

A CARIBBEAN-BRITISH TIMELINE: ART, CULTURE AND SOCIETY

Courtesy of Tate Britain

This timeline highlights a number of social, political and cultural events that relate to the stories told in *Life Between Islands*. It is not comprehensive, but instead offers additional context to some of the artworks on display.

1920s

1923

Ronald Moody leaves Jamaica for England. Following a degree in dentistry he teaches himself to carve and begins a successful career in sculpture.

1930s

1932

Writer CLR James leaves Trinidad for Britain. In 1938 he publishes **The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution**, narrating the uprising of enslaved people to form the independent state of Haiti. The book paves the way for further study of Caribbean society and politics.

1939

Second World War declared. An estimated 16,000 people from what was then the British West Indies serve in the British Armed Forces.

Martinican writer Aimé Césaire's **Notebook of a Return to My Native Land** is published. Césaire is one of the founders of Négritude, a framework and theory aimed at cultivating 'Black consciousness' and a sense of Pan-African identity.

1940s

1942

Una Marson, Jamaican writer, activist and broadcaster launches BBC's **Caribbean Voices** in London. The radio programme serves as an important platform for a new generation of Caribbean writers in Britain and is broadcast across Britain and the Caribbean until 1958.

1944

Capitalism and Slavery by Trinidadian politician Eric Williams is published. It argues that the Industrial Revolution in Britain was reliant on the reinvestment of vast profits made from slavery and sugar in the British Caribbean.

1945

The Fifth Pan-African Conference takes place in Manchester. Organised by leading Pan-Africanist and writer, George Padmore, the event addresses the impact of European colonisation on Africa and the Caribbean.

Throughout the 1930s, calls for economic investment, better wages, land reform and political independence in the British Caribbean leads to major unrest. Commissioned in 1938, the Moyne Report seeks to address these concerns but isn't published until 1945 and for many it doesn't go far enough.

1946

Artist Denis Williams leaves British Guiana to study at Camberwell School of Art, London.

1948

The British Nationality Act allows everyone born in Britain or its Empire to become a 'Citizen of the United Kingdom and Colonies'. The act encourages Caribbean people to move to the UK to address labour shortages and help facilitate post-war reconstruction and the building of the welfare state.

HMT Empire Windrush docks in London carrying 800 Caribbean passengers. Many find work in the NHS and for the train and bus services. Those who emigrated from the Caribbean to Britain between 1948 and 1971 become known

as the Windrush generation.

1949

Kamau (Edward) Brathwaite, poet and historian, leaves Barbados to study in England at Cambridge University.

1950s

1951

Stuart Hall, New Left and cultural studies theorist, leaves Jamaica for England to enrol at Oxford University.

1952

Artist Aubrey Williams leaves British Guiana for London, England.

Martinican psychoanalyst and philosopher Frantz Fanon's **Black Skin, White Masks** is published in French. The treatise on race, colonialism and the impact of racism on the psyche is translated into English in 1967.

1953

Frank Bowling leaves British Guiana for England. After early attempts at poetry and two years of service in the Royal Air Force, Bowling enrolls at the Royal College of Art, London.

The socialist People's Progressive Party wins the first universal suffrage election in British Guiana. Cheddi Jagan becomes Prime Minister but Britain suspends the constitution and British troops depose the new government.

George Lamming's autobiographical first novel, **In the Castle of my Skin** is published, following the writer's move from Barbados to England.

1956

Denis Williams takes part in **This is Tomorrow** at the Whitechapel Art Gallery, London. The exhibition is based on collaborative art practice and includes the work of architects, artists, designers and theorists.

Samuel Selvon's **The Lonely Londoners** is published following his move from Trinidad to England. It is one of the first novels to portray the experiences of working-class Caribbean people in Britain.

1957

Ghana becomes the first African nation to achieve independence from the British Empire. Kwame Nkrumah, a Pan-African socialist, becomes Ghana's first President.

Althea McNish graduates from Royal College of Art, London following her move from Trinidad in 1951. She quickly

achieves commercial success in the fashion industry with her modernist textile designs which she says she sees 'through a tropical eye'.

