jackie, a young unemployed black woman, occupied an existence, one that was happy, that threatened the ways in which the state operated. Jackie’s formal complaint made visible two concrete facts: black grassroots and radical organization was progressing in its mission to advance and improve the lives of black people and exposed the evidently violent means in which the state was prepared to exert control. To the people’s court, Jackie was an honest young woman who was
subjected to horrendous act of racial and sexual violence; a woman who had come forward in an historic moment of solidarity with a wider radical movement.

At her sentencing on April 11th 1985, Glynmoor Jones had decided a custodial sentence may not be the most appropriate and thus proceeded to “sentence her to 14 days’ imprisonment on the charge of breach of the peace; one month’s imprisonment on each of three counts of assaulting a police officer; one day’s imprisonment for criminal damage to police uniforms, and three months’ imprisonment for wasting police time.” (17) In retaliation, the Jackie Berkeley Defence Committee organised a march from Whitworth Park, stopping to demonstrate outside the Moss Side Police Station, the Greater Manchester Police Authority and Manchester Evening News premises. The rallying of black activists from the Black Parents Movement and collaborative organisation the Abasindi Cooperative (a black women’s cooperative established in January 1980) illustrated the strength of the campaign’s support.

Devastatingly though, as reported in the May 1985 issue of Race Today, Jackie had attempted suicide. (18) Whilst she survived, this case proved that the police, the DPP and the magistrate had done all they needed to do: issue a guilty verdict upon yet another innocent young black woman.

However, all six sentences were suspended for twelve months indicating the power of the Black Parents Movement and their defence campaign. The disruption of the process of fabrication and corruption in the courts shook the prosecution to its core and achieved a core value of the movement: to advance the interests of black workers, the unemployed and the youth.

Jackie is a part of black history, and more specifically part of Manchester’s legacy as a centre for black feminist anti-racist campaigning. The reach of the campaign was national - a Defence Support Committee was formed in London by the Haringey section, and Jackie’s mother was even invited to the Black, Radical & Third World Women & their Current Struggles meeting in Tottenham on 18th March 1985.
Jackie Berkeley’s relentless bravery was informed by the unwavering support of Moss Side’s black and working-class community that had long been in existence since the 1930s. For decades Moss Side “was home to a stable and politically conscious black population” and this population continued to challenge the oppressive British state in all its forms. \( \text{(19)} \) The role of the Black Parents Movement in Manchester, and across Britain, in publicising this case proves that the people’s verdict is insurmountable.

Hannah Francis is a Masters of Research graduate, who studied the History of Africa and the African Diaspora at the University of Chichester. Her dissertation research project was completed on the history of the Black Parent Movement in London and Manchester, 1975 – 1985. She aims to carry out more research on the Black Parents Movement across Britain, and its participation and support of global movements in the advancement of the interests of the black diaspora. Alongside this, she is also a member of the Young Historians Project.
NOTES:

1. GPI, BPM 3/2/3/2, ‘What really happened at Moss Side Police Station?’ flyer, 1985
2. Gus John, ‘A Walk Down a Long Road with Ian McDonald QC – tribute letter by Professor Gus John’ (document shared via email)
3. GPI, BPM/2/6/1/2, Ealing Concerned Black Parents and Youth, ‘Police, Schools and the Black Community in Ealing’, 1976
5. GPI, BPM 3/2/3/2, Daily Mirror, 10th May 1984
8. GPI, BPM 3/2/3/2, Letter to Ruth Hall and Wilmette Brown c/o Wages or Housework and Women Against Rape, 28th March 1985, p. 2
10. Ibid, p. 2
12. Ibid, p. 6
13. Ibid, p. 6
14. Ibid, p. 8
15. Ibid, p. 11
16. GPI, BPM 3/2/3/2, “People’s Court” find Jackie “Not guilty”, 5th April 1985
18. Ibid, p. 167
Waveney Bushell is a retired teacher and Educational Psychologist, widely considered to be the first black person to qualify as an Educational Psychologist in Britain. Born in British Guiana, she arrived in Britain in 1956, and worked as a teacher in the East End of London, before qualifying as an Educational Psychologist. She became a prominent activist in the struggle against the marginalisation and oppression of black children in the British Education system. She was recently featured in the BBC documentary Subnormal, A British Scandal where she described her experience. This article features an extract of interviews with Waveney as part of a Ph.D. research project on the biography of Guyanese-British race equality reformer, political activist and publisher Jessica Huntley, who was a friend and associate of Waveney. This interview was conducted by Claudia Tomlinson in August 2020.

Interview extract:

Claudia Tomlinson: Can you talk a bit about your experiences, particularly in relation to Black Children? It is a big story, did you develop a specific awareness that maybe, the system wasn’t treating black children correctly?

Waveney Bushell: The West Indian children started coming over here, I would have said in the early ‘70s. I finished my degree in ‘64, and ‘64, ‘65, I was at the Child Guidance training Centre, and I started working straight. I worked in Woking. Woking was my first place of work. My placement for that course while I was at the training Centre, I was placed in Battersea with a psychologist, one day a week. It was there that I realised that, on while I was on the course, I remember questioning lots of things, because in those days, the emphasis was on testing, using the intelligence tests a lot. Why we were
being trained to use that, I questioned its usefulness in terms of assessing the black child, the child who would come from another culture.

