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HISTORY MATTERS

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WINTER/SPRING 2023



**PRESENTING THE HISTORY OF AFRICAN AND
CARIBBEAN PEOPLE IN BRITAIN**

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Welcome to the History Matters Journal

Welcome to the Winter/Spring 2023 issue of the *History Matters Journal*. As we enter our third year, we'd like to extend our appreciation to everyone who has contributed to the *Journal's* growth. To those who have read and shared it across your networks, contributed pieces of research, and offered constructive criticism, thank you!

The *Journal* was created in 2020, with the aim of providing a digital space for people to share information and ideas relating to the history of African and Caribbean people in Britain, and encourage more research in this area. How much has changed over the last several years? The history of African and Caribbean people in Britain, or 'Black British' History, is still underrepresented and under-researched. However, there have been some major advancements in recent years, including groundbreaking heritage projects dedicated to promoting public engagement in 'Black British' history, the publication of various books - many of which have been featured in the *Journal's* review section, and an increase in the number of people of African and Caribbean descent on postgraduate history courses in the UK. We believe that this

Journal is contributing to this important shift. And as such, we ask that you continue to support our work in any way you can. We are always looking for ways to improve the *Journal* with every issue.

If you have suggestions, or constructive criticisms, please send them to us. If you come across historical material, or you have begun working on a new area of research, let us know so that this information can be shared within these pages. We are particularly interested in presenting shorter articles (between 500-1,000 words), as well as imagery, poetry and other creative works. As always, we are interested in showcasing the work of young people. This *Journal* intends to showcase an inclusive and accessible range of research work. So, if you are working on an aspect of history relating to African and Caribbean people in Britain, please do get in touch via: hismatters@gmail.com

NOTE:

We would like to apologise for some minor errors that were present in the *History Matters Journal* Autumn 2022 issue. Thanks to those who alerted us of these issues. They have since been corrected, and an updated version has been uploaded to our website.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Distinguished historian Marika Sherwood receives honorary doctorate

Congratulations to Dr Marika Sherwood, the distinguished historian and longstanding activist, on being awarded an honorary doctorate from the University of Chichester, in October 2022. For over 30 years, Dr Sherwood has been a leading figure in the struggle to recover the histories of African, Caribbean and Asian people in Britain. She has published 13 books, covering a broad range of topics related to Black history. Alongside this, she has been at the forefront of campaigns to transform the curriculum in British education.

In 1991, Dr Sherwood co-founded the Black and Asian Studies Association (BASA), alongside Professor Hakim Adi. The aim of BASA was to promote research on the history of African, Caribbean and Asian people and communities in Britain, and explore ways of creating better coverage of these histories in various levels of society. Sherwood acted as BASA's Secretary,

1University of Chichester, 'Distinguished historian Marika Sherwood given honorary doctorate from university', 4th November 2022, <https://www.chi.ac.uk/news/distinguished-historian-and-activist-marika-sherwood-given-honorary-award-from-university-of-chichester/>

as well as Editor of the BASA newsletter. . Despite her commitment to historical research and campaigning for positive change, Sherwood has never held an official post at a university, and her impact on the field of history and education is even more impressive considering the lack of resources she's had at her disposal.

For these reasons and many more, Sherwood's honorary doctorate is long overdue and extremely deserved. Professor Hakim Adi nominated Sherwood for this award, and below is a statement by her from the award ceremony:

"I am honoured to accept this award and am extremely grateful to Professor Adi. I hope that I can inspire more students to research areas that universities have not been looking at – the working classes, colonisation, and the history of black people in the UK, which largely remains unexplored."¹



Dr Marika Sherwood, photograph via University of Chichester



Professor Hakim Adi, Dr Marika Sherwood and Vice Chancellor Professor Jane Longmore, photograph via University of Chichester



Dr Marika Sherwood with Professor Hakim Adi, photograph via University of Chichester

ANNOUNCEMENTS

History Matters collaborates with The History Hotline



As the “hottest line for Black history and beyond”, History Matters have been privileged enough to appear on the History Hotline podcast. The History Hotline is a well-established, much loved podcast series hosted by Deanna Lyncook. The overriding aim of the series is to explore the many historical topics related to Black communities, that have thus far been ignored or hidden by the mainstream.

History Matters have featured in two podcast episodes so far, and are scheduled to appear on more in the near future. The first episode featured a discussion between History Hotline and A.S. Francis (History Matters member and co-founder of the *History Matters Journal*), on the various projects that History Matters has been involved in since its inaugural History Matters conference in 2015. The second episode featured Tionne Parris (History Matters member and PhD history student), wherein Parris discussed some of the Black radical women activists that feature in her research, and the importance of exploring their legacies. The History Hotline is available on all good streaming platforms. Check out our episodes so far, and stay tuned for more!



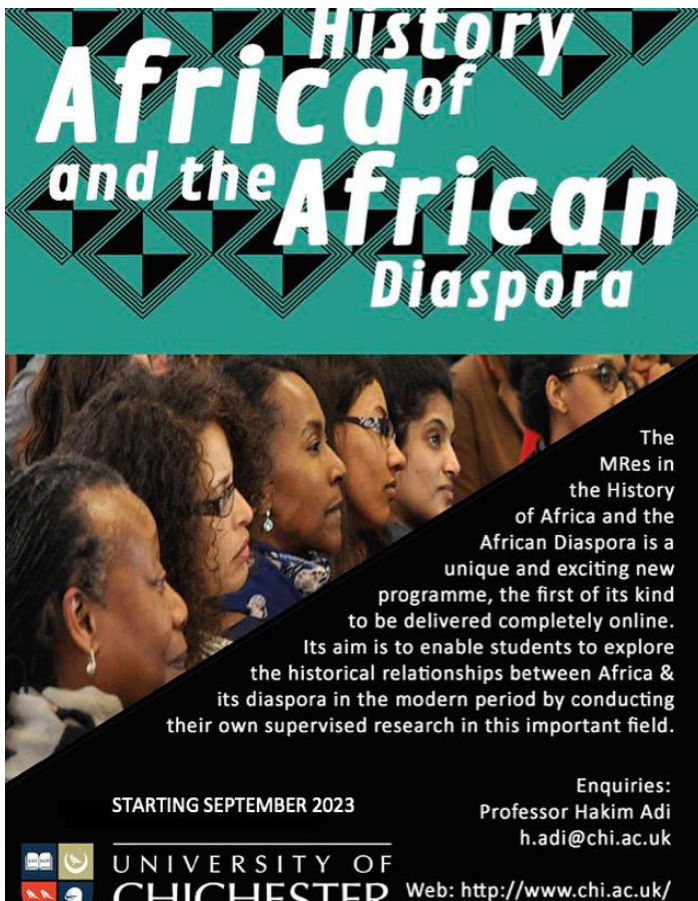
Episode 087: The History Matters Journal featuring A.S. Francis



Episode 096: Radical Black Women featuring Tionne Parris

ANNOUNCEMENTS

MREs: the History of Africa and the African Diaspora, at the University of Chichester



History of Africa and the African Diaspora

The MRes in the History of Africa and the African Diaspora is a unique and exciting new programme, the first of its kind to be delivered completely online. Its aim is to enable students to explore the historical relationships between Africa & its diaspora in the modern period by conducting their own supervised research in this important field.

Enquiries:
Professor Hakim Adi
h.adi@chi.ac.uk

STARTING SEPTEMBER 2023

UNIVERSITY OF CHICHESTER Web: <http://www.chi.ac.uk/>

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. On this course you can explore the historical relationships between Africa and its diaspora in the modern period by conducting your own supervised research in this important field. 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.
- 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.

This course begins again in September 2023. For more information on the course and how to apply, visit the [MRes course webpage](#).

In Memory of Mavis Best

A.S. Francis on behalf of the History
Matters collective

The Winter/Spring 2023 issue of the *History Matters Journal* is dedicated to the memory of Mavis Best. Late last year, on 14th November 2022, Best passed away at the age of 83. She was a committed activist, councillor and campaigner, perhaps best known for her leading role in the ‘Scrap SUS’ campaign during the 1970s. The History Matters collective, along with many others, were saddened to hear of her passing. We hope that younger generations will harness Best’s legacy, as an example of the importance of standing up for the rights of marginalised communities, and working for positive change. Mavis Best’s activism began in the 1960s, amidst a fervent atmosphere of liberation and revolutionary movements. Born to a rural farming family in Jamaica, Best migrated to London in 1961. She soon came face to face with British racism and the plights of Black communities in Britain. After the breakdown of her marriage several years later and inspired by her own experience of overcrowded, precarious housing conditions as a single mother with three young children, Best involved herself in community organising and radical politics:

“I started off initially by having difficulty finding a place to live when my marriage broke down. I met with a group of people who were fairly radical around that period. It was 1968, leading up to the 1970s... Those days, the 1960s meant that people were really radicalised and wanting to see change take place. I became part of a discussion group and it was around Mao Tse Tung. So, my eyes were opened to the politics of the left to some extent. And then alongside that the Black Power struggle was going on and I became even more radicalized about understanding ourselves, because in those periods you know that there’s a problem of race. But, there wasn’t any language to express what it was except that you were oppressed”.¹

Her involvement in the Black Power movement included working with local Black children and young people in the Peckham area through a Saturday school. Many of these young people were being routinely harassed, beaten, and arrested by the police under the SUS law. In England and Wales, the SUS law was the informal name for describing Section 4 of the 1824 Vagrancy Act.

¹ Mavis Best, ‘Do you remember Olive Morris? Oral History Project’, interviewed by Ego Ahaiwe, 3rd March 2009, transcript p. 1.



Mavis Best, photograph via Media Diversified

Through this law, police were permitted to stop, search and even arrest individuals based on suspicion that the individual *might* commit a crime.² It was a powerful tool that police wielded against racialised and working class people. During this time, Best studied Community Development at Goldsmiths College, and whilst there caught the attention of Basil Manning, a South African visiting lecturer. Best recalled how he encouraged her to take a leading role in what would become the coordinated Scrap Sus campaign: “he had a thought: ‘I think we need to have a campaign against the police. And I think you should lead it’”³

The Scrap SUS campaign was a key part of the widespread resistance to state violence and racism that shaped the period of the 1970s and 1980s. Whether in London, Manchester, Bristol, Liverpool, Leeds or Birmingham - where there were notable Black communities, The Scrap SUS campaign was a key part of the widespread resistance to state violence

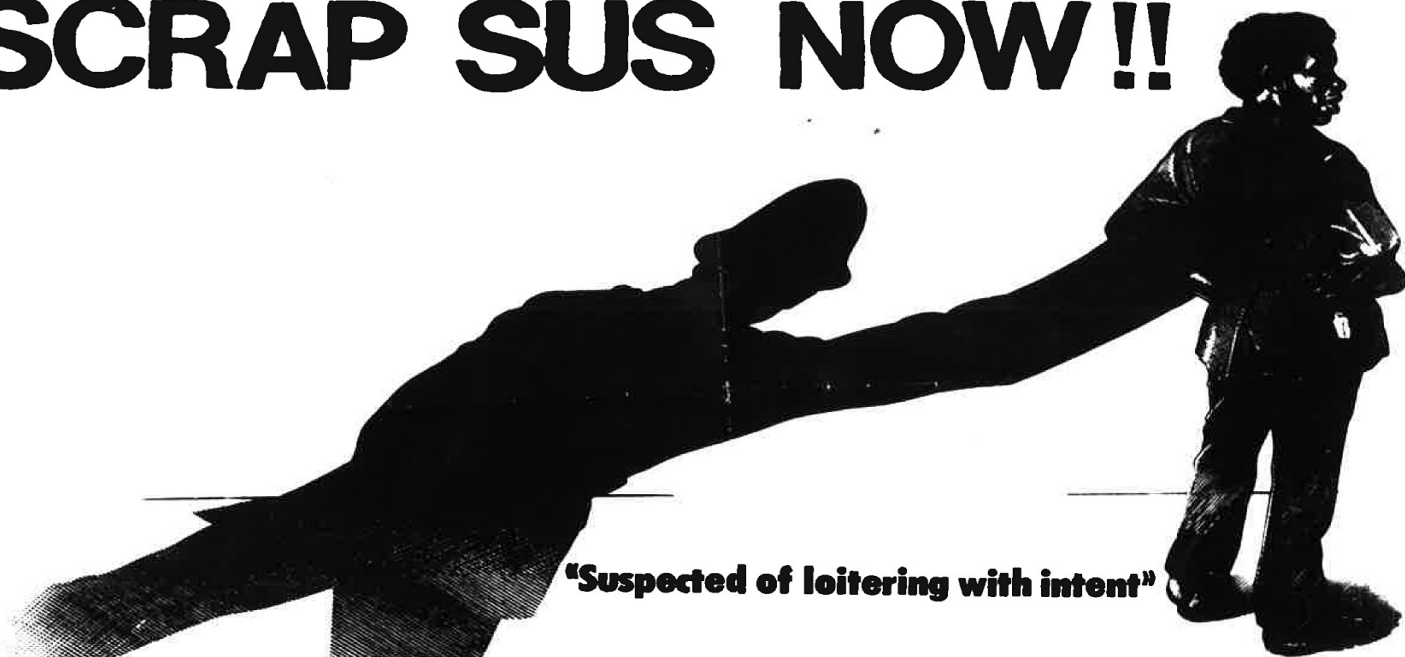
and racism that shaped the period of the 1970s and 1980s. Whether in London, Manchester, Bristol, Liverpool, Leeds or Birmingham - where there were notable Black communities, police harassment was rife. And wherever police harassment existed, so too did organised community resistance against it. Mavis Best was joined by many others in the Scrap SUS campaign, including groups such as the Organisation of Women of Asian and African Descent (OWAAD), and the United Black Women’s Action Group (UBWAG) in North London. The Scrap SUS campaign, under Best’s leadership, attended public demonstrations, published and distributed pamphlets, organised community meetings and held the press to account when Black people and communities were misrepresented in news articles.⁴ Best and other activists in the Scrap SUS campaign also accompanied aggrieved parents whose children had been subjected to police harassment and violence, by marching into police stations and demanding their children be released,

