

A timeline of Black British art and culture. Honouring the visionaries who revolutionised British art, literature, music, and performance.

1773: PHILLIS WHEATLEY'S HISTORIC PUBLICATION

As the first African-American woman to publish a book, *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral*, Phillis Wheatley challenged stereotypes and left a lasting impact on both British and American literature.



1789: OLAUDAH EQUIANO'S NARRATIVE FUELS ABOLITION

Through his autobiography, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano*, Equiano advanced the abolitionist movement, resonating powerfully with audiences in Britain and beyond.

1789: GEORGE BRIDGETOWER PERFORMS FOR ROYALTY

The Afro-European violinist captivated the Prince of Wales with his exceptional talent, leading to a celebrated career, including a notable collaboration with Beethoven.

1816-1826: JOSEPH EMIDY LEADS TRURO PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

Emidy, a pioneering African-British musician, led the Truro Philharmonic Orchestra as conductor and composer, greatly shaping the classical music scene in Cornwall.



1857: MARY SEACOLE'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY PUBLISHED

Mary Seacole published her autobiography, chronicling her experiences as a nurse during the Crimean War.

EARLY 1860S: FANNY EATON INSPIRES PRE-RAPHAELITES

Jamaican-born Eaton became a muse for the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, significantly shaping Victorian art and challenging contemporary beauty standards with her iconic portrayals.

1898: SAMUEL COLERIDGE-TAYLOR'S HIAWATHA PREMIERES

The premiere of *Hiaiwatha's Wedding Feast* marked Coleridge-Taylor as a central figure in British classical music, leaving a legacy that continues to inspire musicians.

1930S-1940S: PAUL ROBESON SHAPES BRITISH THEATRE

Paul Robeson, African-American actor and singer, became a major figure in British theatre. His roles, particularly as *Othello*, and his activism for civil rights made him an icon.

1941: UNA MARSON JOINS THE BBC

Una Marson began working full-time at the BBC in March 1941 as a Programme Assistant in the "Empire Programmes" department. Her passion for poetry led to the creation of Caribbean Voices, a weekly feature in the "Calling the West Indies" series, which began towards the end of World War II.

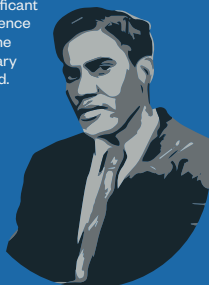


1948: CALYPSO MUSIC ARRIVES IN BRITAIN

Caribbean musicians, including Edric Connor and Lord Kitchener, introduced calypso to the UK, enriching the post-war music scene with vibrant rhythms and cultural diversity.

1953: GEORGE LAMMING'S POST-COLONIAL NOVEL PUBLISHED

In the Castle of My Skin by Lamming emerged as a seminal work in post-colonial literature, exploring Caribbean identity and colonial legacies, with significant influence on the literary world.



1954: WINIFRED ATWELL BREAKS MUSIC RECORDS

Atwell became the first Black artist to sell over a million records in Britain, setting a new standard for musicians in the British music industry.

1956: CY GRANT PIONEERS ON BRITISH TELEVISION

Grant made history as Britain's first Black television presenter, paving the way for greater representation of Black voices in the media.



1958: CLAUDIA JONES LAUNCHES THE WEST INDIAN GAZETTE

Jones founded *The West Indian Gazette* and organised the first Notting Hill Carnival, establishing lasting platforms for Caribbean culture and political activism in Britain.



1966: CARIBBEAN ARTISTS MOVEMENT IGNITES IN LONDON

The Caribbean Artists Movement (CAM), founded in London, played a crucial role in shaping Black British culture and inspiring future generations of artists and writers.

1970S: LINTON KWESI JOHNSON INNOVATES DUB POETRY

Johnson pioneered dub poetry, blending reggae rhythms with spoken word to powerfully address social injustice, racism, and the struggles of Black communities in Britain.

1976: HORACE OVÉ DIRECTS GROUNDBREAKING FILM

Pressure, directed by Ové, became the first full-length feature film by a Black British director, vividly portraying the experiences and challenges faced by West Indian immigrants in London.

1980: BENJAMIN ZEPHANIAH'S PEN RHYTHM PUBLISHED

After moving to London and becoming involved in a workers' co-operative in Stratford, Benjamin Zephaniah published his first book of poetry, *Pen Rhythm*, marking his debut in the literary world.



