

WE WERE HERE

Eight stories of triumph from Camden's Black British history

Ain't life a mystery until you know your history...

C'est La Vie, 2019

rap lyrics by Maiden Lane's Boss B

We Were Here is a collection of eight biographies of significant individuals of African and Caribbean heritage who lived, worked or studied in Camden. Their connections to the borough date back almost 300 years, and have shaped our history.

The individuals included in this collection of stories highlight the struggles, subjugation and discrimination faced by many people across the African diaspora over centuries. They also represent triumph over adversity through not only survival, but also determination and strength. Their achievements led to significant social change in local, national and international contexts. The exhibition celebrates the lives of these individuals who, along with many others of African and African Caribbean heritage, contributed greatly to Camden's history and the history of Britain today.

The inspiration for telling these stories came from a group of people who attend a weekly coffee morning session at a local community centre in Kentish Town. Many of them share a common interest in local history. When the Windrush Scandal surfaced in 2018, an interest in Black History was ignited. Most of them didn't know about people of African heritage living and working across London in areas like St Pancras and Holborn during the 1700s and 1800s, let alone making such significant impacts on society.

The stories presented here explore community cohesion, radical politics, enslavement, abolition, education, interracial relationships and racism. They show us that Camden has been a place of diversity for nearly 300 years, where people can make important changes to our culture and our society.

The exhibition is part of a series of curated programmes celebrating Black History as part of Camden Black History Season. It is curated by Emily Momoh with Jackie Gallard and Tayla Sapstead.

LOVE CAMDEN

**CAMDEN
ALIVE**

Camden



Curator's note

My name is Emily Momoh. I'm a freelance Community Engagement Coordinator working with diverse groups of people in resident communities. I graduated from Birkbeck University London with a BA honours degree in film and media, although my enthusiasm for storytelling stems from my background in the performing arts, and a growing interest in Black British history.



Emily Momoh

I was born in Sierra Leone in West Africa. My family emigrated here before my first birthday. We travelled by sea from the capital, Freetown, via the Atlantic Ocean, and arrived in Southampton UK, a year before this beautiful country gained its independence from British colonialism.

There are sixteen ethnic groups in Sierra Leone each with their own language. My family are Mende people, the second largest group in the country from the south east provinces of what was once called Mendeland. Sengbe Pieh, a fellow Mende, who was a rice farmer from Mani in the eastern province, is one of our national and international heroes. He led the Amistad Revolt on the Spanish slave ship in 1839, after he was kidnapped from his farm and taken to Cuba to be sold into slavery, along with many other African men, women, and children.

During the Slave Trade era many ordinary men, women and children were taken from Sierra Leone and other countries along the west coast of Africa including Senegal, Gambia, Guinea, and Liberia. The capital city Freetown, commemorates the nation's transatlantic slave trade history with the Cotton Tree, and the King's Yard Gate, landmark places of refuge for the former enslaved African people returning to their homeland in the 1800s and 1900s.



Sengbe Pieh by Nathaniel Jocelyn, 1840. New Haven Colony Historical Society, New Haven, CT, USA.

I grew up in Kentish Town Camden, a place where I've always felt a sense of belonging. Kentish Town is not so different to Freetown; a society made up of people from diverse ethnic backgrounds living together in multicultural communities. I'm one of ten siblings, and I have a twin sister. Our home was never short of family, and friends from different backgrounds. At times the house felt like it could have been King's Cross station with all the comings and goings

I guess this is where my values in cohesion, inclusion and collaboration come from. They are the beliefs that I strive to promote in the work I do in community settings where people come together and respect each other's differences.

My heartfelt gratitude goes to Jacqueline Gallard, senior research volunteer for this project. Her expertise, unwavering dedication, and support has been invaluable to me, and to the success of putting together this exhibition. At times, it has been an emotional journey for both of us but our common interest in Black British history and its relevance to our local and national history, kept us in high spirits throughout this exploration.

Also, I would like to extend my sincere thanks to Tayla Sapseid for her contribution towards sourcing images for the exhibition, spending hours tracking down the sources.

I remain indebted to Professor Darla Gilroy and Angela Beale for their support of the exhibition and loans of family archive material.

We Were Here: eight stories of triumph from Camden's Black British history marks my debut as a curator of exhibitions.

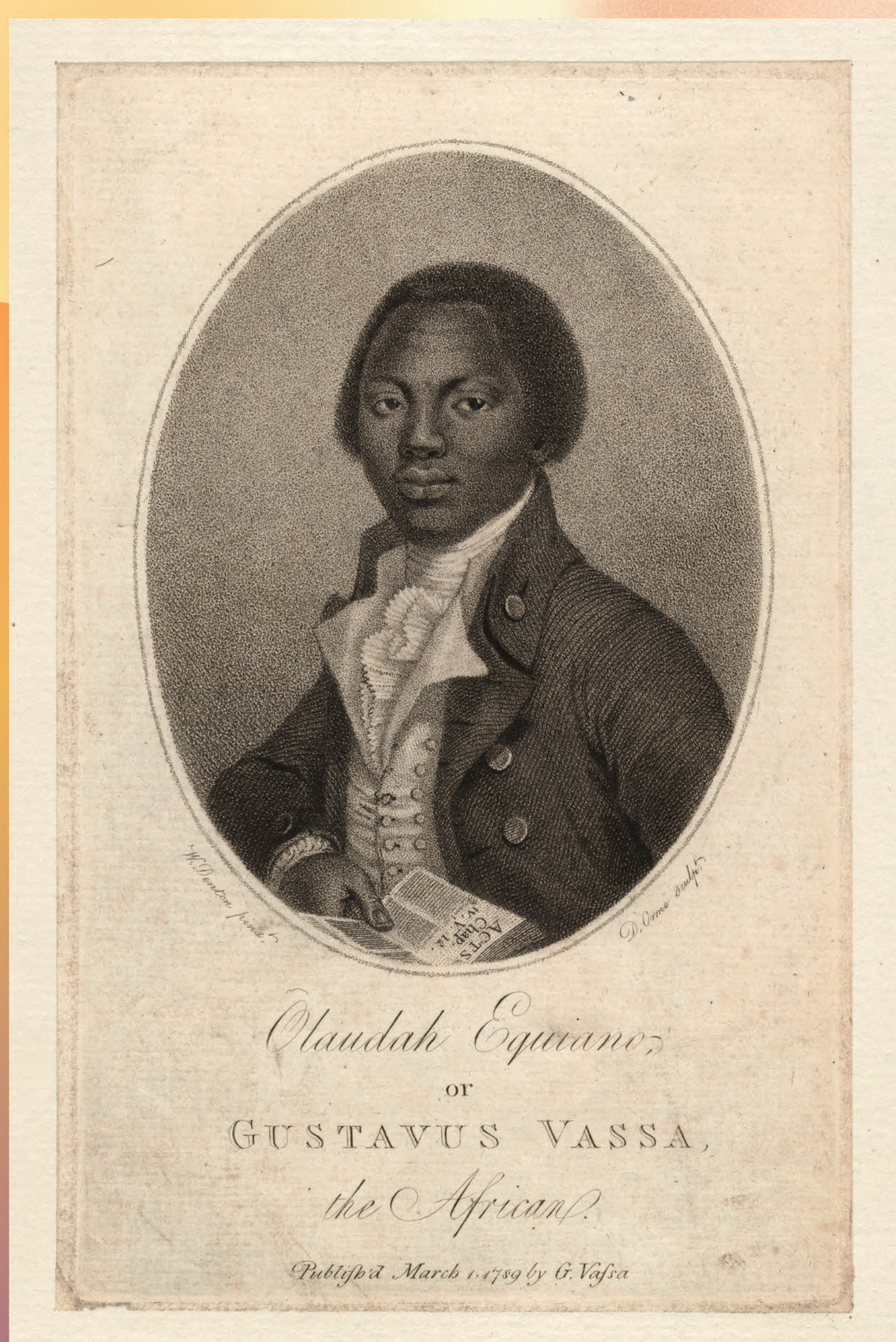
Emily Momoh BA
Curator

Olaudah Equiano

Author and Abolitionist

1745–1797

I was named Olaudah, which, in my language, signifies vicissitude or fortune also, one favoured, and having a loud voice and well spoken. Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative...*, 1789.



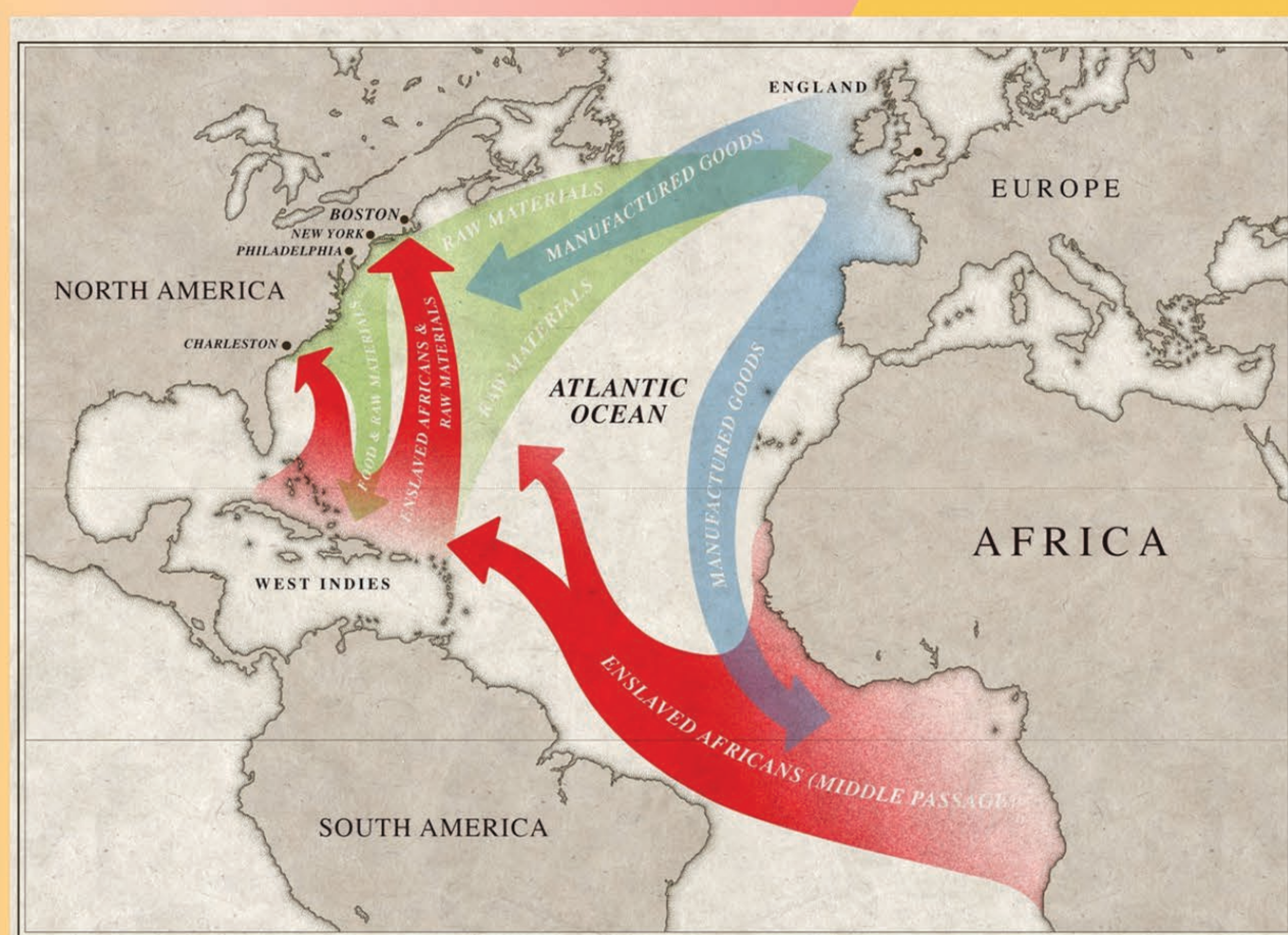
Olaudah Equiano ('Gustavus Vassa') 1789 by Daniel Orme. © National Portrait Gallery, London

Olaudah Equiano is one of the most celebrated figures of Black British history. His book, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa, the African*, 1789, is an invaluable piece of British history that significantly contributed to the growing anti-slavery movement in Britain, Europe and the Americas.

