

Black History Month

This October we are celebrating Black History Month, and we asked some of our tutors who study Black history within the School for aspects of Black history that they think are untold. From influential figures to fascinating manuscripts, these sources give us a deeper understanding of Black history and why it is so important that we pay more attention to these histories and mark Black history at all times of the year.



We understand that by writing this as non-Black people we cannot understand or represent fully what Black History Month means, and we recognise that there is an urgent need to not only be more inclusive of Black voices in academia but also a wider push within the discipline of history as a whole to amplify Black writers and stories.

You can find out more about the work of these tutors at research.ed.ac.uk Check out the RACE.ED blog (www.race.ed.ac.uk) and the BlackED movement on campus who are carrying out fantastic work on racial literacy and much more. Another great source of knowledge is The Black Curriculum (theblackcurriculum.com), which campaigns for a greater representation of Black British history in the UK.

Mark Newman – Amy Ashwood Garvey (1897-1969) in Britain



Amy Ashwood Garvey

In both Jamaica and the United States, Amy Ashwood played a major role in the founding and organisation of the Universal Negro Improvement Association, alongside her future husband Marcus Garvey. In a peripatetic career, she remained a significant figure in Black Nationalism after her divorce in 1922 and subsequent relocation to London, where she mixed with activists and intellectuals from Britain's colonies and, with Ladipo Solanke, helped form the anticolonial Nigerian Progress Union in 1924. Ashwood returned to London in 1935, where, along with C L R James and George Padmore, she helped establish the International African Friends of Abyssinia to protest against Italy's invasion. She also opened the International Afro Restaurant and the Florence Mills Social Parlour, both of which became meeting places for activists. In 1937, Ashwood, alongside notables that included Jomo Kenyatta, launched the International African Service Bureau, which championed anti-colonialism and self-determination. In 1945, she was one of only two women who addressed the Fifth Pan-African Congress in Manchester. Ashwood chaired its first session and, in a report, condemned inattention to black women's concerns. After living in Liberia between 1946 and 1949, she returned to London, where she helped found the Afro-Women's Centre and in 1958 the Association for the Advancement of Coloured People. Ashwood returned to Liberia in 1960 for four years, and, after some time in London, relocated to the West Indies, dying in Jamaica in 1969.

Dr Jeremy Dell – *The Life and Struggles of Our Mother Walatta Petros*

This week, students in 'African Intellectual History' are reading *The Life and Struggles of Our Mother Walatta Petros*, the earliest known book-length biography of an African woman. Written in Ge'ez in 1672, it tells the story of Walatta Petros, a female saint of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahado Church who led a successful resistance movement against Portuguese efforts to convert Ethiopians to Catholicism. She is revered to this day as an exemplar of strong female leadership and independent African Christianity.

You can access this book on DiscoverEd.

Dr Ismay Milford – The All-African Students Conference of October 1960



Pro-Lumumba protest, London, c. 1961. Courtesy of Peter Obanda Wanyama

“This conference [...] recommends decolonisation through the re-writing of school textbooks which have distorted the historical facts and denied our peoples’ scientific and cultural contribution to the progress of humanity”

This resolution has remarkable contemporary resonance, but it was passed sixty years ago this month, at the All-African Students Conference (AASC) in London, 12-14 October 1960. The British security services (who kept a close eye on the conference, due to its links with the British Communist Party) dismissed the event as a failure, claiming that it was poorly attended because its organisers, the students and political exiles who constituted the Committee of African Organisations, had sent invitations too late. But looking back at the eighteen resolutions these students passed, we can see the AASC for the achievement it was. The students subverted the Iron Curtain at the height of the Cold War, inviting African participants who were then studying in Eastern Europe, and holding successor events in Belgrade and Moscow during the next few years. They tackled decolonisation of the curriculum even while many were directly involved in the struggles to win political independence for African countries that were still under European colonial rule. They were thinking about the problems of neo-colonialism too: their resolutions protested foreign intervention in the newly independent Congo where, three months later, the country’s first elected Prime Minister, Patrice Lumumba, would be murdered.

This conference may itself not have made it into textbooks but, as Priyamvada Gopal has argued, the resistance of people around the world to colonial rule provided lessons and inspiration for protest movements elsewhere – not least in the UK, where white British people would soon begin to rally around the fate of Lumumba too. Indeed, some of these students had attended a similar Pan-African Student Conference two years previously at Makerere College in Uganda – both events are part of the longer genealogy of protest which inform

current demands for decolonising the curriculum.