1958

The West Indies Federation is founded to help Caribbean territories considered part of the British Empire work towards political unity and decolonisation. The federation collapses in 1962.

Two weeks of racist attacks and rioting take place in west London. They become known as the Notting Hill riots. Large numbers of white youths attack Caribbean immigrants in the area. Racist riots started in the St Ann's area of Nottingham a week earlier.

Claudia Jones, the Trinidadian Marxist, journalist and community organiser, founds Britain's first major Black newspaper, the **West Indian Gazette**.

1959

A gang of white youths murder Antiguan carpenter Kelso Cochrane on the streets of Ladbroke Grove, London. The Home Secretary makes an appeal for witnesses in Parliament and sets up a public inquiry into race relations. No-one is ever charged for the murder.

Claudia Jones organises the Caribbean Carnival at St Pancras Town Hall in response to the Notting Hill riots. The event later becomes the Notting Hill Carnival.

1960s

1962

Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago gain independence.

The Commonwealth Immigrants Act imposes strict limitations on citizens from current and former territories of the British Empire entering the UK. Only 'high-skilled' workers, such as doctors, are permitted entry.

Frank Bowling graduates from the Royal College of Art and wins the silver medal for painting.

1964

Jamaican singer Millie Small's ska version of **My Girl Lollipop** reaches No 2 in the UK and US charts.

Stuart Hall joins the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at Birmingham University, later becoming its director.

1965

African American civil rights activist, Malcolm X (also known

as el-Hajj Malik el-Shabazz) visits the UK. Days later he is assassinated in New York, USA.

The UK's Race Relations Act outlaws racial discrimination in public places and makes the promotion of hatred on the grounds of 'colour, race, or ethnic or national origins' an offence.

1966

The Caribbean Artists Movement is founded by writers Kamau (Edward) Brathwaite, John La Rose and Andrew Salkey. The group attempts to forge a new Caribbean aesthetic across the arts.

African American activists Huey P Newton and Bobby Seale found the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense in California, USA. The party has an enormous influence on the Black diaspora in the US and beyond.

Guyana and Barbados gain independence.

Notting Hill Carnival takes place on the streets of west London for first time.

New Beacon Books is founded, the UK's first Black publisher, distributor and bookshop.

1967

Trinidadian American Stokely Carmichael (later Kwame Ture) brings his Black Power message to London at the Dialectics of Liberation conference in Camden.

The Caribbean Artists Movement's first Symposium of West Indian Artists is held in London.

1968

Conservative MP Enoch Powell delivers his 'Rivers of Blood' speech in Birmingham. He strongly criticises immigration from Britain's current and former colonies, causing a political storm that emboldens the far-right.

African American writer and activist James Baldwin visits London, delivering a speech at the West Indian Student Union in Earl's Court. Trinidad-born British filmmaker Horace Ové, documents Baldwin's impassioned speech on racism in the US and Britain.

Frank Critchlow, community activist and civil rights campaigner, opens the Mangrove restaurant in Notting Hill. It becomes an important all-night meeting place for the Caribbean community in London.

Writer Obi Egbuna founds the British Black Panthers to defend Black communities against racism and discrimination.

Altheia Jones-LeCointe and Darcus Howe become its leading voices. Jamaican-born photographer Neil Kenlock documents their activities.

1969

Israelites by Jamaican musicians Desmond Dekker and The Aces is the first reggae song to reach No 1 in the UK charts.

Monthly magazine, **Race Today**, becomes a leading voice of Black political journalism in Britain.

1970s

1970

Aubrey Williams and fellow members of the Caribbean Artists Movement travel from England to Guyana for a Caribbean Writers and Artists Convention organised by the Guyanese government. Williams is awarded the Golden Arrow of Achievement and commissioned to produce a series of five murals at Cheddi Jagan International Airport, Timehri.

1971

How the West Indian Child is Made Educationally Subnormal in the British School System by Grenadian teacher and writer Bernard Coard, galvanises parents and activists. The book highlights racism in the British school system and its

psychological impact on Black children.

