A (partial) Timeline of BLACK BRITISH HISTORY

in honour of Black History Month
October 2019
Beachy Head Lady
The first Black Briton known to us was a woman of sub-Saharan African descent.

c. 125 AD
An *African legionary* (Roman soldier) went down in history for making fun of the Emperor Septimius Severus outside Carlisle. He was “famous among buffoons and always a great joker.”
Ivory Bangle Lady

A high-status, mixed-race woman lived in Roman York. Discovered with her burial were jet and elephant ivory bracelets, earrings, pendants, beads, a blue glass jug and a glass mirror.
Black Tudors

John Blanke, one of the court trumpeters, was present in the entourage of Henry VII from at least 1507. He performed at both Henry VII’s funeral and Henry VIII’s coronation in 1509.
1560s

The beginnings of the British transatlantic slave trade.
1729-1780

Ignatius Sancho

The first African prose writer published in England, Sancho became a financially independent male householder and the first known black British voter.
1760s

Black Londoners account for 10,000-15,000 of the nation’s 20,000 black people.
Mary Seacole
A nurse who independently set up the British Hotel to care for the wounded during the Crimean War. Became a much-loved figure.
The Slave Trade Act 1807 was passed, prohibiting the slave trade in the British Empire.
The Slavery Abolition Act 1833 abolished slavery throughout the British Empire.

This Act of the Parliament of the United Kingdom expanded the jurisdiction of the Slave Trade Act 1807 which made the purchase or ownership of slaves illegal within the British Empire.
John Archer, a British politician and political activist, was elected Mayor of Battersea, becoming the first black mayor in London.
Black soldiers could be found in all branches of the British armed forces.

Walter Tull was one of the most celebrated black British soldiers of the First World War.
Racism After the War

“At the end of the First World War, many African and West Indian soldiers who had fought for their ‘Mother Country’ decided to make Britain their home, but in some cities, including the seaports Cardiff and Liverpool, they came under attack.

After demobilisation, many ex-servicemen faced unemployment and returning white soldiers resented the presence of black men, especially those who had found employment and married white women. Between January and August 1919, there were anti-black ‘race riots’ in seven towns and cities in Britain. Cardiff’s black population had increased during the war from 700 in 1914 to 3,000 by April 1919. The tensions between the white and black communities exploded into violence in Butetown (aka ‘Tiger Bay’) in June 1919. 2,000 white people attacked shops and houses associated with black citizens. Many were injured.”

https://www.thehistorypress.co.uk/articles/black-servicemen-unsung-heroes-of-the-first-world-war/
Around 10,000 Caribbean men and women joined the British armed forces, working behind the scenes and on the frontlines to defeat the Nazis.
The Empire Windrush arrived at Tilbury Docks, Essex, on 21 June 1948. It brought one of the first large groups of post-war West Indian immigrants to the UK. British Caribbean people who came to the UK in the period after World War II are sometimes referred to as the Windrush generation.
Dr Martin Luther King Jr. visited London on his way to accept a Nobel Peace Prize in Norway. While in the UK, he brought together C.A.R.D. (the Campaign Against Racial Discrimination) and preached at St. Paul’s Cathedral.
The Race Relations Act of 1965 passed; protections against discrimination were extended in the Act of 1968, and further in the Act of 1976. This legislation resulted in the right to take discrimination complaints to civil courts or industrial tribunals and set up the Commission for Racial Equality.
“The Caribbean Artists Movement (CAM), founded in London in 1966, was the first organised collaboration of artists from the Caribbean with the aim of celebrating a new sense of shared Caribbean ‘nationhood’, exchanging ideas and attempting to forge a new Caribbean aesthetic in the arts.”
Notting Hill Carnival (inspired by the London Caribbean Carnival organised by Claudia Jones) launched by a community activist and one of the founders of the London Free School, Rhaune Laslett, who aimed to highlight the cultural richness of the area and remedy racial tensions after the 1958 Notting Hill race riots.
A branch of the Black Panther Party was formed in the UK
The Immigration Act of 1971 passed, stripping Commonwealth citizens’ right to remain in the UK and further restricting immigration.
1973

Trevor McDonald joins ITN and becomes the first black news reporter. He goes on to receive an OBE in 1992 and a knighthood in 1999.
Viv Anderson becomes the first black British footballer to play for England in an international tournament.
The Brixton Riot or Brixton Uprising occurs as tensions between the black British community and the police in the area culminated in three days of rioting against police brutality and discriminatory policies.

The uprisings spread across the UK.
The Voice is founded, becoming the first British national black weekly newspaper; it’s based in London.
Tessa Sanderson becomes the first black British woman to win an Olympic gold medal; she is awarded an OBE in 1998.
1987

UK elects four black members of parliament: Dianne Abbott (the first black woman), Bernie Grant, Paul Boateng and Keith Vaz; all Labour MPs.
Naomi Campbell becomes the first black model to grace the cover of French Vogue.
Stephen Lawrence is stabbed to death in an unprovoked attack by a gang of white youths as he waits for a bus in south-east London.

In 1999, the police response to the teenager’s killing is labelled “institutionally racist” by Sir W. Macpherson who led the public inquiry into Stephen’s murder.
The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 comes into force as an extension of the Race Relations Act 1976, requiring the police and other public authorities such as colleges and universities to take action to promote race equality.

“The law imposes a duty on institutions to:
• Eliminate unlawful discrimination
• Promote equality of opportunity
• Promote good race relations between persons of different racial groups.”
Ms. Dynamite won the prestigious Mercury Prize for her debut solo album A Little Deeper, followed by two Brit awards the following year.
Doreen Lawrence, mother of Stephen Lawrence, is awarded an OBE for services to community relations in 2003. She is made Baroness Lawrence of Clarendon in 2013.
The first Black Lives Matter protest takes place in the UK.
Stormzy’s album Gang Signs & Prayer was the first grime album to reach #1 on the UK Albums Chart and won British Album of the Year at the 2018 Brit Awards.

2019: Stormzy’s headline appearance at the Glastonbury Festival was widely praised.

He makes the cover of US Time magazine, tops the list of “next generation leaders”.