

# HISTORY

# MATTERS



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SPRING 2022

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

# CONTENTS

## *Part 1: Editorial and Announcements*

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- 4 Editorial
- 5 Announcements

## *Part 2: Articles and Documents*

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- 9 2nd March 1981 - Black People's Day of Action
- 13 Exploring The Political Activism of Billy Strachan
- 17 The History Hotline
- 19 How Imperial Liverpool became an African city, and why it matters
- 36 Zainab Abbas: a snapshot of revolutionary activism
- 41 Cricket, oh Lovely Cricket, in Preston Where I saw it: The Story of Jalgos W.I. Cricket Club
- 58 The National Archives: Records in Focus

## *Part 3: Reviews*

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- 63 Belonging: Fate and Changing Realities

# **PART 1: EDITORIAL AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

## EDITORIAL: WELCOME TO THE SPRING 2022 HISTORY MATTERS JOURNAL

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who have contributed to the *Journal's* contents. We began this Journal back in Autumn 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. So it is with great pleasure that we present our fifth overall issue of the *Journal*, containing yet more groundbreaking and fascinating contributions. Thanks must be given to members of the *Journal's* Editorial Working Group, and to our honorary member Marika Sherwood. We are always striving to improve and expand the *Journal*, step by step, but its success continues to depend on your support. If you have suggestions, or constructive criticisms, please send them to us. If you come across historic documents, as well as other interesting historical material, or you have begun

working on a new area of research, let us know so that this information can be shared via the *Journal*. We are particularly interested in presenting shorter articles, as well as pictures, photos and other visual forms of information. As always, we are particularly interested in showcasing the work of young researchers.

In connection, we must also make it clear that this is not a strictly academic Journal. The *History Matters Journal* intends to showcase an inclusive and accessible range of research work. We are keen to hear from people who are conducting new and exciting research, whether within the academe, at a grassroots community level, or as a personal interest. 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](mailto:hismatters@gmail.com)

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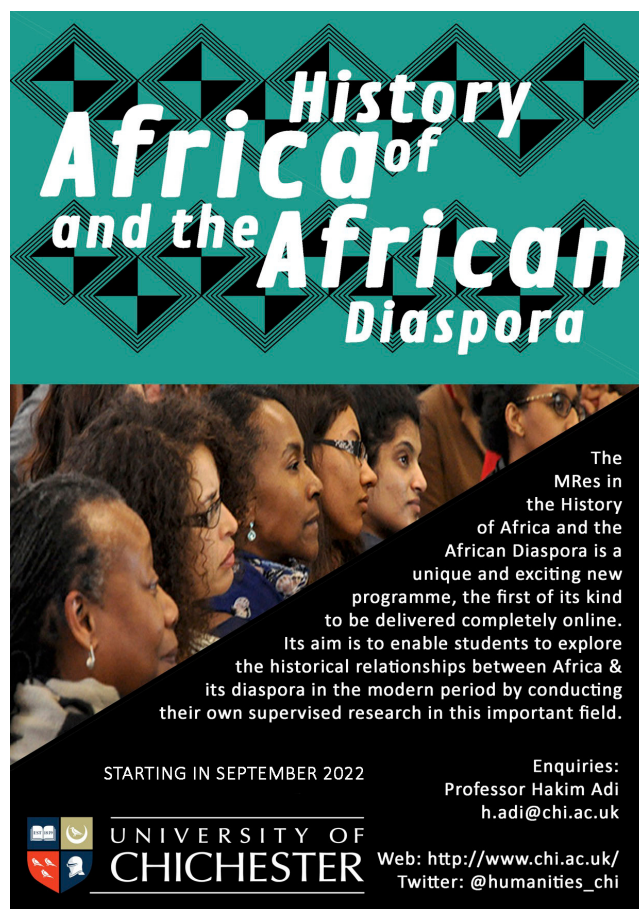
# ANNOUNCEMENTS: MRES: THE HISTORY OF AFRICA AND THE AFRICAN DIASPORA

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This course begins again in September 2022. For more information on the course and how to apply, visit the [MRes course webpage](http://www.chi.ac.uk/)

# ANNOUNCEMENTS: CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS: INSIGHTFUL BLACK HISTORY

## INSIGHTFUL BLACK HISTORY

Insightful Black History is an educational community project founded in August 2020 by Jessey Clarke. We produce short animated histories and biographies related to global Black history, with a particular interest in Black British history. We share the videos via our social media platforms (instagram, facebook, twitter, blackchat) initially, but they are also shareable via whatsapp, telegram, signal etc. Our videos are quite popular; a number of the US biographies we've produced have tens of thousands of views, and the least popular have been seen a couple hundred times on youtube alone.

Insightful aims to produce academically rigorous, cutting-edge historical research, which is also accessible and ideally enjoyable for Black people outside academia to learn from – we sometimes talk about doing 'history for your cousins' when we consider our target audience. We think of accessibility as in free to access and share AND easy to understand by anyone interested



enough to watch a ten minute video about the subject. Please see two of our videos [here](#) and [here](#).

We are interested in submissions about historical events, organisations, figures or a mix of all three. We want to animate Black histories which can inform, amaze and inspire. We love stories: we love untold stories, traditionally marginalised or sidelined stories, Black women's stories, queer stories, we love telling new, complex, little-

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known, or little-told stories. Do you have a historical Black story you'd like to share? Can you recount an episode in Black history in just under 1000 words? We're interested in Black stories large and small, in all places and all time periods. Have a look [here](#) to see the range of histories we've animated so far.

If you'd like to contribute to Insightful Black History, please send a 250 word summary outlining the story idea, a brief bio (max 150 words) and 2-5 lines about why you think Black people need this story to [kesewa.john@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:kesewa.john@ucl.ac.uk) with 'Script for Insightful Black History' in the subject.

If we agree the proposed story would work well as an animated history on our channel, we'll ask for an initial script of up to 1000 words. Please also include 3-10 images, especially photographs of key people or events, and a short bibliography for beginners to the topic if you are able to. We will collaborate with you to produce a final script to be narrated and animated.

Please note, scripts should not exceed 1000 words; our videos serve as topic introductions, they are not supposed to be the final word. We encourage viewers to do further reading with a short bibliography in the video description section.

We're a small community project run by volunteers dedicated to making Black history accessible.

If you enjoy our videos, please like, share and subscribe to our channels. We appreciate the support!

**Follow Us On:**

**Twitter** - @InsightfulBlack

**Instagram** - @insightfulblack

**Facebook** - @InsightfulBlackHistory

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# **PART 2: ARTICLES AND DOCUMENTS**

## 2ND MARCH 1981 - BLACK PEOPLE'S DAY OF ACTION

KEVIN WILLIAMS

In 1981, as a Goldsmiths Fine Art student I explored London's visual arts citadels, from the ICA, National Gallery and Tate to the Royal Academy, Museum of Mankind and Photographer's Gallery. My creativity, often a solitary affair, investigated history, culture and the centrality of race in my life's journey.

Unknowingly, I would soon to be swept along by a landmark, mass participation event following the New Cross Fire.

Just before dawn, on 18th January 1981, a joint birthday party, at 439 New Cross Road (literally a stone's throw from Goldsmiths College, part of the University of London), ended in disaster as a fire engulfed the house. Thirteen young Black British people, the majority of whom were teenagers, died. One survivor would die of suicide two years later and numerous others suffered lifelong, physical and psychological scarring. Many in the Black community

suspected arson, a criminal atrocity by the racist, far right National Front, who were known to be active and fuelling racial tensions in the area at the time.

Understandably, the fire tragedy resulted in much local anger and outrage, sentiments that spread rapidly beyond New Cross and London, to other major English cities. Considering such a dreadful loss of innocent lives, there seemed little action or empathy from the wider White population, the media, the upper echelons of British society and political authorities. That unreasonable behaviour, a cold indifference to what the community viewed as a racist, arson attack, led to accusations that the London Metropolitan Police were conspiring to hide the truth. A protest was organised called the Black People's Day of Action for 2nd March 1981. Compelled by an overwhelming sense of injustice and a visceral awareness

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that the Fire's youthful victims were my peers, I had to attend.

Riddled with nerves, I joined the protest, which convened on the morning of 2nd March 1981 in and around Fordham Park, the Moonshot Club and Pagnell Street, New Cross SE14. It was my first ever demonstration. Having purchased several rolls of Ilford film for my Olympus camera I began snapping away, documenting the unfolding events as the rally set off. All ages were represented: young men, middle aged matriarchs, mothers with children in buggies, elders, Rastafarians and uniformed school children.

One woman, wearing a colourful head tie, invoked passionately the support of gathering protestors, chanting "Thirteen Dead, Nothing Said", through a megaphone loud hailer. More restrained were several youthful church sisters, one carrying a large Bible in her right hand and another, quietly poised, holding a placard that read "New Cross Massacre, Police Cover Up". The uniformed police presence was heavy – officers strategically placed every two meters, escorting either side of the marchers - and hidden from view, I observed large cohorts on the side streets.



Woman chanting as the demonstration sets off - New Cross, 2nd March 1981



As I sought vantage points along the procession route for photographic opportunities, some smartly dressed, young men near Camberwell Green insisted I take their picture, yet other protestors were more wary. I encountered, intermittently among the masses, friends and acquaintances from my area of West London, who had also joined the protest. There was an energy and the tension was palpable. Etched into my memory would be that day's historic significance, as over twenty thousand Black people arose, empowered, and marched peacefully through central London.

The New Cross Fire and the demonstration on 2nd March 1981 were unprecedented events in the modern Black British narrative. The impact would be far reaching. In the immediate aftermath, a year of civil disturbances erupted in urban centres - starting in April 1981 in Brixton, then spreading to Toxteth (Liverpool), Handsworth (Birmingham), Moss Side (Manchester), Chapeltown (Leeds) and Bristol. Goldsmiths Final Year Fine Art Degree Show in the summer of 1982, witnessed the exhibition of my monochrome photographs, one person's record of the 'Black People's Day of Action'.



Church Sisters demonstrating - New Cross, 2nd March 1981

Over three decades later Historian David Olusoga wrote: "There was silence from the political class and a strong sense among black Londoners that the authorities were not interested in the deaths of black people". [1]

No one has ever been charged in connection with the murders. Forensic science would eventually establish that the fire started inside the house and inquests, in 1981 and 2004, recorded open verdicts.

#### **Victims of the New Cross Fire:**

**Andrew Gooding**  
(18.02.1962 – 18.01.1981)

**Owen Thompson**  
(11.09.1964 – 18.01.1981)

**Patricia Johnson**  
(16.05.1965 – 18.01.1981)

**Patrick Cummings**  
(21.09.1964 – 18.01.1981)

**Steve Collins**  
(02.05.1963 – 18.01.1981)

**Lloyd Hall**  
(28.11.1960 – 18.01.1981)

**Humphrey Geoffrey Brown**  
(04.07.1962 – 18.01.1981)

**Roseline Henry**  
(23.09.1964 – 18.01.1981)

**Peter Campbell**  
(23.02.1961 – 18.01.1981)

**Gerry Paul Francis**  
(21.08.1963 – 18.01.1981)

**Glenton Powell**  
(18.01.1966 – 25.01.1981)

**Paul Ruddock**  
(19.11.1960 – 09.02.1981)

**Yvonne Ruddock**  
(17.01.1965 – 24.01.1981)

**Anthony Berbeck**  
(17.08.1962 – 09.07.1983)

Kevin Williams is a former youth worker and teacher, with an extensive background in the British Childcare and Criminal Justice systems. An artist and writer, his focus explores African Caribbean heritage and Identity.

