Chapter 3
Black London

Olive Vassell

The United Kingdom's capital city, London, is famous for its history and monuments. In recent times, however, many of the city's markers have been criticized for being symbols of enslavement and racism. In 2020, such representations became the focus of protests following the police killing of George Floyd in the USA. Demonstrators gathered in Windrush Square, (a longtime site of activism for Black residents which will be discussed in more detail in the next section), while others went into the center of the city, targeting memorials to those who had brutalized and marginalized racial and ethnic groups in the name of the empire. This included a statue of noted slaveholder Robert Milligan outside the Museum of London Docklands, which was removed by the institution just days after another statue of a slaveholder, Edward Colston, had been torn down and thrown into the river in southwest England by antiracism protesters. Museum officials acknowledged that the monument was part of the ongoing problematic regime of whitewashing history and disregarded the effects of Milligan's crimes.[1]

These demonstrations were just some of the many outcries against police killings abroad and at home; police brutality in the UK is not new and has often led to uprisings of the Black population. In 1995, for example, protests erupted after the death in police custody of Wayne Douglas, a young Black man.[2] Officers said that Douglas, aged 26, had been arrested for suspected burglary and had died of a heart attack while in custody. But witnesses told a

1 "Robert Milligan: Slave trader statue removed from outside London museum", June 9, 2020 (https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-london-52977088)

2 "1995: Riots break out in Brixton", December 13, 1995 (http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/december/13/newsid_2559000/2559341.stm)

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Black newspaper, the *Caribbean Times*, that he had been severely beaten. One eye witness later told a 1996 inquest into Douglas's death that a police officer had knelt on his head while he was handcuffed and that he was held face down on the ground by at least four others (mudlark121 2016).

Windrush Square was the site of some of the first Black Lives Matter (BLM) antiracism protests in the UK. On July 9, 2016, demonstrators rallied there after the police killing of Philando Castile and Alton Sterling in the USA, as happened in Berlin.[3] The previous day protestors had marched to the country's ruling body, the Houses of Parliament. In August the city was one of four - others were Birmingham, Manchester and Nottingham - that took part in a "national shutdown" to protest deaths in police custody, racist border policing, and everyday racism. Activists simultaneously blocked roads in these cities, including one to Heathrow airport, chosen partly because it was where Angolan deportee Jimmy Mubenga died after being restrained by private security guards in 2010. The latter were acquitted of manslaughter in 2014. The protests coincided with the fifth anniversary of the police shooting of Mark Duggan, a 29-year-old Black British father of six who was killed in North London in August 2011. His murder ignited riots across the capital and in other English cities.

However, these early BLM protests did not spark as much interest as those in 2020. As a result of the reactions to Floyd's killing, London mayor Sadiq Khan, for example, advised that monuments honoring historical figures with legacies of enslavement would be reviewed, explaining that they reflected the wealth gained from enslavement and that they ignored the contributions of many communities (Onibada 2020). Khan, who is of Pakistani origin, had previously supported the call for a British slavery museum and a memorial for Stephen Lawrence, a Black teenager who was murdered in 1993 by a gang of white youths in a racially motivated attack.

Additionally, Khan announced the establishment of the Commission for Diversity in the Public Realm to review and improve diversity in London's public space. He said:

3 "Freedom! Freedom!': Black Lives Matter activists take over Brixton's Windrush Square", July 10, 2016 (https://www.swlondoner.co.uk/news/10072016-freedom-freedom-black-lives-matter-activists-take-brixtons-windrush-square)

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> Our capital's diversity is our greatest strength, yet our statues, road names and public spaces reflect a bygone era. It is an uncomfortable truth that our nation and city owes a large part of its wealth to its role in the slave trade and while this is reflected in our public realm, the contribution of many of our communities to life in our capital has been wilfully ignored. This cannot continue. We must ensure that we celebrate the achievements and diversity of all in our city, and that we commemorate those who have made London what it is – that includes questioning which legacies are being celebrated. The Black Lives Matter protests have rightly brought this to the public's attention, but it's important that we take the right steps to work together to bring change and ensure that we can all be proud of our public landscape.[4]

However, not everyone agrees with his plan to review monuments to controversial figures. When graffiti was found on a statue of the country's wartime prime minister, Winston Churchill, labeling him racist for his support of eugenics and his role in the 1943 Bengal famine, far right groups such as Britain First clashed with police while "defending" it. The UK prime minister, Boris Johnson, also swore to do the same, arguing that antiracism protesters should attack the substance of the problem, not the symbols. However, he did pledge to establish a commission to tackle inequality and to build more monuments celebrating Black Britons (Johnson 2020). The commission's report, which was issued in 2021, was widely criticized for its denial of institutional racism. Simukai Chigudu, a Zimbabwean-born associate professor of African politics at Oxford University, said the focus on statues during the 2020 protests has been revealing because monuments record a particular version of the past – one that is open to change. He argues that a statue's meaning is not fixed and should instead be collectively and consistently reviewed over time. Thus, figures who no longer enjoy pride of place in public view should be put in museums and learned about there (Onibada 2020).

