Notting Hill Teaching Guide

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Introduction

This guide aims to support your teachings of the events that ensued in the Notting Hill historic environment.

However, the terms and notions discussed in this booklet can be applied to the teaching and understanding of Black British history by large.

Within the glossary, we aim to provide an overview of terms and notions that we consider particularly important for educators to grasp when teaching the history of Notting Hill.

Additionally, the guide includes background information on the history of the area, extension tasks and further questions that can be posed in class for your students.

Glossary.

Positionality: The social and political context creates your identity in terms of race, class, gender, sex, and ability status. Positionality also describes how your identity influences, and potentially biases, your understanding and outlook of the world.

Intersectionality: The interconnected nature of social categorisations such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage.

Racialisation: The process by which a person is racialised. Or, put differently, how society imposes identities of 'race' onto those ethnically minoritised.

Why is my positionality important?

Your positionality influences your understanding and outlook of the world, thus including how you might approach the events that ensued in Notting Hill. So, for example, when discussing the Race 'Riots,' be cautious about how you present the material. Instead, aim to approach this from an unbiased perspective that does not represent the Black community seeking to cause disturbance rather than fighting for civil liberties. Continuously reflecting on your understanding of the events and critically holding yourself accountable will enable you to work towards this.

Why is intersectionality important?

We often overlook particular figures in history and tend to focus only on the 'great men' theory; this even occurs in the likes of Black History. To avoid enacting this narrative in your work, acknowledge the different lived experiences that existed and are often negated.

By highlighting the role of women in the Mangrove Nine and the creation of Notting Hill Carnival, you acknowledge the different lived experiences of peoples within the history of Notting Hill. Claudia Jones, in particular, discussed the framework years before the theory itself was coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw.

Jones references the ideas of intersectionality in her writings about 'triple oppression', hinting at how class, race and gender affect Black women.

Reflection

Why does intersectionality matter when discussing the events that occurred in Notting Hill?

Hint

Signal your students to think about how the SUS laws would have impacted Black people with a disability by referencing how non-verbal and or blind people would interact with the police. For example, how would the police further use their mental and physical disability to justify arguments that they are 'suspicious' or 'disobedient?

Does Claudia Jones positionality automatically make her an advocate for women's rights?

Hint

Of course, Jones was a women's rights activist. Still, this question is posed to allow students to think critically about how your positionality might influence your activism. However, essential to note that this has historically and even in modern times not always been the case, and one's positionality might not always inform their activism 'appropriately', e.g. mainstream/white feminism compared to Black Feminism.
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Race in a historical context.

Race has historically functioned as 'an ordering device' or 'device of cultural engineering' (Baumann, 1996); this is particularly evident in British society. Thus, our understanding of Blackness has seen multiple adaptations and definitions throughout time. This also feeds into the reasoning for capitalising the 'B' in Black.

We capitalise the 'B' in Black because Black in this context reflects a shared sense of identity and, to a certain extent, a community. The case for capitalising Black is further rooted in humanising and uplifting groups that have historically been stripped away from this privilege. White, in this context, does not suffer from the same historical happenings, especially in the context of Britain.

The notion above becomes clear when we take a look at Black activism. One can, for example, highlight that the Black British Panther movement (BBPM) included non-Black people and allowed them to join the party, notably Tony Soares, an Asian heritage Mozambique-born member. He suggested that Black 'was a political affiliation rather than a skin colour' (Angelo, 2018) which affirms the BBPM efforts in using Black consciousness to achieve civil rights and equality for both Black and non-Black people.

It is essential to discuss the aforementioned notions when considering solidarity among non-white people in the UK. Essentially, the Black liberation movements in Notting Hill raised awareness of the structural and institutionalised racism within the UK on a larger scale providing a springboard for similar movements to be birthed afterwards.

Analysing historical sources.

If you are reading a text- or image-based source, draw students' attention to the use of stereotypes. Help students develop their critical thinking skills by challenging how the group is represented within the source.

Highlight your students' attention to, for example, outdated language and thoroughly explain the context and how and why our thinking of the terminology has changed.