My tutor was very good. I was trained with three men, and I remember one particularly being irritated when I stopped her when she was talking, I interrupted but I wasn’t rude or anything. She never objected to that, she accommodated me, maybe started to see what I was pointing to. But I pointed to the use of our words, in the West Indies we used words which…I mean language is a living thing, and England had moved ahead in their use of words, rightly so, but we in the colonies were still using a lot of old fashioned words like… we never used the word ‘tap’ at home. I wasn’t blaming anybody but I was pointing out when I interrupted things, the fact that we were behind, but being assessed on a test which had shown that language had moved ahead of us. It wasn’t a deliberate thing, I wasn’t saying in those early days while I was being trained ‘you people are doing this’, I was pointing to what immediately what I saw, the difference in the use of language, for example the word ‘tap’ which came up in the intelligence tests which was used a lot, and tests in those days had to be used by the Medical Officer of Health. We the psychologists used tests but it was the Medical Officer of Health who made decision as to whether the child should be transferred to a School for the Educationally Subnormal, she or he signed on the dotted line. It was the doctor who did it.

Waveney Bushell (BBC/Rogan Productions/Lyttanya Shannon photo)
The doctor had much more power in those days than the psychologist, who would have had exposure to different things that the doctor would not have had. I don’t know who trained the doctor to use those tests, the test that was used in those days was the Stanford-Binet test which is no longer used. One part of that test was called the Information, I think, we the psychologist stopped that test. I remember on my placement days, I remember seeing a lot of children who were black. Mainly because they started coming in, families started coming in since the 60s, and I used that very test and found that it was all wrong, that it was not relevant to that child.

An example I gave is the word ‘tap’ was used. I would say to the child ‘what’s a tap?’ and the tap wouldn’t know what’s a tap. I found myself walking across the room, fortunately there was a pipe, what we at home would call a pipe. I said to the child, ‘what’s this then’, and the child would say ‘pipe’, so I knew the child knew the concept, but didn’t know the word that was used, what we called that, so I felt this is all wrong. So, we in the West Indies we were stuck in the century before the century in which we lived, in using the words that the century before used. For example, I discovered that Somerset Maughan, a well-known short story writer in those days, used all those words that we used in the West Indies, but he belonged to a different age, he belonged to an age before the age in which the test was written. So I became aware of that. But I also became aware that the Medical Officer of Health wouldn’t know that at all. And also the expectation of the Medical Officer of Health wouldn’t lead them to question the fact that the child knew the word pipe but didn’t know tap, their expectation would be that this child had come from nowhere, he had no education or something, which was in some cases was true, particularly in Jamaica. Jamaica is very mountainous.

In Guyana, by chance we had compulsory education at the same time as England had it, because one of the Governors, our Governor who represented the country for Britain was an educationalist, and therefore maybe, felt that Britain has got adult education and governing this country and this country must have it too. So this is one of the differences between Guyana and Jamaica. Jamaica is very mountainous; they didn’t have free adult education. They didn’t have it, at the time when Guyana had it, so we went to school early, we had to go to school, we also had what we called at home the School Board Man, over here they are called the Education Welfare Officer, who would see that you get in to school, that you’re going to school every day, cos that was the law. Whereas Jamaica didn’t have that as early as we had it. There were all sorts of mitigating circumstances.

So, I became interested in the disparity between the preparation that
children had for school in the West Indies, and that here. I felt well this is all wrong, you can’t be comparing apples and oranges, you have to compare two oranges or two apples. In no time, children started coming here, and in no time, these children were branded as dull, subnormal and that sort of thing. So, I became very interested in that. There certainly were...I can’t swear for that, no black psychologists in London, and people say you were the first, I say I don’t know, there may have been others in Manchester or so, but nobody sought me out to say ‘I’m a psychologist, I hear you’re a psychologist, I’m one can we meet and talk’. So, it seems as if for a long time I was the only one, so I certainly was sought out a lot. That’s how Jessica and I became aware of each other. Jessica became aware of me through my work. I mean we knew each other at home, she settled in an area in which I lived in North London. Our friendship became a professional one because of similar interests. She became very interested in... I think she saw what was happening to her children. The whole primary school system was so different here than at home, she probably saw her children coming home without any homework, and so on, and questioned that because that would not have been the case at home.

Claudia Tomlinson is a doctoral candidate at the University of Chichester, working on a thesis entitled: 'Jessica Huntley, A Political History of Radical Black Activism in British Guiana and Britain (1927 – 2013)'. Her research interests include undocumented and less visible histories within African and Caribbean studies. In addition to creative and political writing, she is a conference contributor and is a member of the History Matters editorial team.
For this edition of History Matters we return to The National Archives, the official archive of the UK Government.

It could indeed be argued that many of the records held at The National Archives (TNA) relating to the presence of Black and Asian people in Britain are at the archive because of the over-policing and surveillance of these communities. This point could certainly be made with this issue’s feature, “From Where I stand,” a pamphlet produced by Guyana-born civil rights activist, Roy Sawh, and contained within the file, CRIM 1/4777, with “CRIM” standing for “records of the Central Criminal Court.”

In the pamphlet, Sawh, an experienced speaker at Hyde Park Corner, sought to make, “the main points of the speech I should make but never do”, as a result of getting side-tracked by questions.
Beginning with the opening line, “Hello comrades and friends, ladies and gentlemen, and all hecklers and racists...” Roy was acutely aware that there were many in the crowd with less than noble intentions towards him. These included, as Perry Blankson has shown, “Special Branch officers of the Metropolitan Police taking careful notes”, which would then be used to prosecute Sawh for “incitement to racial hatred,” under the 1965 Race Relations Act. The evidence gathered against him (which, in the context of the well-documented police racism at the time, must be read with a large pinch of salt) (1), forms the basis of much of the file held at TNA. The inclusion of Sawh’s pamphlet does however show that although TNA records do more often than not represent the voice of the state, there are also important and rare documents highlighting community voices and resistance contained within them.

