



## National Ambulance BME Forum

Working to improve the experience of  
Black and Minority Ethnic Staff and  
communities

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# Celebrating Black History Month 2019



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# Introduction

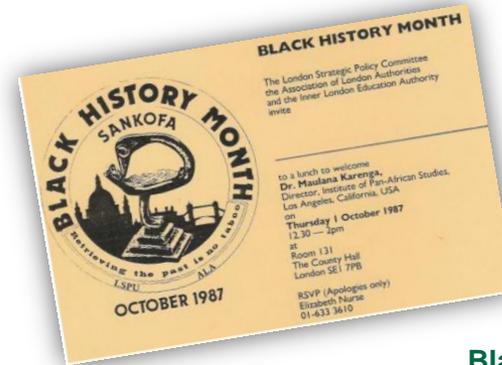


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**During October the UK celebrates Black History Month.**

This national celebration aims to promote and celebrate Black contributions to British society, and to foster an understanding of Black history in general. Its origins go back to the 1920s and the establishment of Negro History Week in the United States.

Black History Month has been celebrated every February in the USA since 1970, it was not officially celebrated in the UK until 1987. Linda Bellos as leader of Lambeth Council led this following an idea put to her by Policy Units race Equality Ansel Wong –Chief Officer of the Strategic Policy Units race equality division. It was organised by the activist Akyaba Addai-Sebo who, at the time was the coordinator for special projects for the Greater London Council.



**Black History Month 1987:  
invitation to Dr Maulana Karenga lecture**

The after-effects the 1980's riots in Brixton, Tottenham and Toxteth, black Britons were fighting for tolerance and acceptance, and against marginalisation, and racism. All this whilst also trying to define a sense of identity and purpose. It is within this context that Black History Month was adopted in the UK.

The first Black History Month was celebrated only in London, but in the years since, the celebration has spread across the UK.



# UK and US Differences



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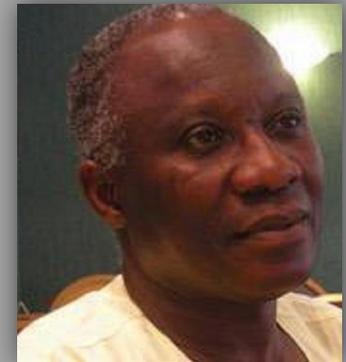


Carter G. Woodson,  
American historian

In the US, Black History Month was created by historian Carter G. Woodson (1875-1950). He wanted to challenge preconceptions at the time that 'the negro has no history' and founded *The Association for the Study of Negro Life and History* in 1915 which encouraged scholars and historians to research and preserve black history and culture.

In February 1926, Woodson founded *Negro History Week* to coincide with the birthdays of former US President Abraham Lincoln and abolitionist Frederick Douglass. It was later decided that a week wasn't long enough and, against the backdrop of the US civil rights movement and the Black Power Movement, *Black History Month* was born in 1969.

Ghanaian-born Akyaaba Addai Sebo, visited America in the 1970s and later went on to found Black History Month in the UK 1987. October was chosen as traditionally this is when African chiefs and leaders gather to settle their differences, so Akyaaba chose this month to reconnect with African roots. Its also thought that Octobers proximity to the new academic year, helps to give black children a sense of pride and identity



Akyaaba Addai Sebo





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# What is it's Significance Today?

***Black History Month*** means different things to everyone and pride for this month is expressed in a variety of different ways.

For many, *Black History Month* is a way of reflecting on the diverse histories of those from African and Caribbean descent, taking note of the achievements and contributions to the social, political, economic and cultural development of the UK. It's importance cannot be underestimated as history shapes our lives and influences our views.

***“If a race has no history, it has no worthwhile tradition, it becomes a negligible factor in the thought of the world, and it stands in danger of being exterminated”***

Black History Month is not without its opponents though.

Some people argue that it's hardly justified to teach black history in the space of one month, and that this could be perceived as tokenism. They propose a greater advocacy to integrate this into the mainstream education system instead.