Additionally, the sources you might encounter can vary from different viewpoints, e.g. the police and the Black community- use this to enhance how the source is presented and discussed in class. This also allows you to point out the dangers of providing a 'single' narrative story.

Please encourage your student to host debates in the classroom when analysing the various sources you might use. Allow them to point where the different perspectives lay and why that might be.

Discussion points

How are stereotypes constructed in historical sources, and how can this be problematic?

What do single historical narratives aim to achieve?

How can single historical narratives be harmful?

Student mental wellbeing.

The social and historical events that ensued in the Notting Hill area c1948–c1970 include heavy topics such as policing and severe racism. Accordingly, be wary of the language used throughout the teachings of this module and make connections where appropriate to modern-day events to contextualise how the events that ensued in Notting Hill are a continuation of a more significant problem at hand within British society and the experiences of migrants.

For example, when discussing the SUS laws, discuss how in a study by University College London's Institute for Global City Policing, the data collected showcases that young Black males are 19 times more likely to be stopped by the police (Dodd, 2020).

With this, we allow students to understand the continuation of institutionalised and structural racism within the UK and how events within history impact us in the modern day.

Include adequate space for your students to reflect on the content material and perhaps include 'break out' times where you offer your Black students a safe space to discuss the emotionally and mentally draining material.

One should also ensure to use trigger warnings where possible. The historical sources on Notting Hill might encompass explicit language. When showcasing these sources in the classroom, explain to your students that the material can be triggering and that they can take a minute out if needed.

Student mental wellbeing.

By using trigger warnings, you are allowing your students to have ownership over the material taught to them and allow them to engage with it on the basis that limits the immediate harm that otherwise can occur. This also includes leaving space and compassion if a student is uncomfortable reading a particular source aloud.

Moreover, no Black students should ever be pressured into contributing in this manner when considering how the material might impact them on a large scale.

The N-word should also never be used nor read aloud even if the sources include it, and this can not be solved by making a Black student read out the text instead. The usage of the word should be avoided at all times by non-Black people including in academic settings.

Why is Notting Hill culturally significant?

Upon the arrival of the Afro-Caribbean community during the late 1940s and early 1950s, the landscape of Notting Hill vastly changed. Many Caribbean migrants (who were then referred to as British colonial subjects) came to Britain for new economic opportunities and to help rebuild Britain after the Second World War. They settled across London, with Notting Hill becoming a hub for the West Indian community. The Caribbean migrants worked in construction, transportation and light engineering. Many Caribbean women also worked as healthcare professionals.

In the decades to come, many Caribbean migrants opened small businesses, which included restaurants, bookshops and barbers/salons. With the ever-increasing settlement of the Caribbean community in Notting Hill, the area had become a melting pot of different cultures. This was not received positively by many white Britons living in the area, who were disgruntled by their presence and were hostile to Afro-Caribbean residents. These tensions culminated in the Notting Hill Race 'Riots' of 1958.

In 1966 Notting Hill Carnival was established. The festival provided an opportunity for Afro-Caribbean people to showcase their culture through costume, music and food. Notting Hill Carnival became iconic, with thousands participating each year. Throughout the years it has become perhaps one of the most important Black British cultural events in this country.

Notting Hill Carnival.

Notting Hill Carnival was founded by Claudia Jones, Rhaune Laslett- O'Brien and Duke Vin and has taken place in Notting Hill, Kensington, London, since 1966.

Before creating the Notting Hill carnival, **Claudia Jones**, a Trinidadian human rights activist, had organised different indoor events that celebrated Caribbean culture. These events incorporated music, dance, food, among other activities. The creation of these events was a direct response to the Notting Hill 'Riots' that had taken place in 1958. Jones wanted to unify the Caribbean community and showcase Black activists celebrating Caribbean culture and heritage.

Rhaune Laslett-O'Brien, a community leader and activist, came up with the idea to bring the Notting Hill Carnival to the streets of London as opposed to indoors. Led her to establish the Notting Hill Fayre and Pageant in 1966, a week-long Fête that brought people together and celebrated each other's culture. This event ran through most of West London, and over 1,000 people attended, serving as the direct inspiration for the modern-day Notting Hill Carnival.

