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**Lawrence Wishart** is a publisher based in East London that has been running since 1936. We publish books and magazines on topics like history, politics and culture. The mission of the organisation is to create spaces where people who believe in freedom, justice and equality for everyone can come together and talk about different ideas. One of the ways we do that is through projects like the Radical Black Women Series, where we have asked people who are researching Black history in Britain to write books on women who have been involved in fighting for the rights of Black people in the UK.

We like to join up with other people who are working on similar topics, like the Young Historians Project, who have helped us to create this workbook.

**Young Historian Project (YHP)** is a non-profit organisation formed by young people encouraging the development of young historians of African and Caribbean heritage in Britain. They’re a team of young people aged 16-25 working on dynamic projects, documenting pivotal and often overlooked historical moments.

YHP emerged as one of the outcomes from the History Matters conference held in April 2015 at the Institute of Historical Research, highlighting the alarmingly low numbers of history students and teachers of African and Caribbean heritage in Britain. They hope that through their projects more young people of African and Caribbean heritage will rediscover history and develop the skills to become the historians of the future.

**Meera Shakti Osborne** is a multidisciplinary artist and youth worker from London. Meera’s work focuses on collective healing through creative self-expression. Meera is interested in the use of art as a tool to create historical documents that represent feelings and the inbetween stuff that often gets left out of history making. They work in sound, oil paint, textile, breathing, talking and dancing.
Meera Shakti Osborne interviews Jumanah Younis. Jumanah is the Books Editor at Lawrence Wishart and the creator of the Radical Black Women series. They also organised this educational booklet series.

**So, what is the book series about?**

This book series is about black women who have made important contributions to movements for freedom, justice and equality in Britain over the past 100 years.

**Why did you want to publish this series?**

I was inspired to create this series after reading a book from 1999 about Claudia Jones and her time in Britain. Claudia Jones was an activist who came to the UK after being exiled from the US. I was particularly interested in how she brought together African, Asian and Caribbean people in the fight against racism, and how she used creative approaches to community activism, like putting on the first Caribbean Carnival in Britain.

**What advice would you give a young person who is interested in researching histories that reflect their own identities?**

My advice would be to think about resources - and be creative! What materials do you have access to that tell the kinds of stories you are interested in? It could be family photo albums, a free newspaper, flyers in your local takeaway - any of these things could end up in an archive one day. Interview family and friends about their experiences, write about what it’s like to be you. History doesn’t have to happen in a university or at school, it can start at home, or in your local youth centre, or on TikTok - wherever you feel connected to different parts of your community and culture.

How can UK education help to address the racism you mention as a barrier to black people becoming professors at university?

I think one of the most important things is to keep young people in schools in the first place, and to make schools a safe and supportive environment. Organisations like No More Exclusions have shown the damage caused to a child’s life by being excluded, drawing attention to the high numbers of Black Caribbean children being excluded. Other collectives like Kids of Colour have highlighted the problem of police officers being in schools, leading to children being criminalised and even abused in a school setting. This needs to change, and supporting these groups is a good first step.

I would like to see more space for children and young people to be able to explore the communities they are a part of within history lessons. I think that if history lessons reflected a more diverse range of experiences, more young people would be more likely to pursue it as a career.

**What do you hope to achieve through publishing this book series and this educational booklet?**

I hope that this book series will preserve a part of the life stories of black women activists that might otherwise have been lost or forgotten. I hope that young people will read the booklets and feel like they too can create change when faced with injustice. I hope it will make them feel strong to know that these rich legacies of resistance exist within their community or hometown, or even if they come from a different community or place.

I also hope it will lead people to feel curious about researching and documenting their own experiences and the experiences of people where they live.
Activism: activities designed to bring about political or social change.

Colonialism: the practice of one country controlling another country, usually so that the occupying country can benefit economically by taking resources from the colonised country.

Communism: a political idea which says that things should be divided equally between people. Under communism, people would not own things privately and instead the government would organise how things were made and share out what was available equally based on what each person needed.

Decolonisation: a process of a colonised country freeing itself from colonisation.

Diaspora: the dispersal or spread of any people from their original homeland.

Feminism: the advocacy of women’s rights on the basis that all people should be treated equally, regardless of gender.

Migration: movement of people to a new area or country, for example, to find work or better living conditions.

Pan-African: a belief in the unity and common history of the people of Africa and the African diaspora and the notion that their destinies are interconnected.

Race: system that puts people into groups based on real or imagined differences between them, like skin colour. Europeans invented different categories of ‘races’ when they colonised Africa.

