

ANNIVERSARY OF BLACK HISTORY MONTH UK

1987 - 2027

A NATIONAL MOMENT OF JOY, FELLOWSHIP AND CONFRATERNITY

BLACK HISTORY MONTH — OUR STORY, OUR COMMON HUMANITY

A National Proposition for Knowledge, Conscience, Policy Decision

1. THE FORTIETH ANNIVERSARY — A MOMENT TO DECIDE

Forty years after Black History Month took root in Britain, BHM@40 calls upon the United Kingdom to turn this historic anniversary into a national moment of knowledge, conscience, policy decision, organisation, collective action, joy, fellowship and legacy.

Under the overarching theme:

BLACK HISTORY MONTH — OUR STORY, OUR COMMON HUMANITY

BHM@40 seeks to bring together communities, institutions, faiths, universities, museums, libraries, heritage organisations, businesses, local authorities, sporting bodies, artists, young people and people of goodwill across the United Kingdom. The ambition is bold. It is to use the fortieth anniversary not simply to remember the past, but to ask a fundamental question:

What should a mature society do with the truth when history has been honestly recovered?

The answer is equally clear:

KNOWLEDGE → CONSCIENCE → POLICY DECISION → ORGANISATION → COLLECTIVE ACTION → LEGACY

Knowledge should awaken conscience. Conscience should inform policy. Policy decisions should enable organisation. Organisation should make collective action possible. And collective action should leave a legacy for generations yet unborn. This is the animating proposition of BHM@40.

2. THE KNOWLEDGE VILLAGE

At the heart of BHM@40 will be a bold KNOWLEDGE VILLAGE, created through enabling collaboration among the extraordinary cultural, heritage and knowledge institutions connected to this national endeavour, including the British Library, English Heritage, University of London at Senate House, the Wellcome, London Museum, the Pitt Rivers Museum, V&A East, the International Slavery Museum in Liverpool and the Museum of London Docklands, together with wider knowledge, heritage, educational, scientific, funding and community partners.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH UK LTD - Company Number: 16202150

REGISTERED OFFICE: Second Floor, 243 Westbourne Grove, London, W11 2SE

TELEPHONE: +44(0)791 261 9756 EMAIL: info@ukbhm.org

CHAIR: Robert Lee SECRETARY: Dr. Claire Holder OBE

During BHM@40, this remarkable concentration of intellectual and cultural resources can become a living marketplace of knowledge—bringing together libraries, museums, heritage organisations, universities, archives, scientists, scholars, artists, teachers, communities, children and young people to discover, question, learn, exchange and share. The Knowledge Village is conceived not simply as a temporary exhibition, but as an invitation to open the doors of knowledge. From antiquity to the present, humanity has continually created centres where knowledge was gathered, preserved, contested, transmitted and renewed.

The great intellectual traditions associated with Per-Ankh, Alexandria, Heliopolis, Memphis, Thebes, Axum, Rome, Athens, Fez, Timbuktu, Salamanca, Bihar, Kabura and Jenne remind us that knowledge has never belonged exclusively to one people, one continent or one civilisation.

These are part of our common wellspring. The Knowledge Village will therefore affirm a simple but profound proposition:

Black history is not an addition to somebody else's story. It is an integral part of our shared human story.

Africa and the African Diaspora are integral to humanity's long intellectual, scientific, cultural and civilisational journey. To recover that history is not to diminish the histories of others; it is to enlarge the human story.

3. FROM GOODWILL TO POLICY DECISION

BHM@40 is calling upon Britain's leading institutions to move from goodwill to POLICY DECISION.

We call upon the Prime Minister, Government and Parliament, the Speakers of both Houses of Parliament, the Archbishop of Canterbury and other faith leaders, the Lord Mayor of the City of London, the Mayor of London and the Greater London Authority, Metropolitan and City Authorities, Borough Councils, business and philanthropic leaders, universities, libraries, cultural institutions and all people of goodwill to use their respective offices and convening powers to help make BHM@40 a national success.