²For more information or resources on the SUS laws and the campaign against it, see: Fighting SUS, an oral history project, at: <https://fightingsus.org.uk/>

³ Mavis Best, ‘Do you remember Olive Morris? Oral History Project’, p. 5.

⁴ Steve Rose, ‘She was not a woman to back down’: the fearless Black campaigner who helped to scrap the UK’s ‘sus’ law, 2nd December 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2022/nov/29/she-was-not-a-woman-to-back-down-the-fearless-black-campaigner-who-helped-to-scrap-the-sus-law>

**FREEDOM FOR BLACK YOUTHS AND OTHERS FROM SUS
THEY DESERVE BETTER TREATMENT
SCRAP SUS NOW!!**



**BLACK PEOPLE'S ORGANISATIONS CAMPAIGN AGAINST SUS
WESTINDIAN-AFRICAN COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION
206 EVELYN STREET DEPTFORD SE 8 01-692-7568**

Scrap SUS campaign pamphlet

and attending court hearings. Best was joined by Paul Boateng, a solicitor who later became an MP and member of the House of Lords. Boateng recalled that: "We were up against overt racism on the part of not only the police but the entire criminal justice system. There were two Black solicitors in London and I was one of them. There were hardly any Black magistrates. There were hardly any Black police officers. Racism was rampant, and to be found everywhere."⁵

After three years of persistent efforts by the Scrap SUS campaign, a home affairs select committee was formed, and SUS was finally repealed in 1981. In this way the Scrap SUS campaign was successful. The Act was passed due to the hard work and coordinated efforts of activists on the campaign, which Mavis Best had been at the forefront of. Earlier this same year, the events surrounding the New Cross Massacre inspired the largest Black demonstration in British

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Martha Osamor, interviewed for 'Fighting SUS', available at: <https://fightingsus.org.uk/listen/>

⁷ Best, 'Do you remember Olive Morris? Oral History Project', interviewed by Ego Achaiwe, 3rd March 2009, transcript p. 15.

history - the Black People's Day of Action. Mavis Best was one of the 20,000 demonstrators, marching from New Cross to Fleet Street, where they were met with violent suppression from police. Despite the overturning of the SUS law, the issue of police harassment toward young Black people remains endemic, as activist Martha Osamor has reflected: "if you look at the law as it is now, it's stop and search... It's still happening"⁶. The campaign had also required significant sacrifices from Best, as a single mother who had to balance her activist work with parental responsibilities: "My children were left on their own a lot... A lot of having to fend for themselves because you've gone to meetings and you know that you need to be there... The sad thing about it, we didn't have proper central heating and things like that. I'd come back and they'd be cold and leaned up together and lighting the paraffin fire. I would say "don't light that fire until I get back", and so it wasn't easy"⁷.



Mavis Best. Photograph: Wunmi Onibudo/The Guardian

Alongside her role in the Scrap SUS campaign, Best worked on a myriad of pressing issues that affected Black people, on both a local and national level. She was a trustee for the Simba Family Project, an offshoot of the Simba Housing Association, which provided support to children and families of African and Caribbean heritage in the Greenwich area. In 1998, Best was elected as a Labour councillor for Greenwich. Throughout the decade of the 1990s, the racist murders of Rohit Duggal, Rolan Adams and Stephen Lawrence triggered largescale campaigns, of which Mavis Best was involved. In 1997, an inquiry into Stephen Lawrence's murder was launched, and Best worked on the inquiry panel. This culminate in the Macpherson Report, published in 1999, concluded that Britain's police service was institutionally racist. Best was also concerned with the connections between heritage, historical memory and justice. She worked alongside Ann-Marie Cousins to get a ceremonial June berry tree planted in the gardens of Charlton House, a 17th century manor house located in her local area of Greenwich, with links to the slave trade. The tree was planted in memory of the historical presence of African people in Greenwich.

Indeed, Mavis Best's life's work was so expansive, and longstanding, that what has been detailed here is a minimal overview. We hope that, in the aftermath of her passing, we will see an increase in research dedicated to exploring the indelible contributions of Best and her contemporaries. As she herself reflected, one's commitment to implementing positive change doesn't dissipate with age. Best continued to work hard on issues she deemed important, and as she grew older, the number of issues in which she was active also grew. Perhaps the best way to conclude our summary of Best's inspiring life, is with her own words:

"The same group that was organising then, we are organising funerals now. Do people think that we were radical, and we get off and it has to stop? We still keep on going but in a different way... there still needs to be something, because there are so many young people in prison. And mental health is a big thing in our community. At the same time there have been successes. We have seen change... I never stick to the rules. If we stick to the rules then we're following a status quo that wouldn't be ours. Often, some rules are meant to be broken."⁸

⁸ Best, 'Do you remember Olive Morris? Oral History Project', interviewed by Ego Ahaiwe, 3rd March 2009, transcript pp. 25-26.

The Committee for Ethiopian and Eri- treaan Relief (1990 – 1993)

Aleja Tadesse

The Committee for Ethiopian and Eritrean Relief (CEER) was formed in London, at the beginning of 1990 by the Black Liberation Front (BLF), the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF) and the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF).

The BLF was a grassroots black power organisation founded in 1971, by North and West London members of the Black Power Movement. Throughout its existence until 1993, the BLF remained grounded in the politics of anti-colonialism, whilst being equally concerned with the pragmatics of survival for black people in Britain. It was chiefly concerned with briefing the black communities in Britain about ongoing liberation struggles in Africa and the Caribbean. It organised annual Africa Liberation Day celebrations, alongside other black organisations, together comprising the Africa Liberation Committee. In addition, it conducted a range of community programmes including supplementary schools, defence committees, Ujima housing association and published its

aply named newspaper, *Grassroots*, until 1991. The EPLF and TPLF were closely connected African liberation movements whose aim was to liberate the people of Eritrea and Ethiopia respectively from the Derg (a totalitarian, militaristic regime which held power in Ethiopia from 1975 – 1991). The EPLF's aims were to bring about a radical transformation of society on Marxist-Leninist or African, scientific socialist principles, centring the rights of the working people, women and marginal groups. Their slogan, 'Awet ni Hafash!', or 'Victory to the Masses!' became a resounding clarion call in the struggle, reflecting the support and dedication of the people of Eritrea to total liberation from colonial, and neo-colonial, oppression.

To this end, the EPLF led the people in armed struggle for over thirty years. They were joined by TPLF in the late 1970s, and the two liberation armies coalesced to bring about the final downfall of the Derg in 1991. It is notable that the Derg regime was disproportionately resourced and armed to the teeth,

having been sponsored by both the US and USSR. In its brief yet stellar existence, CEER was able to harness the organising capabilities of individuals both within and outside of BLF to create successful solidarity campaigns centred on African agency. Amplified and exemplified through fundraising initiatives and public awareness activities, CEER's work enlivened the BLF's final years. Through their organising efforts, the people of CEER raised thousands of pounds which contributed to reconstruction projects in Tigray and instilled wider support for these revolutionary struggles, grounded foremostly in black communities in London.

Above all, CEER's work would engender a genuine spirit of comradeship between the tripart coalition of the BLF, EPLF and TPLF - but TPLF and BLF in particular. Such solidarity followed in the established tradition of BLF's tangible support to anti-colonialist struggles in Africa. Significantly, it would be the last time BLF would assemble a committee of any kind. This essay will look at how CEER took shape and developed over the course of 1990 – 1993. It will do so with particular reference to surviving committee documentation and the oral histories of instrumental members of the Committee- Hakim Adi (Chair), Tee White, Shaun Ajamu Hutchinson and Kobina Mark.

In examining the aims of CEER within the context of Britain's changing social, political and cultural development (of which the Ethiopians and Eritreans would come to comprise an enduring part) I will make an assessment of CEER's practical and ideological legacy. I hope to highlight the significance of CEER as the lifeblood of BLF in its final years by demonstrating the organisational strength, unity in action and resounding affinity, manifested in life-long friendships to emerge between some of the individuals involved. Although BLF's activity diminished completely by the end of the period, this should not overlook the fact of CEER's significant contribution to a re-alignment of political thought in the BLF. Finally, I suggest the short-lived nature of the campaign did not detract

from its clear achievement, which was bolstering support for advancing liberation in Ethiopia and Eritrea amongst a cross-section of groups in Britain.

The context and impetus for CEER:

In the Committee's own words, it was set up "by a number of concerned organisations and individuals"⁹ Their foremost concern, was alleviating the famine and pervading underdevelopment in Ethiopia and Eritrea. In addressing the factors leading to the widely reported and devastating famine, CEER aimed to mobilise direct support for the Ethiopian and Eritrean peoples' struggle for national and social liberation.¹⁰

In a flyer advertising one of CEER's first meetings there is a clear emphasis accorded to the engineered and political nature of famines under the Derg. It asserts, "genuine representatives of the Ethiopian and Eritrean peoples will explain the causes of the repeated famines in this area".¹¹ Writing in 1990, the flyer carries a tone of action and agency, compelling fellow Africans to "Fight the famine in Ethiopia and Eritrea".¹² Such a message was aimed at readers especially in the wake of sustained misrepresentation of the situation, by both the UK government and media. Following on from the BBC's landmark broadcast by Michael Buerk, the 1984 famine in the Tigray region of Ethiopia was the subject of countless headlines across the UK. As would become characteristic, the British state media honed into the disastrous results of famine with tunnel vision, dismissing the root causes.¹³

The resulting attention provided little substance or political context to the terrible situation, whereby Ethiopia and Eritrea were brutalised by the iron fist of the Derg. For example, Mengistu's deliberate policy of cutting off food supplies to liberated areas was not discussed and failing rains were attributed instead.¹⁴ The Derg was a totalitarian regime installed following a military junta which came into power after overthrowing Haile Selassie in 1974. Claiming to be a vanguard communist party, the Derg's oppressive regime masqueraded behind a pretext

9 *Committee for Eritrean and Ethiopian Relief (CEER) Bulletin*, Vol.1 No.1 (Spring 1990).