Racism: discrimination directed at members of a group who are seen as having the same ‘race’, based on the idea that people who belong to that group are inferior.

Socialism: a political idea which says that people in a society should be in charge of resources (water, land, factories) rather than individuals or companies.

Solidarity: feeling unity with, and showing support for, another person or group.
How is history recorded?

Who decides what is part of history?

Who decides what is recorded?

Is everything included into history?

What do you want to be included?

WHO do you want to be included?
Amy Ashwood Garvey was born in 1897 in colonised* British Jamaica. She was involved in a wide range of political activities throughout her lifetime, across many continents. A famous Pan-African feminist, she was known for her public lectures about race and gender. Amy toured the US, Europe, West Africa and the Caribbean, where she helped to establish several women’s organisations.

*colonised The practice of one country controlling another country, usually by using force.
Amy got involved with political activism in Britain in 1922. She was friends with the political activist and journalist Claudia Jones and was on the board for her newspaper, the *West Indian Gazette*. In 1936, she opened the Florence Mills Restaurant and Social Parlour, which became a meeting place for organisations fighting against racism in Britain.

Amy was known internationally because of her participation in events on Pan-Africanism.

Pan-Africanism is a movement that encourages solidarity between people of African descent, including people living both within and outside of the African continent.

Amy also set up the Afro-Women’s Centre and Residential Club at her home in Ladbroke Grove, in west London. This became a place for people who had recently arrived from Africa or the Caribbean to Britain to meet other people from their community. It was also the meeting place for organisations fighting against racism after the Notting Hill Race Riots in 1958 and 1959. In the Race Riots, white people attacked African and Caribbean people because they did not believe they should be in Britain. These riots were an important turning point in the history of Black people in Britain because a lot of groups were formed to fight racism in response.
Claudia Jones was born on 21 February 1915 in Port-of-Spain, part of colonised British Trinidad and Tobago. She moved to the US with her family in 1922. She got tuberculosis at the age of 17, which made her very ill, and she struggled with her health throughout her life. In February 1936 she joined the Young Communist League, and a year later she joined the Communist Party of the USA’s newspaper, the Daily Worker. Journalism was an important feature of Claudia’s life. In 1945 she joined the main Communist Party of the USA, where she focused on the issues faced by black people, in particular black women.

In the 1950s in the US, being a communist was seen as suspicious and people were unfairly arrested and sent to jail for their political beliefs. Claudia was arrested several times because of her political activism and went to prison in 1955. After a campaign for her release, she was made to leave her family and friends in the US, and was deported (forced to go) to Britain in December 1955. Over 350 people came to her goodbye party.
4. Claudia Jones reading the West Indian Gazette, London, 1960s

Once she had arrived in the UK, Claudia struggled to find work and a place to live, and relied on friends and comrades from the US for financial support. One of her friends was the pan-Africanist Amy Ashwood Garvey. Claudia founded Britain’s first major Caribbean newspaper, the West Indian Gazette, in 1958. The Gazette was one of the only ways Black people were able to find out about important events happening in their communities. Its offices on Brixton Road were a place black people would gather to discuss community news. That year, racist violence broke out in Notting Hill and other areas of the UK.

While this I know, my heart rebels
At screens that shut off sunlight’s beams
My thoughts rise too like tinkling bells
To welcome shafts of light in seams.

5. Morning Mists by Claudia Jones

In response to this violence, Claudia set up the first annual Caribbean carnival in the UK in 1959. The first carnival was held indoors at a hall in St Pancras, near Kings Cross. The carnival aimed to celebrate Caribbean culture, and was held every year up to when she died.

Claudia helped to create a number of organisations to fight for the rights of people from countries that Britain had colonised. She campaigned against racist immigration laws like the Immigration Act 1962, which made it harder for people from places that used to be British colonies to come to the UK.

Claudia died on Christmas Eve 1964 at the age of 49 due to a heart attack, which was a result of her long-term illness. She is buried on the left-hand side of Karl Marx, a philosopher who wrote about how people could be equal under a system called communism, in Highgate Cemetery, which is in North London.
Jessica Huntley was born in 1927 in colonised British Guiana (now Guyana). She grew up without a lot of money, but with a rich tradition of family pride in African culture and resistance to racial injustice. She was a founding member of the People’s Progressive Party in Guyana in 1950, a political party that focused on the rights of working people.
When Jessica arrived in Britain, she immediately joined activism against European colonisation in Africa, and developed a focus on fighting for the rights of black people in Britain. In the 1960s and 1970s, there was increasing amounts of anti-blackness from white people in the UK and the government. Jessica spent the remainder of her life in Britain, where she founded and co-founded many organisations related to black power and publishing. The most famous organisation was Bogle L’Ouverture Publications, a black publishing house that published many important black authors from across the world.