#### **NOTES:**

1. Olusoga, D. *Black and British: A Forgotten History* (London: MacMillan, 2016), p. 516.



# EXPLORING THE POLITICAL ACTIVISM OF BILLY STRACHAN

CLAUDIA TOMLINSON

The histories and contribution of important black individuals have remained hidden from the more prominent historical narratives. There is significant concern about the underdevelopment of the field of black British history, and the impact of this on attitudes, and perceptions about the status of black British citizens. This obscuring of these past histories also underpins some of the ongoing hostile and harsh treatment of black British citizens today. This is seen in the Windrush scandal where black people with a legal right to be in Britain were wrongfully labelled as illegal immigrants and deported. [1] This article considers the importance of Billy Strachan's life's work to Britain. His biography, written by David Horsley, has contributed to highlighting his considerable work for Britain.

Billy Strachan (1921-1998) was a leading black West Indian figurehead in the fight against racialised oppression in Britain for many decades.

He was a teenager in his homeland of Jamaica when the Second World War began, and he dreamed of travelling to Britain to become a fighter pilot for the 'Mother Country'. In reality, he would spend the rest of his life after the war, fighting what he deemed to be British and western imperialist and capitalist domination, and its oppressive and exploitative practices across the globe.

He was born William Arthur Watkin Strachan, and first arrived in Britain where he trained to be a fighter pilot in the RAF, and fought for Britain in the Second World War. He returned to Jamaica after the war with his family, but he eventually returned to Britain to study law. In Jamaica, he formed an association with David Lewis, a doctor from New Zealand, a member of the Communist Party, and it was through this friendship that he informed himself about communism, and he made the decision to join the Communist Party in Britain. [2] He spent the remainder of his life with a commitment to the

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revolutionary overthrow of capitalism and imperialism. Strachan was active in the fight against western colonialism, committed to eradicating it in all parts of the world, but he had the West Indies as his main focus.

He was a respected leader and prominent member of a number of organisations furthering these objectives. He was a founder member of the London branch of the Caribbean Labour Congress (CLC), and was elected as Secretary on a number of occasions. The CLC London branch was established in

1948, as part of the organisation established to unite trades unions and democratic political parties in the Caribbean fighting to achieve independence and democratic self-rule in the region.

The London branch specifically aimed to represent West Indian workers in London, increase awareness in the British Labour movement and the British public of the problems in the West Indies, and connect West Indians settled in Britain with the struggles for political emancipation in the region.



Billy Strachan, circa 1960

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Two other important organisations in which Strachan held leadership roles were the West Indies Committee (WIC), a section of the Communist Party of Great Britain, where he acted as Chair, and the British Guiana Freedom Association (BGFA), where he served as treasurer. He was also active in the Movement for Colonial Freedom (MCF), which later became Liberation. According to its Chairman, Fenner Brockway, it was formed in 1954 to 'champion the cause of the peoples in Africa, Asia, the West Indies – everywhere- who were claiming the right to govern themselves'. [3] Beyond this, Brockway described the MCF's struggle was against apartheid, neo-colonialism and race equality.

During the 1950s, Strachan was very involved in bringing attention to the situation of newly arrived West Indians who experienced racial discrimination on all fronts. Strachan set up a committee within the CLC London branch to address these issues, and organised and attended meetings across London on the matter. He lobbied Labour MPs on the issue, and wrote about it extensively in the *Caribbean News*, a paper he produced between 1952 and 1956, the first black British newspaper dealing with issues of independence, and equality. [4]

Strachan was an inspirational figure, a mentor, a highly valued political associate and friend to many leading politicians and activists who shared

his vision. These included Janet and Cheddi Jagan, Peter Blackman, Cleston Taylor, Trevor Carter, Dorothy Kuya, and Winston Pinder. [5] As important, he was part of an earlier and established presence for those political activists who started to arrive in Britain in the late 1950s and the early 1960s, such as Jessica Huntley and Eric Huntley, Lionel and Pansy Jeffrey, and John La Rose, who subsequently became part of the West Indies Committee. [6] He was steadfast in his commitment to the Communist Party of Great Britain, able to reconcile the heightened debates on whether class or race were the most important forms of oppression to liberate all peoples.

The papers of Billy Strachan are principally located at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies Library, at Senate House Library in London. [7] Evidence of his life and work, however, are evidenced in several other archives on black British and Caribbean history, and the archives of the Communist Party of Great Britain.

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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

#### NOTES:

1. Amelia Gentleman, *The Windrush Betrayal, Exposing the Hostile Environment* (London: Guardian Faber Publishing, 2020).
  2. David Horsley, Billy Strachan, 1921 – 1998, (London: Caribbean Labour Solidarity, 2019), pp.12-13.
  3. Fenner Brockway, 'Two Things I Ask', *Africa Freedom Day Programme booklet*, 1965, p.1. George Padmore Institute, 8. JLR/3/1/21 - Movement for Colonial Freedom (MCF) (later Liberation), 1965-1974
  4. Horsley, Billy Strachan, p.16.
  5. [1] *Ibid.*, p.28.
  6. Eric Huntley and Jessica Huntley, interviewed by Harry Goulbourne, 1992, Huntley Archive, London Metropolitan Archives, LMA/4463/F/07/01/001/C.
  7. Argula Rublack, 'The view from the "Motherland": Billy Strachan's fight for the Windrush generation', *Senate House Library Blog* (2021), <https://london.ac.uk/senate-house-library/blog/WindrushBillyStrachan> (Accessed, 25. 02. 2022).
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# THE HISTORY HOTLINE

DEANNA LYNCOOK

The importance of knowing and understanding the histories of Africa and people of the African diaspora is something I was taught by my parents at an early age. However, the education I received at home with my parents and what I learned at the supplementary school I attended on Saturdays greatly differed to the histories I was taught in school.

As I journeyed through secondary school selecting History at GCSE and A-Level, I began to educate myself on African-American history using books we had at home. The narratives of enslaved people such as Harriet Jacobs, Solomon Northup and Olaudah Equiano peaked my curiosity as I began to unravel the brutality, violence and callousness of the British Empire, through the transatlantic slave trade. These histories were accessible through films and books. However, there was a small issue from slavery to Civil Rights, the histories I was learning about were all concerned with America. This continued until the

final year of my undergraduate degree where I was able to select modules on Caribbean Intellectual History and Black British Literature.

A few years later *The History Hotline* was born. This was in part out of frustration for the lack of publicly accessible history on Black Britain and the Caribbean outside of books or journals. Motivation also came from the resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement in the UK, following the murder of George Floyd in 2020. It seemed there was a demand for the telling of these histories in a simple accessible format, and a podcast fit the bill.

The weekly podcast launched in August 2020. The first episode on the Mangrove Nine coincided with the trailer release for Steve McQueen's 'Small Axe' series, which started with the same story. Seventy episodes later the podcast has covered topics on events, individuals, and terminology relating to Caribbean, African, and Black British history.

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The podcast's audience ranges from young listeners who are keen to expand their knowledge, to older listeners who may have even lived through some of the events referred to. It has been used as a resource to support teachers who wish to diversify the knowledge shared in their own classrooms, and for workers across industries such as the healthcare system who may want to know more about the Black people that came before them in their field.

Whilst the podcast explores many different subjects in depth, it is also just an introduction into some of the topics that should be covered by the British education system. Whilst *The History Hotline* educates people on the things left out of school books, it also hopes to change what features in school books of the future.

The *History Hotline* is available on all good podcast platforms and episodes are released every Monday.



Deanna Lyncook is an incoming PhD History student at Queen Mary University of London. Her research takes a transnational approach to the experiences of West Indian children in the British education system in Britain and its Caribbean colonies, in the second half of the 20th Century. She is the host of the weekly podcast *The History Hotline* where she discusses events and individuals that have shaped Black history in Britain. She is also a member of the Young Historians Project, which produces projects that document neglected aspects of Black British History.

# HOW IMPERIAL LIVERPOOL BECAME AN AFRICAN CITY, AND WHY IT MATTERS

STEPHEN SMALL

During slavery the majority of Black people that arrived in Great Britain were from the West Indies, including the enslaved servants of plantation owners that brought them to Britain, as well as men and women that escaped slavery. Some people escaped slavery in what became the United States, and there were Black Loyalists that arrived from there after fighting for Britain in the US war of independence. Some Africans arrived in Britain too, especially male students from wealthy families. But they were tiny in number compared to West Indians.

The common 20th century story of Black people in Britain is primarily a story of West Indians too, especially during two world wars and the post-war arrival of Caribbean migrants who became known as the Windrush Generation. Many were women and most relationships and

marriages in Britain were between West Indian men and women, rather than inter-racial.

During slavery Liverpool shared this pattern with the rest of Britain. But after slavery was abolished in the 1830s the city began a divergent path. The composition of the Black population in Liverpool became different as did the economic and social circumstances that they experienced. From that time most Black people arriving in Liverpool were from Africa, especially West Africa. The vast majority were men and they established long-term relationships or married local white women. As the 20th century unfolded, the vast majority of families in the Black community in every other city in England involved two West Indian immigrants and their children. But in Liverpool the majority of Black people were

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African or of mixed African and white (overwhelmingly British-born) origins, and the majority of Black families were composed of white mothers and African or dual heritage fathers. In other words, while other major cities in Britain with a Black population became majorly West Indian, Liverpool became an African City.

In addition, economic conditions and unemployment in Liverpool were consistently worse, and the Black population became far more concentrated in one neighbourhood in Liverpool (that is, segregated) as compared with other cities. This means that while Black people in Liverpool in the 20th century shared some experiences with Black people

in other cities in Great Britain (including institutional racism and inequality) there were also marked differences with significant consequences. And that's why the unique history of Liverpool as an African city matters.

How and why did Liverpool become an African city? What particular forms did racism take in Liverpool? What does Liverpool's experience mean for our knowledge of Black Britain as a whole, especially for cities beyond London? And how should this history shape our demands for reparations for imperialism in West Africa beyond reparations for slavery in the Caribbean?



The first known picture of Black people in Liverpool, 1776 (Liverpool Record Office, Liverpool libraries)



The history of Liverpool reveals several distinctive features that mark it out as significantly different from other cities in Britain. The first issue is trade. British slavery made Liverpool the so-called slaving capital of the world, buying and selling African bodies by the millions [1]. After slavery was abolished in the 1830s Liverpool became the second city of Empire during which time it massively increased trade with West Africa. By the final decades of the 19th century Liverpool imperialists controlled 90% of West African trade [2].

Palm oil and palm kernels were the most valuable products, both of which were indispensable to British industry and the success of the second industrial revolution. Palm oil was used extensively in British industry and railroads, and palm kernels were used for soap, candles and margarine. Merseyside was the single biggest producer of all three and by the 1850s was responsible for more than 80% of soap exports from Great Britain [3].

There was also rubber and cocoa imported, and Liverpool exported thousands of tons of salt to West Africa. Some of the world's most profitable shipping lines emerged in Liverpool in the imperial period – Cammell-Lairds, Elder-Dempster, Alfred Holt's Blue Funnel Line and Samuel Cunard's luxury liners. Many did trade with West Africa.



Alfred Lewis Jones

Men that became rich during Liverpool slavery with the West Indies - such as the Tobin, Bold and Horsfall families – became even richer during imperialism in West Africa [4]. Others became rich for the first time during imperialism, like the Harrison, Hatton, Stuart and Tyson families. Alfred Lewis Jones became owner of the Elder Dempster shipping company which established a monopoly on trade with West Africa. He was described as the "Uncrowned King of West Africa". William Lever also attained unprecedented levels of international business success including in West Africa. He became far richer than Jones. Then there was the Holts (George Senior, George

Junior, Alfred and John). And the Lairds (John and MacGregor, and John's sons – John, William and Henry) . These men have been admired and lauded in Liverpool schoolbooks and by politicians and powerbrokers in the city for decades and generations. Many have statues, street names, buildings, portraits and university professorships in the city named after them [5].

