



NORTHAMPTONSHIRE
Black History
ASSOCIATION

Newsletter

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Obama Makes History

Committee member **Monica Babb** was in the United States. She reports: Tuesday 20 January 2009 was indeed a historic day. The Inaugural Day for the 44th President of the United States of America, Barack Obama.



There was a buzz coming from the crowds, which created an energy never before seen in Washington DC. The crowds started to arrive from the weekend before. Many had no accommodation or tickets to get in but were determined to be there on the day. When interviewed they spoke of their determination to see and feel the energy and be there in person.

The euphoria started on 4th November 2008 when the then Senator Barack Obama was elected to become the 1st Black President of the United States of America. That night the President Elect gave hope to many by using the phrase "Yes We Can". That slogan has been used ever since.

Thousands of people lined the route on that famous whistle-stop train journey made on Saturday 18 January 2009 from Philadelphia to Washington DC. Barack Obama and his wife Michelle appeared on the back balcony of the vintage train to wave to the thousands of people that lined the route. As reported Obama carried the hopes of a nation 'searching for better days'.

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Obama's Inauguration

People descended on Pennsylvania Avenue and the National Mall for the 'Swearing In' ceremony. The reports estimated about 2 million stood shoulder to shoulder to watch the proceedings.

Quoted from the New Times: " Mr Obama secured at least part of his legacy the moment he walked into the White House on Tuesday, 146 years after the Emancipation Proclamation, 108 years after the first black man dined in the mansion with a president and 46 years after Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. declared his dream of equality."



The electric atmosphere was present in the sitting room in Queens where I watched this momentous occasion with my 85 year old mother and some family members. I regretted not learning how to perform a libation before that big day. I did try my best and honoured Bussa from Barbados, Dr Martin Luther King II, Marcus Garvey, Rosa Parks, and Nanny of the Maroons. I could not bear to miss out on the ceremony so I had to shorten the list of all of the heroes past and present that paved the way for this historical event.

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The Inauguration Debate

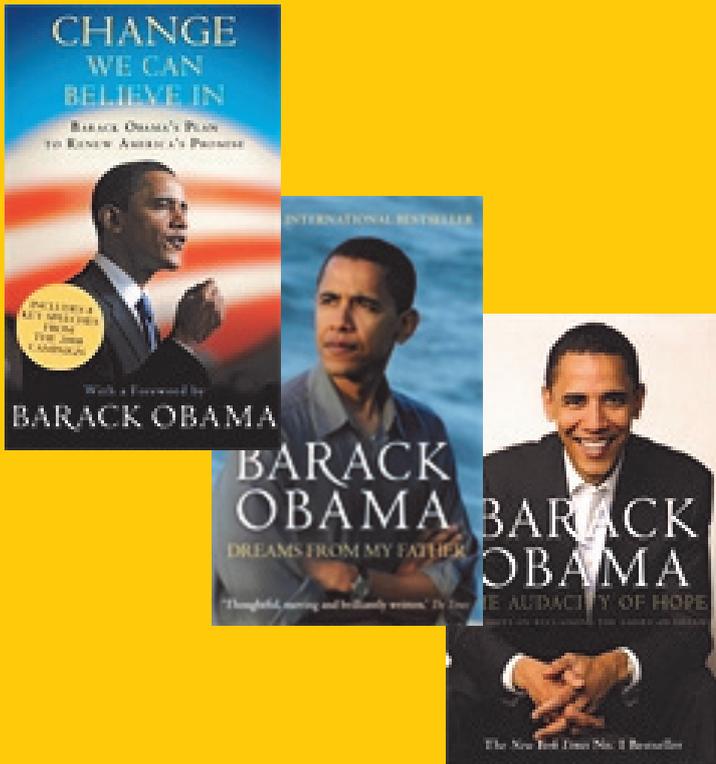
On 23 January 2009 the Wellingborough African and Caribbean Association debated the lessons to be learned by the Black community in Britain as President Obama takes up office. More than a hundred people joined in a lively discussion, led by Mike Prescod and speakers who included Paul Crofts, Shashi Dholakia, Floyd Douglas, Ulric Gravesande, Angela Imbaygo and David Roussel-Milner. Levels of enthusiasm were high, but doubts were also expressed over Britain's ability to reproduce such an achievement: there is still 'a long way to go' in this country, to overcome institutional racism and develop Black leaders in all areas of national life. Some speakers urged the audience to get involved in the political parties, while others demanded that politics should move nearer to their real concerns.