In 1756, aged 11 years, Olaudah Equiano was kidnapped from his home in the Kingdom of Benin (Nigeria) and sold into slavery. His story is just one of millions of African people, enslaved and taken by force to the Caribbean and the Americas to be bought and sold for work on colonial plantations. This stage of the horrific Atlantic Slave Trade was known as 'The Middle Passage'.

Equiano was taken via Barbados to Virginia. He was bought and sold twice before being purchased by Michael Henry Pascal, a British officer in the Royal Navy who re-named him Gustavus Vassa, a name he kept for the rest of his life. During his life in captivity Equiano travelled to different parts of the world working on trading ships.

He learned to read and write, and during voyages traded in glass and fruit on the side, enabling him to save. Eventually in 1766 he bought his freedom for £40 (approx. £7,000 today). He continued to travel as a sailor and trader before he settled in London in 1777, living at various addresses in Holborn and Fitzrovia.



Map showing the 'Middle Passage' of the transatlantic slave trade

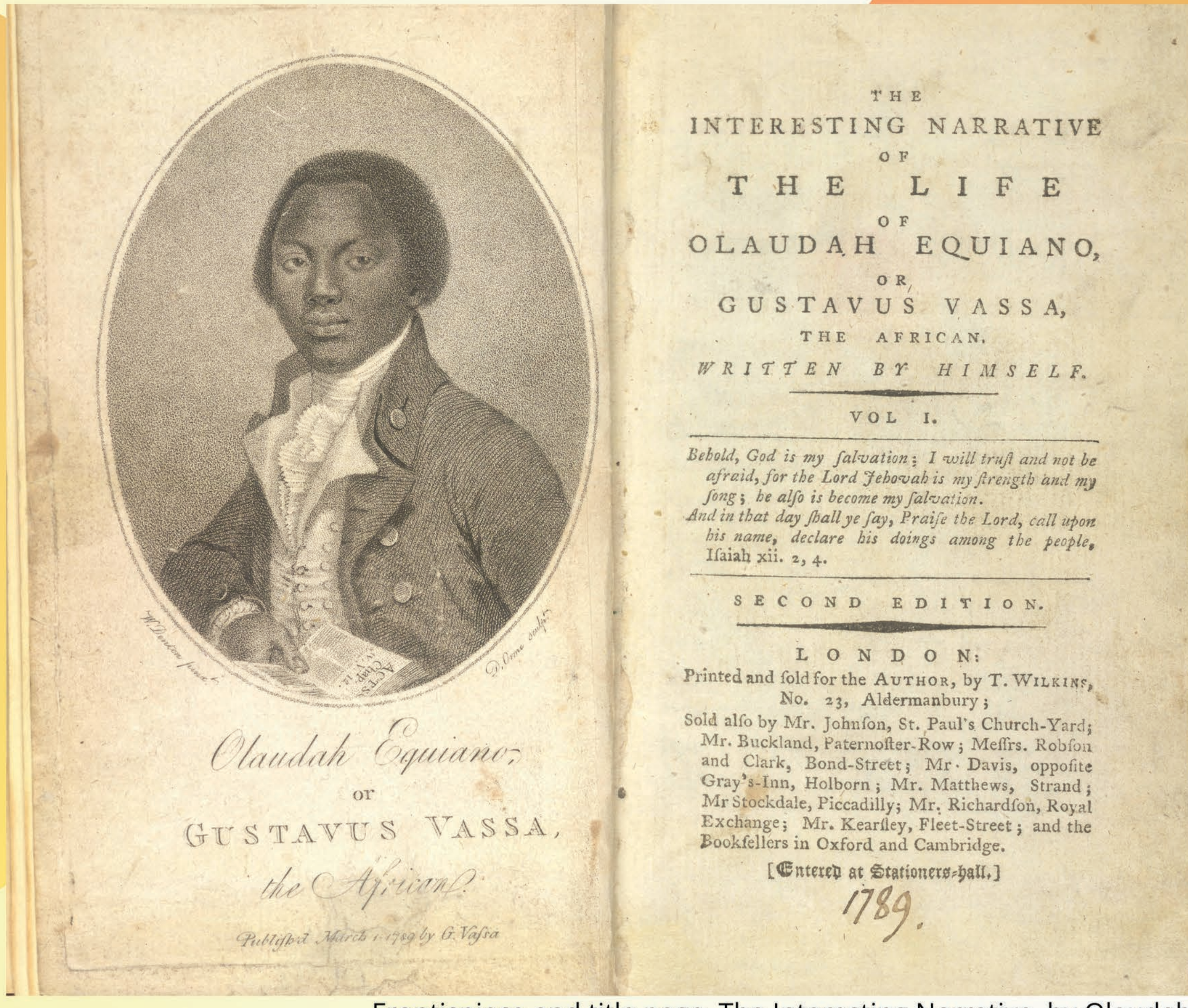
In March 1783 Equiano brought The Zong Massacre trial to the attention of slavery abolitionist Granville Sharp. Together they campaigned for a second trial to hold the crew responsible for the mass murder of 132 enslaved African people thrown overboard from a British merchant slave ship named Zong. The owners of the ship claimed insurance compensation for each slave as 'lost goods'. The legal dispute that followed was covered widely in the press and the Zong affair became a powerful symbol of the true horror of the trans-Atlantic slave trade and drove the movement for its abolition.

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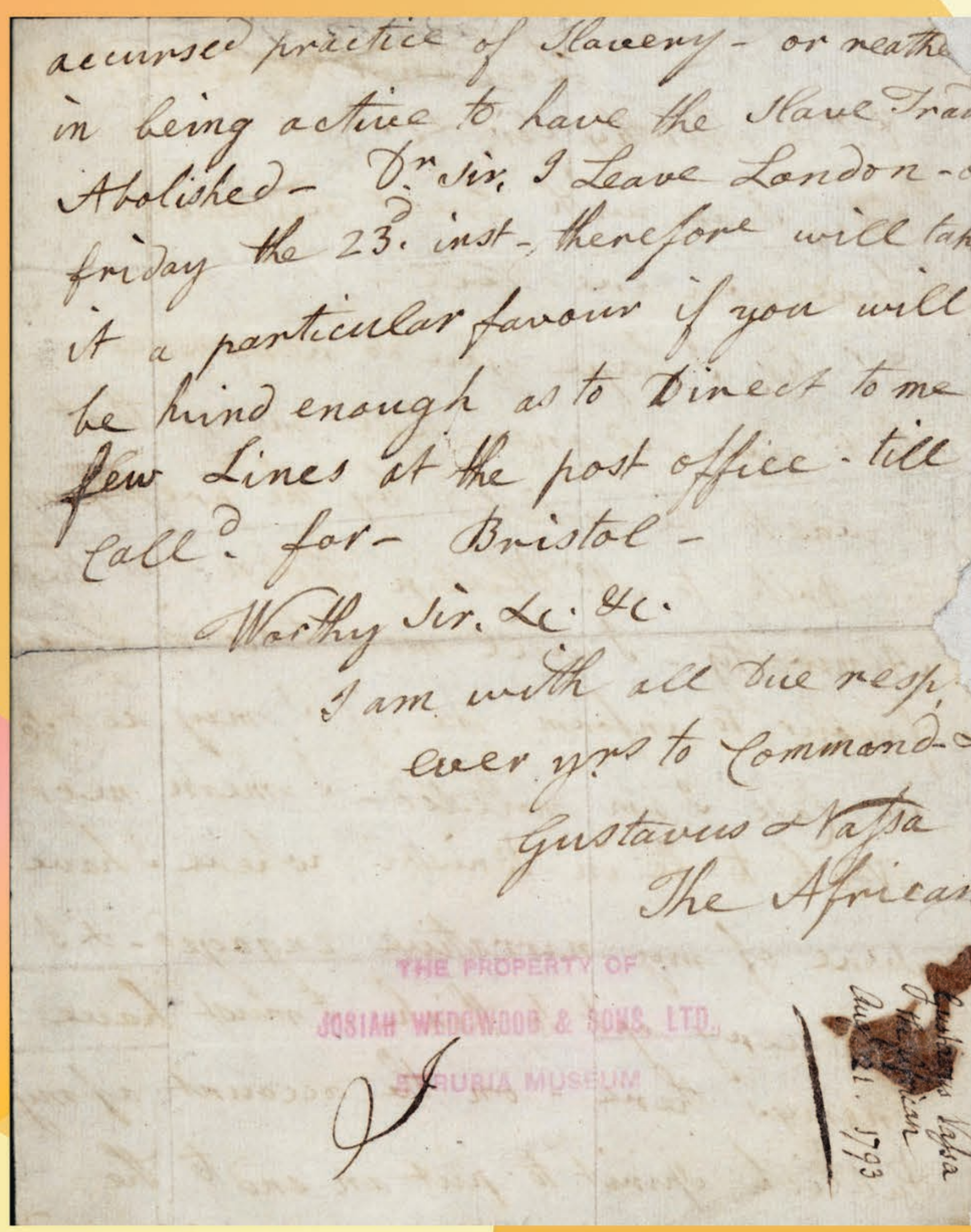
Many of Equiano's abolitionist friends and supporters encouraged him to write and publish his life story. Equiano and other black abolitionists were very aware of the responsibility they had in speaking for the millions of enslaved Africans and presenting their situation from an African perspective. The Abolition movement needed authentic eyewitness accounts to bring home to the British public the violence of slavery in the colonies of the Caribbean and Americas. His book vividly describes his life in Africa, his enslavement and is testimony to the brutality of slavery. It quickly became a best seller; nine editions were printed in English, and it was translated into Dutch, German, and Russian.

Equiano was a member of the 'Sons of Africa', a group of free black men living in London regarded as Britain's first black political organisation. Educated men, such as Equiano and Ottobah Cugoana, the Sons of Africa wrote articles for newspapers and presented lectures opposing slavery, provoking discussion, debate and raising awareness of the horrors of slavery. He was also involved with the Committee for the Relief of the Black Poor and the London Corresponding Society, campaigning against the oppression and exploitation of working people.