The second issue is the origins of the Black community. The economic dynamics of Liverpool slavery had forced Africans into the West Indies and enslaved them, while keeping Africans arriving in England to a minimum. In contrast, the economic dynamics of Liverpool imperialism brought far more West Africans to Liverpool than ever before, and probably more than 95% of them men [6]. They were mainly working class or from poor backgrounds. There were also small numbers of Somalis, again mainly men. The biggest group was sailors on ships built by Cammell Laird and operated by the Elder Dempster Company.

The reason Liverpool ships had African crew had to do with white men's mortality on the African coast. West Africa after all was nicknamed 'the white man's grave'. When white men died the ships' captains recruited African men there rather than return with an incomplete crew. They were paid less than white men (more than 50% less after 1911),

and worked the most difficult jobs, often in the extremely hot engine room. Once in Liverpool they were often dumped unceremoniously so that white men could be taken on again. Ships then returned to the West African coast, more white men died, and new African crew were taken on. Some African men also arrived as stowaways, looking for better economic opportunities in Britain. We don't know the exact numbers, but it is likely over the decades that they were in the hundreds and possibly more. The truth is that African men came to Liverpool because Liverpool imperialists were in West Africa. In other words, African men, like Caribbean men and women later on, could just as easily insist 'we are here because you were there'.

Small numbers of African men – and even smaller numbers of women too - also arrived in Liverpool to take up studies. A tiny number stayed in Liverpool and for example, at the start of the 20th century the Ethiopian Progressive Association (EPA) was established at the University of Liverpool. Several men studied at Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine (LSTM) after it opened in 1898. But most of them moved on, for example, to universities in Edinburgh or London [7].

There is no reliable evidence on the exact number of Black people in Liverpool during this long period

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but there are some estimates. Black people in the city in 1919 were first estimated at around 5,000 but recent authors like John Belchem insist these numbers are exaggerated [8].

In the 1950s, Donald Manley (brother of Michael Manley who became prime minister of Jamaica in the 1970s) completed research for his PhD at the University of Liverpool.

He estimated that there were more African immigrants than West Indian immigrants, and a large number of Liverpool-born Blacks. (Its probably not correct to call them 'immigrants' as they were all British subjects of the United Kingdom and colonies under British law) [9]. Other researchers confirm these facts. By 1991 the census reported 2,400-3,000 Africans, 2,600-3,900 West Indians and 7,400-11,000 'black British' citizens in the city [10]. Most of the 'black British' population traced their ancestry directly to Africa, almost certainly West Africa, rather than to the West Indies.

West Indians also arrived in imperial Liverpool during this time with the largest numbers during World War I and World War II. For example, 345 West Indian male technicians were recruited to work in the Liverpool area in 1941-1945, of whom 80 remained on Merseyside [11]. My own father, Alvin Alexander Small, arrived in Liverpool in 1947 on the Ormonde. He was the only Black barber in Liverpool for many years. Several hundred West Indians arrived on ships like the SS Orbita and the SS Reina Pacifico in 1948 and the MV Georgic in 1949. Most departed the city. A handful of West Indians that arrived on the Empire Windrush in 1948 went to Liverpool, including Calypsonian and one-time manager of the Beatles, Harold Phillips (aka Lord Woodbine) and professional boxer Johny Hazel.

Their presence has always been felt, especially from the 1970s when Reggae and Rastafari become popular among young people in the



Young people being interviewed on TV after the racial disturbances in 1972

city. In fact, Black Londoners who visited Liverpool were surprised to find out that most of the young Black people who listened to Reggae music, had dreadlocks, wore red, gold and green colours, and studied in 'reasoning sessions' (Bible study) had names like Osu, Mendy and Mensah. Most also had African fathers and white mothers. Black Londoners had never seen or heard of such a thing in London [12].

The third issue is interracial relationships and marriage. With so few Black women in the city, Black men began relationships with local white women whom they had met in workplaces, pubs and social venues. This pattern had actually begun during slavery, again due to the demographic imbalance. Again, numbers are unreliable, but it seems the majority of Black men were in relationships with white women [13].

A fourth issue is the Liverpool-born population of mixed heritage. Numbers are again difficult to confirm, but many put people of mixed heritage as the majority in the Black community throughout the 20th century, and at least until the 1990s [14].

The couples in these relationships - and the children too - faced constant racist hostility. Working class white men verbally abused and often physically attacked Black men and white women walking together on the street or socialising in pubs. White women were called prostitutes and

faced abuse from their own families. Many men worked abroad for several months of the year, their white wives having primary responsibility for raising their mixed heritage children.

They faced abuse and opprobrium. The police said these relationships were 'immoral' and condoned or supported attacks on the Black men involved in them. Academics and power brokers also condemned them as 'unnatural'. The children were declared inferior, degenerate and confused. The most notorious accusations were published in two reports validated by the University of Liverpool. In 1924 Rachel Fleming was sent to Liverpool by the Eugenics Education Society. She declared the children to be in a 'deplorable' state. Her work led to the formation of the Liverpool Association for the Welfare of half-Caste Children [15].

Muriel Fletcher was recruited to conduct a survey and her findings were purely racist. John Belchem reports that Fletcher insisted the men in these relationships were promiscuous, 'ridden with sexual disease', violent and contemptuous of the white women they dated. And she alleged the 'half-caste' children found it impossible to be absorbed into respectable society. So, what was to be done? Fletcher recommended preventing 'coloured men' from coming to Liverpool and reducing their pay on ships. The flagrant racism in these publications has been revealed and discredited by Dr. Mark

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Christian who argues that Fletcher's report helped perpetuate the term 'half-caste' in the city. One example of this legacy can be found in the views expressed by the Chief Constable of Merseyside, Kenneth Oxford in the 1970s and 1980s. He called the Black community 'mongrels and half-castes' and alleged that we were the products of white prostitutes and transient African seamen.

It should also be noted that while all Blacks faced racism, there was particular contempt for Africans who were regarded as more barbaric, savage and uncivilised than the presumably more civilised West Indians. There is also clear evidence that African men – identified by their accent and mannerisms – faced more discrimination in jobs and housing than West Indian men.

A fifth issue is systematic racial segregation, a pattern established from the start and intensified after the year 1900. Until the 1940s Black people and white family members lived in Liverpool 1, close to Pitt Street and known as 'sailor town' [16]. From the 1940s, after bombing during the war, they moved up the hill to Liverpool 8, also known as the Granby Triangle. If Black people wandered outside either area they faced verbal abuse or physical violence [17]. Houses were splattered with racist graffiti. In schools children were subject to racist name-calling and told to go back to Africa. A special term of racist abuse was reserved for white women.

married to Black men - the 'n-word lover'. There were no jobs for Black men and women in the city centre or at Liverpool and Everton football clubs. And there was a 'colour bar' (a euphemism for institutional racism) in city centre nightclubs and bars. Even Lord Woodbine described the verbal and physical abuse he faced in the city centre. Racism like this happened every day and erupted in periods of economic stress, for example, during anti-Black riots after the first world war, then again in 1948

A sixth issue was the consistently poor economic conditions and high unemployment in the city. All city residents suffered, and Black people suffered most. Some were last hired and first fired - and even more were never hired - as unemployment among Black men and women was always two or three times higher than among whites. When the Windrush Generation began to arrive in 1948 very few of them stayed in the city. They sought better opportunities in London, Birmingham and close-by in Manchester [18].

Finally, members of the Black community held a vivid memory of trans-Atlantic slavery and its imperial legacies - especially legacies in Liverpool itself. This memory had been shared over decades, generations and even centuries. They knew the names of families that had gotten rich from slavery and imperialism. They knew that the impressive port and harbour structures were financed by

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slavery and imperialism. They knew that so many streets, statues and buildings, like Bold Street, Earle Street and Gladstone road, were named after the men that got rich from slavery. Black people had seen the images of Africans on city centre buildings like the Town Hall and at the Pier Head. They had seen statues of Christopher Columbus, Henry the Navigator and Charles Darwin at the Palm House in Sefton Park. They had clues that Canning Street, Huskisson Street and Gambier Terrace were part of Liverpool's colonial past.

There was also more awareness in the Black community of Liverpool's imperial impact in West Africa. They were actually living those legacies throughout the 20th century - and many clues were there for anyone that had eyes to see. African fathers

that worked for Elder Dempster spent months abroad at a time and when they came home brought food, music and cultural artifacts, and they shared stories about their home nations. Family members visited from Africa and Liverpool born-Blacks visited Africa too [19]. The names of prominent local families like Ankrah, Amoo, Bassey and Brown, Cole, Osu, and Ogunburo were clues too. An even bigger clue was the African nightclubs on Princes Avenue - the Sierra Leone, the Ibo Social Club, the Nigerian, Ghana, the Yoruba and the Silver Sands [20]. In fact, by the 1970s there were more African nightclubs in one area than anywhere else in the UK. Where else in England did clubs play so much music by Fela Kuti and Prince Nico Mbarga alongside Soul and Reggae? They began because of the colour bar in clubs in the city centre.



The Somali Club on Parliament Street (Ray Quarless/ Heritage Development Company Liverpool)

## Liverpool Imperialism in West Africa

British imperialism subjugated and exploited African labour and extracted raw materials in West Africa long after slavery was abolished in the West Indies. And Liverpool was at the forefront of it all. West Africans were forced to labour for exploitative wages, were denied opportunities to establish or own their own businesses and had few political rights. Hard labour in palm oil, palm kernels and rubber production sent thousands of Africans to an early grave. No Africans were allowed to supervise whites in businesses, shipping, medicine, the legal system or the military, no matter how qualified they were. A British tradition of racial segregation was widespread in housing, jobs, politics and social interactions, and racial segregation became official British policy in all of British West Africa in 1913. Racist practices were rationalised by state-sponsored racist ideologies and assertions of African inferiority, beliefs influenced by religion and by social Darwinism. In other words, this was slavery in everything but name [22].

Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine (LSTM), the first of its kind in the world, opened in 1898. LSTM preached good health for everyone but prioritised white lives over African lives. Funded by Alfred Jones and Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain, LSTM was designed to

turn the white man's grave in West Africa into the white man's garden for the production of raw materials with cheap and expendable African labour [23]. LSTM also practiced racial segregation. Liverpool museums acquired more than 2,500 artifacts from West and Central Africa, donated by Arnold Ridyard, chief engineer for Elder Dempster Shipping at the turn of the 20th century. Ridyard also donated one of the most well-known Benin Bronzes in the Liverpool collection, from the more than one thousand artifacts sculptured by indigenous Africans that were plundered by a British military force to the kingdom of Benin in 1897 [24]. This so-called Punitive Expedition was led by local Liverpool lad Admiral Harry Rawson, born and raised in Walton. As a reward for leading the Punitive Expedition he was named Knight Commander of the Order of Bath, and later became Governor of New South Wales in Australia. At the present time, in 2022, the African collections in National Museums Liverpool (NML) have more than 10,000 items.

The University of Liverpool (UoL) received significant funding, and political and social support, from Liverpool imperialist that had become rich in West Africa. For example, George Holt Junior gave tens of thousands of pounds, as did his wife and daughter after him. Henry Tate gave tens of thousands towards the construction of the Victoria Building. Thomas Harrison

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gave £10,000 for the permanent endowment of a chair of engineering. Donations came in from Lord Derby, E.K. Muspratt and many others. Buildings, memorials, professorships and lectures were named after these men, like the George Holt Building, the Holt Professor of physiology and the Alfred Jones Professorship of Tropical Medicine [25]. Liverpool-born William Ewart Gladstone, who became prime minister of Great Britain four times between 1868 and 1894, also got a building named after

him. His father, John Gladstone, received a payment of £106,769 for the loss of his human property when slavery was abolished, the equivalent today of between £10.2 million and £544.5 million, depending on how it is calculated [26]. In 2021, after years of protests, the Gladstone building was renamed the Dorothy Kuya building. And it's about time too. Dorothy Kuya was a Liverpool-born Black woman renowned for her lifelong commitment to racial equality.



