



Black History Month at Highlands School

How did Black History Month emerge?

Black History Month started in the UK in October 1987, thanks to Akyaaba Addai-Sebo.

He wanted to make sure that the contributions and achievements of Black people in the UK were celebrated and that we learned about Black history in school.

Born and raised in Ghana, Addai-Sebo was part of Kwame Nkrumah's Young Pioneer Movement. After moving to England in 1984, he took on the role of Special Projects Coordinator at the Greater London Council.

Addai-Sebo was instrumental in inaugurating the UK's annual Black History Month.

Every October, we remember and honour Black history. It continues to serve as a reminder of the ongoing struggle for racial equality and social justice.



Black History Month 2023

The theme for Black History Month UK 2023 is 'Before Windrush.'

The onset of October signals the commencement of Black History Month in the UK. This month we will be learning about and celebrating the lives and stories of Black people who were living in the UK before a famous ship called the Empire Windrush arrived in 1948.

It gives everyone the opportunity to celebrate and pay tribute to the accomplishments and invaluable contributions made by individuals of African and Caribbean heritage to the British economy, culture, and history both now and throughout the year.





HMT Empire Windrush

The term "Windrush" in the UK refers to the HMT Empire Windrush, a ship that arrived in 1948 carrying hundreds of passengers from the Caribbean, mainly Jamaica.

The Empire Windrush's arrival is considered the start of large-scale Caribbean migration to the UK and the establishment of the Caribbean community in Britain.

These passengers were among the first immigrants from the British Commonwealth after World War II, they were invited to help rebuild the UK and provide a solution for the workforce shortages caused by the loss of life in the war.

These immigrants, known as the "Windrush Generation," contributed significantly to British society in healthcare, transportation, education, and culture. However, many of them faced challenges and discrimination, particularly in housing and employment, as they settled in the UK.





Caribbean through time

The Caribbean is made up of thirteen independent countries located between North America and South America. They are Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Barbados, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Haiti, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Trinidad and Tobago.

Before slavery and colonisation, the indigenous Arawak people resided there. The Caribbean has never been one country, it's made up of many diverse cultures and people.

Links between the Caribbean and Britain remained strong after colonization. During World War II, the people of the Caribbean fought for Britain. Three years later, the HMT Windrush brought people to the UK.

The contributions of the Windrush generation include building railways and underground stations. The people of the Windrush generation are part of the history of Black people we celebrate today. The impact of these people are still felt today.

Even today, Caribbean slang has been incorporated within UK slang and you'll often hear this dialect used in the music industry from the works of Dutchavelli, Alesha Dixon and the comedic acts of Mo Gilligan.

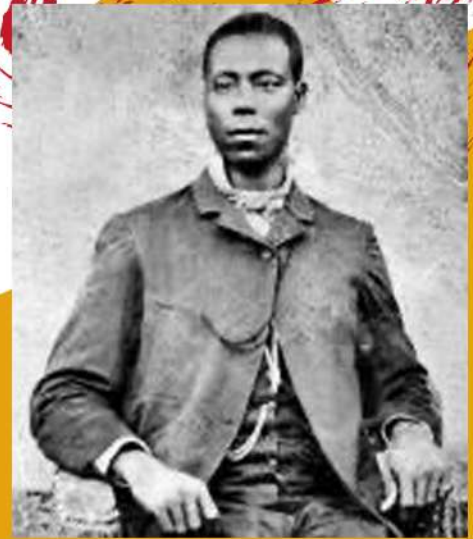




Celebrating Black icons before the Windrush

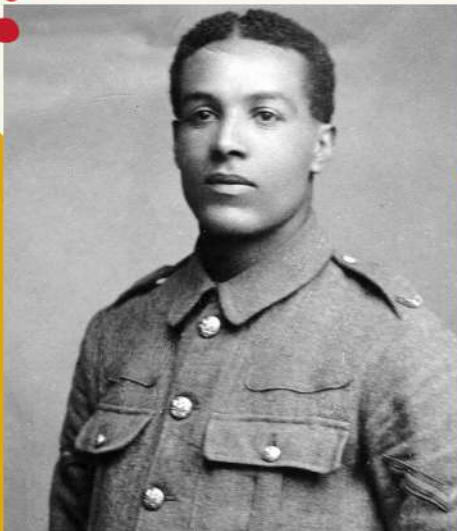
John Edmonstone

John Edmonstone was born a slave in British Guiana in the late 1700s. After gaining his freedom in 1817 he moved to Edinburgh to teach taxidermy at the university where he would teach a 16-year-old Charles Darwin. Edmonstone would teach Darwin the skill of taxidermy which helped Darwin preserve the bird that solidified his ideas about evolution. Without Edmonstone, we may not have the theory of evolution that underpins our understanding of the world today.



Walter Tull

Walter Tull was Britain's first professional Black outfield footballer. At the age of 21, Tull signed for Tottenham Hotspur, in the summer of 1909, after a close-season tour of Argentina and Uruguay, where he was the first mixed-heritage professional footballer to play in Latin America.