Jamaican Immigrants being welcomed in 1948



# The Pan-African Flag

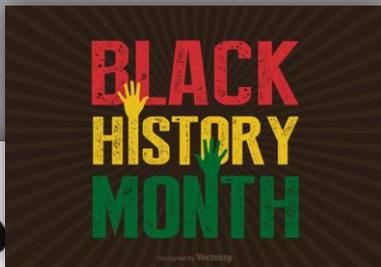
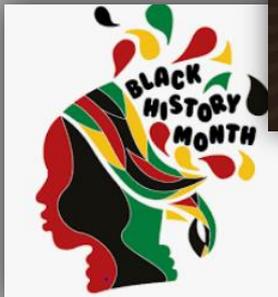


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There is a strong significance to the colours associated with Black History Month, as these are taken from the Pan African flag. The Pan-African Flag, created in 1920, is an emblem of pride featuring the colours red, green and black.

In 1921 report appearing in the Africa Times and Orient Review, for which Marcus Garvey previously worked, quoted him regarding the flag:

*“Show me the race or the nation without a flag, and I will show you a race of people without any pride.”*



The flag went on to become an African nationalist symbol for the worldwide liberation of people of African origin. As an emblem of Black pride, the flag became popular during the Black Liberation movement of the 1960s.



The Pan-African flag

**Red** symbolizes the blood that unites all people of Black African ancestry, and the blood shed for liberation.

**Black** symbolizes the Black people.

**Green** symbolizes the abundant natural wealth of Africa.



# Black History: The Facts



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## Slavery

- \* Even before slavery, Black people lived in the UK in small numbers due to global adventure, e.g. seaman.
- \* **1562** - Britain began trading in slavery as part of an international lucrative trade. There was a high movement through British ports including Bristol, Liverpool, Plymouth, Bridport, Chester, Cardiff, Poulton le-Fylde and London. These then also became areas where Black people settled mainly sailors and imported servants.
- \* Transport was by large ships with people tightly packed as goods taking 3 months or more. The death rate on these ships was high and brutal

## Abolition

- \* **1787** - 225 years later, the Society for effecting the Abolition of Slavery was founded.
- \* **1833** - A further 47 years of campaigning led to an Act of Parliament abolishing slavery in the British Empire, known as the Abolition of Slavery Act.
- \* White slave owners were compensated for the loss of business – no such offer was made to those enslaved



Unknown  
photograph from a  
slave ship



# Black History: The Facts



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## War Time

- \* Soldiers were recruited from across the British Empire for both World War I and 2. Over 1 million Indian soldiers fought in WW1, and a smaller number from the West Indies. All were volunteers.
- \* Over 15,600 Asian and Black Soldiers died in the two wars.
- \* The soldiers are reported as being treated differently to White soldiers. They were segregated, used as labour, paid less, and largely denied officer status. One example is Brighton Pavilion and Dome Hospital for Indian troops (now Brighton General Hospital) was fenced with barbed wire and segregated from local people.
- \* A West Indian RAF pilot was reported for asking a White girl to dance. He died when shot down before any investigation was undertaken.
- \* There are also some accounts of good treatment for these servicemen, which suggests variation in experience.
- \* **1918** – The Taranto Mutiny was a result of unfair treatment on pay. This led to some BME soldiers being tried and one being killed by a firing squad