Dorothy Kuya (bottom row, centre right) sitting next to Paul Robeson during his visit to Liverpool in 1948



## Resistance and resilience

Africans in Liverpool - and in West Africa - never accepted these injustices without a fight and they challenged domination and exploitation at every opportunity. For every act of oppression there was an act of resistance [27]. In West Africa they fought in battles and wars, resisted religious domination, and repelled attempts to undermine long-established traditions and families. In Liverpool they fought back against racist violence and formed families and communities for protection and reassurance. [28] A multitude of Black and multi-racial organisations were formed over the decades, like the Colonial Defence Committee, the Colonial People's Defence Committee, The African Social and Technical Society, the Convention People's Party and the Merseyside West Indian Association. [29] And many others based on nationality and ethnicity, like those of Nigeria and Sierra Leone, Jamaica and Trinidad.



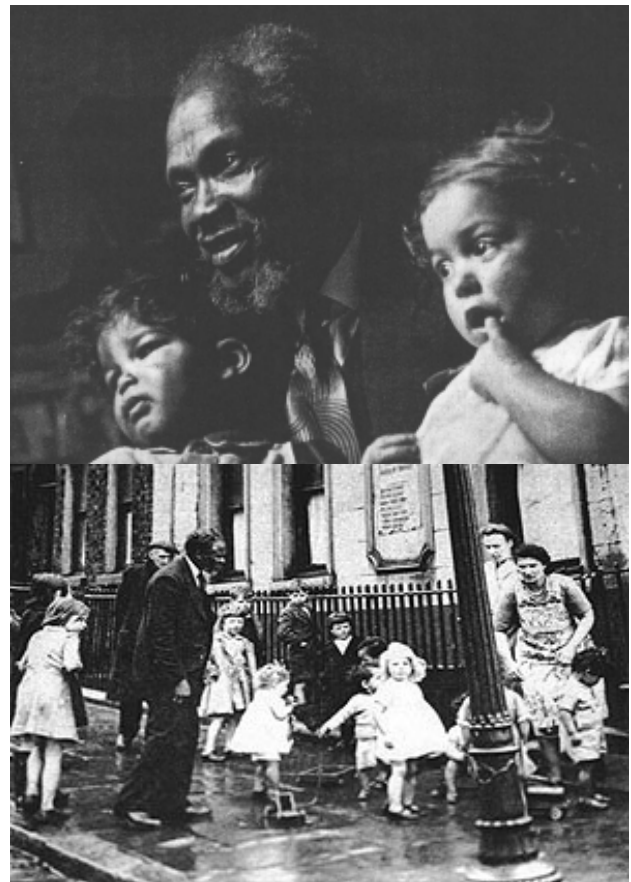
The Fifth Pan-African Congress, Manchester 1945

Most members of the Black community and their families just tried to live their lives, and they did what Black people across the country have always done – they reached out across the African diaspora for ideas, inspiration and support. As the so-called second city of empire, Liverpool was the main port of call for Africans travelling back and forth between the continent of Africa, Great Britain and the Americas. We know that Black people from Liverpool like John Archer were at the Pan African Conference organised in London in 1900 by Henry Sylvester Williams. Edward Wilmot Blyden, often called the father of Black nationalism, spent several months in Liverpool in the first decade of the 20th century. Beginning in the 1920s, members of the West African Students Association (WASU) and later on the League of Coloured People (LCP) visited Liverpool, like Ladipo Solanke and Harold Moody. Black people in Liverpool formed a branch of the LCP and hosted the 12th Annual General Meeting in the city.

Marcus Garvey - and separately later on, Amy Ashwood Garvey - passed through Liverpool, as did Nnamdi Azikiwe (first President of Nigeria) and Kwame Nkrumah (first Prime Minister and President of Ghana). We know that prominent anti-colonialists George Padmore and Ras Makonnen were in contact with people in Liverpool and reached out to them during the Pan-African Congress in Manchester in 1945 [30].

One man whose work needs to be far more widely known is Pastor Daniels Ekarte. He was born in Calabar, Nigeria and arrived in Liverpool in 1915. He opened the African Churches Mission (ACM) at 122-124 Hill Street in 1931. The ACM provided social and economic support to the poor and needy, including many children of mixed parentage. His efforts were constantly stifled, largely by racist opposition. Local welfare organisations usually rejected his pleas for help, while verbal abuse and rejection was the main response from local and national authorities. Harassment from the police and the Colonial Office was common. The head of the Anti-slavery Society (Sir) John Harris (Britain's self-appointed moral authority on all things to do with Africans) was mean and vindictive. Harris went out of his way to prevent anyone helping the ACM and informed the authorities that Ekarte was a 'vigorous beggar' [31]. Unsurprisingly Harris developed his attitudes towards Africans when he had been a missionary in Rhodesia and South Africa where he had advocated racial segregation.

Pastor Ekarte sought inspiration in the Bible, and he reached out to other Black people across the city, the nation, and in Africa. Nnamdi Azikiwe knew Ekarte and sent several of his brethren to stay at the ACM. Ekarte met pan-Africanists like George Padmore and received financial support from them; and he met Harold Moody. Ekarte interacted



Pastor Daniels Ekarte with some of the children he looked after at the African Churches Mission

with people in WASU and was in contact with the organisers of the pan-African Congress in Manchester in 1945. He met Paul Robeson in St George's Hall in 1948, and Dorothy Kuya was at that meeting too. Ludwig Hesse, an active pan-Africanist and Dorothy's mentor, was certainly there too, because he helped organise the visit by Robeson. The endless struggles to keep ACM open wore down Pastor Ekarte. Tired and demoralised he died in 1964 and was buried in Allerton Cemetery. Marika Sherwood has written an outstanding book about him. A lot more needs to be done to commemorate his life and contributions.

Clearly Black people have had a hard time in this city, but it would be a mistake to believe our lives were nothing but resistance. Black people did not allow every moment of our daily existence to be shaped by racism. There were frequent moments of camaraderie, happiness and joy, and many inter-racial friendships with friends, colleagues and local white people. Besides, so many of us had white people in our families ourselves. We lived our lives, pursued our hopes and dreams with whatever ways and means we could find. Just as we do today [32].

## Conclusion

British slavery transformed the village of Liverpool into a town and British imperialism transformed the town into a city. Liverpool's triangular trade with West Africa and the West Indies made many men in Liverpool rich; and its imperial bilateral trade with West Africa made many more men far richer. Liverpool slavery brought some Black people from the West Indies into Britain and Liverpool imperialism brought far more West African men into the city. The preponderance of African men led to long-term relationships and marriage with white women, which in turn led to a large population of mixed African and white origins. Racism against these families is well-documented throughout the city's history and Black families were always segregated into one confined neighbourhood. Major institutions

like LSTM, UoL and Liverpool museums were complicit in racial discrimination - both in West Africa and in Liverpool. This included promoting racist ideologies, direct discrimination, the plundering or acquisition of precious artifacts and the production of colonised knowledge and education. When the Windrush Generation began to arrive very few stayed in Liverpool because of its poor economy and high unemployment. Black people in Liverpool developed an acute awareness of Liverpool slavery and the West Indies they also have a significant awareness of Liverpool imperialism and West Africa. This is how Liverpool became an African city in the 20th century while every other major city in Great Britain became a West Indian city. And that's why the history of Liverpool matters.

Black people in other cities had similar experiences, but not to the same extent or with the same intensity or packed into one segregated neighbourhood as happened in Liverpool. Nor was the significance of imperialism in West Africa, nor the continuous presence of West Africans – especially those married to white women - so impactful in other cities. During the 20th century, Black people in other cities had strong impressions or memories of slavery and its legacies in the West Indies, but not so many images or impressions of its impact in London, Bristol and Birmingham. That was mainly because they had not been present in those cities as

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long as Black people in Liverpool, and because the visible manifestations of these legacies were not so obvious or known about in those cities either. That is why Liverpool is such a racial anomaly in the experience of Black Britain.

At present, we still don't know enough about the who, what, when, where and why of Liverpool as an African city. But we do know that many documents and accounts written by Black people exist and these need to be identified and brought into discussion, so we no longer need to rely on the colonised education taught in Liverpool and British schools. And fortunately, these issues are being researched right now. Better late than never.

Information about imperial Liverpool's experience and legacy as an African city has not been central to Black protests across Britain; and this information is missing from current debates on reparations for slavery. In part that's because of the preoccupation with Liverpool and slavery (rather than imperialism); in part it's because so much of the information has only become known about in recent decades. And in part it's because of the oversized role of London as the capital of Empire, and the fact that there are far more Black people in London than any other city. The overwhelmingly focus on London has drawn attention away from Liverpool, and also from most other cities in Great Britain. That needs to change.

Consideration of Liverpool as an African city is important because it will enable us to create a far more comprehensive account of Black Britain. And imperial Liverpool reminds us that some of legacies of imperialism are more important than legacies of slavery. Just think about British involvement in Egypt as a result of the Suez Canal in the 1860s. Think about the Berlin conference of 1884/85 and the so-called scramble for Africa that eventually led to the creation of African nations across the continent. Think about the creation of the

British commonwealth in 1930s, much of it arising from negotiations with the so-called white dominions – Canada, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand. The Windrush generation is an imperial development and exists only because of Britain's labour needs in the 1940s and 1950s. The point is that while imperialism is a direct legacy of slavery, imperialism created its own legacies. As we decolonise knowledge production and education and as we make demands for reparations for slavery, imperialism and its legacies need to get far more attention than they have so far.

Today we live with the legacies of British (and Liverpool) imperialism just as we live with the legacies of British (and Liverpool) slavery. But while we hear demands for reparations for slavery in the Caribbean we don't hear as many demands for reparations for

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reparations for imperialism in West Africa. It's time to change that. The political domination, economic exploitation and social subordination of Africans during slavery was matched by similar patterns during imperialism in West Africa. We need a more accurate, more comprehensive and more inclusive analysis of slavery and imperialism, if we are to make more complete and inclusive demands for reparations, reparatory justice and decolonising knowledge and education.

### Acknowledgements

My sincere thanks to Jimi Jagne for his insightful and comprehensive feedback on this article and during out frequent discussions. I appreciate his knowledge and his attention to nuance and detail. We also share a sense of humour.

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Small's most recent book is *20 Questions and Answers on Black Europe* published in 2018. His next book is entitled: *Inside the Shadows of the Big House: 21st Century Antebellum Slave Cabins and Heritage Tourism in Louisiana*, to be published by University Press of Mississippi in 2023. He is currently writing a book on Black Culture in Liverpool in the 1970s-1990s to be published by Liverpool University Press. Small was born and raised in Liverpool – the city with the nation's longest-standing Black population.

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## ZAINAB ABBAS: A SNAPSHOT OF REVOLUTIONARY ACTIVISM

A.S. FRANCIS

Zainab Abbas was born in 1950 in Middlesbrough, northeast England, to Egyptian parents. For her and her family, life in a small, poverty-stricken northern town in the post war period was extremely tough. Racism loomed large on their daily lives. As a young woman, Zainab escaped the constraints of her hometown and joined the Black Power movement, working with organisations in Birmingham and London. Her contributions to the Movement included teaching at a Supplementary School in Handsworth, representing as part of the British delegation at the 1974 Sixth Pan-African Congress in Tanzania, being a central member of one of Britain's most significant Black Power organisations – the Black Liberation Front, and helping to lay the groundwork for the development of the Black women's movement.