10 Ibid.

11 CEER flyer for Public Meeting, "Fight the Famine in Ethiopia and Eritrea," undated c. Jan-April 1990

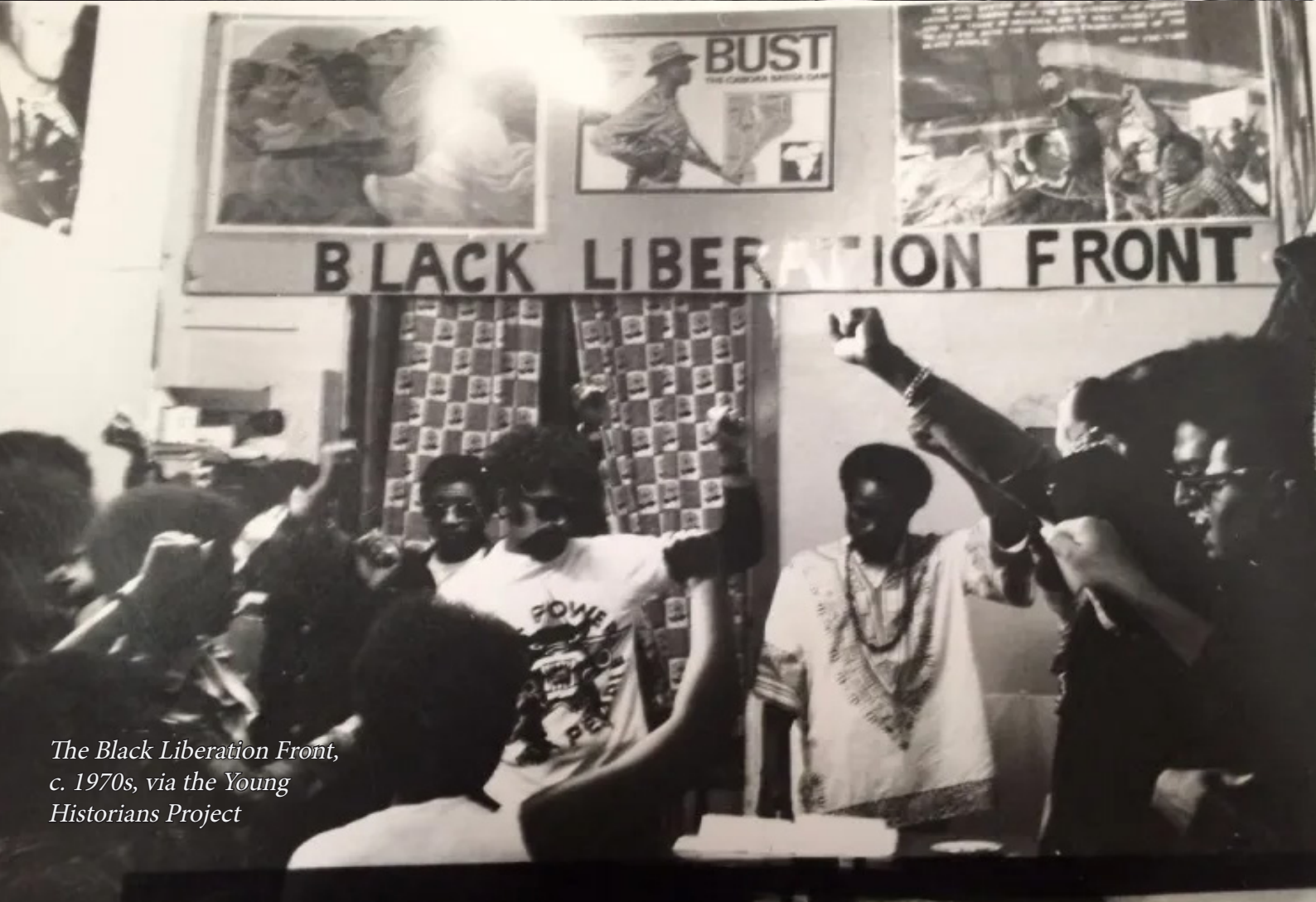
12 Ibid.

13 Suzanne Franks, *Reporting Disaster: Famine, Aid, Politics and the Media*, (London: Hurst & Company, 2013) pp. 2 - 9

14 Poverty Matters Blog: Ethiopia, 'Ethiopian famine: how landmark BBC report influenced modern coverage,' *The Guardian*, <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/poverty-matters/2014/oct/22/ethiopian-famine-report-influence-modern-coverage>, (accessed Nov 2022).



Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) fighter (right) chatting with the women of the village of Ado Okut in Barka. c. 1985. Photo by Frits N. Eisenloeffel.



The Black Liberation Front, c. 1970s, via the Young Historians Project

of Marxism Leninism. Consequently, it garnered support from the Soviet Union and its allies. Headed by Mengistu Haile Mariam, the Derg were responsible for the anti-people regime between 1975-1991 that catalysed a people's resistance movement from the Eritrean and Ethiopian masses. In the case of the former, a fully-fledged national movement with an attendant armed struggle was already underway. However, as Connell observes, it was in 1975 that "the armed struggle entered a new, expanded phase".¹⁵

Ultimately, the unwillingness to investigate the underlying causes of the famine, meant not only that such news reports were chronically myopic. It also ensured that public funds generated through dubious campaigns such as Live Aid were funnelled directly into the hands of the Derg, who would use donations to further the same policies which produced the famine. In side-lining the actual causes, the British media willingly perpetuated a portrayal that was both inaccurate and incomplete, especially in censoring the inextricable, political dimension. This was echoed throughout the US and other parts of the world.¹⁶ With the enduring struggle for liberation downplayed, the Derg regime could continue carrying out atrocities on masses of Eritreans and Ethiopians.¹⁷

To EPLF and TPLF, the revolutionaries embarking on transformation of their oppressed societies – an oppression which was aided and abetted by both US and Soviet intervention- the partial narrative generated by the Western media was an obstacle to progress.¹⁸ As CEER would contend, the skewed attention served to overshadow the work of relief organisations formed by Ethiopians and Eritreans themselves and with consequences which were costing lives: "REST and ERA have so far only received 20% of the food and supplies they need. These organisations are the only ones which can get the food to the people in the affected areas".¹⁹

Further, they admonished the media, who "likes to present pictures of famine-stricken Africans, but it does not explain the causes of the famine, which are mainly political, nor how it might be solved. Even less does it show the great changes which have taken place in the liberated areas of Eritrea and Tigray. The changes in the position of women, for example".²⁰

While most Western outlets worked to ensure the seed was sowed for reductive and harmful mistruths, CEER effectively banded together a community of actors who would build a multi-faceted, grassroots relief and awareness campaign. According to CEER member, Ajamu, this would present a much-needed counter-narrative, predicated on educating the BLF and people in the black community, on the relatively unknown political, social, and cultural history of this particular area of Africa.²¹

TPLF and EPLF:

Famine relief was one component of EPLF and TPLF efforts to bring about a re-constitution of society along democratic, socialist, and egalitarian principles. These organisations were principally embroiled in armed struggle, with the aim of securing independence from the tyranny of the Soviet-backed Derg regime. In the aftermath of their 1988 meeting, TPLF and EPLF released a joint statement, declaring their unified struggle against the Derg:

"To accomplish these joint aims and frustrate the enemy's plans for intensifying the war of extermination, the EPLF and TPLF have agreed to cooperate and consolidate the struggles of the Ethiopian peoples and the people of Eritrea for the realisation of their just goals".²²

Thus, making official their co-ordinated effort towards a consolidation of their struggles and setting aside of the differences that led them to go separate ways in 1985. It is worthy of note that in the years

15 Dan Connell, 'Inside the EPLF: The Origins of the 'People's Party' & Its Role in the Liberation of Eritrea' *Review of African Political Economy*, Vol. 28, No. 89, State of the Union: Africa in 2001 (Sep 2001), pp. 345-364, p.353

16 S Franks, *Reporting Disaster*, pp. 2 - 9

17 Human Rights Watch, 'Evil Days: 30 Years of War and Famine in Ethiopia', <https://www.hrw.org/report/1991/09/01/evil-days/30-years-war-and-famine-ethiopia>.

18 EPLF-TPLF Joint Statement 1988, <https://www.marxists.org/history/erol/ethiopia/eplf-tplf.pdf> (accessed Nov 2022)

19 CEER flyer for Public Meeting, 'Fight the Famine in Ethiopia and Eritrea', undated c. Jan-April 1990.

20 *CEER Bulletin*, Editorial, Vol.1 No.1, Spring 1990

21 Oral History Interview with Shaun Ajamu Hutchinson conducted by author, November 2022

22 EPLF-TPLF Joint Statement 1988, <https://www.marxists.org/history/erol/ethiopia/eplf-tplf.pdf>.

before, the mutually beneficial relationship between TPLF and EPLF experienced tensions. These have been subject to extensive analysis elsewhere. What remains key to point out in an assessment of this history, from the perspective of how the struggle was received by comrades in Britain, is that a common, larger enemy at hand was not always enough to assure harmony. Despite TPLF's indebtedness to EPLF for inspiring their formation, providing training, and EPLF's recognition that TPLF was critical to the struggle against the Derg, discord between the two prevailed.²³ However, the fresh call to unity outlined in the statement of 1988 was made more viable by their comparable political outlooks, as well as the succession of victories over the Derg in the previous months.

Both organisations bore the tenets of Marxism-Leninism and drew their strength from the masses of ordinary people- the backbone of the struggle. Both, too, operated in the diaspora as well as their battlefield and liberated zones. Through organised associations and unions led by youth, women, and men (both on the continent and in the diaspora) EPLF and TPLF had mobilised significant proportions of their populations in a matter of decades. Furthermore, both claimed to defend the right to self-determination and were committed to struggle until this was achieved. At times, their shared interests sufficed. In the final years, they were the fertile ground from which to fight their common enemy- the fascist Derg.

The presence of EPLF and TPLF representatives in the diaspora allowed for a relationship to develop with BLF and other groups sympathetic to their struggle. Kobina Mark, active in CEER from 1991 – 1993, remembers first hearing about Eritrea's armed struggle, when he happened to come across a stand at the yearly International Book Fair of Radical Black and Third World Books (held annually by between 1982 – 1991).²⁴

Described in one account as “a real demonstration of intercultural exchange and possibilities,” this

23 John Young, ‘The Tigray and Eritrean Peoples Liberation Fronts: A History of Tensions and Pragmatism,’ *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 1 (Mar 1996), pp. 105-120

24 Set up est. 1982 by. Bogle-L'Ouverture Publications, New Beacon Books and the Race Today collective

25 Paula Burnett, ‘Dedication and Introduction,’ *EnterText*, Issue 2.3, Brunel University <https://www.brunel.ac.uk/creative-writing/research/entertext/issues> (accessed Nov 2022).

26 Oral History Interview with Kobina Mark, conducted by author, November 2022 (The Way Forward, subtitled ‘Proceedings of a conference on Eritrea organised by the United Nations Association on the 9th November 1985’).

International Book Fair of Radical Black and Third World Books 9TH INTERNATIONAL BOOK FAIR OF RADICAL BLACK AND THIRD WORLD BOOKS

LONDON • MANCHESTER • BRADFORD



9th International Book Fair of Radical Black and Third World Books, via the George Padmore Institute

renowned book fair is where Kobina recalls speaking to a few Eritreans.²⁵ “They had a range of books, but I bought *The Way Forward* which was, I suppose, EPLF’s position at that time on the struggle... reading that was my first insight into the struggle from the Eritrean point of view.²⁶ He was especially drawn to EPLF’s emphasis on self-sufficiency, something which appealed to his own politics of being both Pan-African and avidly interested in African movements. This idea of progressive, self-sufficient development was important to communicate and became a clarion call for support. The far reach of Eritrean Relief Association, ERA, is underscored by CEER in later communications, noting that alongside famine relief, “ERA also has a

programme of irrigation, soil and water conservation and training aimed at boosting food production and overcoming the recurring famines in the area”.²⁷ Netsanet Asefaw, a TPLF member who resided in Germany before joining the frontlines, came to be an important link between TPLF and British-based organisations. BLF first got into contact with TPLF at a point in 1989 (when, as discussed, TPLF and EPLF embarked on a joint effort to complete the final stages of their liberation struggles). Hakim recollects first meeting TPLF at a meeting in Conway Hall, where the latter had been invited to speak. The possibility of working together emerged soon after this initial introduction. As Tee recalls, “we started to meet them, had some discussions with them...they had a kind of revolutionary vision, in terms of how they were organising the people of Tigray”.²⁸ Once again, BLF found a commonality in the revolutionary vision of continental African liberation struggles. Ajamu reflects, “as a result of the political orientation and the links that we had amongst the workers movements in Britain- such as Black Socialist Worker’s Party- we were introduced to Tigray People’s Liberation Front, who had offices and representatives in London at that time”.²⁹

For both Ajamu and Hakim, who were of a Marxist orientation, there was an obvious appeal and sympathy with TPLF and EPLF. This transmuted into a focussed “political understanding that was being shared with me, with us, in the Black Liberation Front. These are the things we learned due to our association with, our links with, our fraternal relationship with TPLF”.³⁰ According to Ajamu, who is careful not to conflate his familiarity with the key tenets of TPLF’s struggle with authority on the subject, they were able to build a kinship along a politics of internationalism which refuted the existing political hegemony. He reflects on his exposure to the region’s politics and an evidently imperialist dynamic, which expressed itself in, “Amhara Chauvinism- as it was described to us”.³¹ Learning of the prevailing inequity in Eritrea and Ethiopia and the brutal suppression of both EPLF and TPLF served to attune these BLF members to the urgency of the situation. Above all, this was

seen as a just, African struggle: one which members of BLF identified with and could directly support.