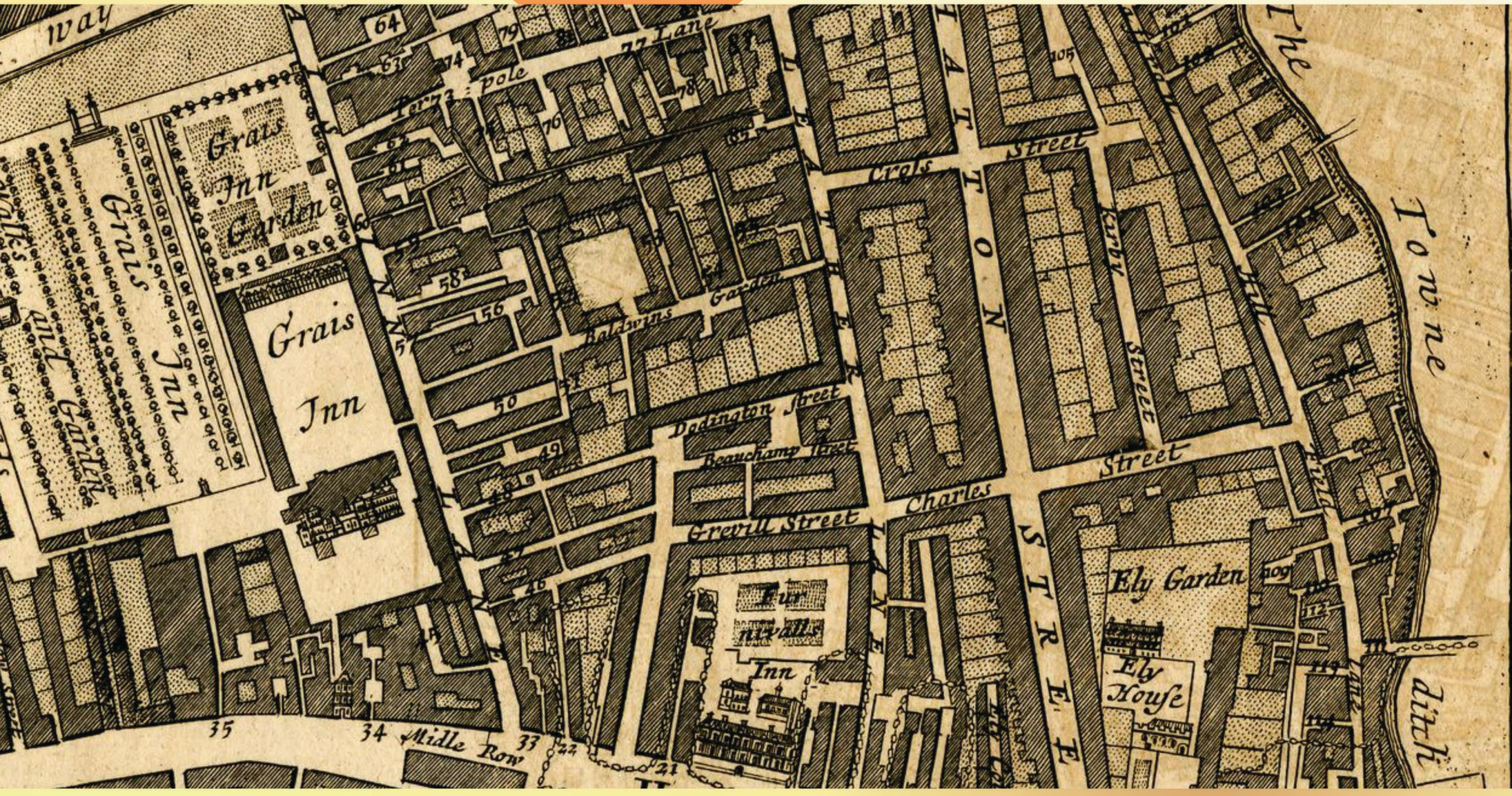
Frontispiece and title page, The Interesting Narrative, by Olaudah Equiano, 1789. © The British Library Board

Due to the success of his book, Equiano was one of the few British black men of the time who was wealthy enough to leave an estate valued at £950 (approx. £120,000 today). His daughter Joanna, the only surviving child of his marriage to Susannah Cullen, who he met in Cambridgeshire, inherited his estate when he died a year after his wife, in 1797 aged 52.



Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, The African's handwriting and signature, 1793

Equiano lived in various houses in Camden for many years, working on campaigning for the end of slavery. Records show he was living at 52 Baldwins Gardens, Holborn for the first half of 1788. It is likely that he was living at this address when he presented his anti-slavery petition to Queen Charlotte. Later on, he lived in Whitfield Street and Tottenham Street. He was buried in the cemetery of Whitefield's Tabernacle, Tottenham Court Road.



Dido Elizabeth Belle

Aristocrat

1761–1804

Her amiable disposition and accomplishments have gained her the highest respect from all his Lordship's relations and visitants. About Belle, from her father's obituary, London Chronicle, 1788.

Dido Elizabeth Belle was an educated woman of mixed-race heritage who defied the conventions and prejudices in Georgian Britain. She was raised by her great-uncle William Murray, Lord Chief Justice, at Kenwood House on Hampstead Heath. Despite her mixed-race heritage and the obscurity surrounding her parents' relationship and where she was born, Dido was financially secure, lived a full life, married and had children.



Dido Elizabeth Belle Lindsay and her cousin Lady Elizabeth Murray, c. 1779 by David Martin. Scone Palace collection

Dido's mother Maria Bell(e) was a very young enslaved Africa woman. Her father Sir John Lindsay was a British Naval Officer. There is much uncertainty surrounding exactly where and how Dido's parents met but during 1760 Lindsay was sailing along the west coast of Africa, and around the Caribbean. Details of their relationship are unknown but in 1774 Maria traveled from England to America to take possession of a plot of land gifted to her by Lindsay.

Dido Elizabeth Belle was the eldest of five illegitimate siblings fathered by Captain Lindsay, by five different mothers of African or Mulatto heritage. At a young age she was entrusted to the care of Lindsay's uncle William Murray, 1st Earl of Mansfield, who was also Lord Chief Justice. We do not know whether Dido was born into slavery in the Caribbean, or born a free citizen in London where she was baptised in 1766 at St George's Church in Bloomsbury, when she was five years old.

She was educated alongside her cousin, Lady Elizabeth Murray and treated as one of the family. She managed Kenwood's dairy and poultry yard, a 'typical occupation for ladies of the gentry' of that time. There were times when she assisted her great-uncle with his correspondence, a task normally assigned to a male secretary or clerk.



Elevations of the north and south fronts of Kenwood House by Robert and James Adam, published 1764.

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It was very unusual for a mixed-race illegitimate child to be raised not as a servant but as part of an aristocratic British family in the 1700s. This is highlighted by the only portrait of Dido Belle painted by David Martin where she is presented wearing a fashionable turban, alongside her cousin Lady Elizabeth. It is seen by English Heritage as 'highly unusual in 18th-century British art for showing a black woman as the equal of her white companion, rather than as a servant or slave.'

Dido lived at a time when the transatlantic slave trade was at its height and Britain's economic prosperity was the result of slave labour in the Caribbean and the American colonies. From 1766 to 1788 Lord Mansfield was Lord Chief Justice and presided over many court cases that were connected to slavery.

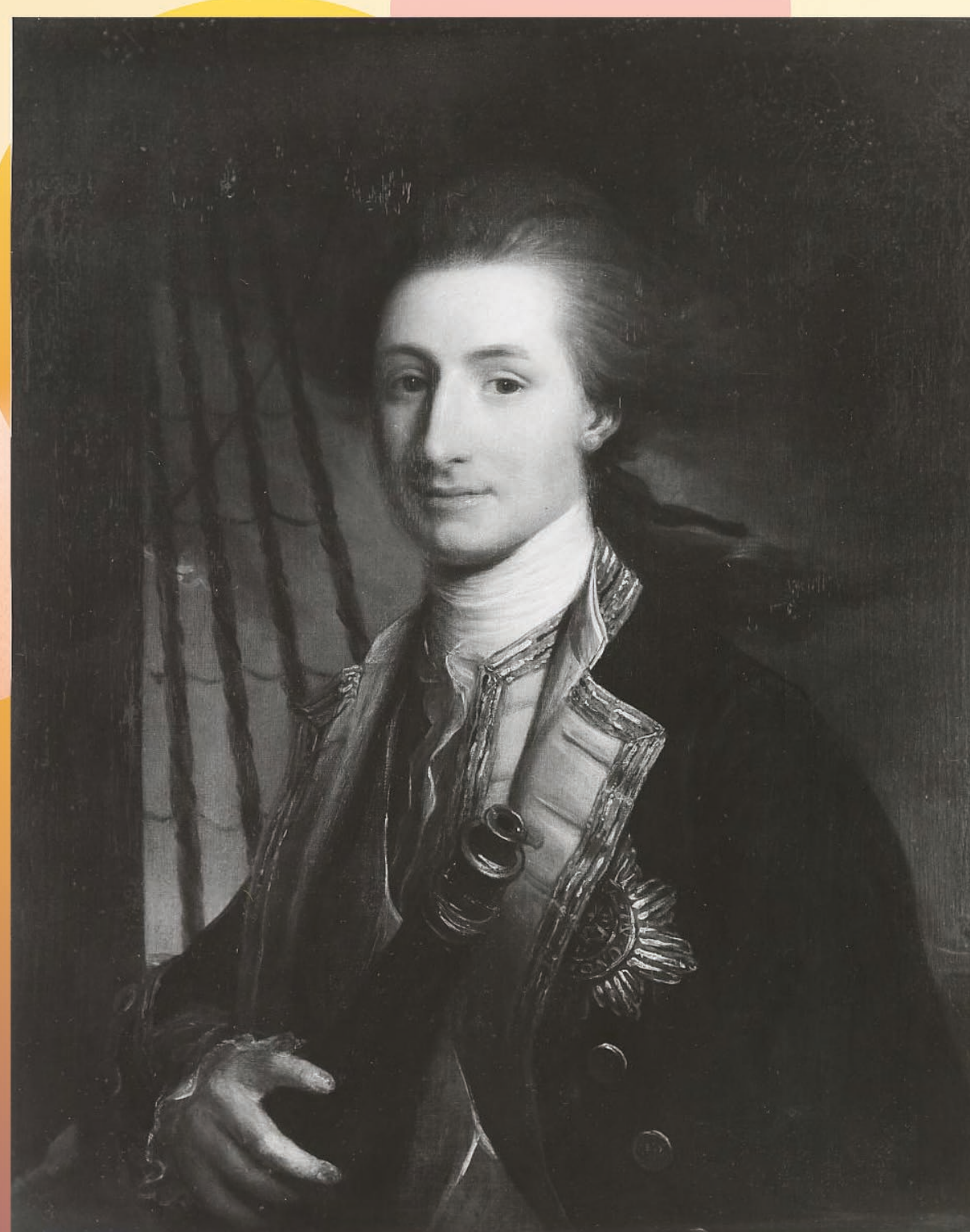
It's possible that Mansfield's family ties with Dido may have influenced his opinions on the slave trade. On record he described slavery as 'odious' but as Lord Chief Justice was obligated to adhere to a strict reading of the law. However, in his will (1782) he made sure that his niece's rights were protected clearly stating that Dido was a free woman.



William Murray, First Earl of Mansfield, c 1783
by John Singleton Copley
National Portrait Gallery

In 1793, after the death of her great uncle, whom she cared for during his final years, Dido inherited a lump sum of £500 (around £80,000 in today's money) and an annuity of £100. Later that same year Dido married a Frenchman named John Davinier who is believed to have worked as a steward for Lord Mansfield. She had lived at Kenwood house for 31 years. Dido had three sons, twins Charles and John in 1795 and William Thomas in 1802. The family lived comfortably in Pimlico until Dido's death in 1804, at the age of 43.

Several narratives relating to Dido's life have become a part of our popular culture. *I, Dido* (2018), a play was commissioned by St George's Church in Bloomsbury, where Dido was baptised in 1766. The feature film *Belle* (2013) is a semi-fictional portrayal of Dido's life as the niece of an aristocrat in England in the 1700s. The novel *Belle, The True Story of Dido Belle* (2014) by Paula Byrne, has been published in paperback and as an audiobook in the United States.