With the retreat of revolutionary politics from the fore, the landscape of Black activism is much different today than during the height of the Black Power movement in the early 1970s. As Rosie Wild put it, “Black Power passed over Britain like a comet: an intense burst of fiery energy followed by a diminishing trail of fragments and activity”. [1] But Zainab has remained committed to Pan-Africanist, anti-racist and anti-imperialist activism into the present day. She should also be recognised for her role in ensuring Britain’s Black Power movement isn’t forgotten. Below is a summarised testimony of her experiences growing up in Britain, her time as a Black Power activist, and the women who have inspired her throughout her life. This testimony was captured during a series of interviews about Zainab’s experiences of activism, with Hakim Adi and A.S. Francis of History Matters:

**Interview extract:**

My mother came to Britain via Palestine. And I never got to the foundation of the whole story. But, what I understood is that she was doing political work with the Palestinian resistance. I lost my father when I was very young, and my mother raised five out of six of us - because my youngest sister died - as a single parent in the North of England. It's a complicated story but an interesting one in the sense that she was very inventive. I've always had a great deal of respect all my life for my

mother. She was the most amazing woman especially when you consider the time. She rented our house and opened a restaurant in what would have been our living room. She then managed to open a proper restaurant cafe which again was successful. But that brought out the bad part of those times and that area, as she ended up having to pay protection money to the police. She didn't need protecting, but they decided that was their way of making a quick buck'. [2]

The first day of school was just awful. People, kids, young, very small kids were spitting at us [me and my brother]. It was a very strange experience, I couldn't understand what was going on. But my big sister, who is an amazing woman, was very protective. I liked school, I liked learning. I was academically inclined if you like. I loved books, so it was an exciting time. But the teachers weren't very nice. I have a picture of me at school, it's a picture of early years. And there's this one little Black face with all these white kids. In this picture, we're all trying to smile and I'm trying to smile. But prior to that picture being taken, my teacher got my hair and literally pulled it. Because she said it looked messy and disgraceful. [3]

**After finishing school, Zainab moved first to attend university in Hull, and then made her way to Birmingham where she became involved in Black Power organising:**

By going to Birmingham, you just

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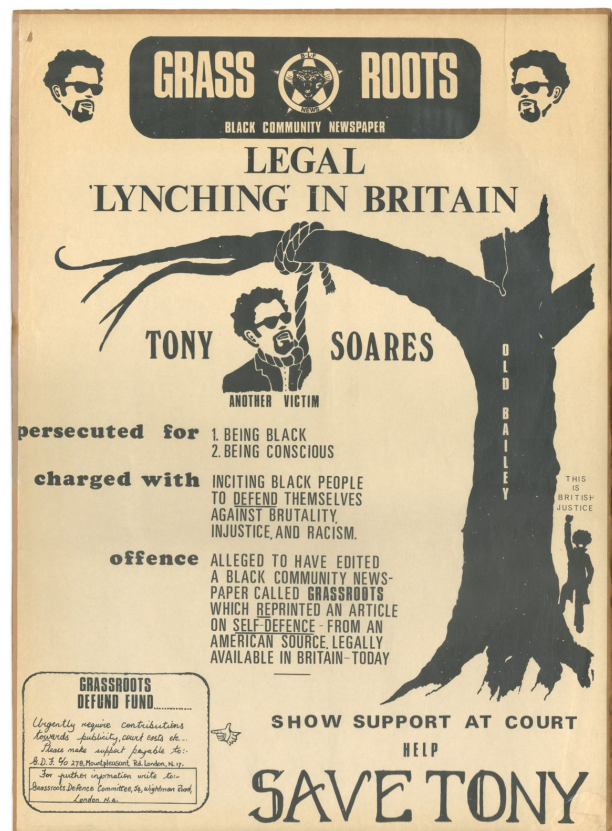
walk around, and you see all these black folks. It was really nice. And then I discovered that there was a particular area where loads of black people hung out: Handsworth. And I went to Harambee which was then run by Maurice Andrews and John Betchman. Harambee house was a housing unit for young black people. But it was also a centre where people would meet up. And we started the Saturday school, all of us started the Saturday school together. I taught math. Then there was Afro Caribbean Self-Help Organisation, which was more political, and that was run by Bini Brown. And he was very much into self-defence martial arts. Then there was the Panthers, next to Afro Caribbean Self-Help organisation. And they were producing a newspaper, organising demonstrations when there was something to demonstrate about and stuff. For me, Birmingham was wonderful, because it felt so secure.' [4]

Zainab moved to London in 1972, where she became a member of the Black Liberation Front, and a founding member of the Brixton Black Women's Group in 1973. Her family had also moved to London to escape police harassment in Middlesbrough:

My brother was beaten many years earlier by the police. He was thrown in front of a bus. So my mum moved down, she did a council house swap and moved down to London. And so I

had my mum and my siblings. I liked the look of the Black Liberation Front because it had people like Tony Soares, and people like Ansel Wong, Gerlin Bean, and me. I was an African, that was unusual to be part of a black organisation. The basic tenets of capitalism were everything we were against. We were for the redistribution of wealth. We were for justice around the world, and imperialism and colonialism were rampant still. [5]

I think there was some event in Brixton and I went there and met Gerlin Bean first. And then I met



Save Tony' campaign poster, BLF's *Grassroots* newspaper (1972)



Gerlin Bean, *Shrew* magazine (1971)

Olive Morris, she was very dynamic around new people, and she invited me to go and live with her on Railton Road. There were three bedrooms, but it was a squat, we weren't paying. It was me and Liv Obi who stayed with her. We were all mentored by Gerlin. Every one of us. There's no doubt, that 10-11 year age gap between her and us meant that she was much more conscious on feminism, and the issues surrounding black women. So she could lead debates and stuff. The Brixton Black Women's Group was set up because Gerlin said we should talk about issues relating just to black women. And she got a group of us together. And we discussed issues related to feminism, defining feminism overall, and what it was about and then defining it in relation to black women, and then in relation to our own experiences. [6]

**In June, 1974, Zainab travelled to Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, to attend the Sixth Pan-African Congress:**

The BLF decided to send a delegation to the Sixth Pan-African Congress. it was me, Gerlin and Ansel from the BLF. But the whole British delegation would meet up every day and discuss what was happening at the conference and what we could participate in. It was an important time for me personally. I think it made black politics more conscious of what was going on in Africa. The speech that the British delegation gave, we wrote the night before. Everybody that was part of the British delegation sat down and decided what we were going to say, at our moment of glory at the 6PAC. And, at the last minute, we added a bit about the recent IRA bombing of the Houses of Parliament. So, understanding how history develops teaches us that things often happen by accident, they're not always logical...

**The Sixth Pan-African Congress was significant for a number of reasons, but not least because it included the largest number of women delegates in the history of Pan-African Congress organising. It also represented a high point for Britain's Black Power movement, and led Zainab and her then husband Emile, to set up a publishing house: Kalahari Publications. They published various Pan-African books including *Resurgence of Pan-Africanism*, and *The Battle of Destiny*.**

A.S. Francis is a PhD student at the University of Chichester, researching women's involvements in Britain's Black radical organisations during the 1960s-1980s, and the development of a Black women's movement. Francis's working thesis title is "All Power to the Sisters - and Power to all!": A History of Britain's Black Women Radicals From 1965-1985. Francis is also consultant to the Young Historians Project, and member of History Matters

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# CRICKET, OH LOVELY CRICKET, IN PRESTON WHERE I SAW IT: THE STORY OF JALGOS W.I. CRICKET CLUB

STEPHEN POLEON

This article's name is an adaptation from the title of Lord Kitchener's Victory Calypso. Written in the aftermath of the West Indies defeat of England in the second test at Lords, the home of cricket in 1950, this song venerates two young bowlers on their maiden tour. Those two pals Ramadhin and Valentine. Their exploits overshadowed the efforts of the three W's, Worrell, Weekes, and Walcott. The latter in the second innings achieved 168 runs not out. [1]

Worrell was responsible for despatching England's Wardle thus ensuring that the West Indian cricketers had completed a momentous triumph winning by 326 runs. As the final English wicket fell, the hushed tones of Lords would never be the same again. Scenes of unbridled passion and joy never witnessed at Lords before spilled over onto the field of play. Armed with an

assortment of impromptu instruments, it seemed like a carnival was taking place. [2] This was just the culmination of what was building all throughout the match itself.

Flamboyantly dressed West Indian supporters in zoot suits, dungarees and scarlet jockey caps built a steel band in the stands and beat out time on dustbin lids. One enterprising supporter showed his support by scraping away on a cheese grater with a knife. The famed calypsonian Lord Kitchener composed numerous calypsos during the course of this pulsating game. Following the West Indians now infamous victory, and after failing to reach their heroes who had retired behind a police line to the safety of the pavilion, Lord Kitchener led the fans on a victory jig around the cricket ground. [3] The purists would exclaim that these unprecedented yet jubilant scenes

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were simply not cricket!

Coined during the Victorian era, this phrase denotes ungentlemanly conduct, immoral or despicable acts or improper behaviour. [4] Being a gentleman's game traditionally favoured by the higher echelons of society, cricket is governed by a code. Fair play is the order of the day. The Umpire's decision is final. Teams must be magnanimous in victory and gracious in defeat. In the colonial context this was used to inculcate and control what the British overlords saw as inferior minds. This somewhat backfired, by the turn of the twentieth century, not only had cricket become an obsession throughout the length and breadth of the British West Indies. It also served as a vehicle for political change. A diverse collection of islands with differing outlooks and identities became united in their desire in beating their colonial masters thus demonstrating colonial progress. [5]

This evolution was confirmed when the West Indies defeated England at Lords in the second test of 1950. Moreover, it provided succour to their fans whilst, not caring a jot about sporting etiquette, did require their cricketing idols to uphold it. [6] It is highly likely that the majority of these fans were ex-servicemen having previously experienced a sense of British fair play during the previous war. Sans uniform however, they were in for a rude awakening. [7]

Garry Steckles highlights the cold, damp, grey, harsh unwelcoming atmosphere complete with unimaginative culinary fare that greeted West Indian migrants as they disembarked the SS Empire Windrush in 1948. [8] Most of what is highlighted here was to be expected. England had not changed much over the course of a couple of years. It was still a mostly conservative and inherently racist society. Despite the London Evening Standard newspaper headline welcoming Windrush passengers home, one of the newspaper's reporters wrote that the official government welcome was akin to that afforded to an unwanted weekend visit from one's mother-in-law. [9] The epochal West Indian victory over England at Lords in 1950, and the establishment of local West Indian cricket clubs in diverse places such as London, Bedford, Birmingham, Bristol, Ipswich, Leeds, Nottingham, Northampton, Manchester, and Sheffield, and many more towns and cities across the country provided respite from the harsh reality of life in England.

Preston in Lancashire played home to three West Indian cricket teams. This article will provide an insight into the development of the first team, Jalgos W.I. Cricket Club which was founded in 1962. It will illustrate how a small group of Caribbean cricketers' efforts served to transform this community.

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Preston Guild (1952)

The 1972 Preston Guild celebrated the Caribbean community presence in Preston by noting how the community added gaiety to the streets and brought their adventurous spirit to the town's cricket fields. Preston Guild dated back to 1179 when Henry II granted Preston the right to have a Guild Merchant. A great display of civic pageantry this event held once every twenty years is an official celebration of life in Preston. The inclusion of the town's small but vibrant Caribbean community maybe be seen as an official welcome. This welcome hid the experiences most West Indians suffered in Preston.

On Fishergate Hill in the vicinity of the train station, it was clear to see there would be no warm welcome. Signs in the windows of houses along the street saying 'No Blacks No Dogs

No Irish' was one of the first sights greeting arriving migrants. Some people were lucky enough to have family or friends to stay with whilst others moved into a house where it was not uncommon for up to forty people sharing cramped conditions. As all the factories and mills operated on a shift basis so did the sharing of beds. As one person left for work another would occupy the departed bed. In other houses with the landlord or landlady in situ, cooking facilities consisted of a stove on the landing where residents would have to wait in line to cook their respective family meals. Other homes would become the venues for a burgeoning social scene.