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# Black History: A Timeline



- \* **1919:** Summer brought with it the first British race riots in Newport, Cardiff, and Liverpool which included extreme violence.
- \* **Late 1920s:** Liverpool University supported research into '*hybrid children*' which looked at outcomes reflecting and reinforcing a negative view of mixed marriages and of mixed race children, deeming them as "being handicapped by their colour" – M. Fletcher 1930.
- \* **1931:** The League of Coloured Peoples established by Dr Harold Moody, a Jamaican born doctor. This is most likely first anti racism body to have been formed. Dr Moody had arrived in UK in 1904 to pursue medical training, qualifying in 1912 but no NHS or public place would employ him so set up on his own.
- \* **1948:** the British Nationality Act gave equal rights to commonwealth citizens to reside as British citizens. Post war Britain encouraged immigration to support rebuilding the economy. This was also the year the *Empress Windrush* docked at Tilbury bring 492 Caribbean people to Britain, other ships followed. The British Caribbean population rapidly grew from 1951 to 1961, from 15,000 to -172,000 people.
- \* **1950:** Chief Kofoworola Abeni Pratt first qualified black nurse to work for the NHS.
- \* **1958;** Race riots in Nottingham, Notting Hill London. Throughout 1950s A. F. Brockway tried to bring forward a race discrimination bill which was defeated nine times.
- \* **1962:** The Commonwealth Immigrants Act, came in restricting immigration and reversing the 1948 rights.



# Black History: A Timeline



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Malcolm X assassinated in February.

1965

UK Race Relations Act was passed.

The Selma to Montgomery protest marches held by nonviolent activists to demonstrate the desire of African American citizens to exercise their constitutional right to vote.

The Race Relations Act 1965 was the first legislation in the United Kingdom to address racial discrimination. The Act outlawed discrimination on the "grounds of colour, race, or ethnic or national origins" in public places in Great Britain. It also prompted the creation of the Race Relations Board in 1966

In August, the Voting Rights Act outlawed discriminatory voting practices adopted in many states after the Civil War, including literacy tests

Black Panther Party founded and Stokely Carmichael popularised the term "black power"

1966

US Race riots in Newark, Detroit and Chicago  
Thurgood Marshall – first black supreme court judge and was leader of the strategy to end race segregation

1967

Interracial marriage legalised in USA



# Black History: A Timeline



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Shirley Chisholm, the first black female elected to US congress

1968

UK Race Relations Act was strengthened

Martin Luther King assassinated in April 1968

Enoch Powell's Rivers of Blood speech April

1969

Learie Constantine was first black peer appointed to the House of Lords followed by Dr David Pitt in 1975

The unethical "Tuskegee Study of untreated syphilis in the negro male" ended after 40 years. The Tuskegee was an infamous study conducted by the U.S. Public Health Service, as even after funding for treatment was lost, the study was continued without informing the men that they would never be treated

1972



Baron Learie Constantine

1976

In August the Notting Hill carnival ends in a riot after the police took a heavy-handed approach against the large congregation of black people.

Race Relations Act further strengthened

Mr. Shaw, a survivor of the Tuskegee study receiving a presidential apology in 1997



# Black History: A Timeline



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Guion Bluford became the first African American astronaut.



Unrest began in South Central Los Angeles on April 29 1993, after a jury acquitted four officers of the Los Angeles Police Department for usage of excessive force in the arrest and beating of Rodney King, which had been videotaped and widely viewed in TV broadcasts.

1981

UK riots - Brixton London, Toxteth Liverpool, Moss Side Manchester, Handsworth Birmingham, Chapletown Leeds

1983

1985

The Brixton riot of 1985 started on 28 September in Lambeth in South London was sparked by shooting of Cherry Groce by the Metropolitan Police.

Riots in Broadwater farm, Tottenham were also sparked by death of Cynthia Jarrett and led to death of PC Blakelock.

1987

First black MPs elected; Diane Abbot, Bernie Grant and Paul Boateng

1992

Stephen Lawrence murdered

1993

1999

In 1999, the McPherson report in the death of Stephen Lawrence was published. The report concluded that the investigation into the killing had been "marred by a combination of professional incompetence, institutional racism and a failure of leadership".

# Black History: A Timeline



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Barrack Obama became the first Black president

Protesters march to demand the criminal indictment of police officer Darren Wilson

On August 9, 2014, Michael Brown Jr., an 18-year-old African American man, was fatally shot by 28-year-old white Ferguson police officer Darren Wilson in the city of Ferguson, Missouri. This sparked the start of the Ferguson riots..