© Photograph by Paul Crofts

Some even felt that 'we're going backwards', in contrast to the United States. It was suggested that education holds the key, and that lifestyle changes and stronger families are needed to produce the leaders of the future. As one participant said 'everybody can do something...take your eyes off the television, step out and see what is on the horizon'.

Have you read these books?



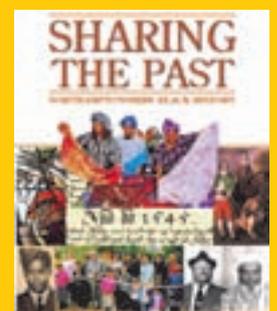
Don't miss the new President's life story and his own account of what he believes in.

Dreams From My Father was written in 1995, the year after he left Law School, and long before he dreamt of becoming president. The facts of his early life are now well known. Born in Hawaii to a Kenyan father and an American mother, the young Barack Obama had a wide range of cultural experiences, spending his childhood in Indonesia as well as Hawaii before travelling to study and live in America, then eventually visiting his father's African homeland. The subtitle of this autobiography is 'A Story of Race and

Inheritance'. The book leaves no doubt about the importance of both themes to Barack Obama's identity and beliefs. As one reviewer has written: 'This may be the best-written memoir ever produced by an American politician'. It will certainly fascinate everyone who is interested in Black History. *The Audacity of Hope* is in some ways a less personal work. Barack Obama's 'thoughts on reclaiming the American dream' are an extended manifesto, explaining his values and ideals as well as the policies which he is now beginning to put into practice. He explains that his politics remain tied to his experiences of family, faith and public life, and expresses his hopes for the future of America and the world.

Sharing the Past: A Gift to Obama

A copy of our new book '*Sharing the Past*' has been sent to President Obama to mark his inauguration. Our members and supporters were present at the Guildhall to see the parcel on its way. The leader of Northampton Borough Council, Tony Woods, wrote an accompanying letter inviting the President to tea in Northampton when he is next in England. He reported the well-attended launch of *Sharing the Past: Northamptonshire Black History*:

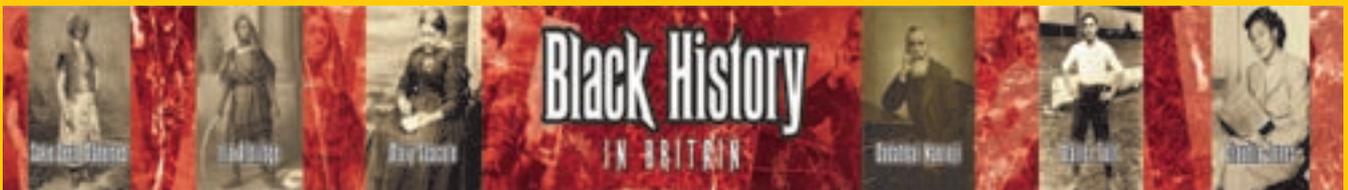


'One of the things we are most proud of, Mr President, is the pioneering community leaders who have enriched the lives of Northamptonshire settlers from the Caribbean, Africa and the Indian sub-continent and helped to make Northampton and Northamptonshire a better place. The history of those people who chose to make Northampton their home has been researched over many years....we hope that you like our gifts and that you may find time out of your busy schedule to look at them.'

The 'Freedom From the Past: Long Time Coming' project commemorated the 200th anniversary of the Act to Abolish the British Slave Trade with a series of events during 2007. Residual funds have been used to commission a Black History ruler, for free distribution in schools and through local community organisations.

NBHA played a leading part in designing and producing the ruler, which was launched at an event at the Doddridge Centre on 28 March 2009. At the event Ifemu Omari spoke about the life of Mary Prince who was born into slavery in Bermuda 1788, Mary never gave up her dream of being a free woman and eventually escaped to join the abolition campaign in Britain. The Black History ruler carries the pictures of two other outstanding Black women, Mary Seacole and Claudia Jones, as well as four famous men: Sake Deen Mahomed, Ira Aldridge, Dadbhai Naoroji and Walter Tull.

Black History rulers will also be available at the NBHA events advertised on the back of this Newsletter. For your copy of the ruler: please contact the NBHA office on 01604 590967.



Special Studies in Black British History- A Volume

For the last three years the University of Northampton and NBHA have been running a course of Special Studies in Black History. During the course students research and write an extended essay on an aspect of Black British History. The topics are chosen by the students themselves and supported by the university staff and resources. Students have covered a range of topics from a range of eras from post war history to medieval. The publications committee will begin working on selecting studies for a book showcasing some of the best studies written over the last three years in April. The volume is planned to be published by the end of the year. For information about this publication contact Northamptonshire Black History Association Office.