Sir John Lindsay by Nathaniel Hone c.1772

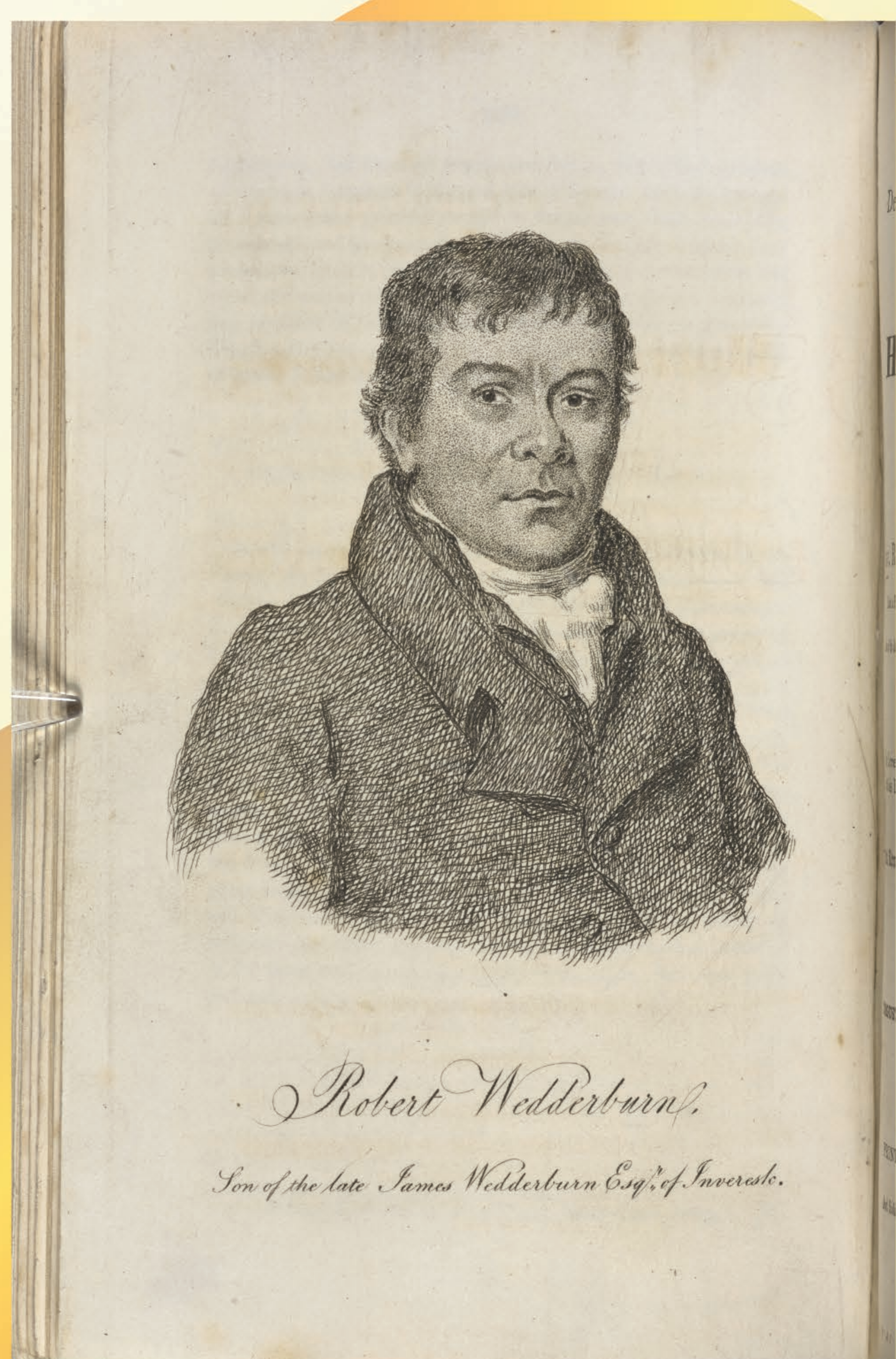


Robert Wedderburn

Political radical

1762 - 1835

I thank my God, that through a long life of hardship and adversity I have ever been free both in mind and body: and have always raised my voice on behalf of my enslaved countrymen. Robert Wedderburn, *The Horrors of Slavery*, 1824.



Robert Wedderburn, frontispiece from *The Horrors of Slavery*, 1824
© The British Library Board

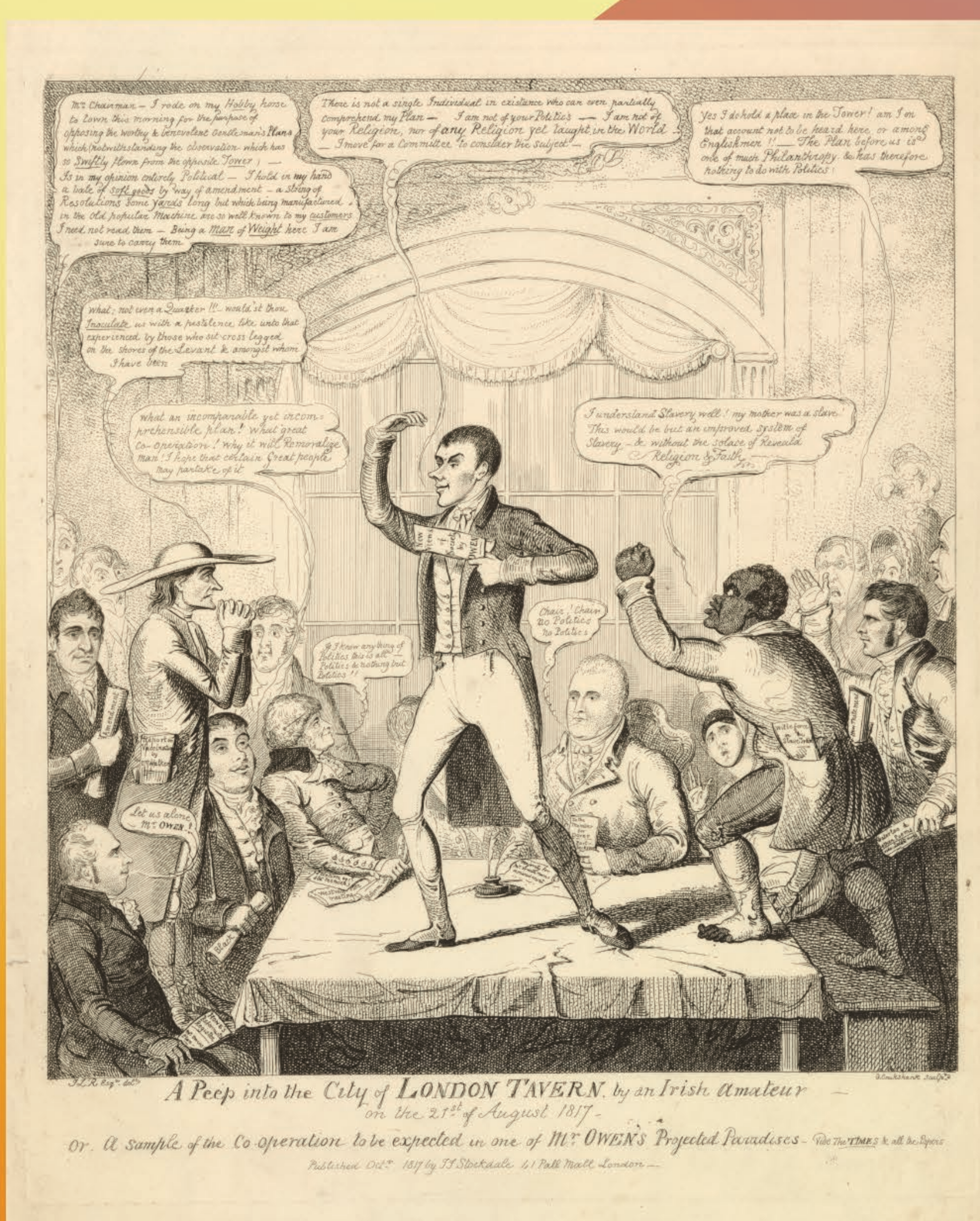
Robert Wedderburn was a radical thinker and activist living in Camden in the 1700s and 1800s. He was mixed race and experienced first-hand the oppression of people through slavery and capitalism. Through his work, Wedderburn pushed for the abolition of slavery and the freedom of the working classes in Britain. He was one of the first writers to connect race and class, as means of control, and influenced radical leaders of the time.

Wedderburn was born in Jamaica in 1762 to Rosanna, an enslaved African woman, and a sugar plantation owner and slave trader, James Wedderburn, who sold Rosanna when she was five months pregnant with his third child. The only thing he did for Robert was to officially register him as legally free at birth.

When he was 16, he escaped the harsh brutality of plantation life by joining the British Navy. However, he was shocked to discover that in the Royal Navy a similar level of brutality was imposed on the sailors he served with. He lasted a year at sea and by 1779, like thousands of other poor immigrants he settled in the Seven Dials district of St Giles. It was known as the 'Rookeries' and one of the poorest areas in London's history. Here, in the overcrowded narrow alleyways he lived among an ethnically diverse community of Jewish and Irish immigrants, Jamaican ex-slaves and servicemen, servants, sailors and soldiers, and militia men from South Asia, all trying to scrape a living and often relying on criminal activity just to survive. Inter-racial friendships and marriages among the working people of the 'Rookeries' were so common it shows that racial prejudice was largely absent in this community.

Wedderburn's experience of poverty, unemployment (he was a tailor by trade) and appalling living conditions, his conversion to Methodism and the belief that all are equal before God, together with his friendship with the radical free thinker Thomas Spence inspired him to subversive and radical political action.

By 1817 he was leading the Spencean Society after Thomas Spence was imprisoned for suspected treason. The Society was a socially diverse radical group from which he published the periodical, *The Axe Laid to the Root* advocating a republican revolution to bring about the redistribution of wealth in Britain and the Caribbean.



A peep into the city of London Tavern, by an Irish amateur by George Cruikshank
© The Trustees of the British Museum

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Soon after, he opened his own Unitarian Chapel in Hopkins Street, Soho where weekly meetings had audiences of around two hundred working men and women. On the 9th of August 1819 Wedderburn held a debate posing the challenging and contentious question, "Has a slave an inherent right to slay his Master, who refuses him his liberty?"



Dudley Street, Seven Dials by Désiré Mathieu Quesnel
© The Trustees of the British Museum

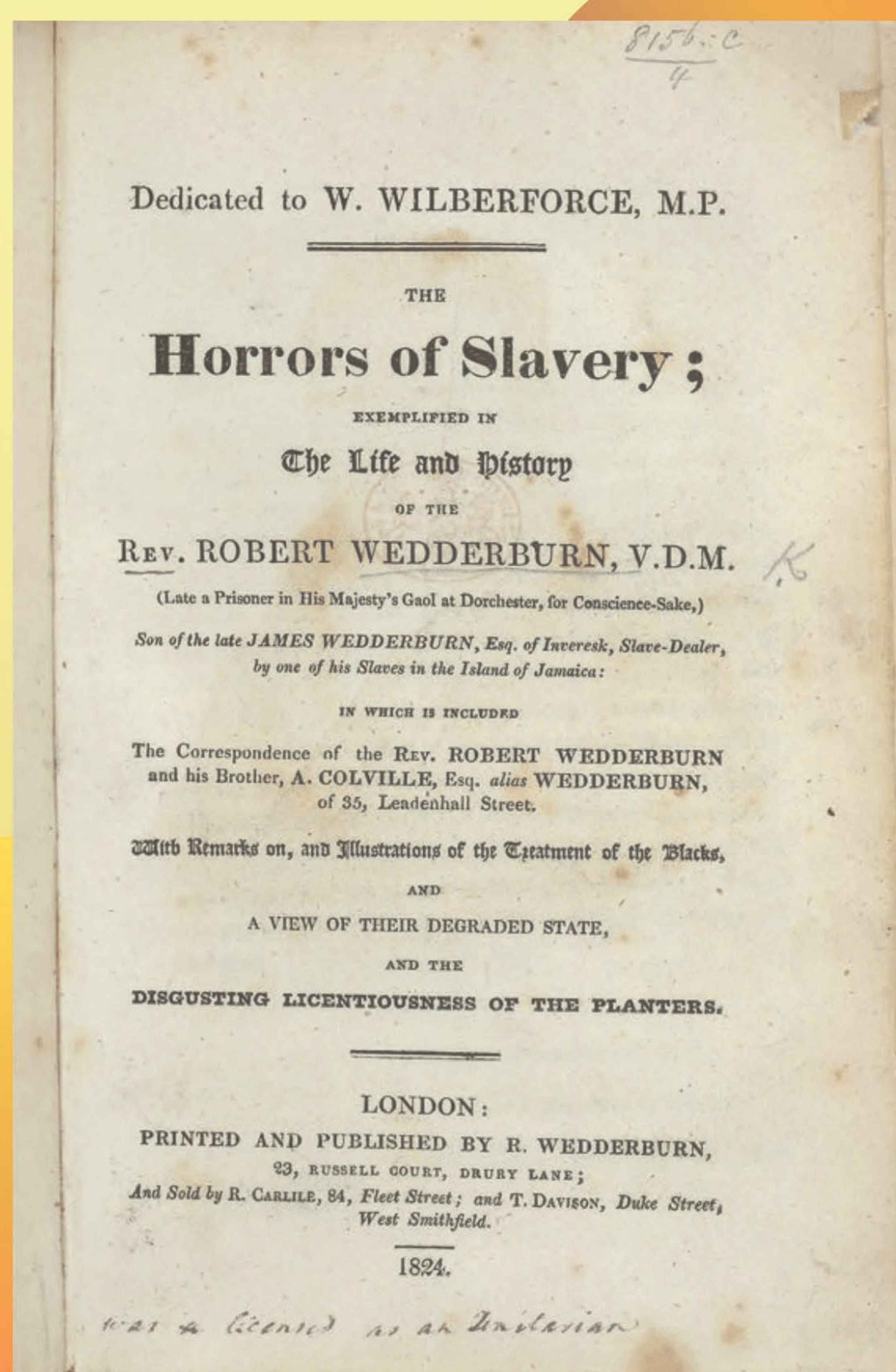
The audience knew that the "slave" in question was both Africans in the Caribbean plantations and the working class of England. The "tyrants" were both the Caribbean plantation owners and the Lancashire cotton mill owners. In order to defeat both poverty and slavery working people of Britain should unite with slaves in the Caribbean in a revolution to bring down their common oppressors. For Wedderburn, the cause of impoverished workers in Britain fighting for their rights was the other side of the coin of those fighting for the liberty of enslaved peoples in the Caribbean.