Both these conferences are explored in Ismay's forthcoming book. Her current research is part of the project 'Another World? East Africa and the Global 1960s' (<https://globaleastafrica.org/>)

Professor Diana Paton – James Williams

Many of the most powerful voices in the campaign to fully abolish slavery were those who had experienced it themselves. James Williams was one of these. Born into slavery in Jamaica to an African mother, Mira, and an enslaved father whose name was not recorded, he became briefly famous in Britain in 1837 with the publication of his *A Narrative of Events, since the First of August 1834*. The pamphlet told in powerful prose of the terror and violence inflicted under the system of apprenticeship, which the British government had in 1834 instituted in the Caribbean colonies, the Cape Colony, and Mauritius. Apprenticeship was supposed to be a gradual means of ending slavery, but Williams's pamphlet argued that far from representing an improvement in conditions, apprenticeship had made things worse. Based on his own experience and those of others he knew, Williams stated that 'Apprentices get a great deal more punishment now than they did when they was slaves; the master take spite, and do all he can to hurt them before the free come.'

Williams's pamphlet was a best-seller. His shocking exposé led to investigations in Jamaica and discussion in the Houses of Parliament. It played an important role in mobilising public opinion in Britain against apprenticeship, which ended in 1838, two years earlier than the government planned. His own subsequent history is difficult to trace. The Quaker abolitionist Joseph Sturge, who had paid for Williams's freedom and his passage to Britain sent him back to Jamaica in

late 1837, where he quickly disappeared from the historical record. He symbolises the complicated alliances between enslaved people in the colonies and abolitionists in Britain in creating a successful movement against slavery.

Read James Williams's Narrative here:
<https://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/williamsjames/williams.html>

For a longer introduction, see Diana Paton's edition of A Narrative of Events, published by Duke University Press. DiscoverEd

Dr Josh Doble – Revisiting anti-colonialism: African women's activism in colonial East Africa



Queen Muhumuza

In the UK we often suffer from a lack of awareness and lack of nuance when it comes to understanding histories of colonialism in Africa. Such issues of representations are part of our national 'imperial amnesia', which is being increasingly challenged by anti-colonial activism.[1] Yet much work needs to be done to complicate and better publicise the experiences of African people under colonialism. African people were not passive recipients of colonial rule or the 'civilizing

mission' which underpinned it.

In the early twentieth century two East African women took up arms against British and German colonialism. Between 1900 and 1911 Muhumuza, or Muhumusa, a member of the Rwandan royal family and a medium of the deity *Nyabingi* launched a campaign against King Musinga, an ally of German colonialism. Her charisma and spiritual power sparked the first armed responses to colonialism in the region, and her virulent anti-colonialism and anti-Christian stance resulted in a rare moment of European solidarity as German, British, Catholic and Protestant actors came together to subdue her. She was twice imprisoned and exiled in Bukoma and eventually Kampala, where she died under house arrest in 1945.



Statue of Mekatilili wa Menza
in Malindi's Mekatilili Garden

Two years later in 1913 and 1,500 kilometres away on the Kenyan coast another female leader, Mekatilili wa Menza led her people, the Giriama, against the encroaching presence of British colonialism. In response to demands for labour and the spread of Christianity, Mekatilili, a widower without any prior claim to authority, spoke out against the British at public meetings, even allegedly slapping the region's colonial administrator. She went on to launch a campaign of civil disobedience, cultural pride and non-co-operation. She was arrested and exiled, Giriama lands were seized, their spiritual sites desecrated, and punitive labour recruitment instigated. Mekatilili has since inspired Kenya's feminist

activists and has become an increasingly popular national figure.[2]

Whilst Muhumusa and Mekatilili operated in different contexts, both utilised spiritual and cultural histories to resist colonialism – it was through pre-existing African ideologies that territorial and spiritual colonialism were challenged. The courage and conviction of these two figures was remarkable, as their campaigns disrupted the racial and gender hierarchies which underpinned colonial rule. Through their compelling cultural power and apt critiques of colonial interference they mobilised large numbers of African people to take up arms and repeatedly shook the tenuous structures of colonial power.