The proposition is deliberately practical. We call upon each Metropolitan Authority, City Authority and university, alongside other major civic and cultural institutions, to undertake a POLICY DECISION in support of BHM@40 and, where appropriate, to initiate a KNOWLEDGE VILLAGE within its own locality or institutional sphere.

A policy decision gives officers, educators, students, cultural practitioners and communities the authority and confidence to act. It can release institutional imagination, creativity and innovation, while giving a clear social purpose to the resources already available.

WHERE THERE IS THE WILL, THERE IS THE WAY.

BHM@40 therefore places the POLICY DECISION at the heart of the national proposition.

4. ORGANISING THE COMMON WEAL FOR THE COMMON GOOD

The resources required to realise this ambition are already substantially present within the United Kingdom. They exist in Government, the City, Boroughs, Churches, Mosques, Synagogues, Temples, Gurdwaras and other faith communities, business, philanthropy, foundations, universities, cultural and funding institutions, communities and among High Net Worth Individuals. The central challenge is not simply the absence of resources. THE CHALLENGE IS ORGANISATION.

BHM@40 therefore proposes the development of a Resource and Delivery Consortium capable of bringing together professional expertise, institutional capacity, financial resources and in-kind contributions. Its work must be founded upon:

PROBITY → TRANSPARENCY → ACCOUNTABILITY → PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE

The proposition is not simply to raise money. IT IS TO ORGANISE THE COMMON WEAL FOR THE COMMON GOOD.

This is where ORGANISATION DETERMINES ALL—not organisation for its own sake, but organisation directed towards a clearly defined public purpose.

5. FROM LONDON TO THE WHOLE UNITED KINGDOM

Black History Month took root in Britain in London. BHM@40 will therefore begin in London—but it must not remain in London. Its energy should radiate throughout the United Kingdom:

LONDON → EVERY REGION → EVERY CITY → EVERY BOROUGH AND TOWN → EVERY COMMUNITY → EVERY FAMILY

The objective is a national Mexican wave of participation. Every locality can contribute. Every community can tell its story. Every institution can open a door. Every school can awaken curiosity. Every museum and library can reveal a treasure. Every faith community can convene people. Every citizen can participate. This is how we give enabling and enriching meaning to the word “United” in United Kingdom.

6. CELEBRATING DIVERSITY TO KICK RACISM OUT OF THE BEAUTIFUL GAME

BHM@40 will also use the extraordinary reach of football to advance social cohesion through:

CELEBRATING DIVERSITY TO KICK RACISM OUT OF THE BEAUTIFUL GAME

The programme seeks to bring supporters, players, communities and nations together through cultural exchange, education, music, sport and shared celebration. The objective is to humanise the stadium and help remove the scourge and trauma of racism, bigotry, hooliganism and jingoism, while affirming dignity, friendship and our common humanity.

Among the possibilities being explored are demonstration matches involving:

England v Ghana

Scotland v Morocco

Wales v Jamaica

Northern Ireland v South Africa

Together with a cricket encounter involving West Indies and India. These are conceived not merely as sporting fixtures, but as opportunities for friendship, cultural exchange and fellowship.

7. A NATIONAL MOMENT OF JOY, FELLOWSHIP AND CONFRATERNITY

BHM@40 is not only about knowledge and policy. It is also about joy, belonging, fellowship and confraternity. A mature society must be capable not only of confronting difficult histories but also of creating occasions on which people can meet one another, celebrate together and discover the humanity they share. The arts, music, theatre, dance, food, sport and community celebrations can provide precisely such occasions.

BHM@40 therefore seeks to create a national moment in which people are able to feel good together—not by forgetting history, but by understanding it; not by denying difference, but by celebrating it; and not by retreating into separate identities, but by discovering our common humanity. This is the spirit of Ubuntu: I AM BECAUSE WE ARE. It is also the spirit of Sankofa: recovering what is valuable from the past in order to enrich the present and shape the future.

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8. THE THAMES–NIGER REGATTA

We are exploring the feasibility of a THAMES–NIGER REGATTA, bringing together the rowing and river traditions of Britain and Africa. Teams associated with the great British rowing tradition, including Henley Royal Regatta, Oxford and Cambridge, could be invited to participate alongside teams from Africa and the wider African Diaspora.