The fiery debate that followed, and the approval from the audience for Wedderburn's words was recorded by government spies reporting back to the Home Office. He was charged with blasphemy and sedition and considered a dangerous political revolutionary. The sedition charge was dropped but he was sentenced to two years imprisonment for blasphemy.

Robert Wedderburn was not educated and his writing skills were limited, yet, he produced one of the key texts in the campaign for the abolition of slavery: *The Horrors of Slavery*, 1824. He was a powerful and impassioned speaker at popular meetings held in the taverns, meeting halls and societies of St Giles and the area. His work greatly influenced future radical activists, such as working-class leader William Cuffey, and organisations such as National Union of the Working Classes.

He died in poverty sometime in 1835, after the Abolition of Slavery in the UK. He had been at the centre of London's working-class radical and diverse community for over 30 years.

His direct descendant, Bill Wedderburn, who had a long career in Labour Law, was created a life peer in 1977 with the title Baron Wedderburn of Charlton.



The Horrors of Slavery by Robert Wedderburn, 1824



Billy Waters

'King of the Beggars'

1778-1823

Who ever danced as he danced? Waters was a genius. Douglas Jerrold, *The Ballad Singer*, 1851

Billy Waters, known as 'The King of the Beggars' was a disabled busker and street performer working in the Strand and St Giles areas. His flamboyant performances drew a lot of attention and he became a celebrity in London in the early 1800s. However, despite surviving many challenges in life through his own inventiveness and enterprise, he was ultimately exploited for his celebrity and died penniless.

Little is known about Billy Waters' early life. Some people believe that he may have been born in the Caribbean, whilst other sources report he was formerly enslaved in America and traded his servitude to be a British sailor. What is known is that Waters served as a seaman in the Royal Navy during the Napoleonic Wars.

He lost a leg when he fell from the topsail yardarm of HMS Ganymede and was invalided out of the Navy. An early portrait of him, thought to have been painted by David Wilkie in 1815, shows a dignified war veteran, his wooden right leg fully prominent. However, in the many subsequent engravings, images and figurines Billy is often a left leg amputee. Although this may just have been a mistake in the printing process it is likely that accuracy concerning his real physical body was not seen as important when selling booklets of caricatures of black street vendors, entertainers and beggars in London at that time, highlighting the commercial exploitation of Billy.



Billy Waters, c1815 attributed to David Wilkie
National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London, Michael Graham-Stewart Slavery Collection.

Following his accident at sea, he became a well-known London busker singing and playing his violin, and entertaining the crowds outside the Drury Lane and Adelphi Theatres in the Strand to supplement his small navel pension. Dressed in a Naval uniform and a feathered hat, he drew lots of attention. He lived with his wife and two children in the house of a Mrs Fitzgerald in Church Street in the notorious St Giles area, one of the poorest areas in London's history.

Waters became so famous on the streets that he was asked to perform as himself, in Moncrieff's comical production *Tom and Jerry* or Egan's *Life in London*, at the Adelphi. An entry in the Adelphi Theatre Calendar, reads: 'His name was taken by William Moncrieff for a character in *Tom and Jerry* (1821), but Billy refused an offer to appear on the stage.' We do not know if this was true. It may be that Billy felt his portrayal was not correct.

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Ironically, Billy was entertaining crowds with his 'peculiar antics' and singing his trade mark song 'Kitty my love will you marry me' outside the Adelphi for halfpennies, and inside, his character was performed by an actor named Mr Paolo, who was blacked up with make-up, and identically dressed in costume as a Billy Waters look alike.

It was the success of Tom and Jerry that drew national and international attention to Billy's character. The hit stage production ran at the Adelphi from 1821-1823. It appeared in theatres throughout UK cities in England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales, and in the United States and the West Indies.



Billy Waters, a one legged busker, in a crowded London street, 1822
The Wellcome Collection

The celebrity of Tom and Jerry affected Billy's real life badly. His portrayal as a cadging, bullying beggar rather than the legitimate busker he really was had a profound effect on his earnings. With no means of controlling how he was represented by someone else on stage, he was ruined. The audiences watching the 'cadgers' antics on stage were assured that the poverty of the beggars was one big act and there was no need to give them money. Wild stories of black beggars making 'fortunes' on the streets of London circulated and Billy Waters income, like many others, suffered greatly as a result.

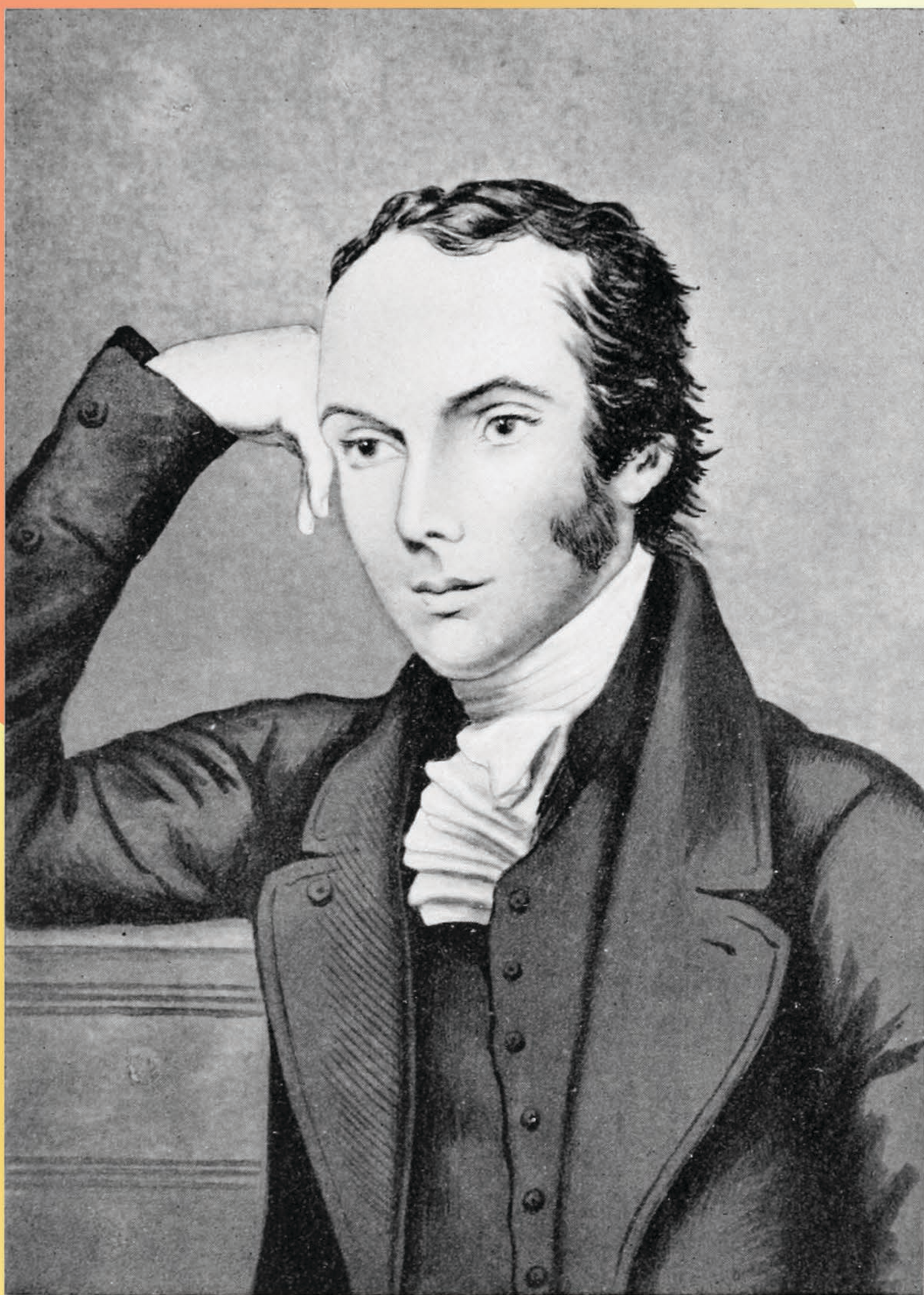
Billy Waters died a pauper. Unfortunately, he received no royalties nor any financial gain from the exploitation of his popularity. He was forced to sell his violin to make ends meet and he died in the St Giles Workhouse in 1823. He was buried in St Pancras Cemetery. Towards the end of his life Waters was elected "King of the Beggars" in the parish of St Giles by his peers in respect of his fame.

However, his character was a 19th-century pop culture phenomenon. He was a familiar character illustrated by George Cruikshank in many of his satirical cartoons, and the subject of numerous prints. From 1821 Derby, and Staffordshire wares manufactured ceramic depictions of him, famously playing his violin. In 2014 a rare Staffordshire pearlware figure of Billy Waters sold at auction for £1,000.



Tom & Jerry, or Life in London, 1822. W.W. pinxt; J. Gleadah sculpt.
Courtesy of The Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University.





Thomas Pringle, from the frontispiece from *A Treasury of South African Poetry and Verse*, 1820s

To gain public attention to her cause and to support the Anti-Slavery Society's goal of the abolition of slavery, Mary Prince narrated her story to a Susannah Strickland. Together with Pringle they produced Mary's book *The History of Mary Prince...* in 1831. The narrative presents the brutality and hardships faced by Mary during her time as a slave and was extremely popular; three editions sold out in its first year.

The book, published at the height of the Abolition of Slavery movement in the UK contributed significantly to this cause. It offered an authentic voice to audiences from an enslaved woman for the first time. Although edited by Strickland and Pringle, it presented the public with the atrocity of slavery; the violence and the degradation faced by female slaves from the perspective of someone who had lived it.

Mary's narrative had such an impact on the question of slavery that pro-slavery campaigners challenged the authenticity of her work. James McQueen, the editor of the *Glasgow Courier* was one such campaigner, who wrote an article suggesting that her story was inaccurate and that she was of low character. Pringle successfully sued him for libel in 1833.

Also in opposition to the narrative was John Wood, Mary's 'owner' who sued Pringle for libel stating that Mary "endeavoured to injure the character of my family by the most vile and infamous falsehoods". Shockingly, the judge Sir James Scarlett, himself a slave owner, ruled that Mary's narrative was exaggerated and awarded damages of £25 (£3,000 today) to Wood.



Am I not a woman and a sister? A popular anti-slavery banner of the time.