Muhumusa and Mekatilili helps us think more expansively about what anti-colonialism looked like. Anti-colonial resistance came in many forms then and continues to do so now. Highlighting the lesser-known histories of those who fought colonialism helps further understandings of the complexity of African social and political economies and the ways in which non-Western beliefs and cultural practices were used with anti-colonialism. In a contemporary political environment where public figures feel emboldened to discuss 'Why the West Won', it is important to remember those figures who challenged 'Western'/white supremacy. Muhumusa and Mekatilili's celebration as heroes in East Africa foregrounds how black memories of empire contribute towards a more nuanced understanding of history and encourages the on-going struggle for decolonisation within Britain and East Africa.[3]

[1] The *Rhodes Must Fall* campaign being the most obvious anti-colonial dialogue between South Africa and the UK.

[2] Carrier, Neil, and Celia Nyamweru. "Reinventing Africa's national heroes: the case of Mekatilili, a Kenyan popular heroine." *African Affairs* 115, no. 461 (2016): 599-620. DiscoverEd

[3] Ferguson, Niall, *Civilization: the six ways the West beat the rest* (London: Allen Lane Publishing, 2011). DiscoverEd

Working as a student

We asked Student Ambassador Alfie for his thoughts on what it's like working whilst studying.

My first piece of advice for any students looking for a job in term-time would be to make sure you read the job advert closely. If you don't, you may end up like me. Not that that's a bad thing. I'll explain.



When it's all gone a bit
hands in the air...

I'd been at Edinburgh for almost a year, and was coming up to the start of my second year. The shock of being at university had finally worn off, and I began to realise that my degree left me with some spare time in the week. Now, spare time is a great way to unwind, but for some of us, too much spare time

leaves us feeling aimless, and that's certainly the way it is with me. So, I took myself onto the University's MyCareerHub and began to hunt for some part-time work because, hey, everyone needs a hobby, and it hardly hurts if that hobby is paid. There I was, flicking through all kinds of different opportunities – Typist? Too uncoordinated. Childcare? Not quite my speed – when I noticed that the Student's Association were looking for... Security? Sure, that doesn't sound too hard, and the pay seemed good. Bouncer. Stand on the door and scowl. Right?

Eighteen months later, I'm still working that same job. Except it's not the job I expected. But that's OK, because it's a world away from being a bouncer. The advert emphasised customer service and communication, which, while useful for the job is not the purpose. I now know that the role focuses a lot on managing the expectations of customers and doing your best to make sure everyone is looked after and safe. It's given me a real sense of freedom and skills I know I'll use elsewhere. Finding employment and managing the schedule it brings alongside full-time study is an impressive achievement – one that future employers will look for, and one that demonstrates a great step into maturity. What's more, you can get official recognition for it on your HEAR transcript with an Edinburgh Award.

I have a new income stream alongside my studying, and more focus as I spend less time staring aimlessly at the ceiling. I also have a new group of friends from all kinds of backgrounds, as well as experiences and ambitions that I'd never considered before moving to university, to share an entirely new part of my life.

Some people are fortunate enough to never need to work whilst studying, but for the many of us that have to, Edinburgh is full of opportunities whether it's a Saturday job, something a little more regular, or one of the many full-time positions over the summer. There really is something for everyone, and

something to ensure that we can all get a little more money in our pocket.

Being a Student Ambassador

One of our Student Ambassadors, Kate, tells us why she was interested in the role.

New beginnings are some of the most exciting experiences of our lives. For me, the most exciting new beginning was when I uprooted myself from Lancashire in the North West of England and came to Edinburgh alone to begin my university experience. Now, in my fourth year, I am just as excited whenever I return to Edinburgh as I was back then.

When the opportunity arose to become a Student Ambassador, I put myself forward immediately because I knew I wanted to be a part of these new beginnings for other people. Getting to be a part of the excitement of open days and talking to prospective students about Classics has been a way that I can show my appreciation for the School, and my enthusiasm for my subject.

Whilst I have been an Ambassador, I've been presented with many opportunities to get involved with the School. Not just through Open Days, but also through focus groups for bettering employment in SHCA, calling campaigns to prospective students and giving individual tours of the building. All of these things revolved around my own schedule, which means that they never affected my studies.