1981: BLACK CULTURAL ARCHIVES FOUNDED IN BRIXTON

The Black Cultural Archives (BCA) was founded in Brixton, London, by educationalist and historian Len Garrison and others. It is dedicated to preserving and showcasing the histories of people of African and Caribbean descent in Britain, serving as a vital resource for education and cultural heritage.

1982: VAL MCCALLA FOUNDS THE VOICE NEWSPAPER

McCalla launched *The Voice*, the UK's first national Black weekly newspaper, providing a crucial platform for the Black British community and addressing issues of race and representation.

1985: SONIA BOYCE BREAKS THROUGH IN ART

Boyce emerged as a prominent visual artist, using her work to explore and challenge themes of race, gender, and identity, earning significant recognition in the British art world.



1986: TALAWA THEATRE COMPANY ESTABLISHED

Talawa Theatre Company was founded in London, providing essential support to Black actors and playwrights, offering a platform for performances reflecting the Black British experience.

1987: BLACK HISTORY MONTH LAUNCHED IN THE UK

The UK's first Black History Month was celebrated in 1987, creating a national platform to honour the contributions of Black Britons and to educate future generations about their achievements.

1993: STEVE MCQUEEN'S FILMMAKING CAREER BEGINS

After graduating from Goldsmiths College in 1993, Steve McQueen embarked on a filmmaking journey that would later gain international acclaim for its innovative and impactful exploration of social issues.



2001: CASSA PANTHO FOUNDS BALLET BLACK

Cassa Pancho established Ballet Black, a company dedicated to promoting Black and Asian dancers in classical ballet, challenging traditional norms and creating new opportunities for diversity in the ballet world.

2000: ZADIE SMITH'S WHITE TEETH PUBLISHED

Smith's debut novel, *White Teeth*, became a literary sensation, exploring themes of multiculturalism and identity in contemporary Britain, earning widespread critical and commercial success.



1998: CHRIS OFILI WINS TURNER PRIZE

Ofili became the first Black British artist to win the Turner Prize, recognised for his provocative and vibrant artwork that challenged traditional notions of race and identity.

2013: MALORIE BLACKMAN APPOINTED CHILDREN'S LAUREATE

Malorie Blackman was appointed the UK's Children's Laureate in 2013, becoming the first Black person to hold the position. Her work, including the *Noughts & Crosses* series, addressed issues of race and social justice, inspiring young readers.



2019: BERNARDINE EVARISTO WINS BOOKER PRIZE

Evaristo made history by winning the Booker Prize for *Girl, Woman, Other*, offering profound insights into the lives and experiences of Black British women.

2021: MICHAELA COEL WINS BAFTA FOR I MAY DESTROY YOU

Coel won a BAFTA for her groundbreaking series, *I May Destroy You*. The series set new standards in British television through its fearless exploration of consent, race, and trauma.

B:M
2024

RECLAIMING NARRATIVES CELEBRATING BLACK VOICES IN LITERATURE

We celebrate six extraordinary Black British authors whose literary voices have reshaped and reclaimed narratives within the literary world.

Malika Booker (born 1970) is an acclaimed poet and performer whose work combines lyrical beauty with powerful social commentary. Her collections, including *Pepper Seed* and *Telling Tales*, address themes of identity, migration, and heritage. Booker's poetry reflects the complex experiences of the Black diaspora and challenges societal norms.



**"POETRY IS
A WAY TO
RECLAIM OUR
STORIES AND
CONNECT
OUR PAST
WITH OUR
PRESENT"**

**MALIKA
BOOKER**



**CARYL
PHILLIPS**

Caryl Phillips (born 1958) is a masterful storyteller whose novels, including *The Final Passage* and *Crossing the River*, delve into themes of migration, identity, and the legacies of colonialism. Phillips' compelling narratives illuminate the enduring impacts of colonialism and the diverse experiences of the Black diaspora. His literature provides profound insights into identity and belonging.



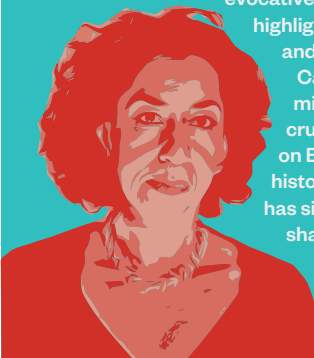
LINTON KWESI JOHNSON

Linton Kwesi Johnson (born 1952) is a revolutionary figure in British literature, known for blending reggae rhythms with powerful poetry to address social injustice and racial inequality. His acclaimed collection *Dread Beat an' Blood* vividly captures the struggles of Black Britons with a unique musical and lyrical style. Johnson's work challenges societal norms and amplifies the voices of the marginalised.