Despite this, Mary's story incensed the general public, particularly women. In 1833 over 350,000 British women signed 5000 petitions to Parliament demanding an end to slavery. On 1st August 1833 the Act for the Abolition of Slavery was passed starting the process of emancipation for 3 million black slaves.

The remainder of Mary Prince's life is a mystery. It is not known if she was reunited with her husband Daniel, or whether she died in Britain. In 2007, a commemorative plaque was unveiled by Nubian Jack Community Trust on Malet Street, Camden where she once lived. In 2012, Mary Prince was recognized as a National Hero of Bermuda with 2nd August celebrated as 'Mary Prince Day'.



Sarah Parker Remond

Lecturer, Activist, and Physician

1826-1894

Our home discipline was what we needed, but it did not – could not – fit us for the scorn and contempt which met us on every hand when face to face with the world, where we met a community who hated all who were identified with an enslaved race.
Sarah Parker Remond, **A Colored Lady Lecturer, 1861.**

Sarah Parker Remond was an international activist for human rights and women's suffrage. She was the first African American woman to embark on a lecture tour in Britain. Between 1859-1861 she delivered 45 lectures across the UK in support of the American Anti-Slavery movement. Remond was also a founding member of the Ladies' London Emancipation Society calling for the vote for women. Her work gathering support and raising awareness of these injustices had a significant impact on these movements.

Remond was born in Massachusetts, USA, in 1826 to a family who actively campaigned with the Anti-Slavery movement. Massachusetts at this time was a free state, without slavery and the centre of the abolition movement. Despite this, her family still faced racism and prejudice. Their house was always full of abolitionists from all backgrounds and Sarah began her career as a lecturer at aged 16, becoming a high profile public speaker. Remond was invited to take the cause of the American abolitionists to Britain and in 1858 she came to England as an agent of the American Anti-Slavery Society to gather support for the cause. She toured cities in England, Scotland and Ireland.

In her lectures she highlighted the sexual exploitation of enslaved black women and the suffering of slave mothers. She talked about family, womanhood, and marriage, to evoke an emotional response in her audience. She demonstrated that the highly valued ideals of family were violated in the slavery system; attracting outrage and compassion from the audience.

Remond was portrayed in the British press as a respectable, eloquent, and educated woman. She was one of the few black American activist women who was warmly welcomed by white members of associations and societies in this country. Remond expected to confront similar prejudice as she had encountered in the United States, but she met with a greater acceptance in Britain. "I have been received here as a sister by white women for the first time in my life," she wrote, "I have received a sympathy I never was offered before."

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Sarah Parker Remond, c1865. Gift of Miss Cecelia R. Babcock. Courtesy of the Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, MA.

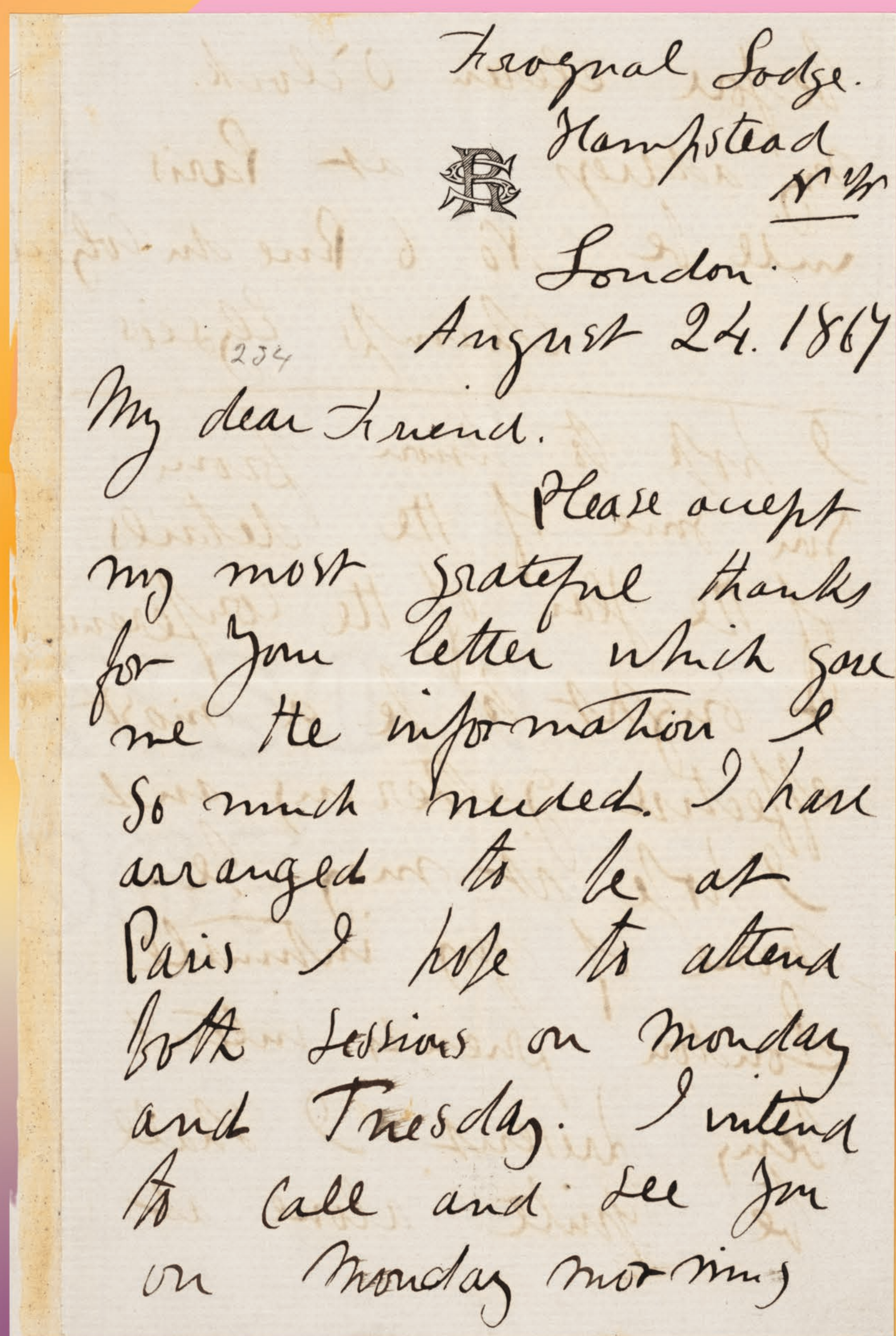


BEDFORD COLLEGE. York Place, N. W.

In her lectures she, like Robert Wedderburn before her, linked the oppression of slavery with the oppression of the poor white working class. During the American Civil War, she delivered lectures in Liverpool and Manchester to cotton mill workers, reminding her audience that the cotton they worked on was produced by slave workers who received no wages in a violent and brutal system. She asked for support from them for the blockade of cotton produced by slaves coming into Manchester cotton mills.

In 1862, at a meeting in the Manchester Free Trade Hall, it was mill workers, in a show of solidarity with enslaved workers, who voted to continue support of the cotton embargo despite the fact that it was they who faced destitution and starvation as a result of mill closures. Abraham Lincoln himself acknowledged their sacrifice in a letter he sent to the 'working men of Manchester'. Lincoln's words were later inscribed on the pedestal of his statue that can still be found in Lincoln Square, Manchester.

In 1859 she attended Bedford Ladies College in Bloomsbury, where she studied classical arts including French, Latin, and music. She joined the London Emancipation Committee and subsequently became a founding member of the Ladies Emancipation Society in 1863. Remond is the only known black suffragist among 1,500 signatories, to have signed the first women's petition brought to parliament calling for women's right to vote in Britain.



Letter from Sarah Parker Remond, London, to William Lloyd Garrison (American abolitionist), dated 1867, written from Hampstead. It talks about her attendance at the Anti-Slavery conference in Paris of that year. Courtesy of the Boston Public Library.

In 1865 she received British Citizenship, and in the same year she enrolled at University College London (UCL) where she trained to be a nurse. After completing her training, she moved to Italy to continue her studies in medicine at the prestigious Santa Maria Nuovo Hospital in Florence. She practiced as an obstetrician for nearly 20 years and married artist Lazzaro Pintor in 1877.

Sarah Parker Remond died in December 1895 in Florence, and was buried in Rome where a plaque has been erected to commemorate her life and extraordinary achievement. In 2020 University College London (UCL) in Camden, named it's Centre for the Study of Racism & Racialisation the Sarah Parker Remond Centre in honour of this remarkable woman.



Portrait of Sarah Parker Remond. Courtesy of the Massachusetts Historical Society.



BEDFORD COLLEGE. York Place, N. W.

Dr Beryl Gilroy

Educationalist, Author and Psychotherapist

1924-2001

In the tradition of Black women who write to come to terms with their trauma, or alternatively to understand the nature of their elemental oppression, I wrote to redefine myself and put the record straight. Beryl Gilroy, *Leaves in the Wind: Collected Writings, 1998*

Beryl Gilroy was a pioneering educator working in London in the 1950s to the 1990s. She faced huge prejudice in the teaching profession. Gilroy wrote award winning work, both fiction and non-fiction to present and challenge issues of race and identity in this country and in the Caribbean. She pioneered counselling and psychotherapy techniques with black women and children. Beryl Gilroy was Camden's first black headteacher.

Beryl Gilroy was born in Guyana (then British Guiana) on the northern coast of South America. She was raised by her grandparents, who taught her to read and a love of learning. In 1943 she attended the Government Training College in Georgetown, where she gained a First-Class Teacher's Diploma. She taught in Guyana and lectured on a UNICEF World Food Programme before leaving for England in 1951 to study for an Advance Diploma in Child Development at University of London.



