

Let us know you agree to cookies

We use **cookies** to give you the best online experience. Please let us know if you agree to all of these cookies.

Yes, I agree

No, take me to settings

CBBC

CBBC iPlayer

Newsround

Bitesize

Own It

CBeebies

CBBC on TV

M

Menu

 **Watch**

Black history: The forgotten history of black people in the UK

© 2 Jul 2019 Last updated at 08:42

 **View Comments (1)**



Does history ignore black British people?

How much do you know about black British history?

The BBC has launched two new online series - Alt History and Black to Life - that take a look back at black British history that has been forgotten.

Over the years, people have been campaigning to make history more inclusive.

That means that instead of always telling the stories of white British and white European historical figures, people from black and minority ethnic communities should be represented as well.

Find more about black history here

[Black History Month: Why it's important to me](#)

[Amazing black women you should know about](#)

[The black men who made history in Britain](#)

What happens in the series?

Alt History takes a look into why black British people are often left out of the history books and how there have been black people living in the UK for hundreds of years.

Black to Life takes a slightly different approach and focuses more on the individual stories behind the black British people that have been forgotten about.

But who are some of the figures that appear in the series? Here are just a couple of people you may not have heard about.

Edward Swarthy





Edward Swarthy was one of many black Tudors

When you think of Tudor England, you probably think of historical figures such as King Henry VIII.

The Tudor period was from 1485 to 1603.

Edward Swarthy was a porter during that time. That means he was employed to carry out jobs such as carrying luggage for people. He worked for a politician called Sir Edward Wynter in Gloucester, England, and was highly respected at the time.

In fact, he was so respected that Sir Edward Wynter once asked him to punish one of his white workers who was acting badly. This was a big deal at the time as black people would never be seen as having more authority than white people.

Mary Fillis



Historians believe that Mary Fillis lived arrived in the UK in 1583 or 1584

Originally from Morocco, Mary Fillis was a Muslim woman who moved to England when she was just six years old.

She started off as a servant but because she was so skilled in making things, she became a respected dressmaker.

Historical records show that Mary changed her religion from being a Muslim to being a Christian by taking part in a religious ceremony called a baptism.

She was one of 60 black women who were baptised as a way to fit into British society.

Omoba Aina Forbes-Bonetta



Queen Victoria was impressed by Omoba Aina's intelligence

Omoba Aina was a princess from a Nigerian community called the Yoruba tribe.

After her parents died from being captured by slave traders, Omoba was given as a gift to **Queen Victoria**. Omoba had to lose her Yoruba identity when she arrived in Britain and that's when her name was changed to Sarah Forbes-Bonetta.

In order for her to be accepted into British society, Omoba could no longer be a Nigerian princess and became property of the British Empire.

Records show that Queen Victoria cared about Omoba and ended up paying for her education and finding people to look after her.

Omoba eventually had a child of her own and it became Queen Victoria's goddaughter.

Dido (Belle) Elizabeth Lindsay





Dido lived from 1761 to 1804 and her portrait still hangs in Kenwood House

Dido was born during a period of time where slaves were sold in the **transatlantic slave trade**.

Her mother was a West African woman and her dad was a white British man who was a Navy officer working in the Caribbean.

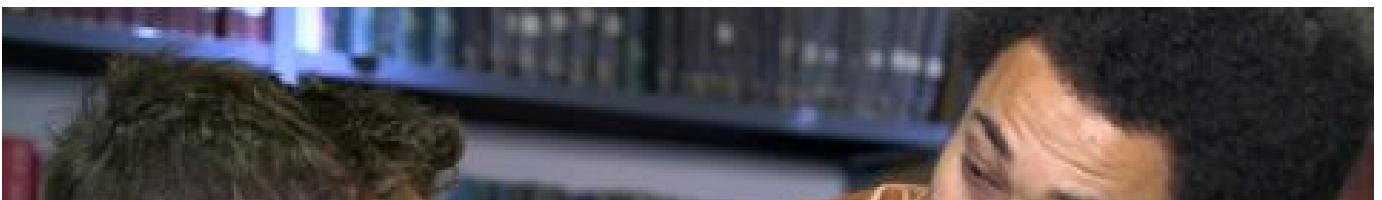
She's often seen as the first black aristocrat which means she was part of the British upper class at the time. She was taken away from her mother and brought to the the UK to be looked after by her father's family in Kenwood House in north London.

However, even though she was part of the upper class she was not always treated like that because she was mixed race and not white.

Historians say that even though her family loved her, they often would not let her be seen by guests who would visit the family.

Alt History and Black to Life can be watched [here](#).

MORE LIKE THIS





Your Comments

Join the conversation

These comments are now closed.

1 comment



U17542518

17:00 2 Oct 2019

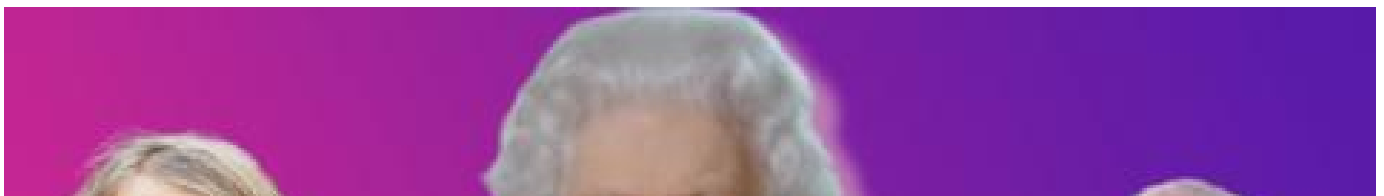
Black history month

Everybody deserves a chance
if you agree

1

Back to top

TOP STORIES





Newsround Home

Explore the BBC

[CBBC](#)

[Newsround](#)

[Own It](#)

[CBBC on TV](#)

[CBBC iPlayer](#)

[Bitesize](#)

[CBeebies](#)

[CBBC Help](#)

[Terms of Use](#)

[Privacy Policy](#)

[Accessibility Help](#)

[Contact the BBC](#)

[About the BBC](#)

[Cookies](#)

[Parental Guidance](#)

[Get Personalised Newsletters](#)

Copyright © 2021 BBC. The BBC is not responsible for the content of external sites. [Read about our approach to external linking.](#)