

# PRESS RELEASE

1<sup>st</sup> August 2020

For immediate release



## Black History Month UK 2020

October 1st marks the start of Black History Month UK, observed since 1987, it is a time to celebrate the achievements and contributions of African and Caribbean heritage peoples to UK culture and history.

### What is Black History Month UK?

Black History Month UK was the brainchild of Akyaaba Addai-Sebo, a special projects officer at the Greater London Council. He wanted to boost the self-esteem of Black British children and young adults by educating them on the achievements of Black people living in the UK.

Taking inspiration from Black History Month (also known as African American History Month) in the United States. The first official event took place on 1<sup>st</sup> October 1987 at Country Hall.

It has since evolved into a national movement that is observed throughout the UK. It is also recognised in other parts of the world during October in Ireland and the Netherlands. In the US, where Black History Month originated, the awareness month is held in February. It is also celebrated in Canada during the month of February, where it was officially recognised in 1995.

### Why is it celebrated at different times across the globe?

After visiting America in the 1970s, Addai-Sebo created a British version of Black History Month in 1987, but they are not officially linked.

In the United States, Black History Month takes place in February to coincide with the births of Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln.

Addai-Sebo choose to celebrate Black History Month UK in October because of the month's importance in the African calendar. More importantly, it was the start of the British academic year.

### Why do we celebrate Black History Month UK 2020?

Did you know that there has been a Black presence in the UK since Roman Times? Or that there were Black Tudors, Stuarts and Georgians? Black History Month is our chance to celebrate these unsung heroes of Black British history whose contributions have for too long been ignored and forgotten.

Black History Month provides you with the chance to find out more about Black Britain's rich and varied long history dating back to antiquity times. It's a time to celebrate the achievements and

contributions of Black Britons who helped to shape the country amongst the Black British community and the wider UK population.

It also provides us with a space to tackle racism head-on by encouraging government, institutions and corporations to embrace and adopt equality and diversity policies.

### **What is the theme of Black History Month UK 2020?**

2020 is the year the world finally started talking about race and anti-black racism. The brutal murder of George Floyd in the United States by police generated shock waves across the globe and led to thousands of people taking to the streets to demand an end to racism.

Here in the UK, young activists took to the streets to demand an end to racial inequality in education, health and employment. Sparking important conversations over Britain's colonial past and its role in the Atlantic Slave Trade within government, business and the media.

This month we want to celebrate the inspiring modern Black Britons who first picked up the civil rights baton that has now metaphorically been passed onto today's brave and inspiring young activists. Our theme for this October is **'Non-Violent Civil Disobedience'** in which we'll be taking a look back at the Black British activists of the 1960s and 1980s who fought to achieve racial equality in the UK. Shining a light on the Civil Rights activists behind the Bristol Bus Boycott and the Lewisham Mums against SUS laws who paved the way for today's young Black British activists.

Throughout the month we'll be sharing a variety of profiles and features on the British Civil Rights pioneers of the 1960s and 1970s who paved the way for today's Black Britons and the wider UK immigrant community. Visit our website and any of our social media channels ([Instagram](#), [Twitter](#), and [Youtube](#)) or why not sign up for our [monthly newsletter updates](#).

### **How will it be commemorated in 2020?**

Black History Month is a great opportunity for people from all backgrounds to educate themselves on Black British history and the often-overlooked people who have made a difference to the country.

Please check your local authority website for news on any exhibitions or events they're holding in commemoration of Black History Month UK. Or the websites of your local museum or other local cultural institutions for any special events they may be running to mark the occasion.

Alternatively, why not check out our [Events Calendar](#) or read our blog ['31 ways to celebrate Black History Month UK'](#) for ideas on how to celebrate UK's Black History Month with your friends and family.

Brands supporting Black History Month this year include The Black Farmer, Bumble, Gap UK, Instagram, Royal Mail and Sainsburys plc.

TV and satellite channels supporting Black History Month this year include BBC, Sky, Channel Four, ITV, Britbox, BT Sport, NHS and Together TV.

To mark Black History Month and its continued commitment to giving diverse voices a platform in the UK, Spotify is shining a spotlight on the Black artists and talent who have made a difference in a very challenging 2020.

## Who is the International Black History Month UK (IBHM-UK) organisation?

The International Black History Month UK (IBHM-UK) was created in June 2020 by a group of Black Britons with a passion for investigating and curating the hidden and forgotten stories of Britain's black past.

We're committed to raising the profile of the month amongst the African and African Caribbean community in the UK. As one of our young volunteer interns explains:

*"Neither my primary or secondary schools celebrated Black History Month UK and I had to learn about UK Black History myself. So, I think it's important that an organisation like this exists to fill the gaps in knowledge that many people in the UK's African and Caribbean community may have about Britain's black past. Our community is not a monolith, and we all have different lived experiences. BHMUK allows us all to reflect and celebrate on all the different aspects of British Black history from finding out about awe inspiring individuals like Dr Harold Moody and John Blanke to the legislative changes in UK law championed by the Windrush generation. "*

For too long, Black History Month UK has lacked direction and focus. We decided to step into that space to ensure that this important month has a clear message and theme. Our CEO, Angela says: *"I have a young son who was tasked with choosing a notable Black Briton for a school assignment and I was shocked to learn that the only resources available was a website with poorly researched articles and filled to the brim with job adverts. We set up this organisation to ensure that quality information and free resources are available to everyone who wants to learn about UK Black History. And more importantly, that the stories of Black Britons are told in an authentic voice that belongs to us and not someone masquerading as one of us!"*

We are a local community group that provides free resources on UK Black History and hope to run themed Black UK history events in 2021 and beyond.

[Ends]

1. Black History Month UK website: [www.ibhm-uk.org](http://www.ibhm-uk.org)

2. Black History Month UK Youtube channel:  
[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCJktyhU48P\\_mWHuoqoU1GIw](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCJktyhU48P_mWHuoqoU1GIw)

### 3. Bristol Bus Boycott

In 1963, Roy Hackett, Paul Stephenson, Audley Evans and Guy Bailey joined together to organise a boycott to force the Bristol Omnibus Company to change its racist policies that stopped Black and Asian people from working on the buses. The protest attracted national attention and ultimately led to the passing of the Race Relations Act in 1965 that banned all discrimination in the workplace.

### 4. Lewisham Mums against SUS laws

A group of Lewisham mums led by Mavis Best, campaigned to stop the SUS laws in the UK with support of Paul Boateng (future Home Secretary and Labour Peer). The law was abolished on 27 August 1981 but three years later the government introduced the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 which reintroduced stop and search.