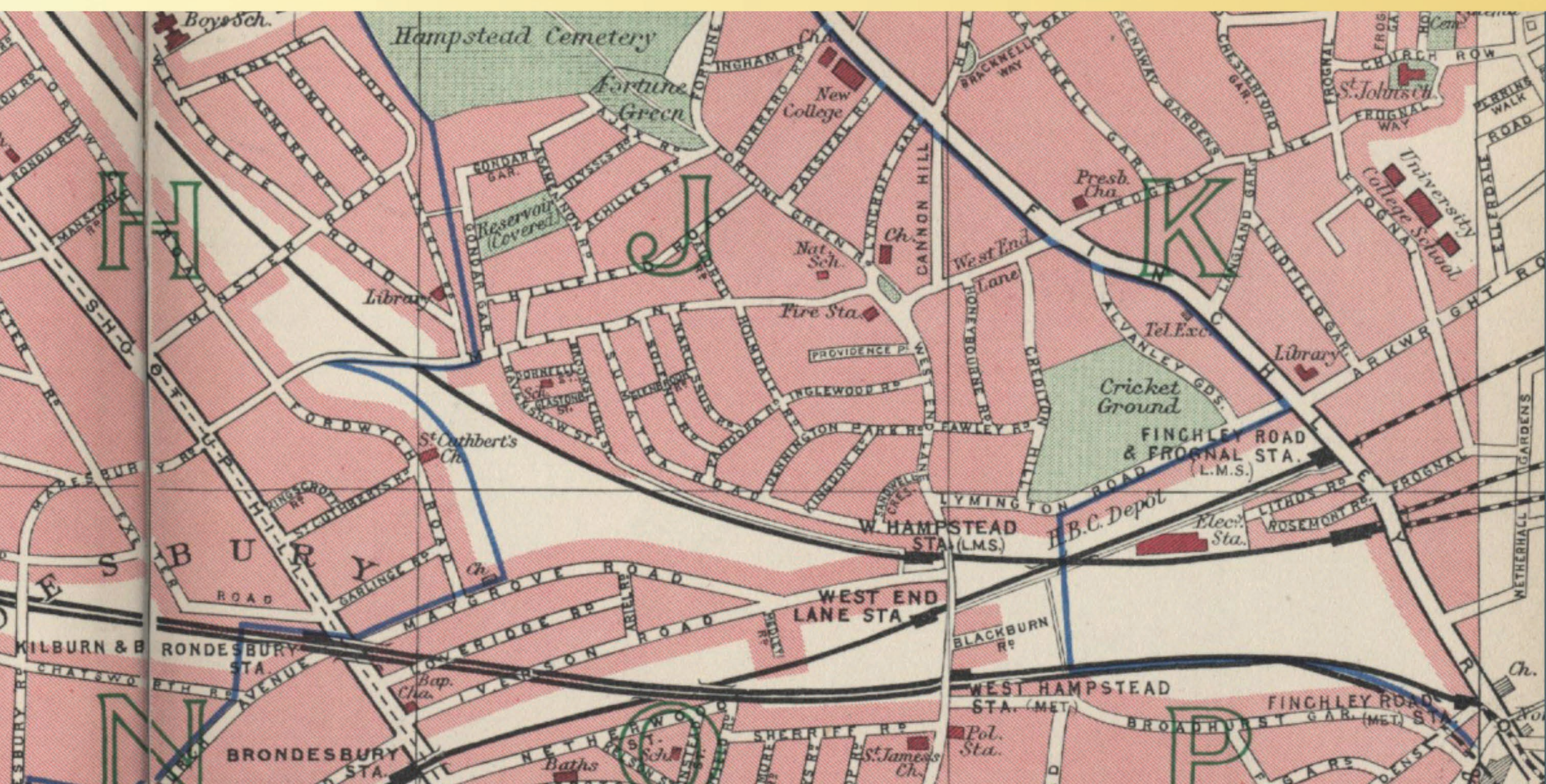
Beryl Gilroy

As a colonial subject, Beryl expected her teaching qualifications to be welcomed. Instead, she met with blatant racism, prejudice and rejection. It was frustratingly difficult for her to find a teaching post due to racist attitudes, so she had to take work beneath her level of education and skills. She worked as a factory clerk, washing up at a cafe and as a maid before getting back into teaching. Between 1954-6, she had several short jobs as a classroom teacher in a number of London schools at a time when black teachers were rare.

She married Patrick Gilroy in the 1950s and they had two children. Whilst raising and teaching her young family in Camden, Gilroy worked in freelance journalism, and broadcasting for the BBC Woman's Hour and working in publishing. She also continued studying, completing a degree in psychology as well as teaching qualifications in English as a second language.

In the late 1960s Gilroy went back into teaching, working as Deputy Head at Montem Primary school in Islington before eventually becoming the Headteacher at Beckford Primary School in Camden in 1969 (now called West Hampstead Primary). With this post, Gilroy became the first black headteacher in Camden and one of the first black headteachers in the UK.

Continued



In the early 1970s Gilroy wrote the innovative *Nippers* series. Many of the stories were inspired by real life experiences of the multicultural children she taught. They were the first multicultural reading books for children from diverse backgrounds, enabling children to learn from relevant and meaningful texts.

Her experiences teaching working-class pupils in London, and the racial prejudice she confronted is captured in her book *Black Teacher* first published in 1976. In the book, she presents the struggles she faced as a black woman working in schools in London, and although presented as an autobiography it is written as a story, showing us what it felt like to be a black woman working at this time. In *Black Teacher* she says, "I'd learned to succeed as a black teacher, an immigrant had to be twice as good as everyone else."



Beryl Gilroy in the playground of Beckford school 1970

Gilroy was one of the 500,000 Commonwealth citizens who moved from the Caribbean to Britain between 1948-1970, known as the Windrush generation. Her book tells the story of coming to Britain, and overcoming the discrimination that she and many others encountered in this country. It underlines their resilience and their determination to succeed in an unwelcoming and sometimes hostile environment. A key theme in the book is identity and it describes Gilroy's journey to redefine herself as a black woman in a white space.

She retired from teaching in 1982 and became an Educational Consultant and Researcher at the Centre for Multicultural Education, University of London in Camden. Here, she developed a pioneering practice in ethno-psychotherapy working mainly with black women, and children. During that time, she gained a PhD in Counselling Psychology from Century University, USA.

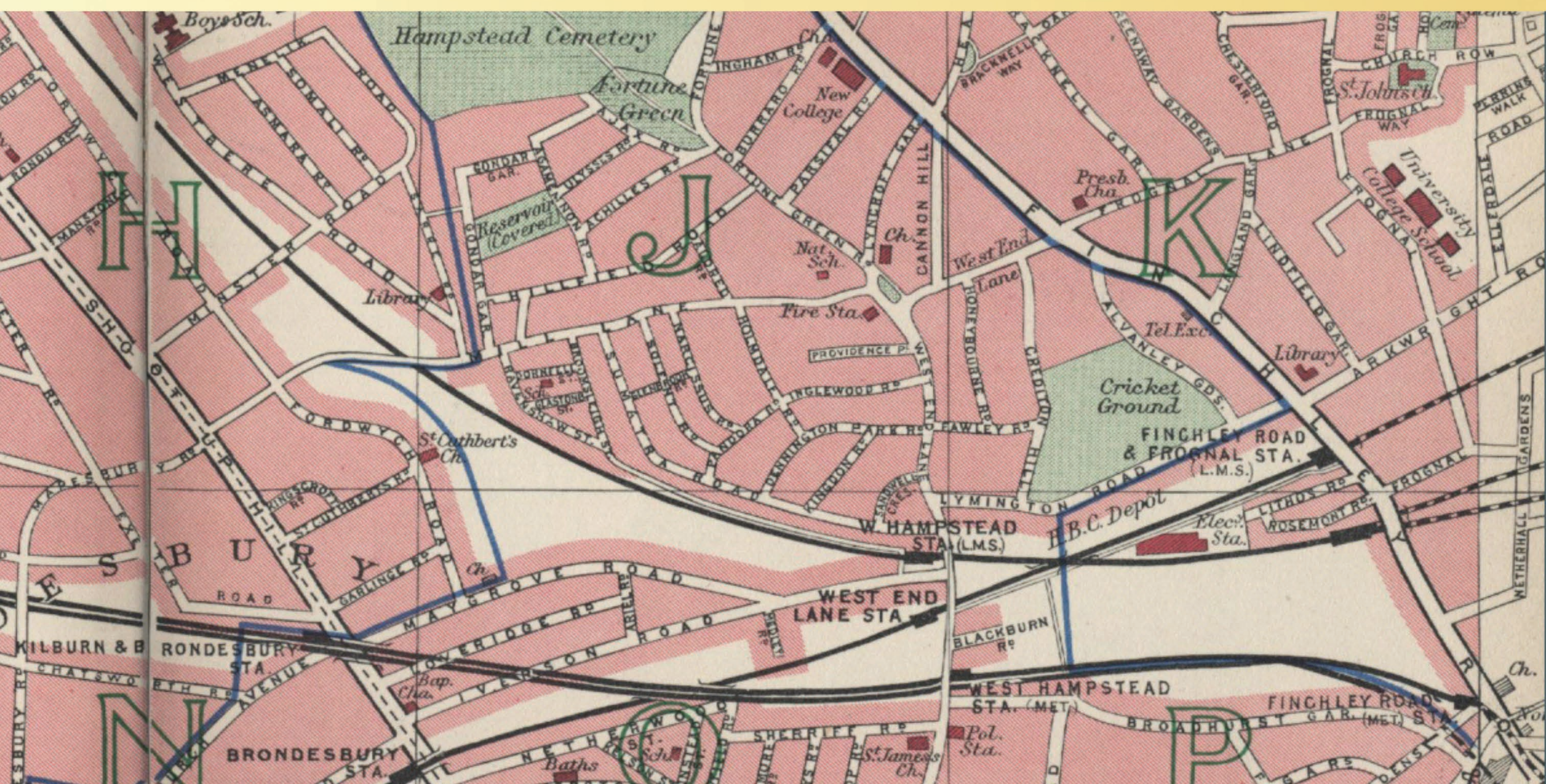
In 1982 she won the Greater London Council (GLC) Creative Writing Ethnic Minorities Prize for her children's fiction novel *In for a Penny* (1980), and received the GLC Creative Writing Prize, for her novel *Frangipani House* (1986).

In 2000 she received an Honorary Doctorate at University of North London and an Honorary Fellowship at the Institute of Education in recognition of her literary works and remarkable contribution to education.



Beryl Gilroy with the girls of St Joseph in the Fields, Bethnal Green London 1954

Beryl Gilroy died in April 2001 at the Royal Free Hospital in Hampstead. After her death Beryl was described as 'one of Britain's most significant postwar Caribbean migrants' To mark the 20th anniversary of her death, *Black Teacher* was reprinted in 2021 by Faber.



Jerry Williams

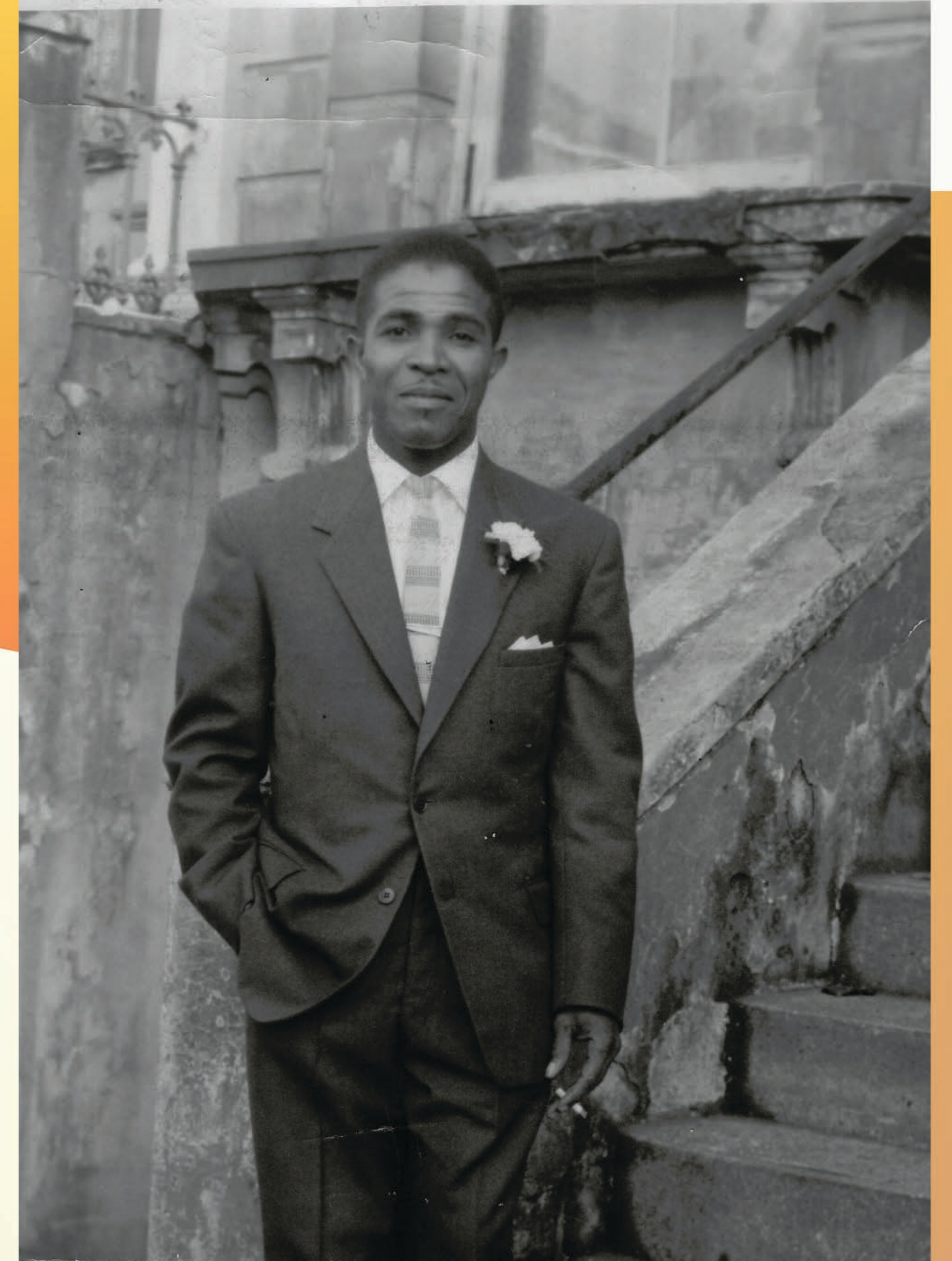
Community Activist and Camden's First Black Mayor 1926- 2017

When he became mayor it was the icing on the cake for him. I'm so proud of what dad achieved. My dad helped lots of people with their housing problems and needs. He was there for everyone. Angela Beale, daughter of Jerry Williams.

