



## **PRESS RELEASE**

1 August 2021

For immediate release

### **Black History Month UK 2021**

October is Black History Month UK. It's a time to celebrate and remember African and Caribbean heritage peoples' achievements and contributions to the British economy, culture, and history. Stories that have long been deliberately overlooked and excluded from the history books.

### **What is Black History Month UK?**

Celebrated every October since 1987, Black History Month UK was the brainchild of Akyaaba Addai-Sebo, a special projects coordinator of the Ethnic Minorities Unit at the now-defunct Great London Council. He wanted to boost the self-esteem of Black British children and young adults by educating them on the long history and 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 event was held on 1 October 1987 at County Hall and was attended by American historian Dr. Maulana Karenga, who founded the African American holiday of Kwanzaa; and Kenyan women's activist Wanjiru Kihoro.

It has since evolved into a national movement recognised by the British government and 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 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 2021?**

Black British history goes back nearly two thousand years with evidence of African people living in Roman Britain. In fact, archival research suggests Black communities have been living in the UK since the 1500s. But these histories have been omitted or distorted in the history books. In recent times, it's not uncommon to see objections raised over the inclusion of People of Colour in the portrayals of ancient and pre-Windrush Britain. The furore over an educational cartoon produced by the BBC in 2017 that included a Black Roman soldier in Britain demonstrated the importance of educating all Britons on its multicultural past.

Black History Month is our chance to uncover and learn the long and deep relationship between Africa and Britain dating back to antiquity times. To discover and embrace the forgotten individuals who helped contribute to the values of modern-day Britain. It's a time to celebrate Black Britons' achievements and contributions that helped shape the UK amongst the Black British community and the wider UK population.

It also provides us with a space to tackle racial discrimination head-on within our society by encouraging government, institutions, and corporations to advocate for diversity and inclusion.

## **Do we really need Black History Month UK?**

Some campaigners argue against the existence and usefulness of the month as they believe it marginalizes UK Black history and that it should, rightly, be remembered all year round. Organisations such as The Black Curriculum are working hard to address the absence of Black British history in the UK curriculum through campaigning, training teachers, and delivering Black history programmes. But Black History Month UK, like many other national and international events, provides us with an opportunity to remember individuals and events that would never be included in a racially inclusive national curriculum and would remain forgotten to the annals of time.

## **What are the aims of Black History Month in the UK?**

- Celebrate and recognise the achievements of African and Caribbean heritage people's role in helping to shape UK culture, history, and economic development.
- Educating the UK population on how the relationships between Britain, Africa, the Caribbean, and the United States helped create modern Britain.
- To encourage government, institutions, and corporations to embrace and adopt equality and diversity policies.

## **What is the theme of Black History Month UK 2021?**

The theme of Black History Month UK 2021 is 'Black to the Past.' We'll be uncovering Britain's hidden Black history spanning from Roman times to the 1800s. We'll examine key moments of that period and explore some of the everyday lives of ordinary Black Britons of the time. The subjects touched upon will include Black Abolitionists and the Lancashire mill worker's role in ending the Atlantic Slave Trade, Africans in Roman and Medieval Britain, the forgotten Black Tudors and Stuarts, and the many amazing Georgians and Victorians. We'll also be shining a spotlight on the Black Britons from the time, including the most well-known Black Tudor, John Blanke, Ignatius Sancho, Dederi Jaquoah, and Prince Alamayou.

## How can I celebrate Black History Month UK 2021?

Black History Month is an excellent 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.

There are a variety of ways you can observe the month:

- Attend any of the hundreds of events taking place up and down the country to commemorate Black History Month. Please visit our [website](#) for more information.
- Show your support online by posting the official Black History Month UK avatar on your social media channel during the month.
- Take on the #BHMLandmarks selfie challenge
- Enter our BHMUK treasure hunt, and you could win prizes!
- Attend the #BHMUK21 launch event and Play our Big Fat Black History online quiz
- Why not watch our '10 ways to celebrate Black History Month UK 2021' video for more ideas?

## How should educational organisations and business corporations recognise the month?

The theme of Black History Month UK 2021 is 'Black to the Past,' and we advise any schools and colleges interested in exploring the topic in greater detail to visit The Black Curriculum website, which has an extensive range of educational resources relating to the theme.

We encourage business corporations to provide a safe space for all individuals who wish to commemorate the month in which stories can be shared – personal experiences and/or inspiring stories. But to also remember that not everybody may want to be involved in your Black History Month planning simply because of their ethnic background. Such assumptions place the burden of responsibility on them, and if they're a visible minority in your workplace, they might feel tokenized about their role in your workplace. Remember, for best results, you should be recognizing all your employees, all year round!

Companies are also advised to run a diversity and inclusion audit of their business – and perhaps book a Black keynote speaker to provide advice on making their workplaces more racially inclusive.

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1. IBHM-UK Heritage International is the leading authority and repository for Black History Month UK. We want to reclaim Black British History by providing a forum for Black Britons to tell their stories in their own voice. We're the leading website for Black History Month UK and are dedicated to providing quality information and events for individuals interested in finding out more about the month. The website contains an assortment of material – quizzes, features, and biographies – all free of charge.

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. Official Black History Month UK events hosted by IBHM-UK Heritage International  
- [Big Fat Black History Quiz launch event for Black History Month UK 2021](#)

- [#BHMUK21 Treasure Hunt in London](#)
- [Black History Month UK Movie Watch Party Weekender](#)

4. Black History Month UK 2021 promotional videos:

6 facts about Black History Month UK - <https://youtu.be/c04sEXmBfv4>

Theme of Black History Month UK – Past to the Past (4 promos)

<https://youtu.be/ORk0shNsjSY>

<https://youtu.be/Fz9B1y8KQC4>

<https://youtu.be/4dvVNqb7Pik>

<https://youtu.be/v1SvnGX9YwM>