Closure of Matta Fancanta Movement (MFM) Project

Below is a statement from **Donna Palmer-Smith**, Chair of Northamptonshire Black History Association.

Dear members and friends, Sadly with regret Northamptonshire Black History Association has to announce that the anticipated MFM project will no longer go ahead as planned. The MFM founders/focus group members with whom we had hoped to run the project have withdrawn their support. As a community organisation we have worked hard to save the project but accept that we cannot, and would not wish to, run this project without their complete support.

Trip to see *La Bouche de Roi*: Book now- Saturday 18 April 2009

La Bouche du Roi: an artwork by Romuald Hazoumé is a thought-provoking work of art created between 1997 and 2005 by Romuald Hazoumé, an artist from the Republic of Benin, West Africa. Literally translated as 'The Mouth of the King', the title refers to a place in Bénin from where many thousands of slaves were transported to the Americas and the Caribbean.

However, *La Bouche du Roi* is primarily a warning against all kinds of human greed, exploitation and enslavement, both historical and contemporary. A profound and thought-provoking artistic statement by artist Romuald Hazoumé, it is made from a combination of materials, including petrol cans, spices, and audio and visual elements, the artwork's arrangement recalls the famous 18th-century print of the slave ship, the *Brookes*, which was used to great effect by Abolitionists. A recitation of Yoruba, Mahi and Wémé names, the terrible sounds and smells of a slave ship, and a video of black market petrol-runners in modern Benin are other elements which combine to make *La Bouche du Roi* a truly remarkable and thought-provoking work of art in which the connections between past, present and future are made profoundly real. The exhibition runs at Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, Coventry 3 April – 31 May 2009.

Ticket costs: £12/ £10 NBHA MEMBERS/ £8 CHILDREN and must be purchased in advance. Places also available on Djembe drumming workshops enquire when booking.

Book now for NBHA's day trip to the British Museum on Sunday 17 May 2009

Leaving the Doddridge Centre at 10.00, we have a full day to explore the wonders of one of the world's greatest museums. Our focus will be on the treasures of African History, including the Egyptian galleries with their new display of 3000-year-old wall paintings as well as great statues, mummies and relics of the Pharaohs. The Sainsbury African galleries include artistic masterpieces such as the Benin bronzes, together with beautiful ceramics, textiles, metalwork and some of the finest carvings in wood and ivory ever made. The rest of the world is there for you to explore too, if you have the energy – or you can relax and enjoy the museum's shops and restaurants in the Great Courtyard.



NBHA is pleased to announce an optional opportunity for some of our party to join a tour of the African galleries led by the famous historian Robin Walker, author of *When We Ruled* and other key books on African History. This tour costs £10 (including a souvenir booklet), and lasts for two hours. It is unsuitable for children. Advance booking for the tour is essential: please book when getting coach tickets.

Cost: COACH TICKET: £12/ £10 NBHA MEMBERS/ £8 CHILDREN
ROBIN WALKER TOUR: £10 (optional, at 2pm)

A new exhibition by Urbis, a gallery in Manchester brings the work of campaigning US artist Emory Douglas to the UK for the first time to pay tribute to an unsung hero of the modern civil rights movement.

The Black Panther salute is an unflinching reminder of the mood of the late 1960s, and a community defending itself against racial injustice in the USA. Emory Douglas, official artist of the Black Panther Party and its first and only Minister of Culture, created a compelling, motivational graphic style. Previously unseen in the UK, Douglas's work from this period, documents the growing civil unrest and includes posters, cartoons and campaign pamphlets that will appear in a provocative new exhibition created for UK audiences by Urbis in Manchester, 30th October – 19 April 09. Coinciding with Barack Obama's historic race to the White House, the exhibition in Manchester is a timely reminder of just how much the political and social climate has changed since 1968.



Emory Douglas became an active member of the Black Panther Party in 1967. He quickly became involved in the Black Community News Service, a paper founded by Bobby Seale and at its peak, distributing 400,000 copies each week. His cover art,

drawings and cartoons, referenced recent events and news, including the killing of Little Bobby Hutton, the campaign to free Huey Newton, and satirical treatments of politicians including a pig-like President Lyndon B Johnson, languishing on his toilet in the final months before his White House term ended.