This file along with countless others can be ordered and viewed at The National Archives. It’s also important to note that the pamphlet – like many others – is not included in the file’s catalogue description. Thus, researchers are advised to perform broad keyword searches around areas of interest, and to order and view relevant documents. TNA’s research guide on Black British social and political history in the Twentieth Century provides a useful starting point. For more on Roy Sawh, see the book From Where I Stand, published by Hansib, in 1987.
Kevin Searle works as a records specialist at The National Archives. His most recent publication is the chapter, ‘Before Notting Hill: The Causeway Green “rioting” of 1949,’ in the book, *Black British History: New Perspectives*.

NOTES:

- Perry Blankson, ‘The British State’s Secret War on Black Power’ *Tribune* (23 October, 2021)
- The National Archives (TNA): CRIM 1/4777
BLACK BRITISH HISTORY:  
STUDENT PERSPECTIVES

RICHARD AKERELE

The need to integrate Black British history into the National Curriculum for History is not a recent phenomenon. Previous generations of Afro-Caribbean people dissatisfied with the predominately negative slave narratives in British history lessons, taught a more positive alternative of ‘black history’ to their children. Through setting up what was known as supplementary schools in the 1960s, groups of Afro-Caribbean parents provided lessons on the significant contributions of iconic black figures such as Martin Luther King, to affirm their children’s black identity. (1) But whilst this attempt at integrating Black British history was important in highlighting positive perspectives on Black history, it was unable to directly challenge or change the negative or little coverage of Black British history prevalent in schools at the time. Similarly, the subsequent attempt by Akyabba Addai Sebbo to integrate Black British history in the National Curriculum for History in schools in the 1980s was only partially successful. Although Akyabba Addai Sebbo set up Black History Month in schools, which focused on famous Black history figures taught within schools for the first time; Black History Month remained separate to the National Curriculum for History, which featured very little positive Black British history. Therefore, to create a sustainable integration of Black British history in the National Curriculum for History, it is crucial that research goes beyond simply a retrospective analysis of previous attempts highlighted above, and also incorporates new and fresh perspectives of teaching Black British history.

This present research contributes to these new perspectives. Through action research with A-level history students at two culturally diverse secondary schools in London, we explored the important yet often
neglected student perspectives on Black British history teaching. Students in this study provided insights into different pedagogical methods of engaging with history such as storytelling. Their personal perspectives on integrating Black British history in the National Curriculum for History offered three interesting contributions. Firstly, students do not view Black British history within the narrow vacuum of the classroom, they bring personal experience, family histories and social/cultural understanding of Black history within Britain. Secondly, the ability to successfully plan and deliver Black British history lessons in schools where such history content or opportunities were previously unavailable, demonstrate how student perspectives can be a catalyst for enabling change that teachers may be unable to see or implement. Thirdly, this study’s micro-perspective on two schools highlighted the importance of in-depth qualitative research looking at an individual school’s history of teaching of Black British history, as reflected in the experience/absence of this teaching from students’ accounts of GCSE history.

In other words, examining a school’s historical engagement with Black British history may provide a useful timeline to explore whether student experiences have changed over time. In what follows, we briefly outline the sample, research interventions and explore the three key findings in more detail.
Sample:

Overall 24 students from two schools in London (12 students per school) participated in this study using the purposive sampling method. This sampling technique is a strategic way to ensure “those sampled are relevant to the research question”. (2) In the case of this research, purposive sampling meant considering how to ensure my sampling decisions were relevant to the two research questions. For instance, as I am interested in different student perspectives, it was important to have a diverse student sampling group for focus groups and not a monocultural ‘student’ perspective.

Subsequently, I chose to conduct research in two schools in areas with a culturally diverse population to increase the likelihood of encountering students with an interest, experience and who may be personally affected by the inclusion/exclusion of Black British history in the National Curriculum for History. Furthermore, the student research participants were sixth form students in Year 12 aged between 16-17 years old, with the vast majority studying AS level history and having experience with GCSE history and the National Curriculum for History. This meant students were confident to contribute to focus groups with a personal knowledge of the discussion topics. There was also a balance of male and female students. Therefore, purposive sampling helped ensure participants’ backgrounds could produce relevant data and research findings.

The first school involved in this research is located in East London, whilst the second school is in West London. Due to the limits of time and data protection issues working with young people under the age of 18 years old, I selected these two schools as we have a pre-existing professional relationship.

As part of my work with East London Connect, a widening participation charity, I deliver Higher Education and career advice in these schools. This enabled me to build on key relationships with teachers, heads of sixth form, gain senior leadership support for the research project and access classrooms for follow up sessions. Whilst I acknowledge this is a small sample size and therefore not representative of many parts of the United Kingdom, the multi-cultural demographic within the schools selected reflect the diversity of the local areas. For the first research intervention, students were selected by teachers at the schools to attend the workshop in November 2019.

Nevertheless, I recognise that teachers selecting students may still pass on biases about who they deem ‘suitable’ for various reasons beyond ethnicity such as behaviour and school attainment. The subsequent follow up focus groups were based on students’
self-selection to participate and contribute their perspectives on Black British history.

**Research Interventions:**

The first research session, a Black British history workshop, was designed to explore different aspects of students’ knowledge and understanding of Black British history. Through an initial pre-workshop questionnaire, students were asked five short questions. The first two questions asked students to rate their knowledge of Black history and Black British history on a scale of 1-10, with 10 signifying very knowledgeable. The remaining three questions were more specific to understanding Black British history knowledge. Students were asked to name three things (such as people or events) that they associate with Black British history and suggest an initial starting date of Black British history.