The Mangrove Nine trial follows a demonstration led by the British Black Panthers against police harassment of London's Mangrove restaurant and its patrons. After a 55-day trial at the Old Bailey, London's central criminal court, all are cleared of the main charge, rioting. The case marks the first judicial acknowledgement of racism in the British police force.

The Immigration Act further tightens immigration from Commonwealth countries.

The exhibition, Caribbean Artists in England, opens at the Commonwealth Institute Art Gallery, London.

1973

The Bahamas gains independence.

The socialist feminist Brixton Black Women's Group is founded in London.

Bob Marley and the Wailers' **Catch a Fire** tour comes to Britain. The album makes the Jamaican musician an international star and popularises reggae music in the UK.

1975

The Black Parents Movement is set up. The campaigning

organisation mounts legal cases and takes political action against racism in education, policing, housing and employment.

1976

The West Indies cricket team defeats England 3-0 in their Test series in England. The team go on to set a record streak of 11 consecutive Test victories in the 1980s, including two 5-0 'blackwashes' against England.

Pressure, directed by Horace Ové, is the first British feature film by a Black director. It describes a young teenager's experience of racial hostility and discrimination and his growing interest in the Black Panther Party.

Following an increase in police presence at Notting Hill Carnival, 'riots' erupt in response to concerns about racially motivated police activity. Over 100 police officers and around 60 members of the public are injured. The incident frames the Carnival as a site of social upheaval rather than a celebration of Caribbean culture.

The UK Race Relations Act outlaws discrimination in employment and education.

The Arts Britain Ignores by journalist Naseem Khan is published. The report leads to the development of the

Minority Arts Advisory Service, set up to maintain registers of artists, provide advice and publicise activities.

1977

A march by 500 members of the National Front through Black neighbourhoods between New Cross and Lewisham, London is overwhelmed by a counter-demonstration of around 5,000 people. Clashes between counter-demonstrators and the police are dubbed the Battle of Lewisham.

1978

Dread Beat an' Blood by Poet and the Roots is released. It is Linton Kwesi Johnson's debut dub poetry album. **Policing the Crisis** is published. The influential study of policing and race relations is written by members of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, including Stuart Hall. Rock Against Racism organises major **Carnival Against Racism** concerts featuring post-punk and reggae acts.

1979

It Ain't Half Racist Mum airs on BBC. Made in association with the Campaign Against Racism in the Media and presented by Stuart Hall and actor Maggie Steed, the programme exposes the racism and stereotyping in comedy and current affairs programming.

1980s

1980

Babylon, directed by Franco Rossi, is released. The feature film is an account of a group of young African Caribbean men in London at the height of the popularity of Rastafarianism.

1981

British weekly newspaper, the **Caribbean Times** is first published.

Thirteen young people die in the New Cross Fire at a house party in south-east London. No-one is charged for the suspected racist arson attack.

The New Cross Massacre Action Committee, chaired by John La Rose, organise the Black People's Day of Action. The 20,000 strong march from Deptford to Hyde Park is the first large-scale demonstration by Black people in the heart of London.

Operation Swamp 81 sees 943 Black people stopped and searched in Brixton over six days. This police action is justified through 'sus' laws, which allow authorities to arrest and charge on suspicion alone.

Brixton uprisings follow the death of Michael Bailey after an

altercation with police. Police officers and members of the public are injured across three days of protests. The Scarman Report acknowledges the racially prejudiced conduct of the police.

Young people across England clash with police over ongoing racial discrimination and violence. Significant protests and uprisings take place across Birmingham, Liverpool, London, Manchester and Nottingham.

Ghost Town by The Specials reaches No 1 in the UK in the midst of high unemployment and social unrest. It marks a highpoint of the 2-Tone ska revival in the West Midlands.

Blk Art Group, founded by Eddie Chambers, Keith Piper, Donald Rodney and Marlene Smith, hold their first exhibition at Wolverhampton Art Gallery, entitled **Black Art An' Done**.