The Chancellor, HRH The Princess Royal, Princess Anne unveils a plaque marking 300 years of history being taught at the University of Edinburgh

I think my favourite experience as a Student Ambassador was attending the celebrations for the 300th year of History at Edinburgh. There was the chance to hear some amazing talks by current students and alumni, to engage with many other alumni of the School and I got to meet the Chancellor, HRH The Princess Royal, Princess Anne. It was amazing and something I will never forget.

All of the things I have done with great friends, who I wouldn't have met otherwise because we're on different courses. This has been one of the best things about being an ambassador.

Anyone who wants to be involved in the School should become a Student Ambassador because you aren't just helping the School out; you're also creating memories and opportunities for yourself.

Top tips for exams

One of our students, Sarah, gives us the lowdown on surviving exams.

As a student, exams are inevitable: some courses only require in-term coursework, but most have a final exam to test your learning through the semester. As a fourth year I've gone through many exams and have developed my ideal system for dealing with them. This is my list of top tips for exams, based on what has helped me through these four years.

Revision

There is no denying that revision is stressful, especially when exams are early or come closely together. What comes first is figuring out where you can revise best. I personally like to find a good café where there is some background noise and lots of coffee and snacks, however, others might prefer the library, various other university buildings, revising in accommodation, or revising from home. Even if you prefer to move around to revise, I'd recommend finding some reliable spaces where you can work well and sticking with them.

Once you've found your revision space, the work itself is the next step. Over the years, most of my courses have been composed of a number of different and distinct topics, with exam questions relating to these individual topics. It's usually best to revise a few of these topics rather than the entire course, to build greater depth of knowledge in particular areas. Always make sure to ask your lecturer for advice on how to best revise, and how many topics you should learn for the exam.

Relaxation

Revision is important, but you should also allow time to relax and wind down. I have a bad habit of overworking and getting

very stressed, particularly with essays and exams, and have had to force myself to stop working after I've done a certain amount or if it's getting too late in the evening. In exam time you have to take care of yourself – eat well, don't overdo the coffee, make sure to get enough sleep (I've found apps like Sleep Stories and Slumber are good for distracting me from overthinking), and try not to overdo it. Make time to talk to your friends and flatmates, as they'll all be feeling the stress too. It's important to get work done, but it's just as important to keep yourself feeling OK, relieve some stress, and remember, especially, to take a break after an exam if you have another soon after. It's good to do well but not if you're sacrificing your physical or mental health to do so.

In the exam

The next step is the exam itself. Always remember to take plenty of pens, a highlighter can be useful, and definitely remember a watch in case your seat doesn't have a clock nearby. Take your time and read the questions carefully (everyone tells you to do this but it's definitely important!), and try to decide on both essay questions early so when you go back to the second your brain has had a chance to come up with an answer. Before writing, it is always useful to sketch out a plan – even just a basic structure for the answer – that you can go back to when you are writing, to help yourself out later. With two hours for two essays, I take five minutes for each essay to plan its structure, then around ten minutes per paragraph, and any spare time to reread my answers. This may not work for some, but it has done well for me so far!

Living in Edinburgh

It's only now that I'm in my last semester of my final year, and I'm having to contemplate moving to a new city, do I realise quite how much I love Edinburgh and the people in it. Having lived here for four years now, and I can honestly say that there is no other place quite like it. It's become my home away from home.

But if you are moving here for the first time it can be daunting, so I've compiled a list of things about living in Edinburgh which might help. Some are things that I wish I'd known before I came here, while others are simply things that I love about the city.

The Weather



At the Botanic Gardens during their Christmas Lights show, wearing the cosy coat my family bought me!

As a naïve 18-year-old from South Wales, I was blissfully

unaware of how cold Edinburgh (and Scotland more generally) gets in winter. Little did I know that snow in February is par for the course and how much a biting cold wind can cut you to the bone! From November through to February of that first year, a scarf was permanently attached to me and I had a hot water bottle in bed every night, in a vain attempt to stay warm. Thankfully that Christmas, my family gave me a huge duvet-style coat that has kept me warm every winter since!

The Variety of Things to Do

The city is always full of things to do, so if you're looking for something you can definitely find it! I love going to the theatre as a treat, and the wealth of performance spaces that Edinburgh has makes this really easy. It's also quite straightforward to find tickets for a good price, as most places offer student rates or sell last-minute tickets at a discounted rate.