These questions could provide important indications of student knowledge and areas to potentially include narratives on Black British history. For instance, if the slave trade is a dominant period where Black British history is mentioned, it may indicate to teachers and curriculum examination bodies areas that are already oversaturated. Equally, identifying areas consistently not mentioned by students could demonstrate a gap and lack of knowledge that could be filled through integrating different Black British history content. Moreover, the initial questionnaire in the workshop design provided a simple measure to compare changes in knowledge over time with a post-workshop questionnaire.

The second aspect of the Black British history workshop was a session delivered by Stronger Stories, designed to introduce the concepts of storytelling, as a framework to understand different narratives that explain the stories of Black Victorians. Starting with an introduction to the Stronger Stories’ work and facilitators, the session was structured in three main segments. First, concepts of storytelling were explained using contemporary film examples students were likely to recognise, such as Black Panther and Hunger Games. This strategy of learning, beginning with more well-known concepts as a foundation to building understanding of less familiar topics such as Black British history, is not only in line with Stronger Stories’ corporate approach mentioned earlier, but also effective pedagogical theory.

Secondly, facilitators from Stronger Stories split students into small groups and were assigned one of four stories describing the lives of Black Victorians: Ottobah Cugoano, William Cuffay, Phillis Wheatley and Ignatius Sancho. These Black British stories were chosen to expose students to relatively unknown histories that present a positive historical portrayal of Black people in
to all students, the facilitators asked whether there were any similarities or differences in the individual Black Victorian stories and underlining narratives that shaped their lives. This enabled students to compare perspectives from different groups and identify overarching and potentially consistent narratives. For instance, students noted the influence of societal narratives and attitudes such as a class system and racism shaping the stories of Black Victorians.

The final aspect of the Black British history workshop was a short tour and presentation by the library manager at Cambridge Centre of African Studies. As described earlier, this was an opportunity for students to hear the stories of a Black historian attempting to publish work and view a vast collection of historical and cultural archives.

All focus groups were audio recorded and stored physically and electronically to ensure personal data was safe. Also, one focus group had a teacher present to conform with its school safeguarding policies prohibiting external visitors being alone with students at any time. This did not affect students’ willingness to share as the teacher was seated on a separate table to where the focus group discussion was taking place. In the second focus groups, students were advised and provided staff contact details to confidentially notify teachers of anything that made them
feel uncomfortable at any stage during the focus group. Also, in the absence of a teacher in this focus group, the classroom door was not fully closed, to create transparency and for teachers to enter at any point.

**Second Intervention:**

Following the Black British history workshop, students were invited to participate in focus groups to share their feedback on the workshop and discuss potential ways of integrating Black British history into the National curriculum for History. Two focus groups were conducted at each participating school, lasting between 30-45 minutes, one group of 10 students and another group of 8 students.

The focus group discussion was organised into structured and clear segments. Firstly, to ensure students felt comfortable and prepared to discuss potential questions, each focus group session included an introductory outline explaining the purpose of the session, reiterating the option to withdraw from the study at any stage. To encourage students to provide more detail, I asked follow-up questions that required student explanation such as “Was there a difference between the workshop and the tour?” Also, if a discussion was ending, I regularly asked whether anyone else wanted to contribute. In this way, I was mindful not to discourage enthusiastic students from continuing to share their perspectives or dominate conversation, whilst allowing a variety of different voices to be heard. This was especially important, given that focus groups can help reveal “ways in which individuals discuss a certain issue as members of a group, rather than simply as individuals”. (4)

All focus groups were audio recorded and stored physically and electronically to ensure personal data was safe. Also, one focus group had a teacher present to conform with its school safeguarding policies prohibiting external visitors being alone with students at any time. This did not affect students’ willingness to share as the teacher was seated on a separate table to where the focus group discussion was taking place. In the second focus groups, students were advised and provided staff contact details to confidentially notify teachers of anything that made them feel uncomfortable at any stage during the focus group. Also, in the absence of a teacher in this focus group, the classroom door was not fully closed, to create transparency and for teachers to enter at any point.

**Third Intervention:**

A Black British history lesson was designed and delivered by one of the two student focus groups. Whilst the second focus group also designed a potential Black British history lesson, which could have provided a comparative element to this research project, the lesson was cancelled due
to the sudden COVID-19 school closures. During the focus group sessions, students were asked to explore their ideas on devising their own Black British history workshop suitable for a classroom setting. Using aspects of the initial workshop in Cambridge, some students suggested adopting some of the same features, whilst developing their own Black British history workshop structure. For instance, one focus group highlighted the usefulness of the general introduction and questionnaire in the Stronger Stories workshop, to help understand the topic of Black British history narratives and assess their knowledge at the start of the workshop. Students in this focus group also considered how to organise content in a structured way.

First, the students discussed the potential of creating a short handout to allow a classroom audience with little or no knowledge of Black British history to briefly familiarise themselves with the topic. Second, to ensure all participants could easily engage in the initial workshop section discussing Black history, the students selected well-known Black historical figures such as Martin Luther King or Nelson Mandela. Students explicitly recommended placing this discussion of well-known general Black history figures before exploring unknown Black British history, as the histories can be treated as synonymous histories. To broaden the discussion and progressively transition towards a more in depth understanding of Black history, students proposed a mind-mapping exercise to explain the contextual background that motivated and linked Black history figures together such as an international fight against racial injustice. Following the mind mapping exercise, the students suggested introducing their potential audience to unknown Black British content in small groups of three or four, similar to the Black Victorian group activity in the first research intervention. The students were also keen to incorporate a comparative and interactive element to their Black history workshop design. Thus, the students wanted to facilitate a debate on how these Black histories (Black history/Black British history) have developed and their relevance to today’s society. The final segment of the student’s workshop design was a conclusion to summarise the key ideas and a post-workshop evaluation questionnaire, to assess how potential students found the workshop. Whilst this is an overview of one of the students focus group’s Black British history workshop design ideas, there were some differences in the actual workshop delivered to year 9 pupils.