He was also the first known Black officer in the British army. Having played for the likes of Tottenham Hotspur and Northampton Town, Tull enlisted at the start of WWI and soon demonstrated exceptional leadership skills, bravery and calmness under pressure. Defying the ingrained bigotry of his time, Tull earned a commission as an officer in 1917 and led White soldiers into battle for the first time in the history of the British army. Walter died on the frontline in 1918.



Celebrating Black icons before the Windrush

Una Marson

Una Marson was a Jamaican-born writer, poet, and broadcaster who moved to England in the 1930s.

She was the first black woman to be employed by the BBC in 1939 and played a pioneering role in promoting Caribbean and black voices in British broadcasting.



Elizabeth Welch

Elizabeth Welch was born in the US but spent most of her life in the UK from the 1920s onwards.

Elizabeth Welch's talent and contributions to both American and British entertainment earned her recognition and acclaim.

She is remembered as a trailblazing artist who achieved success on both sides of the Atlantic and left a lasting legacy in the world of music and theater.



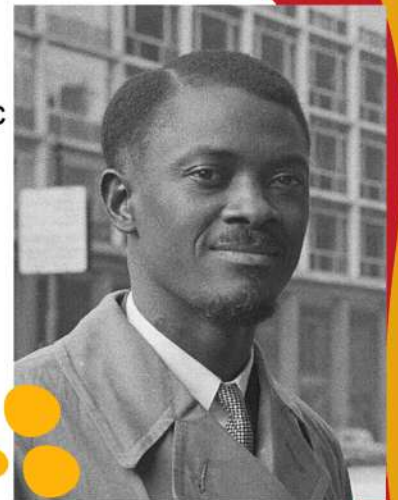


Patrice Lumumba

As well as contributions to the UK, there are people who have made significant contributions to our heritage across the world, like Patrice Lumumba.

Patrice Lumumba was an African nationalist and the first prime minister of Belgian Congo, now called the Democratic Republic of Congo. He is a major factor behind Congo's independence from Belgium, which was gained in 1960. Lumumba's movement emphasised its all-Congolese nature, uniting all the ethnic groups together.

He played a significant role in the transformation of Congo from a colony of Belgium into an independent republic.



Congo and Congolese culture today

The Democratic Republic of Congo is the second largest country in the continent; only Algeria is larger. Kinshasa, the largest city in central Africa, serves as the country's official administrative, economic, and cultural centre.

It is one of the most linguistically diverse countries in the world, with over 200 languages spoken in the country.

Around 75 per cent of the world's cobalt is mined in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and the world cannot get enough of it. The rare, silvery metal is an essential component to every lithium-ion rechargeable battery.





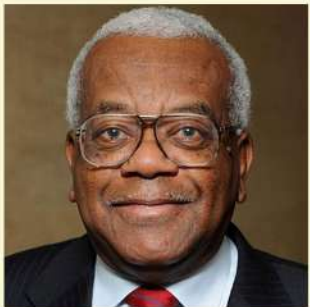
Celebrating Black icons in popular culture today



Michaela Coel

Michaela Coel is a British actress, screenwriter, director, and producer who has gained widespread recognition for her talent, creativity, and groundbreaking work in television and film.

"I May Destroy You" received numerous awards and nominations, including Emmy Awards and BAFTA Awards. It had a profound impact on discussions surrounding consent, sparking important conversations in society.



Sir Trevor McDonald

Sir Trevor McDonald has had a distinguished career in journalism and broadcasting, working for several prominent television stations in the UK.

He began his career with ITN in 1973 as a general reporter, becoming the first Black news anchor on British television. His groundbreaking work in the UK and his extensive career across various networks have solidified his legacy as a trailblazer and respected journalist.



Christine Ohuruogu

Christine Ohuruogu's achievements in athletics, particularly in the 400 metres, have left an indelible mark on British and international track and field. Her gold medal at the 2008 Olympics was a historical moment in British athletics.

Ohuruogu has been honoured with several awards and accolades during her career, including being appointed Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) for her services to athletics.



Edward Enninful

Edward Enninful is a prominent figure in the fashion industry and has made significant contributions as the Editor-in-Chief of British Vogue. Along with his editorial work, Enninful has been instrumental in shaping the vision of numerous advertising campaigns and runway shows for some of the most influential international fashion houses.

To date, he has consulted for Christian Dior, Dolce and Gabbana, Celine and Gucci among many others.



The importance of Black History Month

Black History Month serves as a vital platform for recognising and celebrating the rich and diverse contributions of Black individuals to the history, culture, and society of the United Kingdom.

Black history is not history that should be bound to one month as it is just as important as any other.

Black History Month serves as an opportunity to address and confront issues of racial discrimination and inequality.

By shining a spotlight on these issues during this dedicated month, it encourages important conversations and actions aimed at promoting diversity, equality, and inclusion in all aspects of society, including government, institutions, and corporations.

'A tree without roots is dead.'

Our understanding of the past, shapes the views we hold in the present.