Museum of Liverpool

Liverpool Black Community trail

The Liverpool Black community is the oldest in Europe. In the 1750s Black settlers included sailors, freed slaves and student sons of African rulers. Despite challenges, Black presence has grown and contributed to all aspects of Liverpool life.

Diverse communities are represented throughout the museum. From time to time, different communities may also feature in special exhibitions. Liverpool Jewish, Black*, and Irish Community trails are currently available.

*For the purposes of this trail, Black refers to people with African heritage.

Look out for this symbol to help you find the items on the trail.
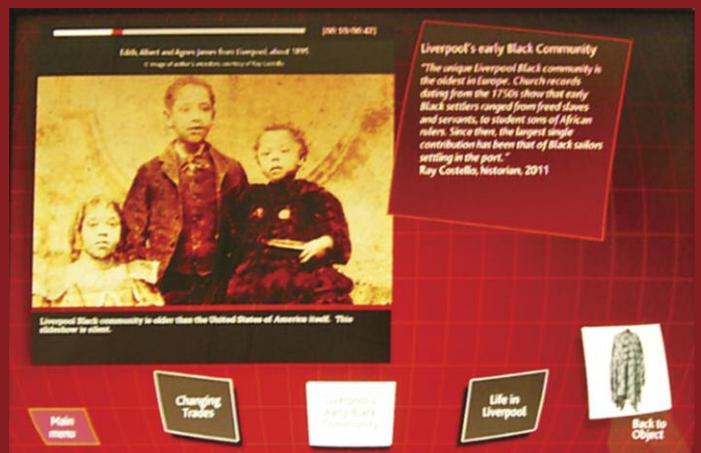
GROUND FLOOR
Global City
Liverpool's Early Black Community
Computer touch screen - select *African Connections* then *Liverpool's early Black Community*

Some Black families can trace their Liverpool history back over 200 years. Imagine the 18th century port, home to the children of African rulers, freed enslaved Africans and Black veterans of the American War of Independence. Later, in the 19th century West African seafarers working on Elder Dempster Line ships settled in the city, enabling the already established Black population to grow. The old Black community was near Pitt Street, close to the docks.

The Transatlantic Slave Trade
Slave branding iron (replica) and sugar cone. Objects 1 and 2 in display case

By the 1780s Liverpool was considered the European capital of the transatlantic slave trade. Vast profits helped transform Liverpool into one of Britain's most important and wealthy cities.

Liverpool ships sailed to West Africa and exchanged goods for enslaved Africans who were brutally transported across the Atlantic and sold. The slave ships then picked up sugar, cotton and tobacco grown on plantations by enslaved Africans and took these goods back to Britain. Supporters promoted racist attitudes to justify their brutal trade. Their racist legacy affects people in Liverpool today.

African Connections
Objects 1- 7 in display case

When the British slave trade was abolished in 1807, palm oil, timber, ground nuts and rubber were traded instead. Liverpool was a huge imperial port. African sailors like the Kru, originally from Liberia and Sierra Leone, settled here.

The items on display here all connect Liverpool and Africa in different ways. Some were brought to Liverpool by people who settled here. Others were made in Africa and traded, or brought home by Liverpool merchants.

Enslaved Africans worked in sugar production
© National Museums Liverpool

The first known picture of Black people in Liverpool, 1776
Courtesy of Liverpool Record Office, Liverpool libraries

GROUND FLOOR
The Great Port
Dock People
Image 20, Dick Benson, Liverpool Cartage Company

Liverpool's Black community has a strong seafaring tradition. Whilst some local people faced discrimination at the docks, others, like carter Dick Benson were well-respected and enjoyed long careers working there.

Dick Benson and his horse moved goods from the docks.
Image courtesy of the Benson Family

FLOOR ONE
City Soldiers
King's Regiment Film - sport section
See the large screen above you

Kingsman Harrison was one of several Black boxers in the successful boxing team that won several army championships during the early 1980s. Black soldiers have served in the King's Regiment as long ago as the First World War. However, the Regiment and the museum have very little material to reflect this and we are actively collecting objects and stories connected to Black Kingsmen.
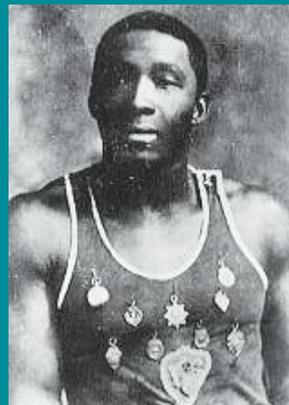

Kingsman Harrison, out-boxing Private Flinter at the Army Inter Unit Boxing Championships, 1982.
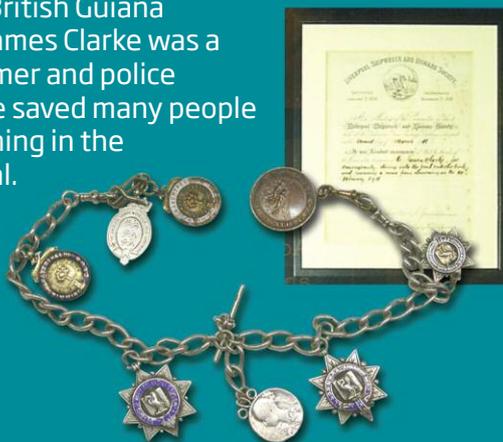
FLOOR TWO
The People's Republic
Leaving your mark on Liverpool
James Clarke medals, certificate and flipbook. Object 3 in display case

