

# Black British history: events and people



## Timeline events

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**1948**

### Empire Windrush came to Britain

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- Empire Windrush was a boat.
  - It carried eight hundred people (mostly men) from Caribbean countries and Guyana to Britain and arrived in Essex.
  - The people were recruited to come to Britain because there was a labour shortage after the Second World War.
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**1958**

### 125,000 Caribbean people lived in Britain

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- Recruitment programmes in the Caribbean and Guyana continued to bring people to Britain to work for organisations like British Rail and the NHS.
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**1958**

### White people were racist and violent

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- When black people came to Britain they had to compete with white people for jobs and homes.
  - Many white people didn't like black people moving into what they thought were 'their' areas and taking 'their' jobs.
  - Black people weren't treated fairly. In the summer, gangs of angry white people attacked black people in London and Nottingham.
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**1959**

### Carnival was born

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- Claudia Jones helped launch Carnival as an event where black people from the Caribbean could showcase their talent as part of getting equality.
  - Carnival became an outdoor event in 1964 and still happens every year in London.
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**1966 – 1978**

### A new generation of black children

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- A generation of black children were born in Britain.
- Their main problems were getting a good education, finding jobs, and avoiding the police who picked on them.

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## 1963

### The Bristol bus boycott

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- The Bristol bus company wouldn't employ black people to be drivers or conductors.
- Paul Stephenson led a boycott: people stopped using the buses to protest.
- It made the media pay attention to the way black people were being treated unfairly.
- The pressure meant that the company agreed to hire black people; it also helped introduce a law about racial discrimination.

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## 1968

### Enoch Powell's speech

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- Enoch Powell was a politician in the West Midlands.
- He didn't want the government to approve a law that would stop race discrimination.
- He made a big speech that criticised people from Commonwealth countries (countries that used to be part of the British Empire) coming to live in Britain.
- His speech said there would be violence and it encouraged people to hate (and be violent towards) black people all over the country.

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## 1980s and 1990s

### More African migration

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- African migrants came during the Windrush period in lower numbers.
- In this period of time, the number of black Africans in Britain increased as people came from countries including Nigeria, Ghana, and Somalia.

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## 1969 – 1970

### The Mangrove Nine

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- The Mangrove restaurant in London was an important place for black people, including people who were fighting for equality.
- The police raided it lots of times even though they didn't have evidence people were doing anything wrong.
- Black people protested and it ended in violence. Nine black people were arrested, but they were found innocent of the main charge.
- It was the first time a judge talked about racism in the police.

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## 1981

### The New Cross Fire

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- In January, 13 young black people died in a fire during a party.
- The police said the fire started in the house and it was an accident, but people in the black community thought it was a racist arson attack (where someone sets fire to something on purpose).
- Darcus Howe organised a march called the Black People's Day of Action to protest.

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## 1981

### Swamp 81

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- The police launched a massive campaign called Swamp 81 where they stopped and searched black young people.
- They used an ancient law to arrest black people and put them in jail without proof they'd done anything wrong.
- This led to black people and the police battling in the streets in London, Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham, and Leeds.

## People

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### Dame Shirley Bassey

- She was born in Wales in 1937 – her dad was Nigerian and her mum was English.
- She became a really famous singer who recorded the theme songs to three James Bond films.

### Dzagbele Matilda Asante

- She was born in 1927 in what's now Ghana.
- She came to England in 1947 and trained to be a nurse.
- She experienced a lot of racism in her job: some people refused to be treated by an African nurse.

### Aldwyn Robert (stage name Lord Kitchener)

- He was born in Trinidad and Tobago in 1922 and was on the Windrush in 1948.
- He was a calypso singer – calypso is a style of music that began in Trinidad and Tobago.
- He used to perform on BBC radio – he was an important figure for lots of people who'd left the Caribbean and missed their home and culture.

### Daphne Steele

- She was born in what's now Guyana in 1929.
- She came to Britain in 1951 when the British government recruited people to work in the NHS.
- She witnessed racism from white colleagues as well as patients.
- In 1964, she was the first black woman to become a matron in the NHS.

### Kelso Cochrane

- He was born in Antigua in 1926. He moved to London in 1954 and worked as a carpenter while he saved money to study law.
- In 1959, he was attacked by a gang of white young people and he died in hospital.
- It was the first acknowledged racial killing, but no one was ever arrested for his murder.
- After his murder, the British government organised an investigation into race relations.

### Claudia Jones

- She was born in Trinidad and Tobago in 1915.
- She was granted asylum in England after the United States deported her.
- She became a leader of the black equal rights movement in London and campaigned against anti-black racism in housing, education, and jobs.
- In 1959, she helped launch Carnival as an annual showcase for Caribbean talent.
- In the 1960s she campaigned against a law that would make it harder for non-white people to migrate to Britain.