1982

The **Voice**, Britain's leading national Black newspaper, is founded.

The First National Convention of Black Art, organised by Blk Art Group, is held at Wolverhampton Polytechnic. It brings together Black and Asian British artists from different generations and areas of the country to debate the notion of Black art. It is a founding moment of the Black Arts Movement in Britain.

1983

Colin Roach dies in Stoke Newington police station, London. The police are accused of a cover up. The Commission for Racial Equality calls for a full inquiry into policing in the area.

Five Black Women exhibition, curated by Lubaina Himid, opens at Africa Centre Gallery, London.

The Black~Art Gallery opens in Finsbury Park, London. It is founded by the Organisation for Black Advancement and Leisure Activities.

1984

The Association of Cinematography, Television and Allied Technicians Workshop Declaration aims to address ethnic diversity in film and television. An independent workshop movement develops, supporting the work of groups such as Black Audio Film Collective, Ceddo Film and Sankofa Film.

Havana Biennial is established, dedicated to artists of Latin America and the Caribbean. From 1986 it also showcases artists from Africa and Asia.

1985

Cherry Groce is shot by police during a raid of her home in Brixton, London leading to uprisings in the area. Groce is paralysed by the shooting. She dies in 2011. In 2014,

following an inquest, the Metropolitan Police Commissioner apologises for the time it had taken to say 'sorry' for her death.

A major uprising takes place on the Broadwater Farm council estate in Tottenham, London. It follows the death of Cynthia Jarrett during a police raid of her home. Many protestors and police officers are injured and PC Keith Blakelock is killed.

The Thin Black Line opens at the Institute for Contemporary Arts, London. The catalogue states, 'We are claiming what is ours and making ourselves visible. We are eleven of the hundreds of creative Black Women in Britain. We are here to stay.'

Over 100,000 take part in the **March Against Apartheid** in London, a high point of the long Anti-Apartheid movement in Britain.

1986

The group show **From Two Worlds** is held at Whitechapel Art Gallery, London and tours to Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh. At the time it is the most substantial exhibition of Black artists' work at a major UK gallery.

Black Edge: Afro-Caribbean Photography in Britain opens at Mappin Art Gallery, Sheffield.

Double Vision: An Exhibition of Contemporary Afro-Caribbean Art opens in Bradford at Cartwright Hall.

1987

Diane Abbott, Paul Boateng, Bernie Grant and Keith Vaz become Britain's first Black MPs.

Paul Gilroy, **Ain't No Black in the Union Jack: The Cultural Politics of Race and Nation** is published.

Rasheed Araeen launches **Third Text**, the academic journal on visual art and its global contexts.

1988

Autograph ABP (Association of Black Photographers) is founded.

The African and Asian Visual Artists' Archive opens in Bristol.

1989

Soul II Soul's **Club Classics Vol. One** reaches No 1 on the UK albums chart.

Channel 4's **Desmond's** becomes Britain's first Black sitcom. Set in Peckham and starring a largely British Guyanese cast, it runs until 1994.

The Other Story opens at the Hayward Gallery, London, surveying what artist and curator Rasheed Araeen terms 'Afro-Asian' art in Britain. It is the first large-scale exhibition to profile Black and Asian artists contributions to post-war and contemporary British art.

1990s

1991

The George Padmore Institute is founded, an archive and research centre dedicated to Black and Asian culture in Britain and Europe.

Isaac Julien's **Young Soul Rebels**, his first feature film, is released. A coming of age drama set in the subcultures of the 1970s, it wins the Critics' Prize at Cannes Film Festival.

Redemption Song airs on BBC television. The seven-part documentary series by Stuart Hall explores the culture and history of the Caribbean.

1992

Derek Walcott, Saint Lucian poet and playwright, wins a Nobel Prize for Literature.

1993

Paul Gilroy's **The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness** is published. It presents Black culture and identity as relational, hybrid, mutable and transcontinental.

Stephen Lawrence is murdered in Eltham, London in a racially motivated attack.