**"MY ROLE AS A WRITER
IS TO GIVE VOICE TO THE
OPPRESSED AND TO
CRITIQUE THE
INJUSTICES FACED BY
MARGINALISED
COMMUNITIES".**

ANDREA LEVY

Andrea Levy's (1956–2019) powerful novels, especially *Small Island*, offer a poignant exploration of the Windrush generation and their experiences in post-war Britain. Her evocative storytelling highlights the struggles and contributions of Caribbean migrants, providing crucial perspectives on British colonial history. Levy's work has significantly shaped our understanding of migration and race.



James Berry (1924–2017) was a pioneering poet and writer whose work vividly reflects the Caribbean diaspora's experiences. His poetry, including collections like *Fingernails*, is celebrated for its vibrant use of language and exploration of identity. Berry's contributions offer a window into the Black British experience, capturing the essence of migration and cultural heritage.

**JAMES
BERRY**



PATRICIA CUMPER

Patricia Cumper (born 1954) is a distinguished playwright and poet whose works, including *The Trial of the Windsor Four*, address critical themes of race and historical injustice. Her plays challenge societal norms and engage with contemporary issues, reinforcing the importance of diverse voices in the arts.



BIM
2024

RECLAIMING NARRATIVES THE POWER OF BLACK VOICES

Powerful words of Black leaders who have defied odds and transformed the world. Their quotes speak of strength, resilience, and vision, offering lessons that inspire and uplift across generations.

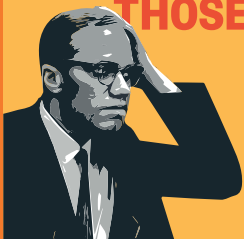


1918-2013

NELSON MANDELA

"What counts in life is not the mere fact that we have lived. It is what difference we have made to the lives of others that will determine the significance of the life we lead".

**"THE FUTURE BELONGS TO
THOSE WHO PREPARE
FOR IT TODAY".**



MALCOLM X
1925-1965

**MARTIN
LUTHER KING JR**
1929-1968

"Injustice
anywhere is a
threat to
justice
everywhere".



"You may not control
all the events that
happen to you, but
you can decide not to
be reduced by
them".

**MAYA
ANGELOU**
1928-2014



ROSA PARKS

"I would like to be
remembered as a
person who wanted
to be free... so other
people would be also
free".

"We may have
different religions,
different languages,
different coloured
skin, but we
all belong to
one human
race".



KOFI ANNAN
1938-2018

**"WE ARE ALL HUMAN
BEINGS; SO MUCH MORE
UNITES US THAN
DIVIDES US".**

BENJAMIN ZEPHANIAH
1958-2023



"The fight for justice is ongoing.
We must continue to hold those
in power accountable and
ensure that change is made".

**BARONESS DOREEN
LAWRENCE** BORN 1952

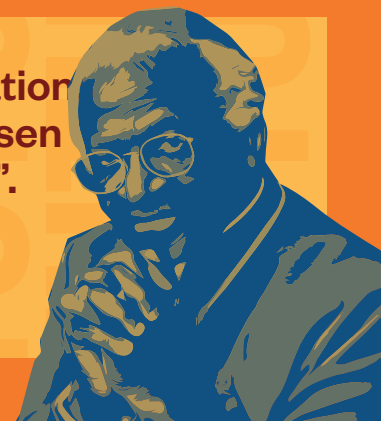
"We fought for
our rights. We
fought because
we had to".

OLIVE MORRIS
1952-1979



"If you are neutral in situation
of injustice, you have chosen
the side of the oppressor".

DESMOND TUTU
1931-2021



B:M
2024

RECLAIMING NARRATIVES HEROES OF SERVICE

Throughout history, Black men and women have played vital roles in the British Armed Forces, demonstrating extraordinary bravery and commitment. As we celebrate Black History Month, we highlight six remarkable individuals whose contributions have profoundly shaped our shared history. By honouring their stories, we ensure their legacies are celebrated.



Walter Tull stands as a towering figure of resilience and courage. A pioneering footballer and the first Black British officer in World War I, Walter Tull shattered racial barriers with his steadfast bravery. His ultimate sacrifice remains a powerful testament to the indomitable spirit that characterised his life. In celebrating Walter Tull, we recognise the profound impact of Black soldiers on our collective history.

WALTER TULL
1888-1918

David Clemetson's service in the British Army during World War I was nothing short of groundbreaking. As one of the few Black officers, David Clemetson embodied fearless dedication, challenging the racial prejudices of his time. His sacrifice is a poignant reminder of the courage and enduring impact of Black servicemen. David Clemetson's story demands our respect and remembrance.