Even though students devised all the workshop structure and design themselves, they highlighted that the focus group session did not include how to deliver the workshop successfully. Thus, I arranged a session to discuss the overarching
pedagogical aims of delivering a lesson/workshop to pupils such as including learning objectives, addressing knowledge, value and skills learnt in the session.

Students were also supported by a teacher in their Sixth form to feedback their ideas for their Black British history lesson. Furthermore, based on this new knowledge, students developed and refined their original ideas from their focus group workshop design to include a quiz and their own research into Black British history.

The students’ workshop was delivered to a Year 9 history class consisting of 20 pupils. The workshop lasted one hour to conform to regular lesson times. Feedback from the support teacher present in the classroom and comments from Year 9 pupil evaluations sheets showed the lesson was positively received.

**Findings:**

**Black British history outside the classroom:**

Students’ discussion in focus groups revealed the importance of Black British history outside the classroom, especially when such history was not available/limited in the National Curriculum for History. For instance, due to the generic nature of Black British history in their school experience, one student suggested you could possibly “learn the same knowledge even if you were not in a lesson”. This indicates there are other sources of knowledge and understanding of Black British history that are equally or potentially more valuable to students than the content taught in school. As a result, there were opportunities and perhaps a need to embark on personal discoveries of Black British history; one student shared how “unless you do your own research you are not going to learn about it.” However, there was also a sense that some in-depth knowledge of Black British history was restricted and limited to those “part of a black family.” Thus, whilst there are a number of different sources of Black British history, allowing students to share their research or family history could add significant value to integrating these perspectives in what is taught in the National Curriculum for History. In this way the classroom would become a diverse and dynamic exchange of Black British history from different sources rather than a passive and one way knowledge transfer. Also, in the context of postcolonial theory, allowing multiple sources and voices to critique and contribute to discussion and content within the National Curriculum of History, offers an interesting way to integrate Black British history into the curriculum. Such perspectives could help challenge the predominant and often limited coverage of Black British history into the curriculum, and simultaneously teach key skills.
such as critical thinking to help students interpret historical sources better. Furthermore, this interactive style of teaching Black British history could teach students broader lessons on how to relate to Black communities who may have different experiences of history.

As one student commented:

> Even if you're not yourself a black person once you get exposed to new information and new perceptions, you kind of change your way of thinking and see what Black history is, I think sometimes we don't really take in the whole picture, so I think getting that new information, it can open your eyes a little bit more to what happened, and have a bit more understanding about what people go through. Because it's kind of hard to empathise with people who are not from the same cultural background.

Students suggested integrating ‘Black’ British history within an existing history module to examine “how we have black influence and philosophers [...] in that time period.” In other words, such changes focus on the structural components required to successfully integrate Black British history in the history curriculum, but also highlight the importance of seeing British History and Black British history as one and the same, taught together within a particular period such as Victorian Britain. In addition, students expressed an understanding of the tensions facing teachers desiring to teach Black British history. In comparison to other historical content presently in the National Curriculum for History such as Weimar Germany, a student expressed doubts as to whether “a teacher would choose black history as a topic” if it was “not that popular.” The student seemed to define popularity here, as the frequency and familiarity a teacher has to a history topic. According to this student’s observations, a teacher was more likely to choose history topics, they had “taught more” or have “a bit more knowledge of.”

**Student led Black British history lesson:**

One of the surprising findings of this study was students’ awareness of the challenges of integrating Black British history into the National Curriculum for History. Students clearly articulated important issues about curriculum structure that must be considered in greater detail to successfully integrate it within the history curriculum. They highlighted specific criteria required for successfully integrating Black British history into the existing history assessment and curriculum structure. For instance, Black British history was considered too broad a title, lacking clarity of time frames to ‘fit’ within the existing history curriculum module title guidelines, and not providing a substantive period to learn about.
In turn, a pattern of avoiding teaching Black British history may perpetuate a continuous cycle of missed opportunities to gain more knowledge of the topic and a greater level of comfort teaching it.

However, as mentioned above, integrating different student perspectives and sources of information may help open up other ways of teaching Black British history that do not rely exclusively on a teacher’s knowledge of the topic. Through teachers helping to facilitate and create opportunities for different students to contribute and even shape Black British history in the classroom, there may be a profound positive and far-reaching influence on student engagement with history content. Reflecting on the experience of preparing and sharing their experience of co-designing a Black British history lesson with other students, one student remarked how much they enjoyed “the way it was up to us think [...] the fact it was up to us to read it, and us explaining it, from what we understand from the story we read.” Equally, students valued the opportunity to learn from each other. The Black British story workshop at Cambridge with students from both schools was very insightful. Students appreciated having a different perspective. For instance, a student commented that “having the other school there as well, how they would answer it, would also stimulate us into thinking differently, so based on their ideas and thinking of our ideas, and healthy competition between ideas, makes you think a bit broader compared to be set from one mindset.”

Furthermore, the personal experience of feeling part of the history lesson was a transformative experience for some students. Rather than simply receiving knowledge about British history, it was empowering for students to hear about Black Victorians and identify with this very important period of British history as “my history.”

Thus, this level of interaction and peer learning can encourage greater student engagement, especially for those of African-Caribbean descent, who studies show frequently consider history their least favourite subject. Also, providing students with opportunities to learn from each other could be a simple way of integrating Black history content in a history lesson, without changing the curriculum or becoming an expert in the topic.