Duke Vin was a Jamaican sound system pioneer who performed regularly at the carnival from 1973 onwards for around 37 years. He was a staple in the Carnival until his passing.

Currently, the festival is a two-day event that includes the showcase of Afro-Caribbean culture through costume, parades, music, dancing and Afro-Caribbean cuisine.

The cultural impact of the Notting Hill Carnival is immense. Many Carnivals have sprouted in other major British cities: including Birmingham, Liverpool and Manchester. Much like the social pressure and Black activism that started Carnival in the 1950s, Notting Hill Carnival continues to thrive despite earlier political pressure. It is fair to say that the Notting Hill Carnival has become a cultural institution.

Carnivals across the UK.

- Leeds West Indian Carnival also known as the Chapeltown Carnival or Leeds Carnival is the oldest West Indian Carnival in Europe. It was founded in 1967 by Arthur France MBE who was a Leeds University student originating from St Kitts & Nevis alongside fellow students Frankie Davis from Trinidad and Tony Lewis from Jamaica. France is still the Chairman to this day. This Carnival is known for its vibrancy which showcases Caribbean culture to its fullest. Alongside Notting Hill Carnival, Leeds Carnival is often covered by BBC Radio 1Xtra.

Carnivals across the UK.

- Birmingham International Carnival, also known as Birmingham Carnival, began in 1984 in Handsworth, Birmingham. It is a celebration of Afro-Caribbean music, food and culture. Birmingham International Carnival includes a Mas parade, live music and a Carnival Queen competition.

- Manchester Caribbean Carnival began in 1971 and currently takes place in Alexandra Park. Moss Side, in Manchester, has always been home to the Afro-Caribbean community dating back to the First World War. The migrants that arrived during the 1950s and 1960s contributed to the area becoming a cultural hub for the West Indian community in Manchester. The Carnival also honours Emancipation day.

Examples of other regional Carnivals in the UK

- Leicester Caribbean Carnival
- Nottingham Caribbean Carnival
- St Pauls Carnival - Bristol
- Preston Caribbean Carnival
- Derby Caribbean Carnival
- Scottish (Paisley) Afro-Caribbean Carnival
- Africa Oye (Liverpool) Carnival

Case Study:
Carnival Costumes.

Perhaps one of the most distinctive features of Notting Hill Carnival is the vibrant and colourful costumes that parade the streets of west London nearly every year. Alongside the fantastic music that follows. Notting Hill Carnival, however, is not the only event where one can see these beautiful costumes and hear some of these great genres. Many other Afro-Caribbean festivals worldwide engage in the same celebrations, such as the Rio Carnival in Brazil and the Barbados Crop Over Festival.

The origins of Carnival dates back to the 18th century. Then, many Caribbean Islands became an amalgamation of various cultures. From the Island's indigenous inhabitants to the enslaved African people brought over to work on the plantations and the European settlers.

With the various people on the Islands, we can 'categorise' them into three distinctive groups—the European settlers, 'free people of colour' and the enslaved peoples.

The European settlers and the 'free people' would participate in masquerade balls in the weeks leading up to Lent. By default, enslaved people were not allowed to participate. However, they created similar events in their slave quarters during the sugar cane harvesting and burning season; their festivities became known as 'Canboulay' or 'Cannes Bruleés'.

Case Study:
Carnival Costumes.

These festivities became an outlet to ridicule their oppressors. They often dressed up, taking borrowed items from their enslavers and mockingly exaggerated aspects of their outfits. They would also incorporate bright and colourful items taking inspiration from their African heritage. Music became another means for them to connect and engage with one another. These events ultimately unified the enslaved peoples and allowed a powerful communal identity to be moulded, contributing to retaliation and resistance against their inhumane conditions.

These costumes have become part of traditional Carnival characters one can find all over the Caribbean during Carnival season. This tradition has become known as Ole Mass. The more contemporary outfits we see today are part of a newer tradition that has its origins in Ole Mass.