It is important to note that discussions were primarily with TPLF, and EPLF was not represented as well throughout CEER’s existence. Although there is limited evidence as to provide a conclusive explanation, the upshot of this is that BLF’s sense of the liberation struggle was gleaned mostly through a TPLF lens. Thus, this account will be limited to the context provided by BLF comrades and will not seek to provide a holistic history of the liberation movements. The latter task is outside the scope and focus of this work, which is chiefly interested in exploring and documenting the fruits of the exchange between BLF and the groups with which it worked most closely. As a result of the BLF’s introduction to TPLF, a fraternal association burgeoned to a formal collaboration. The organisations cemented ties in January 1990, when they formed CEER with Hakim Adi as chair. Other important members included Tee White, Ajamu Shaun Hutchinson, Kobina Mark, Steffanie Edwards and Turunesh Raymonnd.

As stated in the editorial of the committee’s first publication, CEER was formed with two key aims: “to support the struggles of the Ethiopian and Eritrean peoples and their relief organisations and individuals to eradicate the causes and consequences of famine, by fundraising, publicity and other means” and; “to support and publicise the struggles of the Ethiopian and Eritrean peoples for national and social liberation.”

CEER members began holding meetings “on the first Sunday of each month at 2pm at 211 Clapham Road, London SW9”. These remained open to all “who are concerned about Africa and the heroic struggles of its peoples”, whom it encouraged “to come forward and join us”.³²

CEER Activities: Public Meetings, Fundraising and a Bulletin:

Publicity was the necessary first step to get CEER underway, and to this end an array of public meetings were held with “genuine representatives

27 CEER “Why Are We Collecting?” leaflet undated c.1990

28 Oral History Interview with Tee White, conducted by author, April 2022

29 Oral History Interview with Shaun Ajamu Hutchinson, conducted by author, November 2022.

30 Ibid.

31 Ibid

32 CEER flyer, undated c.1990

Africa Adorned

Over £2500 raised for women in Ethiopia

On Friday 15th May, CEER hosted an evening of African fashion and dancing a proud display of our culture and heritage! This successful event was held at the School of Oriental and African Studies through the kind co-operation of the African Caribbean society of this college. Thanks are also due to the many models who donated their time and skills free of charge and to the designers of Boubaahbilah!, House of AH - FREAK - AH,



Committee for Ethiopian and Eritrean Relief Bulletin, Vol. 3, No. 1 Autumn 1992, photograph via Hakim Adi

of the Ethiopian and Eritrean peoples”.³³ According to the early members of CEER, such work was necessary to attune those concerned with African liberation to the specific character of these liberation struggles. It was important to present both the scale and detail of the situation, as Tee notes, “so people would become familiar with what they were doing, why they were doing it in that particular way and what they were trying to achieve”.³⁴ In pursuit of this aim, CEER members applied themselves to the task of educating the public and specifically black communities in London. The issue of famine was already dominating headlines, but the cadres of TPLF and EPLF fighters were far removed from public discourse, led by the UK government and media. As Hakim states, there was a need “to publicise what was going on in Ethiopia and Eritrea amongst the black community, where people didn’t know and there was a lot of confusion about Derg and even

famine, what exactly was going on. So, we thought it was important to explain the politics of it”.³⁵ For members of CEER who prided themselves on being politically conscious, the knowledge gap was one of which they became acutely aware. As Kobina states, ‘the government’s official position was that these were like, terrorists, the government was supporting the Mengistu regime, effectively, at that time. And these forces were being portrayed as rebels...having learned, from The Way Forward, about what’s actually happening, from some of the actual people on the ground, one was interested in finding out more’.³⁶

Clearly then, a large part of CEER’s challenge was to rectify what had been mischaracterised as a solely humanitarian issue, into a properly contextualised, political one. A communication from CEER in spring 1990 shows that they contended against misinformation from the outset. Noting the

³³ Ibid

³⁴ Oral History Interview with Tee White, conducted by author, April 2022

³⁵ Oral History Interview with Hakim Adi, conducted by author, September 2022

³⁶ Oral History Interview with Kobina Mark, conducted by author, November 2022



Nzinga Soundz. photograph by Ron Vester

presence of speakers from Relief Society of Tigray (REST) and Eritrean Relief Association ERA), it goes on to emphasise that speakers would “explain the causes of the repeated famines in this area, the struggles of their people against them and how we in Britain can support them in this fight”.³⁷

In February 1990, CEER organised their first “Fundraising Dance”. According to the report in their first news bulletin, “proceeds raised on the night were over £300”.³⁸ Two further dances followed in the same year, and possibly there were others. Kobina recalls “we had dances, at Stockwell- Tigray Development Association- they had quite a big building there. So, we had lots of dances and fundraising events there.”³⁹

Aside from who they featured, these dances are notable for the organisation and resource invested into them. They were held in reasonably quick succession, in venues ranging from the Yaa Asantewaa (now The Yaa Centre) in W9, to the ADI

Centre at 218 Lambeth Road, 211 Clapham Road (then, the address of TPLF’s London premises), and eventually at School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), via CEER’s connection with the African Caribbean Society. A pamphlet for “An Evening of Culture”, held on 1st September 1990 boasts a ten-act line-up, presenting Nzinga Soundz- the illustrious African Caribbean female sound system established in the previous decade-, an Eritrean Cultural Group and Ujamaa Dance Theatre Troupe. A raffle launch is advertised as well, with “a trip for two to Paris, Dinner for Two, Champagne, Books, Paintings, T-shirts & Records” among the prizes to be won. (Raffles were held at most dances. At another event, Kobina recalls the prize lot featured a donated piece from eminent sculptor, Fowokan Kelly).⁴⁰ Nzinga Soundz also provided a set for the follow-up “Grand Fundraising Dance and Raffle Draw” on 8th December 1990. The cast for this show was equally dynamic. It featured Janet Kay, “Queen of Lover’s Rock,” who in 1979 made history by becoming the

37 CEER flyer, undated c.1990

38 CEER Bulletin, Vol. 1 No.1, p2. (1990)

39 Oral History Interview with Kobina Mark, conducted by author, November 2022

40 Ibid



Omar Lye-Fook, photographed by PRS for Music

First British born Black Female Reggae Artist to have a No. 1 in the British Pop Charts.⁴¹ In addition, the evening included a performance from “Special Guest Appearance by Omar” (Omar Christopher Lye-Fook MBE – acclaimed British soul pioneer)⁴² “signing copies of his Hit Single There’s Nothing Like This”.⁴³

Then, on 15th May 1992 (one year after TPLF and EPLF entered Addis Ababa, fully liberating both Ethiopia and Eritrea from the Derg) CEER went on to host the first of a series of fundraising fashion show-dances at SOAS. This inaugural event drew a decent-sized crowd of over three hundred people and raised £2,500.⁴⁴ Kobina, who recalls leafletting with a comrade in Notting Hill Carnival one year, gives insight into the sheer efforts in pavement pounding required to achieve a crowd of this size. In his comrade’s experience, they would need to distribute around ten thousand leaflets. By this time, CEER were well-versed in hosting events and

employing the committee’s combined experience and networks. Africa Adorned, as the evening was called, featured high profile, internationally renowned singers and artists from the black community- incidentally friends with many CEER people. All came together to dedicate their talents toward this just, African cause. BiBi Crew, the first black women-comprised acting troupe in the UK, modelled designs by Farouque Abdella of Tanzania alongside a showcase of “beautiful and inspiring designs” from Boubaahbilah! House of AH – FREAK – AH, Kindou and Nubi. Providing music were none other than, “Reggae stars Peter Hunningale and Lloyd Brown”, and the night was completed with “spectacular displays of martial arts from the Brazilian Capoeira and Shaolin Fists”.⁴⁵

The array of artistry, culture and heritage on show was accompanied by a genuine ambience of camaraderie, collectively fostered by the CEER

41 Janet Kay, ‘Queen of Lovers Rock’, <https://www.janetkay.com/> (accessed November 2022).

42 Omar Lye-Fook, ‘Biography’ https://omarmusic.co.uk/biography/?doing_wp_cron=1669847357.5345580577850341796875 (accessed Nov 2022)

43 CEER “Grand Fundraising Dance and Raffle Draw”, flyer, Dec 1990

44 CEER Bulletin, ‘Africa Adorned’, Vol. 3 No. 1 Autumn 1992

45 Ibid

THANK YOU for

Thank all the artists

The Committee for Ethiopian and Eritrean Relief (CEER) would like to extend its thanks to all the artists performing tonight who have given their services free of charge.

We would also like to thank all those who have helped to organise tonight's event and to all of you who have supported this event by attending. This is tangible evidence of what can be achieved when we put our efforts together for the progress of Africa.

support relief orgs
support
REST
ERA

CULTURAL PROGRAMME

M.C. VICTOR ROMERO EVANS

7.00 - TPLF VIDEO / NZINGHA SOUNDZ

7.45 - MBEKE

8.00 - LIONESS CHANT

8.20 - CEER

8.30 - SPEECHES

9.30 - AGUDZE DANCE GROUP

9.50 - AUCTION

10.00 - ANUM IYAPO

10.15 - ERITREAN CULTURAL GROUP

10.45 - BURT CAESER

10.55 - TORERA

11.10 - UJAMAA DANCE THEATRE GROUP

11.30 - MIKEY RED N' STEVIE D

11.40 - ERITREAN CULTURAL GROUP

12.25 - SOUND SYSTEM

2.00 - END

CEER Cultural Programme, photograph via Hakim Adi

community. In the midst of the evening's revelry, the venue brimming with celebration and enthusiasm, Hakim recalls the compelling speech delivered by Netsanet Asefaw- CEER's TPLF comrade (and late MP for Endemariam, Tigray, Director of Public Relations in the Office of the Prime Minister).⁴⁶ His memory of this speech, "militant in character", reflects the intensity of feeling which pervaded. At the heart of this compassion was a well understood reality. Arriving at the end of the thirty-year struggle, were victorious Eritreans and Ethiopians who, even in their exuberance and relief, still faced the very immediate challenges of rebuilding. Through this relationship, CEER were building the Pan-African alliances which would play a part in doing so.

The committee branched out their fundraising activities to include family-friendly initiatives such as an annual sponsored walk in Battersea Park, which called community members of all ages to join. The CEER bulletin of Autumn 1992 contains a news item detailing, "Sponsored walk raises over

46 Ofuho Cirino Hiteng, 'Discourses on liberation and democracy in Sub-Saharan Africa: the cases of Eritrea and Ethiopia', Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) thesis, University of Kent, p.233,

47 CEER Bulletin, 'Sponsored walk raises over £500', Autumn 1992

48 Kobina Mark Oral History Interview conducted by author, November 2022.

£500" where "participants included 11 pupils from Mostyn Gardens Primary School". Practically-minded as ever, the article implies motivated readers could join or create similar initiatives themselves: "the initial idea was very simple. It is actually a very easy thing to do....it took two weeks to organise".⁴⁷

Much like *Grassroots* in earlier years, the bulletin came to be a mainstay of CEER's organising and (alongside monthly meetings), a conduit for communicating the group's objectives and progress. The bulletin, produced by Kobina, demonstrates the resourceful and at times underground nature of the organisation. Kobina describes his memory of, "going into, it was the architectural department of my university, because they had the Macs, and, you know, sneaking in and putting this thing together".⁴⁸ While the need for secrecy was not as prevalent in comparison to BLF's early years, at least some of CEER's methods dovetailed with the clandestine approach of former decades.