2000

Race Relations (Amendment ) Act required requires all public institutions, including colleges and universities, to take action to promote **race** equality.

2009

2010

Equality Act 2010 brings together over 116 separate pieces of legislation into one single Act including the Race Relations Act and subsequent amendments.

2011

London riots in August following the shooting of Mark Duggan, which then copycatted over several other UK cities.

2014

Immigration Act reform removed protection for long term citizens from 1999 act

2016

Immigration Act reform strengthened laws to prevent illegal immigrants settling and make it easier to remove them

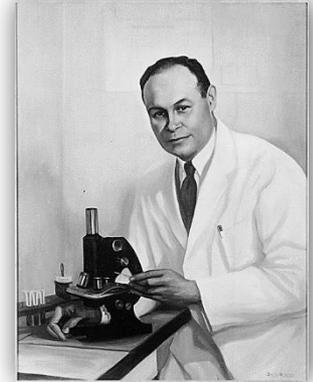
2018

Windrush Scandal and the impact and issues rumble on

# Our Heroes

We asked our forum members who their Black History Month heroes were with you all.

**Simon Linton from South Central Ambulance:** “**Charles Drew.** “He was a doctor who revolutionised the medical profession. He researched blood and that it can be separated to save lives (this is where blood banks and transfusions started from), he was the most prominent *African American* in the field. He was particularly influential around the time of the second world war and set up blood banks saving lives all around Europe. Charles was assigned to set up blood banks during the time of the second world war and was selected to set up a project called ‘Blood for Britain’. His work is commendable and is still saving lives to this date. His studies has allowed for us now to have blood products to be used in emergency situations in our present day ambulance service”.



No list of heroes could be complete without **Dr Martin Luther King Jr.**

**Ann Tobin, Scottish Ambulance Service:** “His speeches were passionate and uplifting. They remind me that after all these years we still have a way to go”.

**Kez Hayat, Yorkshire Ambulance Service:** “I admire Martin’s approach to activism and the civil rights movements, in particular his non-violent protests and his efforts to fight racial inequality in a non-violent manner. He was an advocate for winning hearts and minds!”

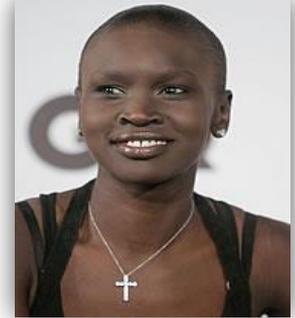


**We asked our forum members who their Black History Month heroes were with you all.**



**Jayne Phoenix, South East Coast Ambulance:** “**Alek Wek**, a Sudanese model who overcame her humble beginnings to become a supermodel. She was one of 9 children living in house with no water or power. The family fled Sudan in 1985 due to the civil war ( she was 12 ) and moved to London. She was scouted in 1995 and became the first black model to grace magazines etc, changing for the first time the images available and making colour visible in the media.

As well as modelling she uses her fame to support refugees, Sudanese issues, AIDs and UNICEF”.



**Tasnim Ali, Yorkshire Ambulance Service:** “ **Nelson Mandela**, a man who was so passionate for the cause of unity and anti-apartheid and remained focused despite personal suffering. I remember the day when he was released from Prison. He impacted on so many people. He definitely had ‘beautiful patience’ something that is subscribed in the Quran”.

**Asmina Islam Chowdhury South East Coast Ambulance:** “**Rosa Parks**, People probably think of her simply as a woman who refused to give up her seat on a bus, but her contributions to and role in Black History can’t be under-appreciated. Her small action of no longer giving in and challenging the “way it is” in a peaceful and dignified way was a catalyst for a movement that eventually led to equal rights for all citizens across the United States. An amazing woman who shows us that the smallest act can make a difference.