This club has its roots in the blues party's scene. Despite plans in 1957 to create a social club for foreign workers in Preston there was no real

social scene to speak of. [10] Whilst the town had a reputed 365 pubs and an assortment of dancehalls, West Indians were only welcomed at the Regents Ballroom on Tithebarn Street. Moreover, the English pub was an alien concept to West Indians, who when back home would often drink at home or whilst sitting on a stool in the rum shop. In England the practice of buying a bottle of rum, or any spirit for that matter to share with your friends was an alien concept. West Indians had no other recourse than to socialise amongst themselves. [11]

A front room, a Bluespot radiogram and some reggae and blue beat records were the prerequisites that ensured parties like this occurred anywhere the Caribbean diaspora in England resided. Held on Saturday nights in various parts of Preston these parties were jam packed with party goers. Like the exploits of the national cricket teams these parties provided an escape from the harsh realities of everyday life. England did not have an official legally binding colour bar, yet it was omnipresent. Although not as vigorous as American racism, prejudice existed in various guises. [12]

Gladstone Afflick, the inspiration behind Jalgos noted how Prestonians were full of smiles and welcomes it was outsiders from Wigan and Blackpool who caused trouble for West Indians in Preston. Teddy boys from these neighbouring towns came to Preston swinging belts and chains

threatening and telling them to go back home. That is not to say that racism was not alive and well amongst some Prestonians.

In January 1959, Woodley Wiltshire, a Dominican who owned a terraced house in Preston's Oxford Street received a threatening note signed KKK. A few weeks later his house was set on fire. [13] Justin Morelese, a founder member of Jalgos is on record stating he personally experienced very little racism. [14] However, when Jalgos were searching for a clubhouse in 1962, the person responsible for letting the rooms used by the West Indian cricket team discovering that he was dealing with a group of black men, charged an extortionate rent with an equally avaricious £200 deposit. [15] Racism as Gladstone Afflick would soon find out came in various forms.

Gladstone came to Preston in July 1960 as soon as he finished college in Jamaica. It was his intention to study medicine however, when applying for a place on a course at Preston Polytechnic he was informed his qualifications were not good enough and was advised to take a foundation course. [16] The reality of course is more likely the colour of his skin was a barrier to educational advancement. An educated and intelligent young man he had no choice but to accept a menial job in Horrocks Mill on Stanley Street. Playing cricket in Avenham Park with some friends after work was an important outlet. One of those

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friends was fellow Jamaican Lewis Walker.

An apprentice electrician working on Royal Mail Line boats in Kingstown Jamaica, Lewis arrived in Preston to live with his elder sister in the summer of 1962. He enjoyed his job and was reluctant to come to England. Having no real choice in the matter he decided to make the most of his opportunity, find work in his trade, save for a few years, and go back home. One of the easiest options available would have been to seek employment in one of the local mills or factories. They were well known for employing foreign labour however, he wanted to carry on learning his trade. Unfortunately, by virtue of leaving his employment in Kingstown and making the two-week

journey to Preston he was deemed to have broken his apprenticeship. As a result, he found it difficult to gain employment as an electrician. Possession of a valid union card was a prerequisite for finding a skilled job. The unofficial colour bar operated by some union branches came into play.

After finding out that the local union had a bimonthly meeting, Lewis had to apply in writing to the union. He dutifully attended the following meeting, sat through the entire agenda when the committee asked him to leave the room whilst they considered his application. The outcome of this consultation was that the union would give him a card if he could find a willing employer. A nine-month search for a willing employer ensued. A small employer



Jalgos Cricket Club

In the Caribbean, cricket is a way of life. [17] Here it is played with a skilful elegance, investigated with an extreme scholastic verve, each and every game, no matter how big or small is subjected to the most in-depth and passionate post-mortem. Young boys scatted across all Caribbean islands conducted cricket matches in yards, fields and beaches acquiring the skills that would enable the West Indies to dominate world cricket for many generations. [18] An informal conversation with a former Jalgos cricketer, revealed that boys used to play regularly on their way to school or too and from the market whilst running errands for their parents. Schools across the Caribbean held inspections every morning, and God help any child found to be in an unacceptable state. [19] The school yard during recess every day was also transformed into various cricketing arenas.

Dominican Julius Prevost, a member of Jalgos great rival Caribbean Club CC, recalled his school playing days.

It was as a youth he like thousands of boys across the Caribbean learned the rudiments of cricket. A childhood game called who got it bowling was played by Julius and his schoolyard friends. It was a rough and ready game where a batsman faced a bowler. If the bowler was successful, he went into bat to face the next challenger. Each individual player was looking out for themselves and honed their skills.

Outside of school coconut bats and oranges and limes were utilised by

thousands upon thousands of boys throughout the Caribbean. [20] This form of play performed by successive generations ensured that the form of cricket transported by the British during the nineteenth century, was transformed and now had a distinctly Caribbean flavour. This form of cricket travelled across the seas from the Caribbean to England. [22] It first made an appearance in league cricket in Preston in 1963.

Prior to joining the Preston and District Cricket League, Jalgos W. I. was simply a bunch of young Jamaicans, living in Preston who whilst playing for various work and league teams, met up to play their beloved game on Avenham Park. [23] In 2012, founding member and then Chairman Lewis Walker, wrote that it was noted that these lads were really good players. A meeting was called where it was decided to apply to join the local league. The team was founded in 1962 and played their first league match in 1963. He notes how in later years, the success of the team drew in other members and provided them a vital outlet away from getting into trouble with the police.

The achievements of the cricket team ensured a meteoric ascent from the third to the first division on Moor Park. They were accompanied by a vibrant and vocally encouraging crowd. [24] This, however, is only a partial telling of the creation of Jalgos.

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Preston Cricket Club Ground

The decision to form a team came about through a conversation held with Mr. Heaton the proprietor of Heaton's newsagents on Stanley Street. Gladstone Afflick, working in the packaging room at the nearby Horrockes Mill, a job which he detested had two simple pleasures to get him through the day. The thought of smashing a cricket ball as far as it would go, and the chance to read the Daily Mirror on his break. It was whilst buying his paper at Heaton's, that Mr. Heaton, a committee member of the Preston and Amateur District Cricket League, suggested that the Jamaicans formed a team and applied to join the league. It was at this juncture that a decision was made to call a meeting to form a team. The meeting was held at 172 London Road in Preston. Gladstone lived here with his aunt and Uncle.

After deciding to form a team the issue of a name arose. A dozen names were suggested and put into a hat.

One of the names suggested was Ajax in tribute to the great Dutch soccer team, Ajax Amsterdam. The other was of course Jalgos, which derived from Nalgos, a local government team in Kingstown Jamaica. Justin Morelese, who was responsible for the Jalgos name explained as the attendees were all Jamaican, he simply changed the N for a J to reflect this. It of course gave rise to the myth that Jalgos was established solely for Jamaican benefit in Preston.

This is not true, the Jalgos blazer made by Burtons Menswear illustrates the true meaning of Jalgos. A maroon blazer reflecting the colour of the West Indies cricket

team with an umbrella over the J in Jalgos was representative of all the different Caribbean islanders residing in Preston. Costing £50 in 1962, this blazer was created after a decision was made to allow Jalgos to join the Preston and District Amateur Cricket League. Following the meeting Gladstone Afflick's uncle, himself an Umpire in the league encouraged his nephew to hand deliver the application to League Secretary's home in Fulwood. This application was delivered by hand and after posting it through the letterbox, a reply was anxiously awaited.

An invitation to attend the next committee meeting arrived in due course. The newly formed team also had a new member. Several days after officially forming Gladstone was purchasing equipment in Cunningham's Sports shop in Church Street. He met Dominican Ian St Louis, who had recently arrived in Preston. Seeing another Caribbean arrival Gladstone asked did he play cricket? It may seem like a dumbfounded question given the devotion to cricket in the Caribbean, however, not all islanders played cricket.

Preston youth worker and Lune Street Methodist Church member John Daley from Montserrat, who himself would play a role in the Jalgos story, had no interest in sports. [25] Ian St Louis, an accomplished fast bowler became the last founder member. The ethos of the club

welcoming members from all the Caribbean islands remains true to this day. The cricketers however, now had to nervously await the outcome of the league meeting to see what their fate would be?

This meeting was attended by Justin Morelese whilst the remaining team members waited across the street. At the end of the agenda a vote was taken in relation to admitting Jalgos to the league. The vote was unanimous and Mr. Morelese opened the door of the meeting hall and signalled to his teammates that they were successful. Exuberant and joyous scenes erupted on the street outside. Jalgos would open the season against St. Paul's. All the teams in the league were Church affiliated. Jalgos made history by not only being the first non Church team in the Preston District and Amateur Cricket League, but also, the first West Indian team to play league cricket in Lancashire. St. Paul's and the other teams had no idea what to expect.

Jalgos possessed a team of accomplished batsmen and fast bowlers. None more so than Ian St. Louis. Unlike the other Dominicans in Preston who mostly hailed from the capital Roseau, he was a country boy. He has been described as somewhat fiery and played cricket in a similar manner. It is on record that opposition batsmen would run away from the wickets when they witnessed not only his run up but the frightening speed in which the ball flew through the air. [26] This and

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the prowess and cricketing acumen of all Jalgos players ensured overwhelming success on the cricket field. St Louis would leave after Jalgos' maiden season. His fellow Dominicans were not to happy with him playing with Jalgos. Nonetheless, his contribution and place within the annals of Jalgos history should not be overlooked. Moreover, nor should the opposition and reticence from members of Preston's Caribbean community towards the club be neglected. Despite the glaring success Jalgos were exhibiting through their climb through the league many members of their community refused to believe this was possible. Despite being shown scorebooks, local newspaper reports or simply

hearing of the team's exploits, they felt Jalgos had no place in the league. It was often pointed out that it was a Church league and they needed to join already established teams.

Michael Collins points out that the Caribbean cricketing mind-set at this moment in time was infused with the practice of operating 'within this racialized colonial structure, with the heroic Englishman venerated, order was preserved, so long as the black man knew his place within the plantation relationship.' [27] It is also plausible to suggest some of Preston's Caribbean community were used to segregated cricket back home.

Where the colour or shade of a persons skin determined which club



Jalgos Sports and Social Club members with Preston MP Mark Hendrick (centre)

or league they could join. [28] This opposition soon faded away when vast numbers of the community attended Jalgos matches every weekend. Accomplishments on the park became a catalyst for community cohesion. Aside from the Blues parties held every weekend across various parts of Preston and groups attending prayer meetings in each others home, there was no real sense of togetherness for Caribbean people.[29] Midway through the season as a result of Jalgos victorious progress, families and groups of individuals came together to support the team. Not only was this a great opportunity for people to come together, the progress of Jalgos provided something for this community to be cheerful about.

Living in a manufacturing district that may not on the surface have been overtly racist, racism however, in reality was for many an everyday occurrence. The chance for people thousands of miles from home to come together in open spaces and enjoy themselves, was the perfect riposte to the discrimination they were enduring. Just as the Times newspaper noted about the triumphant West Indies players and their supporters in 1950, the Jalgos players and their supporters, played and watched the game in their own unique way.[30]

The noise made at Jalgos matches was unheard of before in the history of the local league. Caribbean cricket

fans are very passionate and keen to encourage their team in a very excitable way. Jalgos paved the way for Caribbean Cricket Clubs to join the league in 1965. When both teams met it was like a carnival. Thousands would turn out and create an almighty cacophony by blowing whistles and constantly shaking sealed biscuit tins filled with rice. These matches were fiercely played with no quarter given by either side. Unfortunately, until the opening of the Caribbean Club in Kent Street Preston, in July 1972, both sides had nowhere to entertain each other after the last innings had concluded. Jalgos did however, have a temporary home between 1962 and 1964.

The space utilised by Jalgos CC, was rented from St. Peters Church. When the person in charge of renting this space found out it was for a West Indian cricket club, he wanted a £200 deposit and rent of £25 a week. Considering the average weekly wage earned by the team members at that time was around £7 per week, this was a colossal task. Nonetheless, eight of the team managed to club together and raise the £200 deposit and Jalgos found a home for the time being. The rent of £25 proved to be a bit exorbitant and the cricketers were forced to find a new home in 1964.