Aleja Taddesse is completing her dissertation on the Black Liberation Front and African Liberation at the University of Chichester. She hopes to continue working on understudied histories of Africa and the African diaspora in the future. Her current focus is on the development of anti-colonialism and international solidarity within diaspora communities in Britain and elsewhere. Also a writer, her poetry touches on themes of politics, Africa and womanhood.

The British Guiana 'Power Couples' fighting racial injustices in Britain

Claudia Tomlinson

Many notable individuals of African-Caribbean descent became activists for racial justice in Britain following migration in the 1940s and 1950s. This article looks at the couples from British Guiana who formed marriage, economic, and political partnerships either prior to, or after migration to Britain, and leveraged their relationships to make powerful and enduring contributions in the fight for racial equality in the Mother Country. The partnerships explored are Jessica and Eric Huntley, the political activists who were part of founding the movement for colonial independence from the 1940s in British Guiana, and who, following migration to Britain, were prominent activists on behalf of other black people in Britain. They became the founders of one of the leading organisations in the fight for black liberation, Bogle L'Ouverture Publications. Pansy and Lionel Jeffrey were leading community activists, and Pansy founded the first club for Caribbean elders in Britain. Sybil and Joseph Phoenix were fashion entrepreneurs as well as charity activists and Sybil was at the forefront of the resistance movement following the New Cross Fire. Waveney and husband Len Bushell were activists in a number of areas in racial justice campaigns in Britain. Waveney was at

the forefront of resistance against the oppression of black children in the British education system and Len was active in independence campaigns on behalf of British Guiana. Elouise and Beresford Edwards were based in the north of England and were leading activists for race equality. Beresford made headlines in the 1960s when he sued and won a famous case against a leading and powerful trade union, and Elouise was at the forefront of many organisations working on behalf of migrants to Britain. This article will explore how these couples, often co-operating with each other, made enduring contributions to the social, economic, and political life in Britain.

Jessica and Eric Huntley

Jessica and Eric Huntley married in 1950 in British Guiana and migrated to Britain, with Eric arriving in 1956 and Jessica in 1958. Both are recognised and celebrated for their anti-colonial fight against Britain's oppression in British Guiana, and were particularly active in this fight in the 1940s and early 1950s.

Eric had worked in postal services since his teenage years, and, following his release from political detention in British Guiana, he moved to Britain



Jessica and Eric Huntley on their wedding day in 1950 (Courtesy of FHALMA)

as he found himself unable to resume his career in the post office due to his political activities. On his arrival in Britain, his friend, Lionel Jeffrey, helped him find lodgings and took him to the Employment Exchange to find work. This network of support, comprising friends and family members, was critically important to assist new arrivals with the process of settling in. Like many arrivals from the Caribbean, Eric had periods unemployment, and worked in casual and short-term jobs in factories, for Standard Telephones and Cables company, and for the Post Office. He worked at the Mount Pleasant Post Office sorting office in London, where mail came in centrally before it was sorted and shipped to other post offices around the country. Eric has spoken about his experience working there in 1957 and how hard it was to save for his wife's passage to Britain: 'I worked twenty-four hours a day in order to save that money. I worked overtime. I lived at the Post Office, more or less, and a number of us did in fact because we were all in similar situations; mostly the migrants were the Postmen who worked excessive overtime'. He was eventually employed by American Life Insurance, where he worked for many years. Jessica worked in a number of clerical roles in Britain prior to becoming a full-time publisher and owner of a bookshop, which was operated alongside her formidable programme of political and community

activism. She worked for a shipping company, the Ministry of Pensions based in Haringey, London, a magazine publisher in Fleet Street and Collett's bookshop, and a firm of solicitors in Ealing.

From 1968, both Jessica and Eric became company owners of Bogle L'Ouverture Publications, a publishing house established to produce publications by and for the African diaspora in London, and later Third World publications. To establish Bogle L'Ouverture Publications, Jessica Huntley raised funds from within the diaspora, and her friends from Guiana were among the main supporters. It was also a base for their activism, predominantly on behalf of black people in Britain, the Caribbean, and the USA. They also opened a bookshop which sold their publications but also acted as a resource and cultural centre for black people, but it was also accessed by many other local people who wanted advice and assistance on a range of issues, particularly about the police and criminal justice system. Bogle L'Ouverture Publications launched the careers of many leading authors, including Walter Rodney, Linton Kwesi Johnson, Lemn Sissay, and Valerie Bloom. The bookshop came under frequent attack by racists, but the Huntleys fought back and defied threats to continue their work.



Eric Huntley outside the Bogle L'Ouverture's Bookshop following one of the many racist attacks photograph via FEALMA

Sybil and Joseph Phoenix

An example of co-operation and collaboration between the couples being discussed was the friendship and partnership between the Huntleys and their friends Sybil and Joseph Phoenix. As business partners, the Huntleys assisted with the establishment of Phoenix Afro-European Fashions, known as 'Phoenix Fashions,' in London. In 1968, Eric Huntley served as Publicity Officer to assist with its launch and its inaugural fashion show. Jessica Huntley and her second son, Chauncey Huntley, assisted in modelling some of the collections in the fashion show. Phoenix Fashions was established as a successful company and held fashion shows across London.

Sybil Phoenix was born in 1927 in Georgetown, British Guiana, and worked as a seamstress upon leaving school. With exceptional skill and business acumen, she established her own business in British Guiana, *Sunset Sports Wear and Leather Goods*, for which she designed and sold clothing and handbags. She married Joseph 'Joe' Phoenix, who was working in a bookshop in British Guiana and they became engaged there before getting married in Britain in 1958. Joseph worked in London for J. Lyons, an ice-cream maker, as Mixing Supervisor. After leaving that job, he trained as a social worker, but then moved to work in the family businesses and

charities with his wife as his business partner. As entrepreneurs from a working background, Sybil and Joe Phoenix were in a position to fund other upcoming businesses, and provided financial backing to help establish Bogle L'Ouverture Publications in 1968. They also hosted fundraising events, and donated the proceeds to their favourite causes. One of the Phoenix's favoured charities was Georgetown Hospital, for which the family regularly raised and donated funds for many years.

Sybil's long life and career in Britain encompassed significant charitable work, fostering numerous black children in the care system, and setting up a black youth club, the Moonshot, which was burnt down by a racist organisation, but which she re-built within four years. She collaborated and co-operated with others to fight racial injustice in Britain and was one of those leading the resistance movement in the aftermath of the New Cross Fire, in which 13 black children died in a suspicious fire that was followed by an inadequate and indifferent police investigation. She participated in the Black People's Day of Action, in which black people mobilised to march across London. She was the recipient of many awards and prizes, including the OBE.



Sybil Phoenix receiving the OBE outside Buckingham Palace in 1971, with Joseph Phoenix, photograph via Woodrow Phoenix)

Pansy and Lionel Jeffrey

Lionel and Pansy Jeffrey were one of the more established couples of their generation in Britain as they arrived in the mid-1940s, more than ten years before many who subsequently became part of their peer group of activists. They married in 1951.

Lionel 'Jeff' Jeffrey was born in 1926 and was one of the earliest of his generation to travel to Britain in 1947 to study at Oxford University. He was elected to senior roles in student union movements, and terminated his stay in Britain in 1953 when British troops arrived in British Guiana to overthrow the newly elected government. He returned home and took over the role of Secretary of the People's Progressive Party following the imprisonment of Janet Jagan, but eventually returned to Britain in 1956. There he became actively involved in anti-colonial activism and collaborated with other leading activists, such as Pansy Jeffrey, Billy Strachan, Cleston Taylor, the Huntleys, John La Rose, Peter Blackman, Cleston Taylor, and Irma La Rose. He devoted many years to the forefront of the fight for race equality in Britain, as an advisor for Islington Council, and the Inner London Education Authority.

Pansy Jeffrey was born in 1926 in Berbice in British Guiana, and in 1946 travelled to Britain, where she trained as a nurse, midwife and health visitor. Pansy was politically active since her youth in British Guiana, attending Town Hall meetings, with a particular concern for improving child poverty and welfare. Pansy also supported Jaganism and collaborated with Cheddi and Janet Jagan's PPP. She was appointed to the position of 'West Indian Social Worker' in 1959 in North Kensington, the area of the Notting Hill Riots, and where the murder of Antiguan carpenter Kelso Cochrane occurred. Her role was part of the response these events, and she served in a number of organisations and charities over many years. Like her husband, she collaborated with peers from Guiana and other parts of the Caribbean. For example, she was co-founder, with Jessica Huntley and others, of the group Women for Development in Action to assist women of African descent in Britain and Europe experiencing poverty. Pansy's most enduring organisation is the Pepper Pot Club, which she founded in 1981 to alleviate isolation of Caribbean elders in England through the provision of lunch and activities.



Jessica Huntley, far right, with models during the Phoenix Fashions launch show in 1968, photograph via FHALMA



Lionel and Pansy Jeffrey on their wedding day in 1951, photograph via Howard Jeffrey



Pepper Pot Centre, photograph via Global's Make Some Noise

Now the Pepper Pot Centre, it has been patronised by the Queen, who opened the Centre, and other members of the royal family.

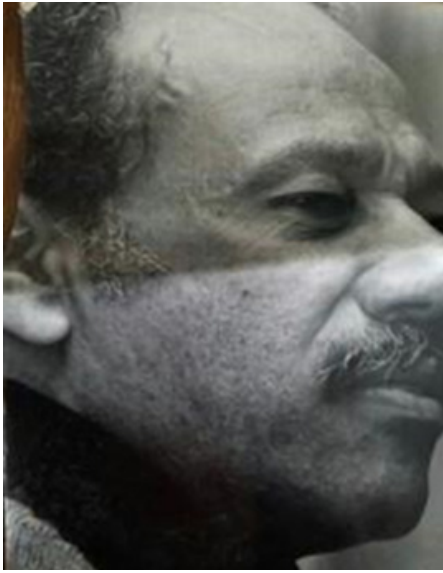
As well as being political associates of the Huntleys, Lionel and Pansy were part of their social circle, and part of the circle of couples who met at each other's homes to entertain each other with West Indian food, music and dance, to maintain the friendships and keep their culture alive. Pansy and Lionel Jeffrey donated their personal and political records to the archives of Jessica and Eric Huntley, the Huntley Collection, at the London Metropolitan Archives.

Waveney and Leonard Bushell

Waveney Bushell was born in 1928 and qualified as a teacher in British Guiana and secured work in London's East End in a tough primary school, in the same way as other compatriots, such as Beryl Gilroy. Many teachers who arrived from the Caribbean found themselves given jobs in the toughest and most deprived areas of the country, such as London's East End, as depicted in the film *To Sir With Love*. She progressed to become an Educational Psychologist (EP), and may have been

the first black EP in Britain, and in delivering that role encountered and fought the systematic oppression of black children in British schools.

She was a pioneer in the establishment of Black Supplementary Education schools, usually holding lessons on Saturdays, to meet the educational needs of black children who were failing educationally in schools. The story of this battle and Waveney's contribution has been recently depicted in the documentary *Subnormal: A British Scandal*. She led the way, with others such as the Huntleys, Bernard Coard, Albertina Sylvester, John La Rose, and other prominent activists from the Caribbean, in speaking out at conferences. She was a founding member of the Caribbean Education and Community Worker's Association (CECWA), an important campaigning and resistance group fighting for race equality in Britain. She took a risk as an establishment insider to blow the whistle on what she observed as the systematic oppression of black children in the British education system. She challenged the very basis of racist psychological theory and practice, particularly the use of culturally biased testing to label black children as subnormal.



*Lionel Jeffrey, born 1926
photograph via Howard Jeffrey*



*Pansy Jeffrey later in her career
photograph via Howard Jeffrey*

She has recently been featured in a major article in *The Psychologist*, the Journal of the British Psychological Society. For two to three weeks while waiting to start her teaching job she worked in bookkeeping at Lyons Corner House headquarters in Kensington. Waveney Bushell and Len Bushell also provided funds in the late 1960s to assist with the establishment of Bogle L'Ouverture publications.