‘Fashist an di attack
Noh baddah worry ‘bout dat
Fashist an di attack
Wi wi’ fite dem back
Fashist an di attack
Den wi countah-attack
Fashist an di attack
Den wi drive dem back’

When people from Africa, Asia and the Caribbean came to the UK, racism in the school system meant that they often received a worse education than white children. Teachers assumed that they were not able to learn and they were often sent to separate classes where they were not taught the curriculum. Supplementary schools were extra classes that black parents organised to address this problem. Jessica was a leading member of the Black Parents Movement, which helped to organise supplementary schools.
Gerlin Bean was born in 1939 in colonised British Jamaica. She is a longstanding youth advocate* and Black community activist. Gerlin migrated to England aged 18 to train as a nurse in the late 1950s, but eventually left nursing to pursue her passion of youth work.

By the 1960s, racism had invaded all aspects of society in Britain, and most black people, young and old, were subjected to it in some form. Housing, employment and education were three main areas where racism and discrimination were most apparent.

*Advocate: a person who publicly supports and/or argues on someone else’s behalf, in this case a young person or child.
In the late 1960s, the Black Power movement emerged in response to this racism. The Black Power movement was made up of different groups of people who fought against racism and for the rights of African, Asian and Caribbean people in Britain. Gerlin became an active member in two London-based Black Power groups: The Black Unity and Freedom Party (BUFP), and the Black Liberation Front (BLF). You will find out more about these groups later in the booklets. Within these two groups, Gerlin worked to create women’s study groups. She encouraged other young Black women to become politically active, and stand up for their rights.

‘Well, I feel that as a person I should be free to do what I want to do and to proclaim my feelings.’
10. Excerpt from Gerlin Bean interview Shrew Magazine 1971

In addition to her work in the Black Power and Pan-African movements, Gerlin was involved in linking up Black women’s groups in Britain. She helped to set up the Brixton Black Women’s Group in 1973 and the Organisation of Women of Asian and African Descent (OWAAD) in 1978. OWAAD was a national organisation that coordinated Black women’s groups throughout the UK.

Gerlin was also involved in the movement for gay and lesbian liberation during the 1970s and proudly identified as bisexual. Gerlin returned to Jamaica later in her life to work with young people there. She continues to live there today.
From 1930 until 1970, there were a variety of music clubs at 50 Carnaby Street in Soho, central London. These clubs were primarily run by and for Black Caribbean communities. In 1936, the Florence Mills Social Parlour was founded by Amy Ashwood Garvey and her partner at the time, Sam Manning. Sam, originally from Trinidad, brought calypso music to the club, while Amy, having lived in New York City, brought the flavour of African American music from Harlem.

How does music make you feel?

Think about a time where you were dancing, how does dancing make you feel?

When I dance I feel joy, sometimes I dance by myself like no one is watching, but nothing feels better than dancing with my friends and family.

Being together for the sake of joy.
I feel at home in my bedroom, having my space gives me a sense of peace. Sometimes home for me isn’t a place, its person, or book, or song that makes me feel safe.

Sometimes I make a home for myself in the clothes I wear, with the music in my headphones or book in my bag. It’s not the same as the house I grew up in but those things make me feel safe - they are the little bits of home I carry with me.

In 1954 Amy Ashwood Garvey set up the Afro-Women’s Centre and Residential Club. It was located close to Ladbroke Grove in west London. As well as being a community centre, Amy also offered accommodation in the building. This was an important service because of the discrimination against black communities by landlords. The centre also housed a restaurant and was used as a meeting space for women-run businesses. It later became the Afro People’s Centre.
Many Caribbean people were recruited to fight for Britain in the Second World War and stayed on in Britain after it ended only to find racist treatment by British people and discrimination in employment. However, the economic situation in many Caribbean countries was so bad that throughout the 1950s, increasing numbers of people began moving from the Caribbean to Britain, especially after changes in immigration laws that made it harder to enter the US. Claudia Jones arrived in London in 1956 and immediately got involved in organising for African, Caribbean and Asian workers’ rights.