## We asked our forum members who their Black History Month heroes were with you all.



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**Oliver Evans, North East Coast Ambulance:** “**Maya Angelou**, she sought to change opinions through education, art and culture. She is an originator of change through the written word, and for her achievements not only in the arts, but with Martin Luther King, and as a presidential advisor. She chose to wage war on people’s social improprieties and beliefs and change the way black people were seen, using her poetry to depict the beautiful nature and culture of black people. Her quote “*My mission in life is not merely to survive, but to thrive; and to do so; with some passion, some compassion, some humour, and some style*”, Is one of my driving values that inspires me to be the activist for change I am today.”



**Pam Brown, West Midlands Ambulance Service:** “**James Baldwin**, I had the honour of meeting my hero, James Baldwin in my last year of my undergraduate degree at university. In this month of Black history Baldwin returned to my memory as someone who embodies the theme for me.

He was born in 1924 in Harlem and was an openly gay black author and activist. Having said that he would probably disapprove of the description as he despised arbitrary labels. His overtly political writing and his support of the Black Panther Party and Communist Party activist Angela Davis gained him another label- that of radical. But for me I just want to applaud the man whose gems of wisdom stay with me and for the intellect that still challenges my thinking.



# Resources and Further Reading

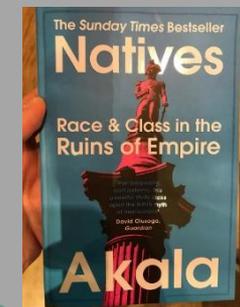
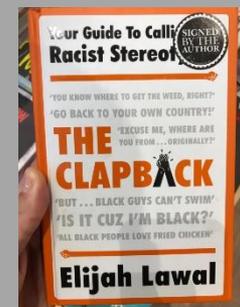


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There are a wealth of books and resources available on Black history, and these are just some of the recommendations from our forum members

**Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People About Race** (Reni Eddo-Lodge)  
**Diversify: How to Challenge Inequality and Why We Should** (June Sarpong)  
**Overcoming Everyday Racism** (Susan Collins)  
**The Empire of Mali** (Mansa Musa)  
**White Privilege: The Myth of a Post-Racial Society** (Kalwant Bhopal)  
**Black and British** (David Olusoga)  
**Intelligent kindness, reforming the culture of healthcare** (John Balatt and Penelope Camping)  
**Slay in Your Lane** (Yomi Adegoke & Elizabeth Uvibiene)  
**The Clapback** (Elijah Lawal)  
**How to be Anti-Racist** (Ibram X. Kendi)  
**Good Immigrant** (Nikesh Shukla)  
**Natives, Race and Class in the Ruins of Empire** (Akala)

**Mansa Musa and the Empire of Mali – A True Story of Gold and Greatness from Africa** (James Oliver)  
**Inglorious Empire: What the British Did to India** (Shashi Tharoor)  
**Intelligent Kindness: Reforming the Culture of Healthcare** (John Ballant & Penelope Campling)  
**Your Silence will not Protect You** (Audre Lorde)  
**Brit(ish)** (Afua Hirsh)  
**Windrush: The Irresistible Rise of Multiracial Britain** (Mike Phillips and Trevor Phillips)  
**Dreams from my Father** (Barrack Obama)  
**Long Walk to Freedom** (Nelson Mandela)  
**The Black Presidency** (Barrack Obama)  
**12 Years a Slave** (Solomon Northup)  
**Autobiography** (Maya Angelou)  
**Roots** (Alex Hayley)



# Five ways to show your support for #BlackHistoryMonth

1. Use your organisational bulletins and social media to raise awareness of the month and the reason behind it's importance. #BlackHistoryMonth.
2. Spotlight Black leaders within your organisation.
3. Consider holding Black history themed 'Lunch and Learn' events, quiz or film nights.
4. Take the time to learn about the Black history in your local community, then share that knowledge with another person.
5. Celebrate Black literature. Whether fiction or non fiction, literature is a vital way of recognising people's individual stories and experiences.

## Further information and resources:

If you would like to find out more information about Black History Month, which takes place every October, please visit:  
<https://www.blackhistorymonth.org.uk/contact-us/>



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