Almost as soon as they left Fylde Road, Mr. Morelese came up with a solution. He had heard that two prefabricated containers were for sale in Stoke. He took it upon himself

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without informing the committee to drive down to the Potteries and investigate. The price was reasonable and one that Jalgos could afford, however, the problem facing Mr. Morelese was land to place these containers on. It was not in abundant supply. The problem of finding adequate land would be an acute problem that Jalgos faced over from 1964 to 1976. There was a glimmer of hope in the late 1960s but it turned out to be quite an expensive venture.

In around 1968/9, the club contacted Councillor Bunker. Mr. Bunker, a Labour Party member serving Fishwick Ward, was very knowledgeable about land that was available in Preston. He notified Jalgos that there was some land available in Fishwick. Situated near the golf course, this wasteland had been used locally as a dumping ground for many years. Mr. Bunker advised Jalgos Chairman Lewis Walker that the club would need to employ a surveyor to come up with some plans. The surveyor did just that and drew up plans for a cricket ground, football ground, hockey pitch, a dry ski slope and a club house. There was no money readily available for this cost. Preston Borough Council advised Jalgos to apply to the Government for a Section 11 grant. If this grant provided Jalgos with 75% of the cost they needed, the local council would provide the shortfall.

The Section 11 grant application was submitted and Jalgos were

successful. However, Preston Borough Council refused their application. The Council themselves decided to utilise this land and in 1969 successfully sought planning permission to develop this vacant lot. It was developed into a golf course which the adjacent golf club leased from the Council. Although they gave Jalgos the vacant land the council stipulated that they would have to level the ground first and if they ran out of money, they would reclaim the land. Because they refused to acquiesce and give Jalgos the 25% shortfall for the Section 11 grant this scheme fell by the wayside.

Although this scheme fell through Jalgos were left with a £500 bill. It was something they could ill afford; however, the surveyor had completed a copious amount of correspondence with solicitors and other interested parties to a cost of £8 per letter. Bring and buy sales were held, football coupons and cards were sold by club members at various workplaces to raise this sum. Thankfully for Jalgos they successfully managed to raise this sum, otherwise they could have ended up in court. [31] This of course, did not occur and the fundraising efforts utilised in order to pay the surveyors costs would be replicated in order to pay for a new home.

The journey in search of a permanent home is a microcosm of the Caribbean diaspora not just in Preston, but throughout the whole

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UK. The money to buy these premises were raised in the community. A distrust of banks and the exorbitant lending rates that they imposed on members of this community led to a scheme of lending known as the pardner hand. Many people who had purchased their own homes at auction using money raised in this way proposed to try and mortgage their properties in order to help buy property that would house the club.

Bring and buy sales held in the basement of the Methodist Church in Lune Street. Fundraising dances were held in Arkwright House and the Foxton Centre. At both venues, unlicensed alcohol was purchased by raffle tickets. Attendees would buy raffle tickets to the value of the drink they wished to purchase. This was exchanged for the alcoholic beverage of choice in lieu of currency. This practice also occurred in Fylde Road. Jalgos, although offered the site where the Caribbean Club would be built would not find a permanent home until 1976. The years in the wilderness searching for home caused embarrassment for the cricketers.

It is traditional for cricket teams to entertain their visitors. As Jalgos became an established team they were invited to play friendly matches with teams from other leagues across the country. When the team and any supporters they chose to bring for the occasion, were superbly hosted by their opponents, Jalgos by virtue

of not having their own clubhouse, could not repay the compliment, and when it rained were forced to take cover under the nearest trees. This source of shame, although occurring over fifty years ago, is vividly remembered today. The purchasing of a clubhouse from the Hibernian Club, consigned this to the past.

Jalgos Sports and Social Club on Rose Street in Preston was officially opened by the Mayor in September 1976. It was formally the home of the Hibernian Club affiliated with the Ribble Bus Company. Tommy Meade in his capacity of Jalgos Secretary at that time had heard this



Jalgos in the beginning exhibition board

club was up for sale. He approached this club and said don't sell to anyone else, Jalgos would buy this venue. In negotiations with Mrs. Hunt he impudently stated that Jalgos were £1000 short and would they lend them the shortfall. It was agreed and Jalgos would have a permanent home. The rest as they say is history.

This year marks the sixtieth anniversary of the creation of Jalgos W.I. Cricket Club. Although it officially changed to Jalgos Sports and Social Club in 1976, in cricketing terms it is 60 not out. It grew out of a burning love of cricket. A game exported to the Caribbean by Britain in order to govern and control a formerly enslaved people and their descendants. This noblest of sports with puritan values and a rigid code, was seen as the ideal vehicle to force a British way of life on what the Imperial overlords deemed as an inferior populace. In many ways this was successful.

Elders of the Caribbean diaspora in Britain known as the Windrush Generation, mostly espouse their British identity and remember childhoods imbued with a sense of Britishness. This belief has been severely crushed by the behaviour of the Home Office. In many ways this faith in the mother country has been acutely challenged from the moment the vast majority of people from islands throughout the Caribbean began to settle in Britain. Dressed in their finest clothes carrying cardboard suitcases known as grips,

some containing a Dutch pot, others containing a few meagre possessions. Some travellers like Sir Galahad, much to Moses's disgust in Sam Selvon's iconic book *The Lonely Londoners* arrived with nothing at all. [32] Regardless of what possessions this generation brought with them on the journey across the seas, they carried hopes of a brighter day.

On arrival the elders of various Caribbean communities across the country were met with a desolate, cold, grey, and unwelcoming climate. Racist attitudes may not have been on full display; however, this deplorable attitude was lurking directly below the surface. Ever present and every ready to make an unwelcome appearance. A colour bar descended placing a huge barrier throughout the country wherever the Caribbean diaspora settled. All aspects of their lives were heavily affected by this immoral practice. A recourse to this was socialising in each other's homes. This led to the rise of the Blues parties.

Strangers in a strange land would come together and become friends. In rooms crowded with people listening and dancing to pulsating beats, if they were lucky from the latest blue beat or reggae records, formed friendships that for many have stood the test of time. In Preston Lancashire, a group of young Jamaicans bonded over an obsessive love of cricket. This obsession led to many hours playing informally in

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Avenham Park. This arrangement was formalised when Jalgos W.I. Cricket Club was founded in 1962, playing their first game of league cricket in 1963. Success on the cricket park and an ascension through the divisions paid dividends for community cohesion.

A dispersed community that would meet in a number of houses on Saturday nights listening to the pulsating beat of the Bluespot radiogram, could now meet around the cricket boundary. A colourful Caribbean exuberance was on abundant display. The success of the cricket led to the creation of two community hubs. The Caribbean Club opened its doors in July 1972 and Jalgos Sports and Social Club in July 1976, with an official opening by the Lord Mayor of Preston in September 1976. The Caribbean Club closed its doors in 2009, Jalgos whilst still running is facing the final over. In the current economic climate, most sports and social clubs are experience a decline in membership that impacts on their trading.

However, in their respective heydays both clubs played vital roles in the development not just of their own community but, in several aspects of the indigenous population.

The Caribbean Club and Jalgos played a vital role in facilitating the alternative music scene in Preston. Jalgos, in the late 1970s and early 1980s became a much-loved home for Preston's Punk scene. It also provided home to Preston's Scooter Club. As the sands of time are running out, it is imperative that the memories of people associated with both clubs are captured, and their stories added to the annals of history relating to the Caribbean diaspora.

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

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## THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES: RECORDS IN FOCUS

DREW ELLERY

Robert Wedderburn was a British-Jamaican radical who campaigned against slavery and social injustice in the early 19th century.

He was born in Jamaica in 1762 to Rosanna, an enslaved 'woman of colour', and James Wedderburn, a slaver and plantation owner of Scottish descent. Robert was granted his freedom upon birth, and, after experiencing the horrors of plantation society, [1] he went on to join the British Navy at sixteen and eventually settled in London.

He is remembered as the most prolific black writer in Britain during the early 19th century who forged comparisons between the enslaved people of the Caribbean and Europe's dispossessed. [2] In Britain, he would establish a following amongst London's poor, whom he encouraged to rise up and dismantle the religious



Portrait of Robert Wedderburn,  
from "The Horrors of Slavery", 1824  
(Wikimedia Commons).

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and capitalist structures that underpinned society at that time. [3] He would also publish *The Horrors of Slavery*, [4] a biography of his upbringing and a scathing attack on his father's cruelty towards his mother and grandmother.

The spy reports and depositions that have survived in the government's archive provide a unique insight into Robert Wedderburn's life.

In 1819, the Home Office sent undercover spies and informers to document his activities at the Hopkins Street Chapel in Soho. The Chapel was used as a meeting space to debate revolution, and societal reform inspired by the teachings of Thomas Spence. The authorities viewed these activities with unease, and after gathering enough evidence, they arrested Wedderburn as the lead organiser and tried him for blasphemy.

The spy reports and depositions from the Hopkins Street Chapel are archived in collection TS 11/45/167. These records document first-hand accounts of Wedderburn's debates and fiery speeches. Court documents from the ensuing trial detail why the authorities' viewed these activities as both seditious and blasphemous. Included in these records are a collection of documents used as evidence against Wedderburn, which feature a printed advertisement, written in his own words, encouraging the public to attend his lectures and debates "where the

uninformed may receive instruction..." at the Hopkins Street Chapel.

Also included are Wedderburn's own publications, *The Axe Laid to the Root* (or a Fatal Blow to Oppressors, being an address to the Planters and Negroes of the island of Jamaica). Volumes nos. 1, 2, and 3 have survived in our collection. These abolitionist pamphlets, written in his own words, once again bring his voice to the forefront. In these publications, he addresses the enslaved of Jamaica and encourages them to revolt against their oppressors, evoking references to the Haitian Revolution of 1790 and the Maroon Wars.

These records bring into focus the lives of former enslaved people and their descendants who were active in radical politics in Britain during the Georgian era. Other notable black activists from this period who are referenced in the government archives include William Cuffey and William Davidson.

In 1820, Wedderburn was found guilty of blasphemy and sentenced to two years' imprisonment in Dorchester jail, leaving behind his wife and six children. [5] He spent the majority of his life living in abject poverty and after his death, relative obscurity.

Over the past 30 years there has been a growing interest into his extraordinary life and his writings. The folder (TS 11/45/167) can be ordered and viewed at The National Archives [here](#), and a transcription of

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these documents and his writings, published by Iain McCalman, can be found in our library [here](#).