**History of teaching of Black British history:**

This study in two schools helped students reflect on their GCSE history experiences of Black British history. It showed that for many years in each school students did not have Black British integrated into their schools. Whilst much attention is given to exam boards or the Department for Education’s
the study highlighted that Black British history can be taught even within the constraints of the current National Curriculum for History. Therefore, this study is a challenge and encouragement to teachers and school leadership to draw on their student experiences and knowledge and provide Black British history discussions as part of British history.

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NOTES:
The third History Matters conference, which took place 7th-9th October 2021 was a startling reminder of just how rapidly the field of History, and Black British History in the UK in particular has changed in clear, important ways in a very short space of time. The conferences themselves, bound up with the history, if you will, of History Matters, tell a story about the status and teaching of Black history in Britain in just the last seven years – a single REF cycle.

Formed in 2014 by a group primarily composed of secondary school teachers and historians, History Matters sought to highlight what they believed to be ‘the alarmingly low numbers of history students and teachers of African and Caribbean heritage in Britain.’ A letter was published in the Times Educational Supplement in October 2014, and in conjunction with the Black Cultural Archives, the University of Chichester, the Royal Historical Society, the Historical Association and other partners, History Matters held a conference at the Institute of Historical Research in London in April 2015 to address the issue.

I began my PhD at Chichester in October 2015, and was not a part of the first conference. I immediately heard a lot about it from people who had been there and were excited about the next steps. I was particularly intrigued by the new Young Historians Project, an initiative designed to combat disinterest in history as a subject at GCSE, Advanced, and undergraduate level among Black students in the UK, notably due to the absences of Black people from UK history syllabi, by encouraging young people to research histories that interested them. Engaging them at this level, the logic went, would produce more Black postgrads and PhD.

I was much more involved with the organising of the second conference, and co-convened it with Hakim Adi, KESEWA JOHN
my PhD supervisor. When we began preparations in 2016, estimates were that there were less than 10 Black students in the UK studying history at doctoral level. I was officially a unicorn in a context in which hundreds of universities across the UK produce multiple history PhDs annually. The introduction to Onyeka’s Blackamoores, about Africans in Tudor England, holds a useful insight into why that might be so; Onyeka related that around 1997 he had received 52 rejections when he applied to do doctoral research on a subject he’d been independently researching for 11 years. The most frequently cited reason being that there was no one in the department able to supervise a thesis on the subject of the Black presence in Tudor England.

With so much Black history in Britain being conducted outside of the academy, it is perhaps unsurprising to note that the largest contingent of presenters at the second history matters conference, was the independent scholars. In October 2017 twelve scholars and one collective presented their research; 1 history professional, 3 PhD students, 3 academics and 6 independent researchers (I’ve included the Young Historians Project as a single entity at the conference).

A mere four years later, the balance has been totally upended in favour of those conducting research with institutional backing. At History Matters III, fourteen PhD students vastly outnumbered the history professional, three academics and two community elders who shared their work with the conference. While the University of Chichester still dominated with four presenters linked to the institution, and the Young Historians Project had also borne fruit with several presenters and members of the organising committee linked to it. The Universities of Birmingham and Leeds had two PhDs each presenting on aspects of Black History in Britain, and Kings College London once again was represented by a PhD student.

What has happened in the interim of the two conferences? I have observed the impact of reports; the Royal Historical Society report published in October 2018 on Race, Ethnicity and Equality, the February 2019 UCU report by Nicola Rollock into the experience of the handful of Black Woman Professors in UK
universities, and the September 2019 Leading Routes report ‘The Broken Pipeline’, about the access (or lack thereof) to AHRC PhD funding for Black students, and the African-Caribbean Researchers Collective of PhD students which it inspired.

There have also been new programmes. The much-lauded BA in Black Studies at Birmingham City University was launched in 2015, it has since been joined by an MA in Black British History at Goldsmiths (currently under threat of extinction), an MRes in The History of Africa and the African Diaspora at the University of Chichester and the entire centre at DeMontfort University, headed by historian of Black Britain, Kennetta Perry. There were also celebrations (and shock) at the appointment of the first Black woman to a Professorship in history in the UK, Olivette Otele in October 2019. Perhaps the final shove towards change came with the May/June 2020 global Black Lives Matters protests.

Whatever the reason, in the past 12 months the universities of Cambridge, Oxford, Leeds, Durham, Edinburgh, Lincoln and the Open University have all hired Lecturers specialising in Black British History, and Warwick is advertising for an African history scholar who works on African and the diaspora. While the reports and programmes were largely the work of Black and Asian scholars, the hiring practices they appear to have induced are not.
The field of Black British history is changing. That much is evident from the second and third History Matters conference presenters alone. For decades it was ‘niche’ terrain trodden by those accountable to the Black community in Britain, taught by radical teachers, supplementary schools, and those driven by a political imperative to highlight that Black people belong in Britain, and have a history within its isles. Black British history, long the purview of independent scholars conducting research without AHRC funding, or even institutional support, and inversely, with no imperative to ensure their research is palatable to such bodies, has suddenly gone relatively mainstream.

Will this new generation of scholars of Black Britain be equally accountable to Black people in Britain? How will they incorporate histories of Black people who are no longer British but were historically, sometimes for centuries?

Will their research and interventions serve our interests – however we define them - or those of their careers, their departments, their institutions, and the academy, which Onyeka described as ‘an English academic community which is too often riddled with people who are indifferent, ignorant and unwittingly prejudiced.’

I am all for an inclusive, multi-cultural approach to British history. It is the only version which is accurate; Black historians in and outside of the academy have long proven that. The expectation must be for people researching and writing on Black Britain to be actively engaged with creating applied histories, serving the interests of Black British people past and present. Anything less will be an exercise in irreversible gentrification.

