



# BLACK HISTORY MONTH

# WHAT IS BLACK HISTORY MONTH & WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

October is Black History Month - a time to recognise the cultural, economic and political contributions Black people have made to our country.

Black History Month in the UK was founded in 1987, by Akyaaba Addai-Seboin, with the aim of educating people on the aspects of history that were not taught in schools. Today it remains part of an ongoing effort to preserve the rich history, culture and legacy of Black communities across the UK.

A celebration of Black history remains important today because although Black people have been present in the UK as far back as the Roman empire, Black contributions to our national history have either been undervalued or erased altogether.



**BLACK HISTORY  
MONTH**

**Black history is British history** and if we are to ever gain a full understanding of our national identity, the recognition of Black icons and leaders must not be confined to a single month, they must be celebrated throughout the year.

The Black Lives Matter movement has made it clear that we have a long way to go in addressing racial injustice and we have a lot of work to do both as a party and a country. Part of that work is a recognition that Black history is an inextricable part of our national narrative.

# FORGOTTEN BLACK BRITISH HISTORY

A few things you probably didn't learn in your history lessons ...

## The Ivory Bangle Lady

Although most people assume that Black people weren't living in the UK until recently, the remains of a Roman woman known as the Ivory Bangle Lady were found in York in 1901. An analysis of her facial features, by the University of Reading's Department of Archaeology and the evidence from the burial site, suggest that she was a high status incomer to Roman York, likely to have been of North African descent<sup>1</sup>.

## Black Tudors

Although much is taught on Tudor England, little attention is paid on the lives of Black people in 16th century England. Research has shown that there were hundreds of Black people living in England at the time including **John Blanke** - a musician at the courts of both Henry VII and Henry VIII.<sup>2</sup>



## The Black Britons in the war effort

Black people played a crucial role in both WW1 and WW2 as fighters, fire-watchers and nurses and although thousands risked their lives, there is little recognition of their sacrifice today. After the war many faced racism and inequality in the country they had fought so hard for.

In recent years more recognition has been given to people like **Lilian Bader**<sup>3</sup> one of the first Black women to join the armed forces and **Walter Tull** - a Black British soldier of the First World War.<sup>4</sup>

There are many more people who deserve to be celebrated such as ...

**Margaret Busby** - Britain's youngest and first Black female book publisher, **Claudia Jones** - the "founding mother" of the Notting Hill Carnival and the composer **Samuel Coleridge-Taylor**.



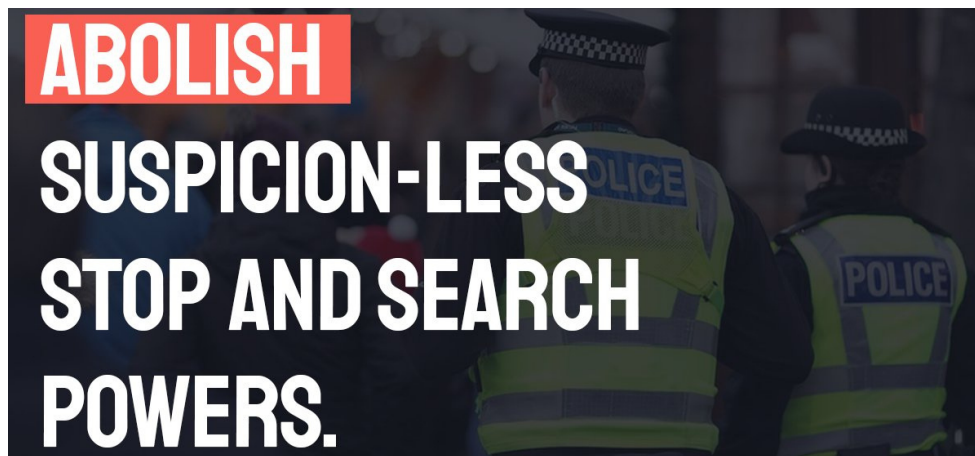
# HOW ARE LIB DEMS STANDING WITH BLACK COMMUNITIES?