The outfits have become more vibrant, colourful and extravagant. Nevertheless, they still pay homage to the Indigenous population of the Islands and the African heritage of their ancestors. This tradition is known as Pretty Mass.

Throughout Carnival, people's bodies become a means to take back the agency which had been historically stripped away from their ancestors. The costumes ultimately defy everything colonialism and white supremacy had rendered the bodies of the enslaved people to be. Thus, the usage of body paint, feathers, and the partial nudity we see in current Carnival costumes exemplify resistance.

Case Study:
Carnival Costumes.

In the case of Notting Hill, with its history of racial injustice and prejudice, there was a dire need for an event that celebrated West Indian culture. Ultimately Notting Hill Carnival has been birthed out the same need as the first Carnivals in the Caribbean: **to humanise the newly emerging Afro-Caribbean community.**

To this day, the parade of decorated bodies during Notting Hill Carnival will continue to move forward as a political force while paying homage to the Afro-Caribbean peoples that settled in the region.

Reflection

What similarities do Carnivals worldwide share?

How have costumes historically been used in the fight for liberation?

Why do you think this tradition is still significant?

Notting Hill Race 'Riots'.

30th August to the 5th September 1958

After the Second World War, the immigration of Afro-Caribbean peoples to Britain was encouraged by the British government to rebuild and repair Britain. The Afro-Caribbean migrants were seen as British colonial subjects whose homelands contributed to the war effort and fulfilled the demand for labour in Britain. They worked in construction, transportation, light engineering, and as healthcare professionals.

By 1955, 24,500 Caribbean peoples were living and working in Britain. Many of whom moved into North Kensington and Notting Hill. At the time, these areas were known for their significant amount of poverty and violence, which fuelled racial tension between the white and Black working class. The competition for affordable housing resulted in violent confrontations throughout the summer of 1958.

A key figure who contributed to the heightened racial tension during this time was Oswald Mosley. Mosley was the leader of the Union Movement (UM), which supported Pan European Nationalist ideologies. The rallies held by both the Union Movement and the White Defence League encouraged white youths to attack innocent Caribbean and West Indian men to 'keep Britain white'.

Notting Hill Race 'Riots'.

On the 29th of August, spurred by the events of the assault of Majbritt Morrison (a white woman who was assaulted for having a Jamaican husband), hundreds of racists began to attack the homes of Caribbean and West Indian migrants in Bramley Road. They were chanting racist rhetoric whilst using weapons such as knives, chains and other sharp objects to insight fear and violence towards the Black community.

These 'riots', which included violent attacks, property damage and psychological abuse, continued into September, with racist abuse and violence carried out routinely until the 5th of the month. Multiple people were arrested on both sides by the Metropolitan police for either taking part in the riots or for carrying or having access to weapons. At the time, the police believed there to be little evidence of racial motivation for these attacks.

Questions to ask students:

Why do you think the police were reluctant to label the conflict as racially motivated?

Why did you think Britain needed to outsource labour from their colonies?

Why were the rising amount of Afro-Caribbean migrants an issue for white Britons?

Extension Tasks.

If students are keen to learn more about Notting Hill outside the years covered in the syllabus, there is further opportunity to do so. Both the 1976 Notting Hill Carnival and the tragic events at Grenfell are examples of the unfair treatment faced by Black and ethnic minority people in Notting Hill, North Kensington.

Trigger warning: The events that you will read about might be distressing to some, please read with caution.

1976 Notting Hill Carnival

The constant racial tension between white fascists and the Black community during the 1970s led to increased police presence at Notting Hill Carnival each year.

- During the 1976 Notting Hill Carnival, riots broke out between the Afro-Caribbean youths and the police.

- The police attempted to arrest an alleged pick pocketer, which the Afro-Caribbean youths believed to be racially motivated, which led to a violent clash between the two.

Extension Tasks.

1976 Notting Hill Carnival

- Multiple Afro-Caribbean youths were arrested and charged with 79 counts of criminal violence and damage, with two actually being convicted.