1994

InIVA (the Institute of International Visual Arts) is founded, directed by curator Gilane Tawadros with Stuart Hall as its chair. The organisation's artistic programme reflects on the social and political impact of globalisation.

1995

A massive volcanic eruption in Montserrat buries its capital, Plymouth, in twelve metres of mud. An exclusion zone encompasses over half the island to this day. More than half the 13,000 population leaves. The UK gives rights of settlement and full citizenship to all immigrants from the British overseas territory.

1997

Writer David Scott founds **Small Axe: A Caribbean Journal of Criticism**.

1998

Aubrey Williams exhibition opens in London at Whitechapel Gallery, organised with InIVA.

Chris Ofili wins the Turner Prize.

A public inquiry is launched into police and Crown Prosecution Service failings in the handling of the murder of Stephen Lawrence. The resulting Macpherson report concludes that the Metropolitan Police Service is institutionally racist.

1999

Steve McQueen wins the Turner Prize.

2000s

2000

Peter Doig, Chris Ofili and Lisa Brice are invited to take up residencies at CCA7 in Port of Spain, Trinidad. Doig and Ofili move to Trinidad shortly after.

2003

The Decibel programme is launched, an Arts Council England initiative to support and raise the profile of artists of African, Asian and Caribbean descent in England.

Chris Ofili showcases his first major body of work made in Trinidad at the British Pavilion at the Venice Biennale.

2005

Shades of Black: Assembling Black Art in the 80s, conference and publication edited by David A Bailey, Ian Baucom and Sonia Boyce, is the first major reappraisal of the Black Arts Movement in Britain.

Lubaina Himid founds **Making Histories Visible** at University of Central Lancashire's Centre for Contemporary Art, dedicated to researching, archiving and presenting Black diasporic art histories in Britain.

2007

The Bicentenary of the Abolition of the British Slave Trade marks the end of the trade of enslaved people in British colonies in 1807. Slavery itself wasn't abolished until 1833.

Rivington Place, designed by architect David Adjaye, opens in Shoreditch, accommodating the programmes of both Autograph ABP and InIVA.

2008

The Stephen Lawrence Centre opens in Lewisham. The centre is a memorial to the murdered architecture student and dedicated to improving opportunities for young Black people

in south London. It is designed by Adjaye Associates and includes designs based on drawings by Chris Ofili.

2009

UCL's Legacies of British Slave Ownership is founded to 'explore and document some of the ways colonial slavery shaped modern Britain'. The core of the research is a database of 61,000 enslavers who were compensated by the UK government following the abolition of slavery.

2010s

2010

An estimated 3 million people are affected by an earthquake and aftershocks in Haiti. At least 100,000 people are killed and 250,000 buildings are severely damaged.

2011

Mark Duggan is shot and killed by police in Tottenham. Local demonstrations are followed by serious unrest and 'rioting' across London and other English cities. In 2012 the 'After the Riots' report into these events acknowledges the role played by economic, social and policing policies which disproportionately impact racialised communities.

2012

John Akomfrah documents Stuart Hall's intellectual and political life through **The Unfinished Conversation**. In 2013, the three-channel video installation is edited into a single-screen theatre presentation entitled **The Stuart Hall Project** and is nominated for the Grand Jury Prize at the Sundance Film Festival.

The Empire Windrush is recreated as part of the opening ceremony of the London 2012 Olympics, directed by filmmaker Danny Boyle.

2014

Artist and filmmaker Steve McQueen's **12 Years a Slave** wins the Best Picture Academy Award, Golden Globe and BAFTA.

Black Artists in British Art, a history of post-war and contemporary Black British art by Eddie Chambers, is published.

Black Cultural Archives, founded in 1981 to 'record, celebrate and preserve the history of people of African descent in Britain', opens at a new venue in Windrush Square, Brixton, London.

2015

Staying Power: Photographs of Black British Experience,

1950s – 1990s, at London's V&A, showcases a major acquisitions initiative.

The UK finishes paying off the £20 million loan (worth roughly £17 billion today) taken out as part of the 1833 Slavery Abolition Act to compensate 'the Persons at present entitled to the Services of the Slaves to be manumitted and set free by virtue of this Act for the Loss of such Services'. Former enslaved people receive no compensation.