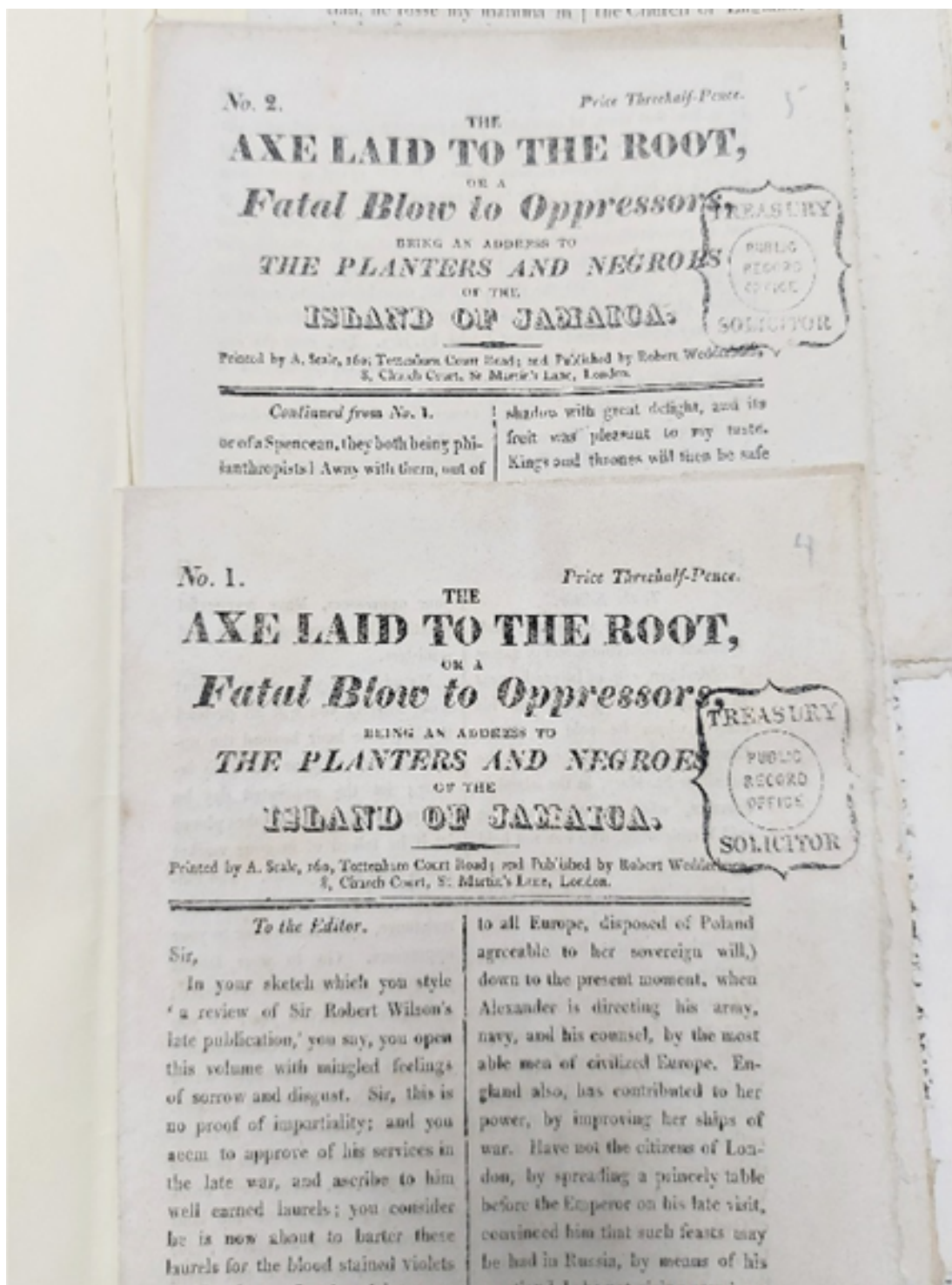


Image of The Axe Laid to the Root, 1817 (catalogue reference: TS 11/45/167)



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  2. Annie Dickenson, (2020) 'Black History Month: Robert Wedderburn, Revolutionary and Abolitionist' available at: <https://rylandscollections.com/2020/10/19/black-history-month-robert-wedderburn-revolutionary-and-abolitionist/> (Accessed: 22 March 2022)
  3. Karl Arthur, 'Music, Dance and Politics in Georgian Britain', in *History Matters Journal*, Vol. 2 No. 1. (Autumn 2021), [online] available at: <https://www.historymatters.online/journal> (Accessed: 22 March 2022)
  4. Robert Wedderburn, *The Horrors of Slavery, from The Horrors of Slavery and Other Writings by Robert Wedderburn*, edited and introduced by Iain McCalman (New York and Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishing, 1991), pp. 44-61.
  5. Dickenson, 'Black History Month: Robert Wedderburn, Revolutionary and Abolitionist'.
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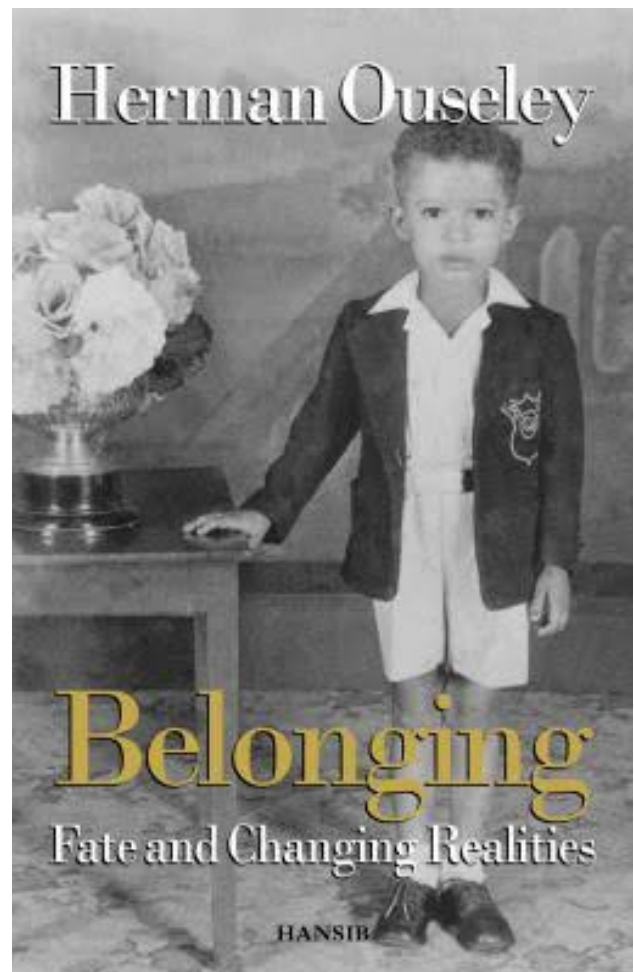
# **PART 3: REVIEWS**

# **BELONGING: FATE AND CHANGING REALITIES**

**HERMAN OUSELEY (HANSIB PUBLICATIONS, 2021)**

**MONTAZ MARCHE**

Although of admitted 'obscurity' in more recent years, Herman Ouseley undoubtedly is a great man and leading figure in local council politics, for minority and disadvantaged communities in London. Throughout his 56 years in public service, he campaigned tirelessly to improve the lots of communities around London and undermine discrimination in all its forms wherever it was found. This 200-page memoir, comprised of 17 short chapters, is a careful narration of Ouseley's migration to Britain, his humble beginnings, and his various steps up the local council ladder to his reach the lofty heights of his barons and his incredible efforts to bring change for ethnic minority communities across various areas of society, most notably in public services, local community politics and football.



The memoir begins with Herman's early life in Barbados and his arrival in England. In his opening chapters he describes the culture shock of life between Guyana and England, attempting to overcome the challenges of being black in a predominantly white school and his naivety to racism and his experiences of community and place in South London, particularly rooted through his football exploits. Although it may not have appeared so, at the time, his early experiences of assimilation within the memoir seem to greatly precursor his involvement in the local politics of London.

Notably, Ouseley commented on the duality in his life between his private home life, a humble multiple tenancy home he shared with his mother, stepfather and eventually siblings, which only a few friends knew about and his outgoing, public nature around school friends; an experience reminiscent of W.E.B. DuBois's arguments for "double consciousness" and something many Black Britons have experienced. Yet interestingly, this public vs private life becomes an inadvertent theme throughout the memoir.

Although he regularly described how he had little idea of what to do after leaving school, the memoir alludes to his path to greatness in his early exposure to London's working-class South London community, through close friendships particularly with Jamaican musician Carl Douglas. The preceding chapters then take us on a

journey through Ouseley's many roles in the local council in Lambeth notably and in London more broadly. Ouseley ascended into roles of leadership and position, as he outlines in chapters six through eleven, from a local government civil servant (which he was from the early 1960s to 1990s) to the head of the Greater London Council's Ethnic Minority Unit, the Chief Executive of Lambeth Council, the first-ever head of the London Inner Education Authority (LIEA). He was chair/chief executive of the Commission for Racial Equality before becoming Baron Ouseley in the House of Lords, which he described to be a continuation of his public service; each step creating an apt decrescendo for a life committed to public service.

As I mentioned, the memoir possesses clear absences of Ouseley's private life, which I believe is a translation of the many of the anxieties for his family and private life that Herman faced in his roles as described in the book. For example, upon taking his role in the ILEA, he spoke openly about the racist abuse he and his family would receive via mail and telephone. Therefore, he strove to keep his private life private for the safety of his family. Similarly, there is a distinct level of privacy in terms of Herman's personal life in the book. His wife and children have referenced barely a handful of times. Moreover, there is little semblance of Herman's personal life in this memoir beyond his early years. So, the memoir demonstrates only one life of

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Herman's, his official public life, limiting the scope of our perception of Ouseley as a man rather than a historic public figure.

Instead, Ouseley spends a great deal of time outlining the infrastructure of local councils and authorities, demonstrating the adversities suffered between authorities who were willing to enforce change and representing the experiences of ethnic minority groups in London and those who were not. Bravely, he pinpoints his past obstacles in management, for example, the tendencies of local community authorities to 'tokenistically' employ people of colour, how he often found himself in this position but sought to use these misguided attempts at inclusion to bring about real change, for example integrating people of colour and women into the fire service when working for the Greater London Council's Ethnic Minority Unit or uncovering the acts of racial discrimination committed by the Army and Ministry of Defence in their lack of diversity and the initialisation of initiatives to change this. In Chapter eleven, for example, Ouseley outlines over 20 institutions/organisations that he met with to begin initiatives to begin conversations about race and equality. Although the balance between explanation and personal illumination was often weighted towards the former rather than the latter, the emphasis placed upon such description delineated in detail the

trials of change-making. It also made the undermining of his efforts in chapter twelve more painful, particularly when organisations did not take on board his recommended actions.

Ouseley's story is one of perseverance, particularly in areas that have been close to his heart even from his childhood. Chapter thirteen to fifteen highlights his steps into business consultancy, entrepreneurial enterprises in public race relations, football and from within the House of Lords, championing investigations and settlements in the Windrush Scandal on behalf of commonwealth countries.

Finally, Ouseley ends his memoirs with outward reflection upon the development of race relations in London's society in chapter sixteen. Despite the strides he and others have taken for equality, Ouseley comments on the disparities in treatment and changing conditions for people from ethnic minority communities, particular during the pandemic, stating that "we are not all in this together, as some politicians and leaders claim". He also reflects upon the legacy of his campaign 'Let's Kick Racism Out of Football' which he began in 1993 in chapter seventeen and his charity work. He became the chair of the Kick It Out and the Chandran Foundation and continued his efforts to eradicate racism in Premier League football, calling out Chelsea Football club in 2018 because

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of the racist abuse Raheem Sterling was experiencing at Stamford Bridge whilst playing for Manchester City, and how repercussions were always promised for the next game. In Ouseley's words, "there is no next time. It is now".

For Ouseley, his belonging to "a community of communities in which there is no tolerance for ignorance, prejudice, hatred, abuse and discrimination" was always a priority. Yet, as this memoir demonstrates, he is, in part, responsible for the progress made for the community of today, representing that progress in person and action and for the steps taken to reach this goal to which we all aspire. Tellingly, a testament of his character and by extension the character of the memoir, was that he even relegated his knighthood, peerage, and Pride of Britain award to two mere sentences, emphasising his greater predilections towards his work over accolades.

Indeed, Ouseley is a man of justice, humility, and forthright conviction. Without the slightest implication of it within the writing itself, this memoir lists the hundreds of reasons why communities across London will continue to owe him a debt of gratitude. He strove to integrate diversity within local community affairs and the various departments themselves. Moreover, he fought to ensure equality and for the integrities of London's minority communities at every level of government. His career and achievements are centred on the dominant highlight of his story and the writing of this memoir has ensured Ouseley's active voice and position in British history; in a way in which many underrepresented pioneers from ethnic minority backgrounds have not been in the past in Britain.

Montaz Marché is a PhD researcher at the University of Birmingham, focusing on black women in eighteenth-century Britain. She is passionate about researching and expanding awareness of black British and gender history within the academy and beyond

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