## **Demanding an end to "Suspicion-less" Stop and Search**

In the UK a Black person is 47 times more likely to be subject to Section 60 'Suspicionless' Stop and Search than a white person. This is unacceptable. That's why Ed Davey is demanding that the government scrap that power once and for all. More info [here](#).

## **Calling for All-ethnic-minority shortlists**

We're calling for a change the Equality Act to allow political parties to use all-ethnic-minority shortlists (on the same basis as all-women shortlists) for selections.



## **Changes to the curriculum**

Black History is often overlooked in our schools, that's why Layla Moran is leading calls for a review of the national curriculum to ensure that the history curriculum represents a more diverse range of perspectives, and that other subjects are designed to be more inclusive and tackle racial injustice.

## **Continuing support for Black Lives Matter movement**

The murder of George Floyd rocked many of us and led to calls for racial justice across the world. As a party we have been unequivocal in our support for the Black Lives Matter movement and having been working to hold the government to account. A snippet on some of the work we've been doing [here](#).

# BLACK LIVES MATTER

## **New policy to combat racism**

A new racial justice motion drawn up by the Federal Policy Committee and the Lib Dem Campaign for Race Equality was just passed at Autumn Conference. It's a wide-ranging motion that tackles everything from the need to draw up a Race Equality Strategy and to the need to reduce the disproportionate number of Black people in prison and the importance of addressing the suffering and injustice caused by the British Empire. Read the full motion [here](#).

## **Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic pay gap reporting**

We have been fighting to extend the Equality Act to all large companies with more than 250 employees, requiring them to monitor and publish data on gender, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic, and LGBT+ employment levels and pay gaps.

## **End the hostile environment**

The UK's immigration system is broken, and it is hurting everyone. The Conservatives' Hostile Environment has caused innocent members of the Windrush Generation to be made homeless, detained and even deported.

People without documents have been denied access to healthcare and housing. Thousands are locked up indefinitely, in appalling conditions and at great expense. Public confidence in the system has been shattered. We are fighting to stop this.

## **Name-blind recruitment**

Require organisations with more than ten employees and in receipt of public funds to use name-blind recruitment processes.

# REFERENCES

- <sup>1</sup> Yorkshire Museum - [www.yorkshiremuseum.org.uk/collections/collections-highlights/ivory-bangle-lady/](http://www.yorkshiremuseum.org.uk/collections/collections-highlights/ivory-bangle-lady/)
- <sup>2</sup> National Archives - [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pathways/blackhistory](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pathways/blackhistory)
- <sup>3</sup> RAF Museum- [www.rafmuseum.org.uk/research/online-exhibitions/pilots-of-the-caribbean/heroes-and-sheroes/technician-leading-aircraftwoman-lilian-bader](http://www.rafmuseum.org.uk/research/online-exhibitions/pilots-of-the-caribbean/heroes-and-sheroes/technician-leading-aircraftwoman-lilian-bader)
- <sup>4</sup> Black History Month - [www.blackhistorymonth.org.uk/article/section/bhm-heroes/how-black-soldiers-helped-britain-in-first-world-war](http://www.blackhistorymonth.org.uk/article/section/bhm-heroes/how-black-soldiers-helped-britain-in-first-world-war)

## FURTHER READING & INFORMATION

### **Lib Dem HQ**

More diversity resources available [online](#)

Contact HQ Diversity Team: [diversity@libdems.org.uk](mailto:diversity@libdems.org.uk)

### **External Organisations**

Black History Month: [www.blackhistorymonth.org.uk](http://www.blackhistorymonth.org.uk)

Black Cultural Archives: [blackculturalarchives.org](http://blackculturalarchives.org)

National Archives: [nationalarchives.gov.uk](http://nationalarchives.gov.uk)

### **Films and Documentaries**

Alt History (BBC)

Black and British: A Forgotten History (BBC)