Jerry Williams was Camden's first black Mayor and the community activist who played a pivotal role in turning a bombed site in Kentish Town into Talacre Open Space, creating a legacy that will last for generations. His campaign to develop Talacre into a space for recreation was motivated by seeing children playing in the streets. He was elected Mayor of Camden in May 1987.

Jasper Haldane Williams, known as Jerry, was born in Bridgetown, Barbados in 1926, to a large family of seven children. He was the eldest and his father, Clayton, worked on ships transporting sugar from Barbados to Cardiff, in Wales. Williams emigrated to England in 1957 and settled in Kentish Town in the mid 1960s. He was one of the 500,000 people who came from the Caribbean to Britain during the Windrush era between 1948 and 1970.

Like many people from the Caribbean and other commonwealth countries, he came to Britain to work and to help re-build the country after the ravages of the Second World War. They faced racism and prejudice on arrival in this country as well as the harsh climate. Often, people from the Caribbean found jobs in transport, social care and health care, essential to the rebuilding of the country.



Jerry Williams in Paddington where he lived after arriving in London, 1950s



Jerry Williams in his railway guard uniform in 1960

Williams worked as a railway guard for the London, Midland and Scottish Railway for most of his career, on trains running north from St Pancras station. He joined the National Union of Railwaymen and later became a shop steward, supporting the rights of his colleagues.

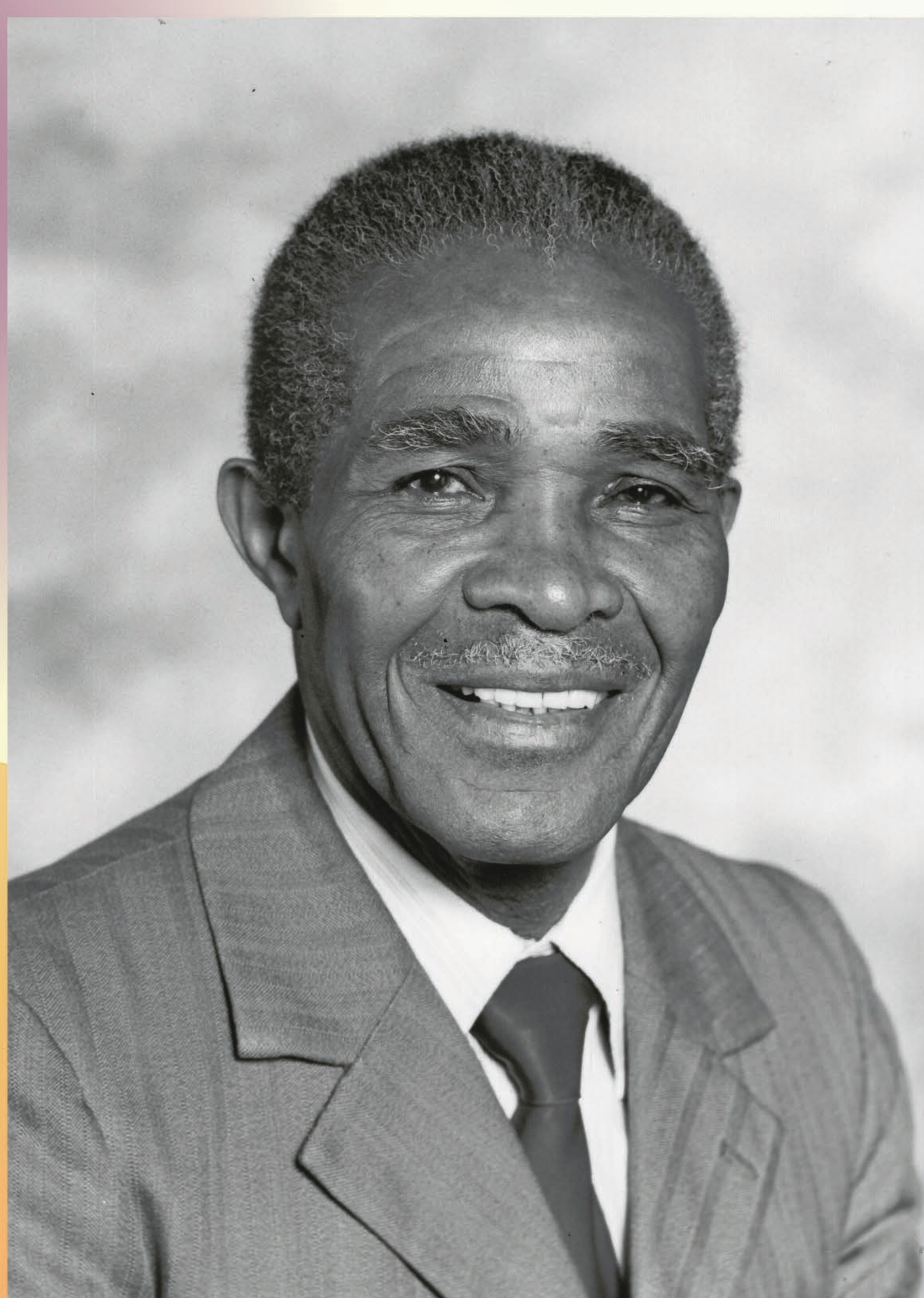
While his wife remained in Barbados with their children, Williams became involved in the local Camden community. He had a strong sense of social justice and wanted to enable people to have better lives. He joined the Labour party and became a local Councillor for what was Castlehaven ward.

Continued



Leaving Barbados: Jerry Williams (second from left) with his son Anthony, flanked by two friends who accompanied him, and another acquaintance

Williams loved life and people. He was a good dancer and followed sports such as boxing and cricket all his life. His love for boxing was passed down to his only son Tony Williams who became a boxer for Barbados.



Jerry Williams pictured in the 1980s.

He wanted people to have the chance to enjoy life outside of work and this led him to work with local arts charity Inter-Action to help transform a bombsite in Kentish Town into the Talacre Open Space in the early 1970s. This site, earmarked for new builds, had been used by local children to play in. Inter-Action set up a six week play scheme at the site in the summer of 1971 which was so popular that they called for the site to become a permanent green and open public space. Through a public campaign the site, (extended through the demolition of neighbouring damaged houses) became an open space in 1975. Williams, as a councillor, was instrumental in helping this happen.

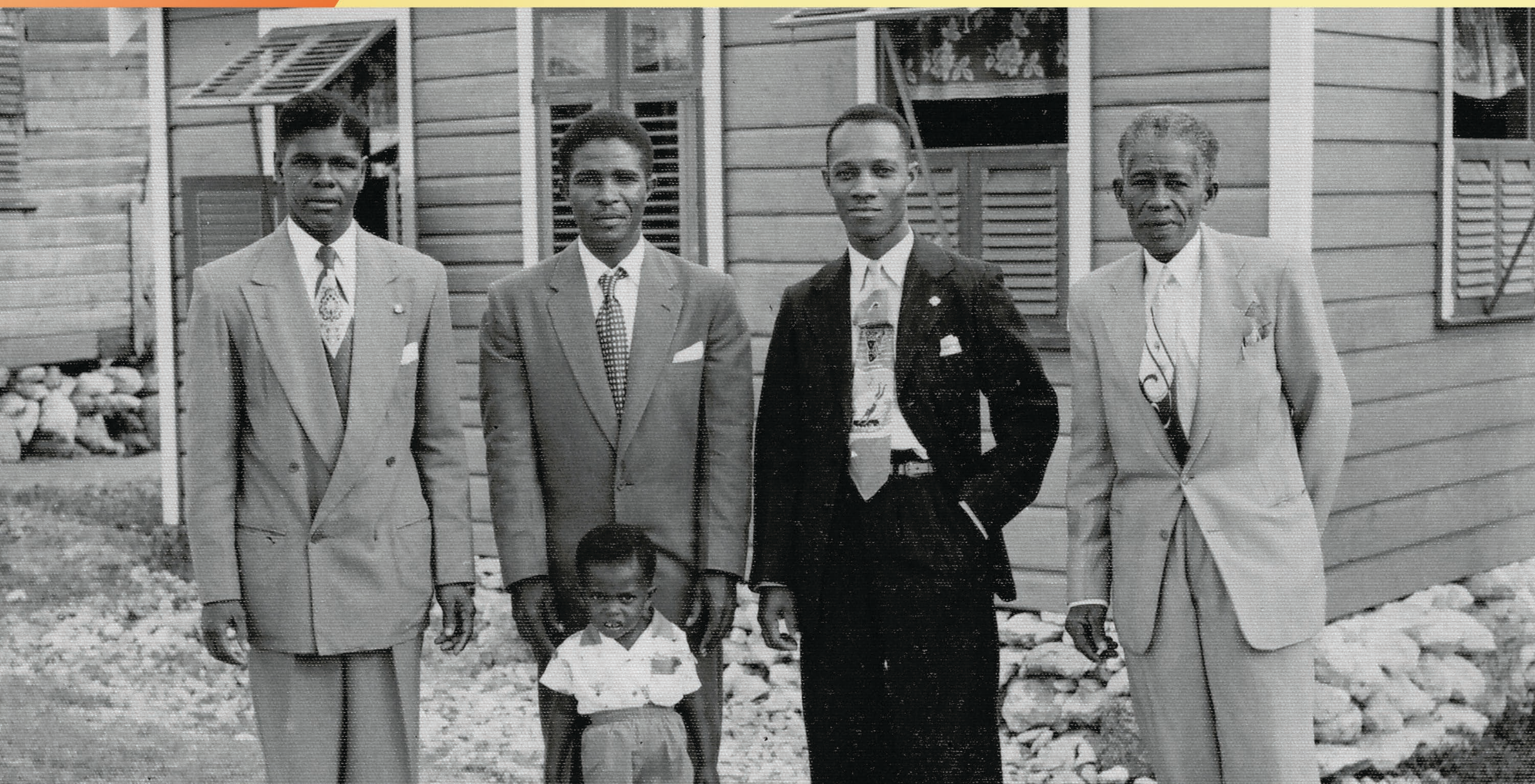
Jerry Williams became Camden's first black Mayor in 1987. At a party after the mayoral ceremony, to celebrate his achievement the Camden branch of the Asante Tribe of Ghana made him an honorary chief. This was bestowed on him by the King and Queen of the tribe, Nana Menfahbonfu and Agnes Menfahbonfu.

In 2009, Jerry Williams moved to Kent. At his farewell party he said: "Everyone who left Barbados was given a book called Living in England. The book told us: 'English people are very hard to get along with, but when they make a friend, it will be a friend for life.' The book also advised us: 'Join a union and a political party. And if you get lost, ask a policeman'".



Jerry Williams in his Mayoral regalia

Jerry Williams died in August 2017 at the age of 91. He had worked hard to ensure that Camden residents had access to opportunities for a better life, working closely with residents and campaigning for their needs. He is remembered fondly by many. Martin Plaut a former BBC editor and friend to Williams wrote of him: "Jerry – everyone knew him by his first name – was our Labour councillor in what was then Castlehaven ward. Always warm and cheerful, he was a delight to know, and to share a drink with."



Leaving Barbados: Jerry Williams (second from left) with his son Anthony, flanked by two friends who accompanied him, and another acquaintance