DAVID CLEMETSON
1893-1918



NORMA BEST
BORN 1924



Norma Best's journey is one of resilience and dedication. She joined the ATS during World War II and served with distinction, overcoming significant challenges. After the war, Norma Best inspired future generations through her career in education. Her story highlights the essential role of Black women in British history.

Arthur Wint exemplified excellence across multiple fields. As Jamaica's first Olympic gold medallist and an RAF pilot during World War II, Arthur Wint broke new ground in both athletics and medicine. His legacy transcends borders, embodying the diverse contributions of Black servicemen. Arthur Wint's story broadens our understanding of heroism.

ARTHUR WINT
1920-1992



Lilian Bader was a pioneer for Black women in the British military. As one of the first Black women to serve in the WAAF during World War II, she played a crucial role as a leading aircraftwoman and instrument repairer. Lilian Bader's story is a testament to resilience and the broader contributions of Black women in the armed forces.

LILIAN BADER
1918-2015

Ulric Cross was a distinguished navigator in the RAF during World War II, completing over 80 missions and earning a Distinguished Flying Cross for his bravery. After the war, Ulric Cross had a remarkable career in law and diplomacy, contributing to the independence movements in several African nations. His story is a powerful testament to the leadership and influence of Black ex-service personnel beyond their military service.

ULRIC CROSS
1917-2013



BIM
2024

RECLAIMING NARRATIVES PIONEERS WHO SHAPED OUR WORLD

Honouring the Legacy of Black Innovators: Celebrating the Pioneers Who Transformed Science, Technology, and Society with Their Groundbreaking Contributions and Visionary Achievements.



DR. GEORGE AFRICANUS 1763-1834

INVENTED: ONE OF THE EARLIEST RECRUITMENT AGENCIES

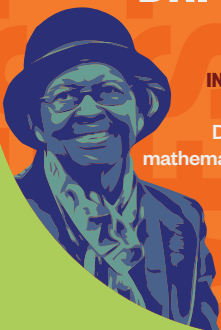
Dr. George Africanus established one of Britain's first recruitment agencies, breaking racial barriers and creating job opportunities. His pioneering spirit set a powerful example for Black entrepreneurs, reshaping career opportunities and challenging societal norms.



DR. PATRICIA BATH 1942-2019

INVENTED: LASERPHACO PROBE FOR CATARACT SURGERY

Dr. Patricia Bath's Laserphaco Probe revolutionised cataract surgery by offering precision and reducing invasiveness. Her invention restored sight to millions, setting new standards in eye care and significantly advancing ophthalmology.



DR. GLADYS WEST BORN 1930

INVENTED: MATHEMATICAL MODELS FOR GPS TECHNOLOGY

Dr. Gladys West developed crucial mathematical models for GPS technology. Her work enabled precise global navigation, revolutionising travel, logistics, and daily life with unprecedented accuracy and reliability.

SIR GEOFF PALMER BORN 1940

INVENTED: INNOVATIONS IN BREWING SCIENCE

Sir Geoff Palmer's advancements in barley abrasion transformed brewing by enhancing efficiency and quality. These innovations established new industry standards, influenced global practices, and ensured consistently high-quality beer, making a lasting impact on the brewing world.



FREDERICK MCKINLEY JONES 1893-1961

INVENTED: PORTABLE REFRIGERATED TRUCK

Jones's portable refrigerated truck revolutionised the transportation of perishable goods. This innovation ensured safe, long-distance delivery, enhancing food distribution and public health.



MARIE VAN BRITTAN BROWN 1922-1999

INVENTED: THE FIRST HOME SECURITY SYSTEM

Brown created the first home security system, featuring cameras and monitors. Her groundbreaking work improved personal safety and laid the groundwork for modern security technology.



ELIJAH MCCOY 1844-1929

INVENTED: AUTOMATIC LUBRICATOR FOR STEAM ENGINES

Elijah McCoy's automatic lubricator improved steam engine efficiency by allowing continuous lubrication. This invention enhanced machinery performance and earned the term "The Real McCoy" for its superior quality, advancing manufacturing and transportation.



DR. THOMAS MENSAH BORN 1950

INVENTED: ADVANCES IN FIBRE OPTICS AND NANOTECHNOLOGY

Dr. Thomas Mensah's breakthroughs in fibre optics and nanotechnology revolutionised telecommunications. His innovations increased data speeds and capacity, laying the foundation for the modern internet and enhancing global connectivity.