Interested in the intersections of Black feminist and Black radical histories, Kesewa John’s research explores the radical press of the twentieth century colonial Caribbean. Dr Kesewa John is a Lecturer in Caribbean History at University College London.
PART 3: REVIEWS
Claudia Jones is, like many women, a figure in Black British history that is often underappreciated in her contributions. Jones is often solely associated with the Notting Hill Carnival – however, there is so much more to her story. 2021 marks a reprint of Marika Sherwood’s 1999 book by Lawrence Wishart, and it could not have come at a better time. This new edition is prefaced by Lola Olufemi who stresses that Jones “understood her own power and the menacing potential of political consciousness”, and in this, Olufemi highlights exactly why knowledge of Jones’ life in its totality is vital for any budding activist in Britain today. (1) Since Sherwood’s initial study, Claudia Jones has been placed within the larger U.S Communist Party (CPUSA) historiography.

_left of Karl Marx_ and Claudia Jones: Beyond Containment both by Carole
Boyce Davies are currently two key books which piece together Jones’s theoretical and political writings in America. Sherwood focuses, however, on Jones’s exile; the difficult years following the sensational McCarthy trials of Jones and other leading Communists who were ostracised by the American Government for their political ideologies. Furthermore, in comparison to Buzz Johnson’s 1988 book *I Think of My Mother*, this study notably relies heavily on oral histories from acquaintances and colleagues of Jones throughout the years obtained via a series of Symposia held in 1996 by Marika Sherwood. As such, Sherwood supplements these oral histories with a vast array of sources – ranging from newspapers like the *Daily Worker* and the *West Indian Gazette* to personal correspondence both to and from Claudia Jones.

In the introduction Sherwood argues that Claudia Jones was omitted from the history of the radical left in Britain because “she challenged their failure to acknowledge the plight of colonial subjects, or to integrate an understanding of race as a modality through which class is lived into their critique of capitalism.” (2) Crucially, Sherwood traces the difficulties Jones faced in the UK – financial insecurity, culture shock, and the indifference of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) are weaved together to illustrate the somewhat depressing conditions of life in Britain for a black communist in the 1950s and 1960s. Jones had been part of a bourgeoning and supportive collective of black radicals in the U.S that included CPUSA affiliates like Paul Robeson and Ben Davis - however they also faced reprisals from the State. One aspect which stands out about Sherwood’s book is the efforts of US black radicals who tried to aid Jones, despite their own troubles. For example, Davis tried to arrange funds for her from CPUSA – stating he would have put up a one man fight for her if he wasn’t so “disorientated” by the aftermath of the Red Scare. (3)

In contrast, Sherwood emphasises throughout the utter negligence with which Jones was treated by the CPGB, writing: “...it’s as if the CPGB simply did not know how to respond to this fiery, highly experienced black woman, who was capable of absolutely mesmerising her audience.” (4) With the reprint of Sherwood’s edition from 1999, this 2021 version now can be combined with (and is wonderfully complimented by) Carole Boyce Davies *Beyond Containment* which includes many examples of Jones’s brilliance. The CPGB clearly squandered the genius of Jones as she was asked to contribute on specific issues but had no major or stable role in the organisation.

However, Jones persisted and forged her own path, using her practical experience in CPUSA to organise independently in Britain – beginning with a response to the murder of Kelso Cochrane and culminating in the establishment of the West Indian Gazette and, of course, Carnival.
addition, Sherwood notes that the office of West Indian Gazette became “truly the cultural centre for blacks in Britain.” (5) Most importantly, this book shows that despite her ongoing health problems and financial insecurity, and despite being shunned by CPGB, Jones continued to be a woman of the people. One lingering question remains for the reader, however, as it is detailed that many of Jones’ personal manuscripts, documents and an unfinished autobiography went missing after she passed away, at home alone, on Christmas Eve 1964.

What further revelations could be in these documents remain unknown – but any sleuths among the readership should continue the effort to hunt these down. Sherwood’s book, in 2021, will reignite the love of Claudia Jones in Britain. In the wake of Black Lives Matter protests in Summer 2020 - the suffering she experienced whilst staying true to her ambition should inspire many budding activists to push through personal problems and dedicate oneself in agitating towards the kind of society Claudia Jones envisioned for us all.

NOTES:

2. Marika Sherwood, Claudia Jones: A Life in Exile, p. 41
3. Ben Davis in M., Sherwood, Claudia Jones: A Life in Exile
4. Sherwood, Claudia Jones: A Life in Exile, p. 36
5. Sherwood, Claudia Jones: A Life in Exile, p. 138
The presence and experiences of Caribbean people in the post-war period in Britain is one of the more well-documented aspects of Black British history. However, James G. Cantres’ debut publication is a reminder that there are always different angles and new perspectives to be cast. Blackening Britain: Caribbean Radicalism from Windrush to Decolonisation delineates the psychological processes that many Caribbean people underwent in arriving to the imperial centre, a destination they were economically, politically, and socially tied to, and yet in many ways completely estranged from.

In the aftermath of WWII, as the British state struggled with its new position on the world stage as a decaying, yet still domineering and
and exploitative, imperial power, Caribbeans were grappling with their conditions not only in Britain as a growing minoritized group, but many were also assessing and energetically engaging in the wider role of the Caribbean region in a global struggle for radical social change.

Blackening Britain provides a detailed journey of the ways in which Caribbean individuals, both prior to, and since the post-war migratory wave to Britain, were concerned with building collective, transnational forces against racism, Eurocentrism and colonialism. From integrationist methods favoured by Harold Moody and the League of Coloured Peoples in 1930s Britain, to the uncompromising era of Black Power organising in the late 1960s and early 1970s, Cantres demonstrates consistently throughout this publication that the politics and ideas of British-based Caribbean individuals has always been diverse, and to varying extents subject to nationality, class position, and education opportunities.