## Paul Stephenson

- He was born in Essex in 1937 – his dad was West African and his mum was British. He was the only black child in his secondary school in London.
- In the 1960s, people in Bristol set up an organisation to fight discrimination, including the Bristol Bus Company not employing black people.
- Paul Stephenson was inspired by American civil rights activists (including Claudette Colvin and Rosa Parks) hold a boycott: people protesting by refusing to use the buses.
- He became the spokesperson for the boycott because he was educated. Later that year, the bus company let black people work on buses.
- He continued to stand up against racism throughout his life.

## The Mangrove Nine

**Barbara Beese, Rupert Boyce, Frank Crichlow, Rhodan Gordon, Darcus Howe, Anthony Innis, Altheia Jones-LeCointe, Rothwell Kentish, Godfrey Millett**

- They were a group of black activists who were arrested for encouraging a riot at a protest. The protest was against the police unfairly targeting a restaurant that was important for the black community.
- Their trial lasted 55 days and they challenged the legal process, including by asking for people in the jury to be black.
- Their trial was the first time a judge said there was racial prejudice in the Metropolitan Police.
- The Mangrove Nine inspired other civil rights activists to take on the legal system and led to the government changing the way they put juries together.

## Skepta

- He was born in London in 1982 – his parents are Nigerian.
- In interview, he talked about being at school and said that the African kids used to lie and say they were Jamaican and he used to try to say his Yoruba surname before the teacher got it wrong.
- Later, his lyrics said things like 'I make Nigerians proud of their tribal scars' – he was talking about confidence and fighting back.

## Darcus Howe

- He was born in Trinidad and Tobago in 1943 and moved to England when he was 18.
- He was a member of the **Mangrove Nine** in 1970.
- In 1981, he organised a Black People's Day of Action where 20,000 people marched across London to try to get justice for 13 young black people who'd died in a fire.
- He was also a chairman of the Notting Hill Carnival and a television broadcaster.

## Stephen Lawrence

- He was born in London in 1974 – his Jamaican parents came to London in the 1960s.
- When he was 18, he was at college and he wanted to be an architect.
- He was killed by a gang of five or six white young people in a racist attack in 1993.
- A few years later, a report found that the police investigation had made lots of mistakes and that the Metropolitan Police were 'institutionally racist', which means that racist attitudes and beliefs were seen as normal in the police and they affected how the police investigated Stephen's murder.
- The report said people needed to make changes in places like the police, the NHS, and schools to stop them being racist.
- Stephen's death was a tragedy. His dad (Dr Neville Lawrence) said that his son's murder 'opened the country's eyes' to racism – both the attack and the way the police responded showed that

there was still a lot of racism in Britain.

- In 2012, two people were found guilty of the murder.
- You can find out more about Stephen Lawrence on [BBC Newsround](#) or the [Stephen Lawrence Charitable Trust website](#).

### **Doreen Lawrence**

- She was born in Jamaica in 1952.
- Her son, Stephen Lawrence, was killed in 1993.
- She spoke up when the police were racist and fought for changes to the police service.
- Her campaigning led to an important report in 1999.
- She also started the Stephen Lawrence Charitable Trust, which works with young people to try to make the world a fairer place for everyone.

### **Diane Abbott**

- She was born in London in 1953 – her parents were Jamaican.
- In 1987, she became the first black female MP and she still represents the same area of London in 2020.
- She's been responsible for her party's response to things like children's health and nursing.
- She also supported people from the Windrush generation who were given the right to live in Britain in the 1970s but hadn't been given any documents to prove it.

### **Patricia Scotland**

- She was born in Dominica in 1955.
- She became a member of the House of Lords in 1997.
- In 2007, she became Attorney General: the most powerful lawyer in the country and the chief legal adviser for the HM Queen Elizabeth II, parliament, and government.
- She was the first woman to be the Attorney General after 700 years of men.

### **Nicola Adams**

- She was born in West Yorkshire in 1982.
- She was a professional boxer and retired with an undefeated record.
- She won gold medals in the London 2012 and Rio 2016 Olympics and was the first openly LGBT person to win an Olympic boxing gold medal.

### **Mo Farah**

- He was born in Somalia.
- He spent his early childhood as refugee.
- He won gold medals in the 5,000m and 10,000m races in the 2012 and 2016 Olympic Games.
- Mo Farah is a Muslim; in 2012, he observed his Ramadan fast later in the year so he didn't fast during the Olympics.