His style, although bearing other influences, is clearly his own; haunting images of black women carrying both babies and guns show just how vulnerable the community was at that time. Though often remembered for their militant stance, the Black Panthers were far ahead of the state in providing welfare and

education to poor local families, and their passion to educate and empower is demonstrated by the slogan 'Each One Teach One' and a preference for giving books, not weapons, to new party members.

The exhibition can be seen at Urbis, Cathedral Gardens, Manchester M4 3BG. The gallery is open Tues- Sun 10am-6pm. Closed Mondays. Entry to Urbis is free. For more information 0161 605 8200 www.urbis.org.uk/ or email info@urbis.co.uk

Paul Bracey reports: As part of the *Shaping the Future* project we wanted to encourage children to explore stories which museum objects could tell through a pack called *Representations of Empire*. Sometimes the information may be restricted to the place the object came from and its arrival in the museum. More may be known about the person who gave it to the museum than the culture of the people who made it. This pack can be used either independently or to support work with the world loan boxes from Northampton Museum. This exciting, if daunting task was achieved with the help of a lot of people. Sara Burdett, our ethnographer consultant and Deborah Martin, our museum consultant organised and grouped objects from the museum stores into themes. John Brownell provided insights into many of the objects using his knowledge of cultural traditions in Liberia. I developed their ideas into a series of teaching activities helped by the education sub committee and a panel of six wonderful primary and secondary teachers who gave their practical expertise on how to make the exercises work in the classroom.

During the piloting of the activities, children thought of ways in which people from different cultures adorn their bodies and reasons– fashion, events, rituals and festivals. In groups they explored objects and considered What can be learnt from looking at it? What else can be learnt? The next activity involved using additional information to answer harder questions about the meaning of objects like a brass anklet which was worn by women to show their married status. Then they repeated this exercise using insights provided by John Brownell who discussed the meaning of adornments traditionally worn by women in Liberia.

This was one of several themes related to the world object boxes. Other exercises in the pack encouraged children to develop a global museum in the classroom, identify and challenge museum displays which do not include the voices of people from around the world and finally the story behind Northampton's Benin Bronzes. We hope that that the pack will encourage a more balanced outlook on the past. Making it was thanks to a team effort.



Windrush@60

Following the success of the [Windrush@60](#) event in Northampton last summer which received both local and national press coverage, Heritage Lives secured funding from the Northampton Community Foundation to offer a second part to their



Windrush celebrations. On Friday 27 February 2009 a dinner was held to honour the contribution of the elders in the African-Caribbean community in Northampton. As well as a formal meal a performance was given by Victor Richards of the play 'Streets paved with Gold'. Everyone present had a great time and enjoyed the performance.

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| 2 April | NBHA Full Committee Meeting - Doddridge Centre, 7pm. |
| 18 April | Trip to The Herbert Art Gallery in Coventry to see the special installation linked to the history of Transatlantic Slave Trade. Side attraction: African drumming workshop, and an opportunity to see the nearby Cathedral. (See page 5) |
| 21 April | Aspects of African History, University of Northampton , 10 weeks, Tuesday evenings (Changed from Mondays, contact NBHA office for full details and an application form) |
| 17 May | Trip to The British Museum and Robin Walker Tour. (See page 5) |
| 21 May | NBHA Advisory Panel Meeting - Doddridge Centre, 6.30pm |
| 26 May | 'Bombay Africans: The African Ex-Slaves Who Returned' , Open Lecture by Cliff Pereira, University of Northampton, 6pm |
| 4 June | NBHA Full Committee Meeting - Doddridge Centre, 7pm |
| 9 July | NBHA Annual General Meeting - Doddridge Centre, 7pm |

Could you foster or adopt? Children of Northamptonshire need you!

We need all sorts of people for children of all ages and from a variety of different racial and cultural backgrounds. These children need carers and parents that can love and care for them and importantly provide them with the right cultural and ethnic background to meet their needs, allowing them to grow. We welcome applications from single applicants as well as families.

To find out more please call:

For Fostering: 01604 236623

For Adoption: 01604 704704

We are always looking for opportunities to raise awareness of fostering and adoption. This could be displaying leaflets and posters, setting up a stand at an event or coming out and giving talks. If you belong to a group or organisation that could help please contact: **Claire Iweka, Tel: 01604 237833 , Email: ciweka@northamptonshire.gov.uk**

Where can you find us?

Northamptonshire Black History Association is based at

Doddridge Centre, 109 St James Road, Northampton NN5 5LD

Phone: 01604 590967 Email: admin@northants-black-history.org.uk

Website: www.northants-black-history.org.uk

Please contact us at this address for further information on all NBHA's plans and activities, and please come and join in!



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