Leonard 'Len' Bushell, (1929 – 2018) was born in Kitty, Georgetown, and after completing secondary education he worked as a civil servant. Always interested in improving life for all and eradicating social injustice, Len became politically active and joined the People's Progressive Party in its early phase. Len migrated to Britain in the 1950s and although he knew Waveney as a friend in British Guiana, they married in Britain after their migration. Despite being an experienced civil servant, Len had to accept work that was not reflective of his experience, and worked for British Railway on night shifts as an assistant to the electrical works. This enabled him to study and he obtained a degree in Economics. He also worked in Lyons Corner House, a company already noted for providing casual labour for many immigrants from the Caribbean during the 1950s and 1960s. Len also worked in factories, again a source of casual labour for Caribbean arrivals during this period. He eventually became a college lecturer and maintained this career until his retirement.

In Britain, Len became a founding member of the British Guiana Freedom Association and picketed Downing Street with demands for freedom for British Guiana from colonial tyranny. They were joined in this

movement by the Huntleys, and other compatriots after their arrival. Archival records relating to Len Bushell's contribution are to be found in the Labour History Archive in the People's History Museum in Manchester, and the Institute of Commonwealth Studies Library, University of London.

Waveney Bushell survives her husband and lives in south London, Britain. Archival records relating to Waveney's work are to be found in the Huntley collection at the London Metropolitan archives, and the George Padmore Institute in London.

Elouise and Beresford Edwards

Beresford 'Berry' Edwards, born in 1930 at Mackenzie in British Guiana, was educated in Georgetown, the capital city. On entering the workforce, he became a worker in lithography eventually becoming a foreman at a lithography firm in Guiana. He left Guiana in 1960 to study lithography and he became a skilled and experienced printer in Britain. It was during the course of this work that he became caught up in a legal case that would contribute to changing trade unionism in Britain. In 1967, Berry Edwards, by then an extremely skilled and experienced printer in a well-paid job, was employed in a printing firm in Manchester, in the north of England, and joined the company trade union, the Society of Graphical and Allied Trades (SOGAT). At this time, unions in Britain operated a 'closed shop' system whereby all employees had to be a member of the union. Edwards had a temporary membership and instructed the union in writing to deduct the subscriptions from his salary. Due to an administrative oversight, the



Waveney Bushell in the 1970s in London, photograph via Waveney Bushell



Waveney and Len Bushell on their wedding day in London, 1967, photograph via Waveney Bushell

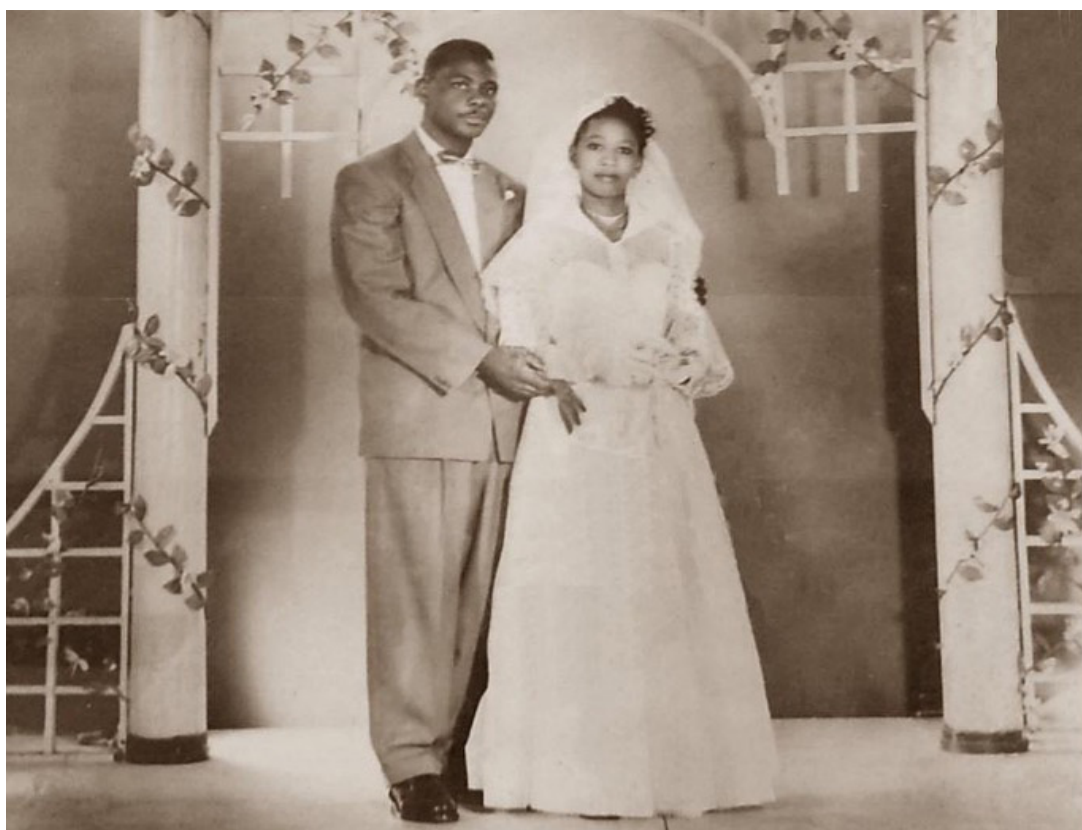
deductions were not made, and Edwards fell into several months' arrears, unknown to him. His union membership lapsed and as he was no longer a member, the closed shop system meant he was sacked from his job. His offer to make up the arrears were denied, and he was out of a job, six days before Christmas in 1967. The employer expressed reluctance at having to dismiss Edwards, and it was the union that was the driving force behind his dismissal. There was an element of racial injustice as four white union members, who were also in arrears with their subscriptions, had been permitted to pay the arrears whereas Edwards was denied this opportunity. Further, the union threatened to strike if Edwards was not kicked out of his job, resulting in Edwards taking his case against SOGAT to court.

On 27 November in 1969 in the High Court in London, Edwards won his case against SOGAT, and was awarded just under £8,000 in damages (estimated to be approximately £140,000 in today's currency value). The union accepted that at the time he was sacked he was still a temporary member of the union because he had signed a form authorising the union to deduct his subscriptions and it was due to an oversight of the union that he fell into arrears. During the hearing, SOGAT was strongly criticised by Edwards' barrister, Peter Pain: 'The Society is a large, rich and powerful union. In the ordinary way, one would expect it to be a pillar of support to a Guyanese worker trying to establish himself in this country. But in this case, the normal position has been unhappily reversed. The union, through its members and officers in Manchester, has quite literally sought to bring about the economic

destruction of Mr. Edwards.' Edward's victory resulted in a change in British law, recognising a person's right to work, or as the presiding Judge Lord Denning put it 'a man's right to work is now.' The case is now analysed in legal historical research: 'In *Edwards v SOGAT* (1971), Ch.345, Lord Denning introduced a controversial concept into the law relating to internal trade union affairs. He held that where a closed shop operated, a union could not adopt a rule which would permit it to expel any member on grounds which are arbitrary or capricious. Such a rule would be contrary to public policy, as being an unwarranted encroachment on a man's right to work.' Following his dismissal, Edwards for a long period was only able to secure low paid labouring work, for which he earned a fraction of his previous salary. The damages were calculated on the projection of ten years of lost salary for Edwards.

For the remainder of his time in Britain, Edwards worked on a number of campaigns as part of the long fight against racial oppression in Britain directed at black people. He was a member of the Campaign Against Racial Discrimination, the coalition of all racialised immigrants in the UK, established by Martin Luther King's visit to the UK in 1964. He was a youth worker, and established a Black Supplementary school, and set up Manchester's first bookshop specialising in African Caribbean literature, the African Caribbean Centre.

Beresford Edwards married Elouise Edwards, MBE, in British Guiana in 1955 and their eldest child was born in 1958. Elouise joined Beresford in Britain in 1961. Elouise was born in 1932 in Georgetown.



Elouise and Beresford Edwards on their wedding day in 1955, photograph via Tony Reeves

Couples were able to leverage their economic power from the fact that when one wasn't working, there was increased opportunity for financial support for the family as there was a second person to work. This was the case with the Edwards, and it was Elouise who provided for the family with four sons when she worked in the canteen at Manchester University, then a large hotel in Manchester. Many of her work associates were exploited workers who had emigrated to Britain and she became an advisor to them, and the Edwards home was a calling place for those in need of advice, support and assistance. She was a co-founder of the West Indian Organisations Coordinating Committee that helped black people with employment, education, accommodation, legal affairs and other matters. For example, they kept a registry of employers who would employ black people and landlords who would rent them rooms at the time of a strong colour bar.

In 1977, she also co-founded the Manchester Black Women's Mutual Aid, which worked to provide educational advice and support to disadvantaged children. She also co-founded the Manchester Sickle Cell & Thalassaemia Centre to bring attention to conditions predominantly affecting black people in Britain and for which there were poor health and

social care services. In 1994, Elouise was awarded the MBE (Member of the Order of the British Empire) for her services to the community. She and Beresford were also honoured by the communities they served, becoming Mama Elouise and Nana Bonsu, respectively. Elouise and Beresford Edwards returned to Guyana and died there in 2003. Elouise returned to live in Guyana and died in Georgetown in 2021. The Nana Bonsu Oral History Workshop was established in Manchester to honour their legacy. Their archives are available at the University of Manchester and the Black Cultural Archives in London.

As the current British government is proceeding to roll back as many of the gains and protections won by this generation of fighters for racial justice, it is imperative that the scrutiny and action undertaken by these couples in Britain continue. We have seen the introduction of racist legislation, such as the Nationality and Borders Bill, which will see Black Britons who have another country in which they can claim citizenship being at greater risk of sudden and unannounced withdrawal of British Nationality if Britain deems them a threat to the country. The case of Child Q, in which teachers permitted a 15-year-old black girl to be strip-searched by police officers



Elouise and Beresford Edwards, photograph via Tony Reeves

on school premises, as well as countless ongoing atrocities experienced by black children and youth in the British education system shows that gains are being rolled back. Lastly, the deal struck between the Conservative government and the government of Rwanda, to ship undocumented migrants to Rwanda for offshore processing, is irredeemable on many levels. An understanding of the battles of recent as well as more distant history provides many lessons to inspire future generations. Learning from the experience, activities, struggles and victories of these outstanding couples from British Guiana is invaluable for generations going forward.

Further Reading

‘The life of Mama Elouise Edwards’, The Open University, 17 July 2021, <https://www.open.edu/openlearn/history-the-arts/the-life-mama-elouise-edwards>

Nana Bonsu Oral History Project: The Life of a Pan-African Community Activist in Manchester, UK, <https://nanabonsu.com/>

‘Mrs. Sybil Phoenix MBE, OBE, MS: a profile by Yvonne Field’, Marsha Phoenix Memorial Trust. <http://www.marshaphoenix.org.uk/about/history>
K.D. Ewing, ‘Judicial Control of Union Rule-Book: Expulsion of Member’, *The Cambridge Law*

Journal, Vol. 42, No.2, pp.207 – 209, p.207.

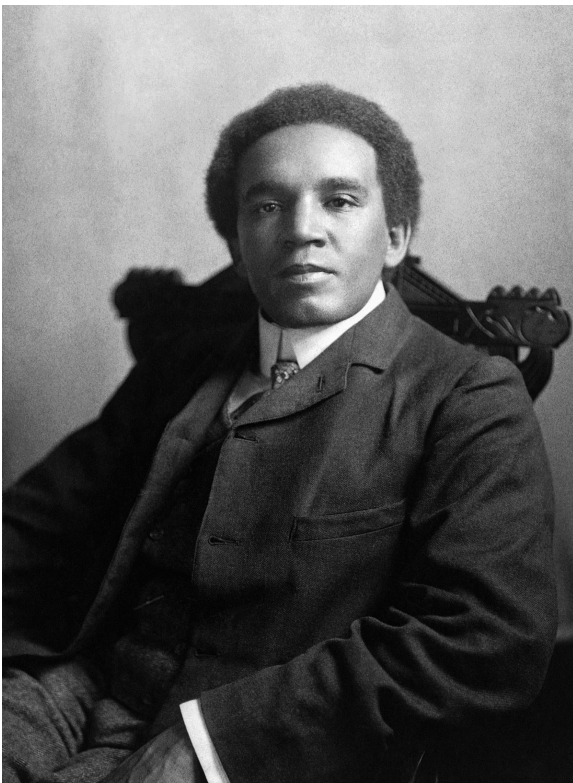
This article was first published in the *Stabroek News* on 19 June 2022 and presented at the 2022 Annual Virtual Conference of the Guyana Institute of Historical Research on 23 to 25 June 2022.