- It is important to note that the SUS laws that had originated from the 1824 Vagrancy Act allowed police to stop and search any member of the public that they deemed to be suspicious. This law was disproportionately used against ethnic minorities (especially the Afro-Caribbean community during the 1970s and 1980s) and is a clear example of racial profiling committed by the Metropolitan Police.

- Similar Race 'Riots' and violent clashes between ethnic minorities and the police would continue across Britain for many decades to come.

What does this further tell us about the tension between the Afro-Caribbean community and British institutions such as the police and judiciary? You can reference both the riots that occurred in 1981 in Liverpool and Brixton.

What are the similarities and differences in the relationship between the Afro-Caribbean community and British institutions today compared with then?

Extension Tasks.

Grenfell

On June 14th 2017, a terrible tragedy occurred. A fire broke out in the flats of Grenfell Tower, a part of Lancaster West Estates, during the early hours of the morning. The fire eventually led to the injury of 70+ residents and the death of 72. Most of the residents in the council estate were of an ethnic minority background.

The Grenfell Tower Inquiry was launched in September 2017 to determine the leading causes of the fire. The findings from October 2019 suggested two main reasons for the spread of the fire and the loss of residents' lives. Firstly, the building's exterior was deemed to not comply with building regulations. Secondly, London Fire Brigade's (LFB) 'stay-put' strategy and late evacuations (residents were told to wait up to two hours) directly led to more deaths.

North Kensington has for decades been a cultural hub in London. Historically, the area has been made out of a community with a vibrant migrant population that has contributed to the artistic productions of some of the most important events in British history.

Unfortunately, although significant, the community has faced several adversaries. The hostility shown by white Britons led to the historic Race 'Riots' of 1958 and 1976, whilst the targeting of the Mangrove restaurant and its aftermath was the first example of institutional racism in Britain. This shows that Grenfell was not the first time ethnic minorities had been overlooked and discriminated against in Britain. Instead, the Grenfell fire serves as another testimony to the lived experience of many migrant working-class people in the UK.

Extension Tasks

Grenfell

The lack of care shown by the Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, London Fire Brigade (LFB) and the government highlights the second class nature of which immigrants are ascribed to within Britain. Are Council Estates to be overlooked and the people living in them not cared for?

Grenfell has raised an important question regarding the safety and wellbeing of Black, ethnic minority and working-class people in present-day London.

Grenfell United, an organisation made up of the survivors of the Grenfell fire and the families of the fallen, continues to campaign for social housing reform to ensure that these events do not happen again. The responsibility and push from the survivors and families connected to this tragedy show the lack of accountability, respect, and blatant disregard shown by numerous British institutions.

What does the Grenfell Tower fire show about the institutional problems faced by Black and minority ethnic Britons?

Summarise the key findings from the Grenfell Tower Inquiry report. Do you think the government and local boroughs have done enough to support the families that Grenfell affected?

Research into other buildings built from similar materials to Grenfell. What have local boroughs done to ensure a similar tragedy does not occur again?

Additional resources

Archives

- Friends of Huntley Archives at LMA
- Black Cultural Archives
- George Padmore Institute

Books

- *The making of the Black Working Class in Britain* by Ron Ramdi
- *From Immigrants to Ethnic Minority: Making Black Community in Britain* by Lorna Chessum
- *Black, Listed: Black British Culture* by Jeffrey Boakye
- *Racial Violence in Britain 1840-1950* by Panikos Panayi
- *Empire Windrush: Fifty Years Of Writing About Black Britain* by Onyekachi Wambu

Films

- *Black and British: A Forgotten History* by David Olusoga
- *The Unwanted: The Secret Windrush Files* by David Olusoga
- *Small Axe (anthology)* by Steve McQueen
- *Pressure* (1976) by Horace Ové
- *Burning an Illusion (1981)* by Menelik Shabazz

Websites

- https://www.younghistoriansproject.or
- https://nhcarnival.org/resources
- https://grenfellunited.org.uk
- https://www.grenfelltowerinquiry.org.uk
- https://blamuk.org/free-black-history-resources/

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