But different organising methods and political orientations aside, the concern for gaining and therein maintaining self-consciousness and self-determination, and cultural and political autonomy from Britain, as Caribbeans as well as people of African descent, has been the primary aim.

In Chapter One, Cantres charts the organising techniques implemented by Caribbean workers, trade unionists, as well as members of the educated elite classes, to battle against the reality that Britain dictated the political, economic, and social conditions of Caribbean societies.

Chapter Two, opening with Manchester’s Fifth Pan-African Congress, draws on the perspectives of many key West Indian intellectuals, including Harold Moody, Henry Sylvester-Williams, Eric Williams, CLR James, and their observations regarding racial formations, West Indian identity, and class structures in Caribbean society.

Chapter Three traces the experiences of post-war West Indian intellectuals and students during their period of relocation and settlement to Britain. It is at this point within the story wherein Cantres masterfully presents the disorienting effects that colonial education had on many Caribbean individuals, and the subsequent development of a collective ‘West Indian’ identity forged in Britain, which lowered barriers between islanders and brought Caribbean people together under a shared experience and destiny, summed up by Stuart Hall’s reflection that he “became West Indian in the metropole." (I)

Although the text is primarily concerned with the perspectives and experiences of African descendants from the Caribbean, the presence of
continental Africans during the same period is, refreshingly, not wholly ignored, as is too often the case within the field of Black British history. For example, in discussing the feelings of isolation and alienation that many Black students had during their studies in England in the 1950s, Cantres makes the important point that Africans in particular were prone to suffering mental health problems due to the lack of provisions in place to support colonial students, resulting in several documented cases of suicide.

The fact that racism and discrimination in various forms is usually what greeted African and Caribbean people upon arrival to Britain is a well-documented phenomenon. Yet, Cantres’ publication answers the important follow-up questions, what was the psychological effect of this? How did Africans and Caribbeans respond? What organisations were formed to provide a sense of community and cultivate mass resistance?

Chapters Four and Five deal with the Notting Hill Riots, and murder of Kelso Cochrane, as watershed moments in the history of African and Caribbean people in Britain.

Here we are reminded of the community responses which highlight these events as significant radicalising moments for many Black people in Britain, alongside events taking place on the African continent and elsewhere in the Diaspora, which also mobilised British-based African and Caribbean people to organise collectively. In Chapters Six and Seven, Cantres ensures that within this documentation of British-based Caribbean activists, artists and intellectuals, their transnational activities and support for independence movements in their homelands continued, and aided the development of Caribbean political consciousness, self-determination and staunch radicalism. We are reminded of the significant role played by the Guyanese-born couple Eric and Jessica Huntley, among others, in carving space and providing links between different sections of Black populations, in Britain and abroad.

The emergence of Black Power and Third World politics from the late-1960s onwards is also eloquently presented by Cantres, as well as the emphasis on celebrating Blackness and African history, exemplified by the Rastafari movement. In essence, Blackening Britain provides an intimate survey of the process of reconceptualization, that many Caribbeans contributed to on British soil, away from the assumed position of West Indians as loyal colonial subjects, toward a shared destiny as a revolutionary people with an active role to play in building an alternative model of society.
A.S. Francis is a PhD student at the University of Chichester, researching women’s involvements in Britain’s Black radical organisations during the 1960s-1980s, and the development of a Black women’s movement. Francis’ working thesis title is “Committed. Black. Woman”: Britain’s Black women radicals, 1965-85”

NOTES:

This Lovely City by Louise Hare is a masterful piece of historical fiction. Clapham teenager Evie is delighted when the Windrush docks in London and several passengers settle locally. Her whole (albeit young) life she felt like ‘the only one’ and knew few other ‘coloured’ people. In the new arrivals from the Caribbean however, she sees kin, offers them a warm welcome, and they in turn see a friendly face accompanied by hospitality.

All goes relatively well for them, her, and jazz musician by night, postman by day beau, Lawrie who recently arrived from Jamaica on the Windrush, until a dead body is discovered. Mildly expressed preferences and prejudices suddenly transform into open hostility as the heinous crime is blamed on the new arrivals, both as a collective harbinger of change gone wrong, and as a group harbouring a murderer.
If they can find the killer before the police get tired of leads that lead nowhere, maybe everything can go back to ‘normal,’ Evie and her new friends reason hopefully. The story gathers pace as Lawrie and Evie search for answers, media interest in the case increases, and more details of the murder unfold.

The novel works well on several levels. It’s a fast-paced whodunnit which also manages to movingly evoke working-class life in an immediate post-war community in South London, London’s lively jazz scene of the period, and the social mores of both. Hare humanises and provides emotional depth to ‘the immigrants’ as well as shining a light on the people who welcomed them for a range of reasons. She explores the lives of men and women, white and Black in the period. On firm footing with the historical elements of the story, skilful writing means This Lovely City is a gripping murder mystery, a classic coming-of-age tale, a meditation on the families and extended families we choose, and a love story.

This is an impressive, thought-provoking, well-researched debut novel, with great characters, complex human relations and sophisticated storytelling. Louise Hare’s novel is delightfully/tragically unpredictable, and well worth a read by anyone interested in a compelling depiction of the daily lives, loves and struggles of the first Windrush-era migrants.

Interested in the intersections of Black feminist and Black radical histories, Kesewa John’s research explores the radical press of the twentieth century colonial Caribbean. Dr Kesewa John is a Lecturer in Caribbean History at University College London.