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

The National Archives: Records in Focus

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor

Drew Ellery



Samuel Coleridge-Taylor in 1905

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor (born 1875) was an influential British conductor and composer during the early 20th century. His music was hugely popular in Britain and America during his lifetime and after his death. He was also a strong advocate for racial equality, colonial freedom, and broader black activism, attending the inaugural Pan-African conference in London in 1900.⁴⁹

The National Archives holds an incredible collection of photographs of Coleridge-Taylor within its collection. Between 1862 and 1912 individuals and businesses applied to secure copyright of photographs and artwork under the Fine Arts Copyright Act by submitting an application for registration to the Stationers' Company. The copyright records held at The National Archives are those that were registered under the terms of successive copyright acts. This photograph of Samuel Coleridge-Taylor was registered for copyright protection in 1905.

The process of registration required the copyright proprietor to fill out an Entry Form with a description of the work and their personal details, as well as the

⁴⁹Mike Phillips, 'Pan-Africanism, race and the USA, The British Library', available at: <https://www.bl.uk/on-linegallery/features/blackeuro/coleridgepan.html> (accessed: 21/04/2023).

TO THE REGISTERING OFFICER APPOINTED BY THE STATIONERS'...

I, Robert Thirlwell

do hereby certify, That I am entitled to the Copyright in such Copyright [as, the Assignment of such Copyright, Drawings, and Photographs, kept at Stationers' Hall, and



each.
Art) Act.)
Stockton-on-Tees
a Memorandum of
right in Paintings,

41-287
-8 MAR 1905
Received

Description of Work.

Photograph of
S. Coleridge-Taylor
{³/₄ face with body turned to the right}

Dated this 7th day of

Name and Place of Abode of Proprietor of Copyright.	Name and Place of Abode of Author of Work.
Robert Thirlwell 21 Bridge Road Stockton-on-Tees	Adolf Urban 17 Hampton Road Stockton-on-Tees

(Signed) Robert Thirlwell

N.B.—In filling up the first column the description should commence thus: "Painting," "Drawing," or "Photograph," as the case may be. All names in the third, fourth, and fifth columns to be written in full.
In all cases where a Painting, Drawing, or Negative of a Photograph is transferred for the first time by the owner to any other person, the Copyright will cease to exist, unless at or before the time of such transfer an agreement in writing be signed by the transferee reserving the Copyright to the owner, or by the owner transferring the Copyright to the transferee, as may be the intention of the parties; and the date of such agreement and the names of the parties thereto must be inserted above, or registration will be no protection. The second and third columns are only to be used when there is a written agreement or assignment.

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor with face and body turned to the right, including entry form document in the background. Reference COPY 1/464

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor with overcoat and hat on, including entry form document in the background. Reference COPY 1/464.

TO THE REGISTERING OFFICER APPOINTED BY THE STATIONERS'...

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do hereby certify, That I am entitled to the Copyright in such Copyright [as, the Assignment of such Copyright, Drawings, and Photographs, kept at Stationers' Hall, and



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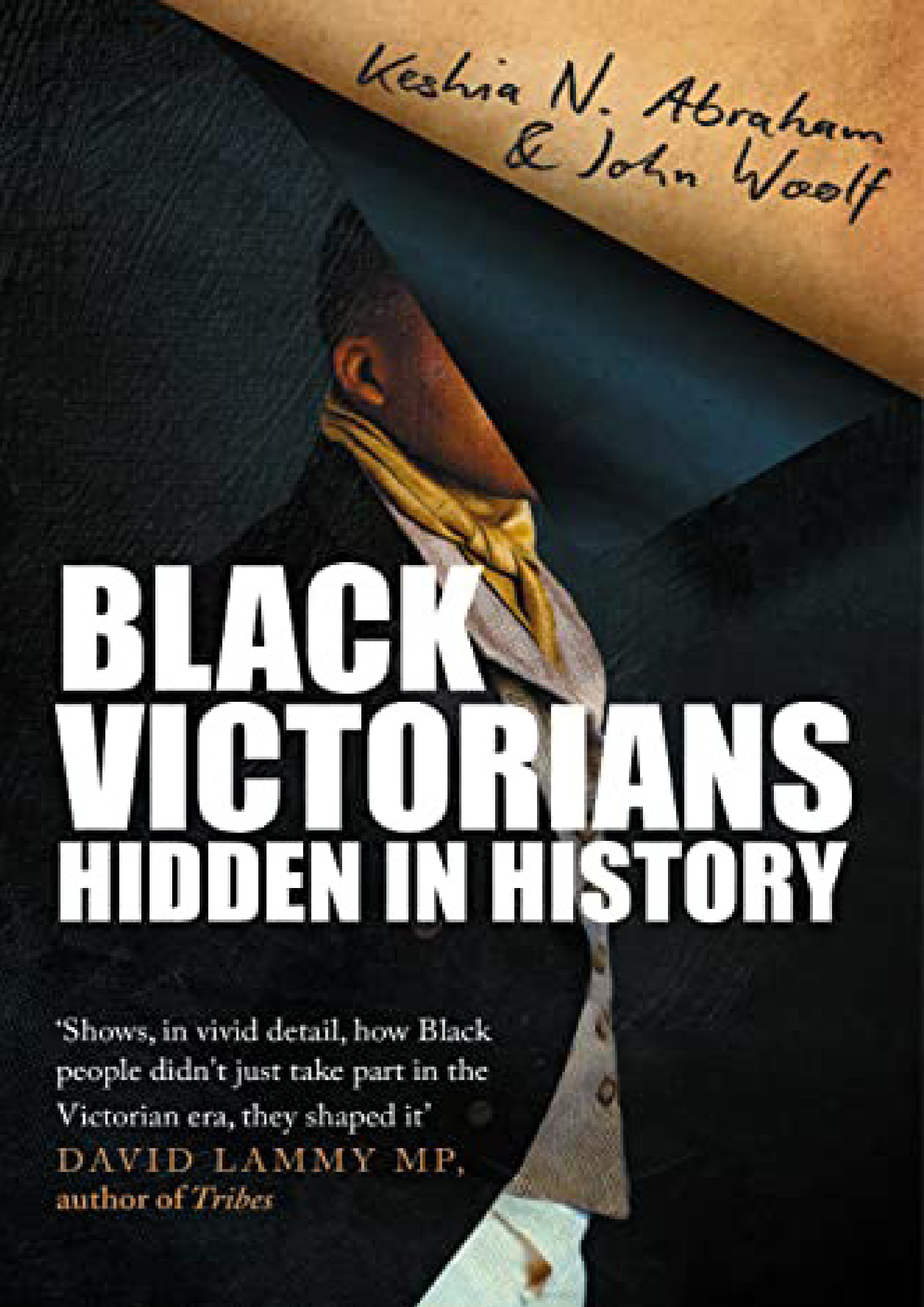
N.B.—In filling up the first column the description should commence thus: "Painting," "Drawing," or "Photograph," as the case may be. All names in the third, fourth, and fifth columns to be written in full.
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details of the artist or photographer. By examining the entry forms, we can see that these photographs were submitted by someone called Robert Thirlwell of 21 Bridge Road, Stockton-on-Tees in 1905. These stylish photographs present Coleridge-Taylor as someone of high-social standing. He is dressed in top hat and wears what seems to be expensive clothing; he is depicted as an English gentleman. Although there is no contextual information within the entry forms that provide an insight into why these photographs were taken and for what purpose, they still provide us with a unique insight into Coleridge-Taylor's status and image within British society, especially during a time when black people were often caricatured by the press and within popular culture.

Find out more about UK copyright records held by The National Archives in our online guide to [Intellectual property: photographs, artwork, literature, music and advertising registered for copyright 1842-1924 \(and 1887-1955\)](#)

Find out more about records that relate to Black British social history at The National Archives in our online guide to [Black British social and political history in the 20th century](#).

Drew Ellery works at The National Archives. He has an MA in Art Gallery and Museum Studies from the University of Manchester. Drew's research interests include the history of the Caribbean diaspora in Britain, Pan-Africanism, and Nigerian colonial history.



Keshia N. Abraham
& John Woolf

BLACK VICTORIANS HIDDEN IN HISTORY

'Shows, in vivid detail, how Black people didn't just take part in the Victorian era, they shaped it'

DAVID LAMMY MP,
author of Tribes

Black Victorians: Hidden in History

Keshia N. Abraham & John Woolf
(Duckworth Books Ltd, 2022)

Reviewed by: Hannah Francis

Black Victorians: Hidden in History is a necessary text in understanding and contextualising the history of Black African and Caribbean presence, participation and influence in Victorian society. The book, penned by African Diaspora scholar and educator Keshia N. Abraham and 19th-century specialist, reading History at Goldsmiths and Cambridge, John Woolf, identifies the Victorian period as one characterised by European enlightenment ideals with scarce evidence and knowledge on the growing and dynamic Black population in Victorian Britain. Through the use of key archival materials from the Black Cultural Archives, the National Archives and various local libraries, as well as texts by the likes of Professor Hakim Adi, Marika Sherwood, Dr. Caroline Bressey and Peter Fryer, Abraham and Woolf introduce readers to a wider historiography with discerning focus upon

the individual lives of Black Victorians across many contexts, milieus and social standing. The book is split into five thematic sections mapping the individual lives of a total of sixteen Black Victorians, from the birth of the Reform movement in Britain following the influential visits from African American anti-racist activist Ida B. Wells in the 1890s and the growing Women's suffrage movement, to the first Pan African Conference at Westminster Town Hall in 1900.

The structure of the book is neat and considered, culminating in an in-depth historical overview of the contributions of African and Caribbean people to British infrastructure, its labour force and community organisation and cultural influence upon the arts and aristocracy and academia in an age of social and historical repression of their presence and a growing awareness of racial identity amongst white Victorians.⁵⁰

50 Keshia N. Abrahams and John Woolf, *Black Victorians: Hidden in History*, (London: Duckworth Books

Further, in an effort to discern the myth of Black exceptionalism in order to make history, despite its finite focus upon individual lives, the authors emphasise the focus upon individual lives spans each corner of British society. Bridging the gap between colonial subjectivity and the exotification of the colonial subject amongst aristocratic and monarchical circles, Black Victorians were visible and had established roots in Britain.

In part one aptly entitled Context and Concealment, we are introduced to Black Victorians that have been hidden in plain sight. We begin with John Edmonstone, who arrived in Scotland from Guyana in 1817 and soon become the tutor of none other than Charles Darwin and a great influence over his theories on evolution⁵¹. Despite this significant relationship, Edmonstone is scarcely mentioned in his writings and occupied the space of the ‘invisible technician’ in the world of medicine. From the get go, it is clear that the authors elucidate the fact that the history of the named and the nameless amongst Black people breaking ground in Britain such as Edmonstone is “demonstrative of collective historical amnesia.”⁵² The mention of Black people, not only existing in Britain but influencing internationally renowned figures, cultures, ideas and practices is a challenge to the perception of Victorian Britain as being solely white. Much of the population of Black Victorians were members of the working class, but those that were unable to work were found on the margins of society in workhouses, homeless shelters, prisons and asylums, however, many Black Victorians bridged the social scale with connections to royalty. As contended by the authors, archival obfuscation and concealment of historical record has shielded us from these

histories, despite the glaring presence of significant Black Victorians in the world of art, politics, law and skilled trades.

For the remainder of the book, the sections are based on themes of: struggle and survival; Church and state; the arts; and fighting for freedom. Carefully considered, these sections identify key areas of influence Black Victorians contributed to but also encapsulate the vast realities of being Black in Britain in the 19th century.

