



## **PRESS RELEASE**

1 August 2022

**For immediate release**

### **Black History Month UK 2022**

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 less 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 Akyaaba 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 2022?**

Following the anti-black racism protests that swept the globe in 2020, there was a step-change in how racism was addressed by individuals and organisations. Honest dialogues were opened, however, contentious, over Britain's colonial past, and diversity and inclusion became a key component of corporate policy, however performative the action. Change is happening but there is still a long way to go.

As our stories enter the mainstream and UK Black history, is rightly seen as just British history. We must ensure that the stories of our lesser-known Black Britons are not forgotten and that the authenticity of those stories is not lost, and are told in their own words.

'[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 2022?**

The theme of Black History Month UK 2022 is '*Sharing Journeys*'.

This October we'll be exploring the lives and stories of the people who came to Britain in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and helped laid the foundations of today's diverse Black British Community.

Throughout the month we'll be taking a look at the lives of Africa-American soldiers who came to the UK during the Second World War, examining the impact of West African students on Black Britain and their part in campaigning for the end of colonial rule in Africa, and the highly influential Caribbean Arts Movement of the 1960s and 1970s.

We'll also be shining a spotlight on notable Black Britons with heritages ranging from West Africa, the Caribbean, South and North America and East Africa; including Amanda Alridge, Ottobah Cugano, John and Kathleen Wrasama.

## **How can I celebrate Black History Month UK 2022?**

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. Please visit our website for more information.
- Take on the #BHM Families selfie challenge
- Enter our BHMUK treasure hunt, and you could win prizes!

- Attend the #BHMUK22 launch event and Play our Big Fat Black History online quiz
- Why not watch our '10 ways to celebrate Black History Month UK 2022' video for more ideas?

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

The theme of Black History Month UK 2022 is 'Sharing Journeys,' 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.

[Ends]

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 2022
  - #BHMUK22 Treasure Hunt in London
  - Black History Month UK Movie Watch Party
  - #BHMFamilies selfie challenge

4. Black History Month UK 2022 promotional videos (located on our YouTube channel):
  - 6 facts about Black History Month UK
  - Theme of Black History Month UK 2022 – Sharing Journeys (4 promos)
  - BHMUK Events video