The initiative would provide an opportunity to celebrate Britain's long and often overlooked African history, including the documented presence of African soldiers, commanders and communities in Roman Britain, and the remarkable connection represented by the African-born Emperor Septimius Severus, who came to Britain in AD 208 and died at York in AD 211.

The Regatta would therefore be both historical and forward-looking: an occasion on which two great river traditions meet in friendship, sporting excellence, cultural exchange and fellowship. The Thames and the Niger would become symbolic meeting places—connecting Britain, Africa and the African Diaspora through the universal language of water, sport and human fellowship.

9. THE ROLE OF FAITH AND CIVIL SOCIETY

The participation of Britain's faith communities is particularly important. Churches, mosques, synagogues, temples, gurdwaras and other faith communities are among the country's great convening institutions.

They possess not only buildings and networks, but moral authority, intergenerational reach and a capacity to bring people together across social and cultural boundaries. BHM@40 therefore invites the faith communities of Britain to consider what part they can play in transforming the fortieth anniversary into a national occasion of reflection, reconciliation, fellowship, celebration and common purpose.

For the Christian, Moslem and Judaism traditions in particular, the anniversary presents an opportunity to reflect upon the enduring call to seek truth, practise justice, love one's neighbour and work for reconciliation, while recognising the dignity and equal worth of every human being. The objective is not to appropriate the history of any faith tradition, but to invite faith communities to bring their distinctive resources of conscience, compassion, service and fellowship to a common national endeavour.

10. THE SANKOFA–UBUNTU TORCH RELAY

A year-long journey through cities, towns and communities across the United Kingdom touching on historical sites. Sankofa retrieves what is valuable from the past; Ubuntu affirms our shared humanity. The Torch connects heritage, participation and belonging.

11. THE NATIONAL CALL

BHM@40 is therefore a call to Britain to do something worthy of the fortieth anniversary. Not simply another month of events. Not simply another calendar celebration. Not simply another collection of speeches. But a national endeavour in which:

KNOWLEDGE awakens CONSCIENCE;

CONSCIENCE informs POLICY DECISION;

POLICY DECISION enables ORGANISATION;

ORGANISATION makes COLLECTIVE ACTION possible;

COLLECTIVE ACTION creates LEGACY.

The ultimate purpose is to ensure that the fortieth anniversary leaves something behind that is greater than the anniversary itself:

A child who discovers something previously hidden.

A student whose understanding of Britain's history has been enlarged.

A museum that opens a new door.

A university that establishes a new collaboration.

A borough that makes a policy decision.

A faith community that convenes its neighbours.

A football stadium that becomes more welcoming.

A family that discovers a story it did not know.

A nation that sees itself more completely.

That is the meaning of:

BLACK HISTORY MONTH — OUR STORY, OUR COMMON HUMANITY

12. TOWARDS THE BHM@40 PRESS ANNOUNCEMENT

The next major public milestone will be the planned **BHM@40 Press Announcement at the Houses of Parliament on 21 October 2026**, bringing together representatives of public life, Parliament, Government, faith, education, culture, heritage, sport, business, philanthropy and the media.

The purpose will be to announce the BHM@40 proposition to the nation and invite institutions and communities to begin making the **POLICY DECISIONS** required to turn the vision into reality.

The invitation is simple:

COME WITH YOUR KNOWLEDGE.

COME WITH YOUR CONSCIENCE.

COME WITH YOUR INSTITUTION.

COME WITH YOUR RESOURCES.

COME WITH YOUR IMAGINATION.

COME WITH YOUR GOODWILL.

AND LET US ORGANISE THEM FOR THE COMMON GOOD.

FORTY YEARS IS A MOMENT TO REMEMBER.

IT IS ALSO A MOMENT TO DECIDE.

AND WHAT WE DECIDE TODAY WILL BECOME THE LEGACY OF TOMORROW.

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KNOWLEDGE → CONSCIENCE → POLICY DECISION → ORGANISATION → COLLECTIVE ACTION → LEGACY

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