Claudia set up the West Indian Gazette (WIG) newspaper in March 1958 in Brixton, London. From the outset, the newspaper’s offices were threatened by members of the British Ku Klux Klan*, who didn’t want a black newspaper to exist. Claudia used the paper to organise resistance to racist violence, and the paper was reported to have sold over 30,000 copies in this time.

Its offices at 250 Brixton Road also became an informal meeting place for black people to find news, meet others and organise politically.

*Ku Klux Klan commonly shortened to the KKK or the Klan, is an American white supremacist terrorist and hate group. They claim British roots and operate in the UK as well as the USA.

Can you write about a time you were inspired by someone you respect? Why did they inspire you? (It can be anyone, including a friend or family member. They don’t have to be famous)

Claudia Jones inspired a lot of people, including myself. She cared about truth and put it into a physical format, into something people could hold.

Giving people a truth they can hold is a powerful thing. I love to write poetry, it’s my way of telling my own personal truths - I wonder if one day the things I write and create will inspire others, if my poems can be truths for them too.
In 1959, Claudia Jones organised the first Caribbean carnival in the UK, in response to racist violence in Notting Hill the previous year. She reached out to performers that she knew, from singers to actors and choreographers, to ask them to join her in this celebration of Caribbean culture. British film star Yvonne Mitchell, jazz singer Cleo Laine and calypso artist Edric Connor were all part of Claudia’s first Carnival. She promoted the Carnival in her newspaper, the West Indian Gazette, which featured the evening’s programme. The first Carnival took place in a hall in St Pancras, which she decorated with palm trees.
The UK government’s response to rising racial hatred in Britain between 1958 and 1962 was to restrict the number of immigrants allowed to come here from countries that used to be part of the British Empire, specifically African, Asian and Caribbean countries. The law, known as the Commonwealth Immigration Act 1962, was widely seen as racist and Claudia Jones campaigned against it through the West Indian Gazette and another organisation that she founded called the Afro-Asian Caribbean Conference.

Claudia and others risked their safety in order to organise against the bill; a meeting she held against the bill in 1961 was broken into by racist organisations who shouted ‘keep Britain white’ and threw fireworks at the audience and the speakers. Even when the bill became law in 1962, Claudia continued to organise mass protests, including one with Caribbean nurses in their uniforms.

*Commonwealth countries that used to be part of the British Empire.

*a bill is the name for a proposed law before it has been passed.
The children of migrants to Britain experienced discrimination in the education system by being labelled ‘educationally subnormal’. Young people also experienced brutality from police, who used the infamous ‘Sus law’ to harass young people. The Sus law meant that the police could arrest any ‘suspected person’ for loitering on the basis that they might commit a crime. Activist Gerlin Bean began to do youth work in response to seeing this harassment of young people in her community.

Other activists like Jessica Huntley were prominent during this period in resistance campaigns against the unequal treatment of black children in the British education system, and the early establishment of alternative educational and cultural provision through supplementary schools.

Do you think unequal treatment still exists in schools today? (Please explain)

If you could add a new subject to your school curriculum, what would it be? Could you write down some suggestions for new subjects?
Bogle-L’Ouverture Publications was a pan-African publishing house set up by Jessica Huntley and her husband Eric. They published books by many important black writers and political activists. Bogle L’Ouverture also had a bookshop, which would host events and activist meetings. With her husband and business partner Eric, the company became one of the biggest and most influential publishing houses of the time.

Bogle-L’Ouverture became well-known internationally for publishing writers like C.L.R. James, Valerie Bloom, Walter Rodney, Lemn Sissay, and Linton Kwesi Johnson. These writers wrote about the experiences of black people in the UK and abroad, raising awareness of the impact of racism at a time when people did not usually accept this. These writers also became recognised as excellent authors in their own right, which was especially important at a time when black people faced a lot of racism and discrimination based on the idea that black people were less intelligent and capable.

Jessica collected the papers related to her work at Bogle-L’Ouverture in the Huntley Archives, one of the largest black British archives in the country. You can go inside and see her papers if you organise a visit. Why not ask your parents or your school to arrange a trip there?

If you are in London check out New Beacon Books - a bookshop specialising in works from Caribbean, Black British, African and African American authors.

76 Stroud Green Rd, Finsbury Park, London N4 3EN
The Black Unity and Freedom Party (BUFP) was set up in 1970. It was heavily influenced by left-wing politics. The BUFP was the first organisation of its kind to argue that the women should be equal to men in the black power movement. Within a year of BUFP being founded, Gerlin Bean launched the organisation’s Black Women’s Action Committee.

