



PRESS RELEASE

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For immediate release

Black History Month UK 2023

October marks the start of Black History Month UK – a time to celebrate and remember African and Caribbean heritage peoples' achievements and contributions to the British economy, culture, and history. It's a chance to tell the stories of those lesser well-known Black Britons who we will forget if we don't showcase them.

What is Black History Month UK?

Black History Month UK began in October 1987 by Akyaba 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 in February too when it was officially recognised in 1995.

Since the 1990s, the significance of Black History Month has gradually increased throughout continental Europe and it is now observed in Germany, Belgium, and Italy in February.

What are the origins of Black History Month?

In 1926, African-American historian Carter G Woodson started national Negro History Week to advocate for the inclusion of American Black History in the US national public education system. Over time, and with the momentum and support of the Civil Rights Movement in

the 1960s, the week gradually morphed into the month it is today. In 1976, US Black History Month (or African American Month as it's now regularly referred to) was officially recognised by President Gerald Ford.

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 should we separate Black History Month celebrations in the US and UK?

When Black History Month UK started in the UK, there was a big emphasis on African American history. Over time the focus has moved to celebrating and recognising Black British history and key Black figures in the UK.

It's important also that we focus only on British Black history as the Black British community is a composite of peoples with different cultures and identities. Some individuals with a lineage beginning long before the Windrush generation and others with distinct and very different cultures rooted in the African and Caribbean continents.

Why do we celebrate Black History Month UK 2023?

In 2021, the National Census revealed that the overall Black population makes up 2.4 million (4%) people living in England and Wales, a steep rise from the 1.9 million (3.3%) recorded a decade earlier. This growth was powered by a growing Black African population (nearly 3%) while the Black Caribbean population slowed to just 1%.

As Britain's Black population changes, we need to make sure that the stories of the previous generations are not lost and are remembered and honoured by the new generations of Black Britons.

'[UK] Black history is a series of missing chapters from British history' said David Olusoga, historian, and we must be involved in the telling of these stories.

Black History Month exists to tell these stories in our own voices. It's our chance to shine a light on individuals who aren't featured in the mainstream and whose contributions would be forgotten without Black History Month UK. It's a time to celebrate Black Britons who are making history now too.

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, equality, 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 lack 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 2023?

The theme of Black History Month UK 2022 is *'Before Windrush'*.

This October we'll be exploring the lives and stories of Black Britons who were living in the UK before the arrival of Empire Windrush in 1948.

Throughout the month we'll be shining a spotlight on notable Black Britons such as Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, Kofoworola Abeni Pratt, Learie Constantine and Princess Ademola. We'll also explore Black doctors and nurses working in healthcare before the NHS and the 18th century Black prisoners of war at Portchester Castle in 1796.

Not forgetting that Black History Month is also about documenting history in the making. We'll be asking the UK Black Community to commemorate the month by sharing their own family histories using the hashtag #bhmfamilies

How can I celebrate Black History Month UK 2023?

Black History Month is an excellent opportunity for people from all backgrounds to educate themselves on Black Britain's history and familiarise themselves with the lesser-known Black Britons 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. Check out our Events page for more information.
- Take on them **#BHMfamilies selfie challenge**.
- Attend the **#BHMUK23 launch event** and Play our Big Fat Black History online quiz.
- Why not watch our **'10 ways to celebrate Black History Month UK'** video for more ideas?

How should educational organisations and business corporations recognise the month?

The theme of Black History Month UK 2023 is 'Before Windrush,' 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 UK 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 DEI (diversity, equality, and inclusion) audit of their business. Surveys make it easier to understand the current state of DEI at your company, pinpoint focus areas, and run intersectional analyses that can guide companies towards meaningful action.

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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

2. Black History Month UK Youtube channel:
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCJktyhU48P_mWHuogoU1GIw
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 2023
 - Black History Month UK Movie Watch Party
 - #BHMfamilies selfie challenge
4. Who is the International Black History Month UK (IBHM-UK) organisation?
The International Black History Month UK (IBHM-UK) is a local community group that provides free resources on UK Black History and runs Black UK history events.

It was founded 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.

5. Quotes from IBHM-UK Heritage International:
We're committed to raising the profile of the month amongst the African, Caribbean and Black British 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! "***