No Colour Bar: Black British art in Action, 1960–1990 an exhibition at Guildhall Art Gallery, London, publication and website launches.

2016

Publication of **Travel & See: Black Diaspora Art Practices since the 1980s** by British art historian Kobena Mercer.

Britain votes to leave the European Union. The divisive campaign includes a focus on immigration. UK police force data shows a 15–25% increase in race and religious hate crime in England and Wales.

2017

Diaspora Pavilion at the Venice Biennale, curated by David A Bailey and Jessica Taylor, explores the concept of diaspora and challenges the prevalence of the nation state at biennials.

An extremely active Atlantic hurricane season sees Hurricane Maria cause 3,059 fatalities, mostly in Puerto Rico and Dominica. 42 die in the Caribbean as a result of Hurricane Irma.

The Place is Here, a major survey of the Black Arts Movement in Britain in the 1980s, opens in Nottingham Contemporary, travelling to other venues.

Lubaina Himid wins the Turner Prize.

72 die in a fire in Grenfell Tower, part of a social housing complex in Kensington, London. Campaigners demand an investigation into how 'race and class' contributed to the tragedy asking if the cost cutting measures that helped the fire spread would have been sanctioned 'if the tower block was in an affluent part of the city for an affluent white population'.

David Lammy MP chairs an independent review of the treatment of, and outcomes for, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic individuals in the Criminal Justice System. The resulting Lammy Report makes 35 recommendations to help address significant racial disparity in the UK system.

2018

News of the Windrush scandal breaks. Children of Commonwealth citizens who emigrated to Britain between 1948 and 1971 have been threatened with deportation on account of a lack of legal documentation. The scandal is seen as part of a series of government policies known as the 'hostile environment' which challenge the human rights of undocumented migrants. 83 people have been deported to date.

Sonia Boyce's television documentary **Whoever Heard of a Black Artist? Britain's Hidden Art History** is broadcast by BBC.

2019

Tate Britain presents Frank Bowling's first major retrospective exhibition.

Jay Bernard's **Surge** is published, a collection of poems about the New Cross and Grenfell Fires.

Get Up Stand Up opens at Somerset House. Curated by Zak Ové, it showcases 50 years of visual arts by Black artists in Britain and beyond, starting with the work of his father, Horace Ové.

Hurricane Dorian kills 74 people in the Bahamas.

A–Z of Caribbean Art is published – the most comprehensive directory of Caribbean and Caribbean diasporic twentieth and twenty first-century art.

2020s

2020

Black Lives Matter demonstrations break out in the US and across the world following the murder of George Floyd by police in Minneapolis, USA.

Frank Bowling is knighted for his services to art.

Steve McQueen's **Small Axe** is broadcast on BBC. The anthology of five films presents stories of Black resilience in London's Caribbean community.

British designer Grace Wales Bonner launches her **Lovers Rock** Autumn/Winter collection at London Fashion Week. Her designs are part of a trilogy of collections inspired by Caribbean style in Britain in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s.

2021

PC Benjamin Monk is the first police officer in 35 years to be convicted of manslaughter while on duty. He is jailed for unlawfully killing professional footballer Dalian Atkinson in 2016. Campaigners say the incident raises issues about policing and race.

The UK Cabinet Office commission a report on Race and Ethnic Disparities. The controversial report concludes that the claim the UK 'is still institutionally racist is not borne out by the evidence'. A United Nations working group criticise the report as an 'attempt to normalise white supremacy'.

War Inna Babylon opens at the Institute of Contemporary Arts, London. The exhibition chronicles 'the impact of various forms of state violence and institutional racism' on Britain's Black communities.

Uprising, Steve McQueen's three-part documentary about the New Cross Fire and the uprising it inspired, airs on BBC.

Haiti earthquake kills at least 304 people and impacts 1.2 million.

2022

Sonia Boyce represents Britain at the Venice Biennale and Alberta Whittle represents Scotland.