One particular area in which the authors did their subjects justice was in chapter three dedicated to the story of William Brown. Brown was admitted to mental asylum Broadmoor in 1883 for killing his wife and setting his home, on Ebenezer Road, Kent, with his four children inside, on fire. Born in British Guiana in 1832 during the era of slavery, Brown joined the navy as opposed to working the land after emancipation. His experiences of slavery, emancipation, his service to the navy and his new life in Britain were likely to be characterised by struggle and poverty, resulting in a deterioration of his mental health when he retired from the navy. As reiterated by the authors, we may not ever know what caused Brown’s depleting mental state from his own perspective but what we do know is that when tried, he was found not guilty by reason of insanity. After his incarceration, he still received letters from his daughter Anna Cecilia, despite witnessing the death of their mother at the hands of their father. In mentioning this, the authors counter the traditionally cold asylum record with Anna’s voice. The dignity granted to Brown by the authors was a pertinent reminder of how we can counter narratives the dangerous stereotypes that continue to surround the mental health of Black people

Ltd, 2022), p. 29

51 Ibid, p. 4

52 Ibid, p. 5

in Britain today. Insanity is a consequence, rather - a symptom, of the world people are forced to exist in. For Brown, the double jeopardy of his experience of depression and insanity, and of being racialised as 'Black', made it even harder to exist in Victorian Britain, where attitudes of White European moral and intellectual superiority informed by pseudo-scientific racism and colonial control were developing. Despite this, the authors' in-depth exploration of more 'person-centred' and 'moral' (although we must critique this as paternal) therapeutic techniques available reminds the reader that the evolving social construct of 'race' and the pathologisation of madness were, and still remain, intertwined.

Despite some slight repetition in the main body of the work, Abraham and Woolf present their readers with an explorative collection of individual histories located in a period which was shaped by shifting definitions of 'race' and what it meant to be British. Offering both the 16 named individuals and the nameless a place in historical record, *Black Victorians* brings to the forefront why we should challenge the concealment of Black British history from the masses: in the name of dignity and agency.

Hannah Francis is a Trainee at the Runnymede Trust, a UK-based race equality thinktank. After completing an MRes in the History of Africa and the African Diaspora at the University of Chichester in 2021, they joined the Young Historians Project as a volunteer researcher. She is also a member of History Matters.



Ethiopianism

The Forgotten Movement

PAN-ETHIOPIAN CONFERENCE.

25 1900

This Conference of the
Association of
and will be attended
from all parts of
of America

African
Question,
a descent
States of
etc.

YOU ARE CORDIALLY AND INVITED TO ATTEND.

CONFERENCE

Danny Thompson

8.

Ethiopianism: The Forgotten Movement

Danny Thompson
(Iteroo Publishing, 2022)

Reviewed by: Claudia Tomlinson

This new publication by Danny Thompson, educator, creator, filmmaker, and additionally doctoral researcher in African and African Diaspora History, pursues a quest to put greater knowledge of Black British movements firmly on the map. In this task, he succeeds, but he moves beyond this to engender a real interest in this little known movement of Black resistance, that was active on British soil.

Ethiopianism was a Black Nationalist movement for the unity, liberation and

uplift of Black people, which was nested in the African Christian church movements in the USA, Africa, Europe and the UK. Ethiopianism was rooted in the church due to the organisations's stance towards Black people. Thompson succinctly informs us that 'Ethiopianist church movement grew out of Africans rejection of a European missionary education and its inherent colonial values and policies. This allied to a need for an alternative African centred spirituality⁵³'.

A new spirituality was sought by Ethiopianist activists which did not seek to subjugate and oppress Black people within the colonial and Eurocentric perspectives. Ethiopianism wanted a clear break from White supremacist philosophies spread by European church

⁵³ Danny Thompson, *Ethiopianism: The Forgotten Movement*, (London: Iteroo Publishing, 2022),p.7.

missionaries. Black people wanted a spirituality that also underpinned the rights of Black people. These rights included the right to name oneself, shape the spiritualism of Black people, and establish Ethiopia as the rightful spiritual home of all Black people.

Thompson provides good description of the historical and background to the movement from its roots in the late eighteenth century. He then moves through to consider its spread in Africa, and in Europe, and provides examples of the movement in Britain. This encompasses interesting analysis of how the movement was shaped in Britain, in the form of nineteenth century African student activism, African choral societies, the music and entertainment sector, and literature. There are many familiar names such as Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, Olaudah Equiano, and Phyllis Wheatley that readers

may be aware of. But Thompson sets their work into the context of Ethiopianism for a greater understanding of the existence of a coherent movement rather than disparate actors working in isolation. The book is based on substantial original research conducted by Thompson, and incorporates fascinating documents that informs and validates, but also are wonderful to behold.

Thompson also engages readers with the relevance of this research for today's contemporary position and draws parallels with growing interest in African spirituality, the Black Lives Matters movement. Above all, Thompson argues that this is a history that must be known rather than hidden as it currently is, because it is part of British History.

Thompson's work can undoubtedly benefit from an editor and proof-reader's touch, but

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

BLACK STUDENTS IN IMPERIAL BRITAIN

The African Institute, Colwyn Bay, 1889–1911

ROBERT BURROUGHS



Black Students in Imperial Britain

Robert Burrough
(Liverpool University Press, 2022)

Reviewed by: Kaitlene Koranteng

there is joy to be found in this passionate and direct book, for which the author must be applauded.

Robert Burrough's *Black Students in Imperial Britain* weaves a fascinating picture of the lives of Black children and young people who were enrolled to train as missionaries at The African Institute. The African Institute, as known as Congo House in Colwyn Bay, Wales hosted approximately 90 Black students from 1890 to 1911. While Burroughs states that the institute was by no means grand or prestigious compared to other missionary schools, his examination of The African Institute offers a stage from which we view shifting societal views in late-Victorian Britain.

The introduction provides a powerful start to an account of Black British History that feels excluded from mainstream narratives. Education in 20th-century Britain is identified as a mechanism by which Black students from across a global diaspora begin to congregate. Burroughs effectively draws out individual students' stories and highlights how their networks both within and outside the institute shaped "their journeys of

becoming as well as "being in imperial Britain".⁵⁴

Burroughs centres the students' lives unlike previous historiography. For example, we are introduced to the first two students of The African Institute/Congo House, Kinkasa and Nkanza, whose stories showcased the dubious ethics the Institute operated under - like many of the first students who came to the Institute they were vulnerable and young, making it easy for them to mould to the Institute's agenda. Unfortunately, both these boys died young and their stories are primarily told through the accounts of Reverend Hughes - despite this I feel that I was still able to have a good understanding of their lives at the institute, through Burroughs' analysis. The limitations of the archive are acknowledged, but regardless I believe we get a clear picture of the lives of the students. Burroughs refers to literature from archival studies, such as Stoler's *Along the Archival Grain*, which refers to the identification of patterns in archives - especially the absences. It is the interpretation and comparison of archival sources that allows the narratives to be strengthened.

The book is divided into two parts the first entitled "The Congo House" and the second "The African Institute". The structure of this book

54 Robert Burroughs, *Black Students in Imperial Britain* (London: Liverpool University Press, 2022) pp.26

serves as a physical distinction of shifting societal viewpoints during the institute's lifetime. The first chapter, 'Redeeming Souls: Recruitment and Evangelical Representation', is deeply unnerving as the perception of Africa as the 'darkest'

continent and the insidious pervasiveness of missionary work on the African continent is explored. This first chapter allows the audience to gain insight into the Eurocentric attitudes that allowed missionaries like the founder of the institute, Reverend Hughes to rationalise their actions. We are introduced to the young man James Kofele Mbesa, a Cameroonian student who entered the school in 1890, whose image graces the cover of the book. Burroughs offers his reflections on photography as a mechanism to understand the intended Victorian-era audiences and their attitudes to race, imperialism, and civilisation. This introduction sets the tone for the rest of the book as Burroughs interrogates the archival evidence and uses the perceptions of the students as a constant theme throughout this text.

While the African Institute is at the centre of this book; it is also starting point to explore the rich and varied contexts that young people of the institute drifted through. In Chapter 1, Burroughs uses sociological concepts like Marcel Mauss' thoughts of gift exchange and Adam Smith's reflections on gratitude become a pivoting point where students are accepted and praised as they remained humble and recognised the gift of enlightenment, they were receiving from Britain. Burroughs' inclusion of these sociological concepts allows the audience to contextualise both the acceptance and the rejection of students. The role of these concepts becomes necessary as the book continues to connect the expectation of gratitude with anti-blackness in 20th-century Britain.

I was also particularly interested in Burroughs' examination of Welsh attitudes to the training school that is explored in Chapter 3. The locality of the African Institute in North Wales allowed locals to construct an identity that subscribed to British imperialism. Hughes selected Colwyn Bay for its "purity" in contrast to city life and as a result, locals could boast of a cultural and religious superiority. The perception of the students by local people shows the complicated dynamics that are prevalent in this book, as a country that has its own colonial relationship with England and whose language, Welsh, was actively subjugated against.

This allowed locals to feel a very slight kinship to students at the institute, while simultaneously subscribing to a version of imperial Christianity created by England. Burroughs punctuates that sentiment with a quote from a speaker from an Annual Meeting of the Institute to emphasise this dichotomy. "[t]he civilisation of England was not much to boast of', great advantage might arise from bringing [the student] into the very centre of their Christianity, where the light of God shines".⁵⁵

The second half part of this book 'The African Institute', shifts the focus slightly from Colwyn Bay to examine the wider networks students formed beyond the institute. Education in early 20th century Britain is identified as a mechanism where Black students explored organisation, activism, and anti-colonial resistance. Burroughs' late-Victorian Britain. There is special attention on the of Pan-Africanism, Ethiopianism and associated political interventions that came from the activities of students who travelled from the colonies to Britain. Burroughs posits The African Institute, as a microcosm for the growth in collective Black identity and as an example of the social and cultural shifts on British soil. Ethiopianism is particularly central to Burroughs' analysis. Ethiopianism is defined by Burroughs as a movement that was not referring to Ethiopia specifically, but all of sub-Saharan Africa and its religious autonomy and solidarity. The increase of African religious autonomy was reflected in students arriving to the institute funded by their own sponsors in their respective countries, rather than fundraising from the institute itself and students tended to be much older than the institutes initial target age. Older students sought to prepare for further intellectual pursuits with many pursuing medicine or law, however sponsorship for individuals was not enough make up for the institutes dwindling funding.

The second section of the book also builds a case to evidence why the institute ultimately closed its doors in 1912. Burroughs refers to specific examples of incidents that caused the institute to be viewed more negatively by the public. Chapter 7, 'How these black "boys" must laugh!': Race and Recrimination', is a striking case study where we are presented with the story of Eyo Ekpenyon Eyo II, who attended the institute in 1893. The young Eyo travelled from Calabar, which is in modern day Nigeria, and petitioned his way to the Africa Institute/

55 Burroughs, *Black Students in Imperial Britain*, pp.59

Congo House. Eyo found himself profoundly unhappy and quite sickly in the cold winter climate. Despite the obscurity of the school, Eyo's return to Calabar was reported in many newspapers, with an unprecedented amount of ridicule. Burroughs uses Eyo's narrative to demonstrate an instance where British society felt a student rejected its gifts and returns the Mauss' and Smith theories around gratitude explored in Chapter 1. While this event seems the inconsequential overall history of the institute, Burroughs sees the event as a precursor for the circumstances that led to the institute's closure. Many viewed Eyo's departure from Congo House as an insult and created a temperament of a spoiled boy unable to appreciate what he was being offered – a rejection of their gift of British civility.

The smoking gun of the Institute's closure is a libel case that took place in 1912, dubbed as 'the scandal at Colwyn Bay'. This starts with John Lionel Franklin, a Grenadian who lived in Britain for several years as an actor, before joining the institute to pursue missionary work. Franklin became associated with the rumour of Institute students fostering children. Franklin, specifically was reported in a newspaper to be contributing to 'the ruination of white girls'. Burroughs reports that this rumour ruined the Institute's reputation and the founder Hughes, who attempted to file libel, which only revealed Hughes's poor governance and mismanagement of funds. *Black Students in Imperial Britain* is an engaging read and overall, Burroughs is successful in creating a work that explores a variety of complex histories held within the walls of the Africa Institute. The institute was ultimately an imperial tool, which positioned Britain as the saviour of Africa children, and the curriculum supported that. However, what is also seen is the possibility of education as a settler project in African countries and how it could foreshadow the future.

Kaitlene Koranteng is an archivist and poet. She has an MA in Archives and Records Management from University College London. Her poetry is a medium for exploring lived experiences and communicating truths that are often left unsaid. Her work explores hidden histories and marginalisation. She is currently working as the Archivist and Engagement Producer at Iniva; and a co-ordinator with Young Historians Project, as well as a member of the History Matters Editorial team.