Green Spaces



The view of the city and Arthur's Seat from Blackford Hill.

As a country girl, I really appreciate the amount of easily accessible green space there is in the city. First and foremost, there is Arthur's Seat, the ex-volcano in Holyrood Park. However, there's also the Royal Botanic Gardens,

Blackford Hill and the Pentland Hills. Indeed, I'd argue that you get a better view of the city (especially at sunset) from Blackford Hill than Arthur's Seat (controversial, I know). If I ever feel homesick, or just want to clear my head, I know I can go for a walk and be surrounded by nature within 30 minutes. This has definitely made city living much easier for me.

A Compact City

Despite there being so much to see and do, Edinburgh is actually a relatively compact city. You can get to most places in both Old and New Town on foot. Because of this, it didn't take long for me to feel comfortable and familiar with the city. However, if you want to go further afield, say to Newhaven or Portobello, Lothian Buses are great.



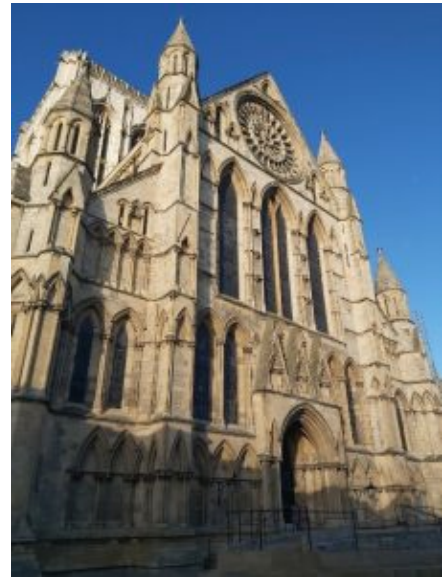
Carys Flew

Presenting a paper

Student Ambassador reports back from presenting her paper.

In late February 2020, I was very fortunate to have the opportunity to present a paper at 'From Margins to Centre? An Undergraduate Conference on BAME, LGBTQ+, Women's and Disability History' at The University of York. I had never attended a conference before and had no idea how to write and

present a paper, so this was a really valuable experience for me to learn a lot of new skills!



York Minster.

I decided to travel to York the day before and stay overnight in a hostel so I could see the city, as I heard that it's very beautiful. The rumours were certainly true! I had a fabulous time at the York Castle Museum, which seemed to go on forever (perfect for a museum enthusiast like me) with exhibitions on the history of the body, life in the trenches during the First World War, and Britain in the 1960s, to name a few. I particularly enjoyed the body exhibition because it reminded me of a course called 'The Making of the Modern Body' which I studied in my second year, and I found the fashion history exhibit very interesting because it showed how ideals of beauty have changed over time.

I arrived at the University of York campus early in the morning to listen to the many panel discussions taking place, which included papers from undergraduate students from all over the UK. Some of the topics presented included the role of West Africans in the French Resistance during the Second World War, attitudes towards the disabled poor in 16th Century Norwich and the problems with the terminology 'Islamic Art'

within the field of History of Art.



Lola Moutel-Davesne's poster on 'Is gansta rap a form of radical resistance?'

The talent of the panellists and the breadth of interesting topics that were presented were amazing, many of which I had never explored in my own research! During the lunch break, many undergraduate students also presented posters on their research, including another of Edinburgh's history students, Lola Moutel-Davesne, who presented a poster on her dissertation research relating to gangsta rap and black activism in the US.



The all-important speaker's name badge.

At the end of the day, it was time for me to present my paper. My panel discussion was all about how history can inform us about the identities of marginalised groups, and my talk in particular was about the history of bioengineering (the industry which designs and constructs artificial limbs) and the experiences of those who used artificial limbs in Edinburgh since the First World War. I had learned about bioengineering history through my summer internship at the Lothian Health Services Archive which is part of the University of Edinburgh's Centre for Research Collections. This role had made me realise my passion for disability history and why I am now studying the history of HIV and AIDS in Scotland as part of my undergraduate dissertation.

I'd be lying if I said that presenting my paper was not a terrifying experience, but I am so proud of myself for doing it and hopefully raising awareness for further research into the field of disability history. Here's hoping I can be involved in other conferences in the near future!