



"History is a clock people use to tell their historical culture and political time of the day. It's a compass that people use to find themselves on the map of human geography. The history tells them where they have been, where they are and what they are. But most importantly history tells a people where they still must go and what they still must be"

Dr. John Henrik Clarke

Source:

<http://www.black-history-month.co.uk>

Black to History Month

To paraphrase the Afrikan Ancestor and giant amongst scholars, 'Baba' John Henrike Clarke; history is a past, present and future event. I think this is a mantra that as Afrikans at home and abroad needs to be held at the forefront of our minds when doing anything in relation to our culture, social, economic, spiritual and political wellbeing.

The origins of BHM go back to 1926 CE when Ancestor Carter G Woodson, editor for thirty years of the Journal of Negro History, established African Caribbean celebrations in the United States of America for one week in February; and today still takes place in February, but for the whole month.

The beginning of Black History Month in the UK is not conclusive. Most people including myself support the view that it began in the 70s with Ancestor "Nana Bonsu" or Berry Edwards in Manchester (Caribbean Week); and with Eric and Jessica Huntley from Ealing who regularly organised a Caribbean week in the late 70s and early 80's.

Others suggest that the British version of Black History Month started about twenty years ago and stems from London and the activities of Akyaba Addai-Sebo. After talking to Black British teenagers, Akyaba, a special projects officer for Greater London Councils, discovered that they had a great reluctance to have anything to do or identify with Africa. Akyaba felt this was due to the negative representation of Blacks and Africans in the media and the many racist and distorted images about Africa's past and present. In 1986 CE and 1987 CE, Akyaba with the backing of several other people organised key events that established the trend for Black History Month. These included serious debates about the Black contribution to civilisation with leading U.S. historians.

Symbolically the year 1987 CE also marked 150th anniversary of the abolition of slavery in the British Empire (1838 CE). Prior to the demise of the GLC, and in a drive to improve racial harmony in London, councillors passed a declaration that put Black History Month in October. As a result the UK's first Black History Month took

place as part of the African Jubilee Year 1987-88 CE with celebrations organised by the former London Strategic Policy Unit.

So whether we are talking about a 30 or 20 year history in the UK, I really wonder whether we have made significant progress in that time? No achievement; the first Black person to do this or that; but what about the collective progression? By this, I think of what institutions have been established, cultural retention and development, economic advancement and political influence and power.

The closest thing I see of an Afrikan institutions are often centred in religious movements e.g. Black churches, Nation of Islam, Rastafari. I think we missed a trick in terms of building on the "West Indian" or "Afro-Caribbean" community centres established by the "Windrush Generation" and subsequent Afrikan immigrants. Nowadays, most just exist to host the odd dance, seminar or dominos tournament and have very little connection to the grime, rhyme and bling generation. The baton seems to have been well and truly dropped, and we appear to be disqualified in the race of life and have taken our place in the stands as spectators.

I am not in anyway meaning to be negative or wanting to "chant down" BHM as many do; but want to know how has 20-30 years of BHM been of benefit to the Afrikan community in Britain, and where will or could it take us in the future? Have we become blasé about BHM because we feel relatively 'integrated' and not in the firing line of Global European (White) Christian Supremacy; however, if you're an Afrikan Muslim, you probably won't agree with this point as Muslims appear to be public enemy number one in the European Christian World; and it has to be said in some Afrikan and Caribbean countries too.

Essentially, I am not feeling any vibes about BHM. Not one of my brethren or sistren have said to me, this event is happening, or so and so is coming; let's go check it out. I am speaking here of

personal, direct conversation with me; not mass email or text promo. This brings up a worthy digression in that in spite of all the technology of email, text, skype, laptops etc, we rarely communicate or 'reason' with each other as our Rastafarian brethren would say; and this is probably because we don't have the institutions and public space to do so. The Black churches should be leading the way, as the original community centres are essentially terminally ill institutions.

While I don't pretend to have the solutions to all this questions and dilemmas raised, I would like to think it will bring together some structured and strategic discourse as to where we go forward with Afrikan History Season as I feel it has to be more centred in building a progressive future with relevance to our present existence and learning the lessons of the past.



Watching BBC Central News (Tuesday 7th October 2008 CE) there was a feature on how former gang members (mostly Black boys from inner city Nottingham) had come together to produce a 'neutral bandanna'. Fifty years ago (1958 CE), Nottingham was the scene of the UK's first race riots after a Black man was seen talking to a White woman in a pub in St Ann's. Now if the best we can report on fifty years later is a neutral bandanna; I don't know about you, but I think we need to take to the streets again!

While I'm on the subject of the media, The Guardian has produced a daily pull-out timeline on Black History w/c 13th October. Good, in the sense that that they stated that Afrikan History is not to be considered as separate history, but requires due recognition in world history. While I can't argue with that, what bugs me was that despite being a good collection of Afrikan History, but not as comprehensive as Paul Obinna's work, the pull out was in normal newsprint. When The Guardian have done other daily pull-outs e.g. birds, plants etc, they have been produced on high quality, glossy paper; when it comes to our History, is on the bog-standard news paper and if you do want the high-quality, quality set, you have to cough up £15...you see how Babylon wuk!? But I do have to admit, the Guardian have done a decent job and the set of timelines is worth having even if you have spend some dough in these days of credit crunch.

At the time of writing, Afrikans in the UK are into about the fifteenth day of Black History Month or Afrikan History Season as it is (quite rightly) beginning to be termed in some of our cities. However, regardless of what it is called, I fear that the substance of many Black History schedules are failing to connect romanticised reminiscence of the past to what is happening now, and the implications for the future.

For me, Afrikan History Season/Month is important, a concentrated time of focus and reflection of 365 days of Afrikan genius and greatness; and that's how we should proceed with our Afrikan history – 365, 24-7; so use that mobile for something constructive, text or call your crew, break bread and reason this Black History Season which as far as Nubian Link is concerned culminates with Kwanzaa.

Hotep!

References:

1. www.black-history-month.co.uk
2. http://www.thurrock.gov.uk/i-know/diversity/content.php?page=black_history#c01



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