Gerlin was inspired to set up the Black Women’s Action Committee after attending the 1970 National Women’s Liberation Conference at Oxford University. The Conference was organised as part of the fight for equal rights for women in Britain, such as the right to be paid the same as men for doing the same work, or having the right to make decisions about whether or not to have children.

Although the event was a turning point for activism around women’s rights, as one of the few Black women present at the conference, Gerlin was struck by the huge differences between the problems facing Black and white women. Following this experience, she began to create groups that would later become the Black women’s movement.

Gerlin later worked with the Black Liberation Front, a Pan-African organisation set up in 1971. She made sure they also set up a women’s group, and a ‘Sister’s Column’ began to appear in the organisation’s newsletter.

* **Activism**: activities designed to bring about political or social change.
* **Left-wing**: political beliefs that support equal opportunities and fair treatment for everyone in society.
Gerlin Bean played an important role in establishing black women’s groups within other organisations, and later helped to found independent women’s groups like the Brixton Black Women’s Group in 1973 and the Organisation of Women of African and Asian Descent (OWAAD) in 1978.

The Brixton Black Women’s Group (BWG), which existed from 1973-1985, identified itself as a socialist feminist organisation, and was one of the first black women’s groups to be established in the UK. The aim of BWG was to create a space where women of African and Asian descent could meet to focus on political, social and cultural issues. This gave them the chance to address issues separately from both white women and Black men.

Many women have said they became activists thanks to Gerlin. Her lifelong friend, Zainab Abbas, said “she was a mentor to us all”.

Black: At the time of the BWG’s creation, the term ‘Black’ was used as a political term to mean people from places that used to be colonised by the British, which included Asian people as well as African and Caribbean people.

Socialist: The goal of socialism is to share wealth more evenly so that no one is rich or poor, and to treat all people fairly.

I think a lot about change. How my local area changes, how I might change, how perspectives change.

It’s change is weird, it can be bad or good or just different. Like when you really think about it’s just the process of stuff happening. I wonder what my role is in creating change, how can make stuff happen.

I’ve discovered that sometimes just being yourself is enough. My experiences and feelings have value. I can make change happen.
In 1978 Gerlin Bean, Stella Dadzie and others set up OWAAD, the Organisation of Women of African and Asian Descent. OWAAD campaigned about issues including immigration and deportation*; domestic violence; exclusion of children from school; strikes* by black women; police brutality; and health and reproductive rights*.

OWAAD was an umbrella organisation that brought together groups with different interests and focuses. This was one of its biggest strengths and weaknesses since the clashing priorities between groups eventually led to complications. In 1982, the organisation stopped operating. But it had made a huge contribution to putting African and Asian women’s views onto the agenda for the women’s rights campaign in Britain at that time.

*Deportation: the removal of a person or group of people from a place or country by force, usually to send them back to somewhere they or their family originally lived.

*Strike: a strike is when a group of people stop going to work in order to put pressure on their employer to meet their demands, for example to get paid the same as men doing the same job.

*Reproductive rights: legal rights relating to reproduction (being able to choose whether or not to have a baby).
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Further resources

Lawrence Wishart books
https://lwbooks.co.uk

Young Historians Project
https://www.younghistoriansproject.org/

British Empire Facts!
www.natgeokids.com/uk/discover/history/general-history/british-empire-facts

Decolonising The Curriculum
www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/z7g66v4#:~:text=When%20they%20say%20decolonising%20the,a%20colonial%20point%20of%20view.

Colonialism, Explained
www.teenvogue.com/story/colonialism-explained

How you can help stop racism
www.bbc.co.uk/cbbc/watch/bp-advice-for-helping-to-stop-racism
References

1. Amy Ashwood Garvey. Archival photo from Courtesy Lionel Yard Collection

2. Amy Ashwood Garvey at Afro Women’s Centre. Archival photo from Courtesy Lionel Yard Collection

3. Claudia Jones in Devon visiting Heaton Ferrers, by Eric Benson. Courtesy of the Working Class Movement Library


7. Jessica Huntley. Courtesy of the Huntley Archives

8. Linton Kwesi Johnson from the track Fite Dem Back 1979


11. OWAAD Pamphlet (1978), Black Cultural Archives. Photo credit: The Black Women’s Movement digital exhibition. https://artsandculture.google.com/story/hAUBVgWeiBZ-Ig


Radical Black Women
British History KS3

Interview with Jumanah Younis

Questioning History

Definitions

Amy Ashwood Garvey

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A British timeline 1936-1978

Space to write your history

Further reading and resources