Courtesy of Martin Clarke

Originally from British Guiana (now Guyana), James Clarke was a champion swimmer and police boxing coach. He saved many people who were drowning in the Mersey and canal. He also taught local children to swim.
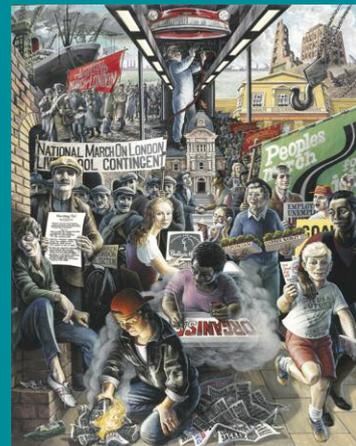

Working and Health
The right to work
Listen to the Painting with Claire Dove, MBE
Select number 4

In the 1980s Claire Dove faced racism in her hunt for a job. Her response? Claire co-founded the Women's Technology and Education Centre (WTEC) to provide training for low paid and unemployed women. Today the centre, now Blackburne House, has helped around 20,000 women.

It features in this painting, *Unemployment on Merseyside – campaigning for the right to work,* by Mick Jones. Listen to her story and find out more here.

FLOOR ONE
History Detectives
Timeline (section 1900 to present) Racial Tensions

After the First World War around 5000 Black people lived in Liverpool. As servicemen returned home looking for jobs, community tensions grew. Riots broke out and a mob attacked a Black seafarers' boarding house. 24 year old Charles Wooton was chased to Queens Dock and murdered. No arrests were made.

Timeline *'Liverpool 1981'* – an edited version of a film made by Liverpool filmmaker Bea Freeman in 1984

In 1981 getting a job or moving outside of the Liverpool 8 area was hard if you were Black. Black and white residents fought back against unemployment, racism and police harassment in riots in Liverpool 1 and 8, later known as the 'Toxteth Riots'. Organisations like Merseyside Community Relations Council supported local people.

The Merseyside Map
Computer touch screens
Liverpool Transatlantic Slavery Trail - select *trails icon* then *Slavery* and *Go to Trail*

Where in Liverpool were ships used in the transatlantic slave trade repaired? Which Liverpool street was named after a co-founder of the Liverpool Committee for the Abolition of the Slade Trade? Which important building has a frieze with visual references to the "African Trade" including elephant heads, crocodiles and Black African heads? Discover this and much more here.

Finding a voice
'The Other' (film)

Discover more about Liverpool's past with this film by Derek Murray and Curtis Watt. They explore how discrimination based on religion and ethnicity has shaped the city for more than 200 years.
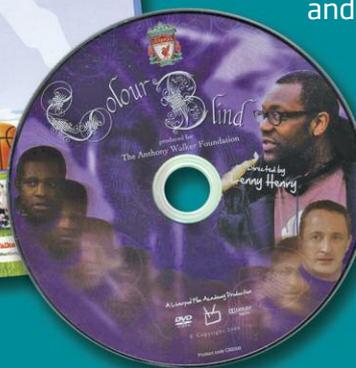

Finding a voice
Community activism
Anthony Walker Foundation flyer and *Colour Blind* DVD. Object 10 in display case

In 2005 promising student Anthony Walker was murdered in Huyton, on the outskirts of Liverpool because he was Black and walking with his white girlfriend. His mum and sister, Gee and Dominique Walker, established a special Foundation to celebrate Anthony's life and challenge racism.

Colour Blind was filmed in Liverpool to be shown in local schools to spread the anti-racism message in Anthony's memory.

FLOOR TWO
The People's Republic
Finding a voice - politics
Glynn George Pratt - Liverpool's first Black councillor
People in Power computer touch screen
– select *Ambassador* to find out more

SANKOFA

The Sankofa project is investigating Black social history within the collections of National Museums Liverpool, and also beyond the walls of our museums.

The stories, photographs and objects revealed through the project, which form a rich picture of Liverpool's Black experiences, can be discovered here liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/collections/research/sankofa/

Join us every year to commemorate Slavery Remembrance Day on 23 August

Our annual commemorations enable us to remember and reflect upon the millions of lives that were stolen through enslavement. They also allow us to consider the many legacies and achievements of people of African heritage throughout the diaspora.

Events include the Walk of Remembrance, a Libation on the waterfront and the Dorothy Kuya Slavery Remembrance Lecture. For more information see liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/ism/srd/

Find out more
For further information about the transatlantic slave trade and Liverpool's African connections, please visit:

INTERNATIONAL SLAVERY MUSEUM

Albert Dock, Liverpool, L3 4AQ
Tel: 0151 478 4499 • liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/ism
FREE ENTRY • Open daily 10am-5pm

World Museum

William Brown Street, Liverpool, L3 8EN
Tel: 0151 478 4393 • liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/wml
FREE ENTRY • Open daily 10am-5pm