Meanwhile, two new memorials to Black Britons were signed off on in East London after the 2020 protests. The Hackney Council announced that it had commissioned them to honour the borough's Windrush Generation,

4 "Mayor unveils commission to review diversity of London's public realm", June 9, 2020 (https://www.london.gov.uk/press-releases/mayoral/mayor-unveils-commission-to-review-diversity)

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Figure 3.1: Veronica Ryan's Custard Apple (Annonaceae), Breadfruit (Moraceae), and Soursop (Annonaceae), 2021. Source: Courtesy of the artist, Paula Cooper Gallery, New York, and Alison Jacques, London. Photograph: Andy Keate, 2021

people who came to the UK from the Caribbean between 1948 and 1971. One is a series of marble and bronze sculptures depicting Caribbean fruit and vegetables, inspired by Montserrat-born sculptor Veronica Ryan's childhood visits to Ridley Road Market, a popular shopping location for African and Caribbean people in the area. The memorial was unveiled on the first day of Black History Month (October 1) in 2021 (Tandoh, Mohdin, 2021).

The second sculpture, *"Warm Shores,"* by Thomas J. Price is outside Hackney town hall. It is a bronze of a man and a woman created from composites of 30 residents connected to the Windrush Generation (Abrams 2022). The council also announced that it will review statues and the naming of landmarks, streets, parks, and other public spaces to make sure that they reflect local diversity. Explaining the plan, Mayor of Hackney Phillip Glanville said that it was part of the borough's mission to also specifically recognize Black history (Aron 2020a).

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The following year, in February 2021, Khan announced the 15 members of the commission who represent a range of leaders from the arts, architecture, community engagement and business sectors and include People of African Descent (PAD) such as social rights activist Toyin Agbetu, art historian and curator, Aindrea Emelife and business owner, Binki Taylor. They will work with a board and local authorities. However, even before the 2020 BLM protests, London's Black communities had been pushing for public recognition of their identities and contributions.

Figure 3.2: Thomas J. Price's, Warm Shores, was unveiled on Windrush Day in June 2022. Photograph: Mr. Gee, 2022

Brixton's Windrush Square: A Performative Space for Black British Identity

Windrush Square in South London epitomizes how Black residents are using spaces to create a sense of belonging and identity. The name pays public tribute to the *Empire Windrush* and its passengers, which brought one of the first large groups of postwar Caribbean immigrants to Britain in 1948. The square is located in Brixton, a district in Lambeth, one of London's 32 boroughs. It was the first area to welcome the Caribbean-born immigrants whose arrival would change the nation's social landscape forever.

Arthur Torrington, the chair of the Windrush Foundation, which he cofounded in 1996 with former passenger Sam King (since deceased), said that the borough provided shelter for men, women, and children while many

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found their first jobs in this neighborhood.[5] Brixton was also where these new residents purchased food from their birthplaces and where publications such as *The Weekly Gleaner* and *West Indian Gazette* were available to satisfy their need for news from "home." It was also a place to meet fellow countrymen and find brief respite from the daily onslaught of pervasive racism. This chapter of Black British history reflects the area's shifting cultural dynamism.

Before the *Empire Windrush*, the square was originally part of Rush Common; it became known as Tate Gardens after the widow of English sugar merchant Sir Henry Tate purchased the land in 1905 to open a public garden. Tate had earlier funded a public library in nearby Brixton Oval, and a bust of him still stands outside the library today. In 1998, the local government reclaimed more public space from the Common, naming it Windrush Square to mark the 50th anniversary of the arrival of the *Empire Windrush*. Over the years, the square has been a place of social significance and resistance. Its location, flanking the seat of local government, Lambeth town hall, has only added to its importance. In 1955, for example, the town hall hosted a "No Colour Bar Dance." The mayor of Lambeth invited 180 "English" people and 180 "West Indians" to a dance to help address racial tensions, made visible through the hostility whites directed at their Black neighbors. Some 30 years later, in the 1980s, the square became a focal point for protests against apartheid in South Africa.

Its importance to Black Britain has only increased through the years. When, in 2010, Boris Johnson, then mayor of London, reopened the square after it had been closed for rehabilitation and expansion – two spaces once separated by a road were combined – residents were given the opportunity to change the name, but they decided to keep it the same. In recognizing the space's importance to Black residents before its redevelopment, Lambeth council wrote in the minutes of a committee meeting in 2006 that the square was an expression of Brixton's diversity and culture. This underscores the assertion that "place names are more than innocent spatial references or passive artifacts; they are embedded in social power relations and struggles over the identities of places and people" (Kearns and Berg 2002).

In 2014, the square was central to a milestone in Black life, becoming the home of the first repository of Black British history, the Black Cultural Archives. As a cultural and documentation center for people in the UK with

5 Torrington, Arthur, interview with Arthur Torrington, by author. London, July 13, 2020.

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a direct or distant African family background, the archives trace the history of Black people from the Roman occupation onward. It emerged as a result of several factors, including the death of 13 young Black people in a South London house fire in 1981, which many Blacks believed was intentionally set by white racists.[6]

After receiving community donations – documents and photographs – educator and Black historian Len Garrison, supported by community and public funding, spearheaded an effort to catalog the collection which officially opened at 1 Windrush Square in July 2014. The organization believes that its location is appropriate not only because of its role in recent Black British history but also because it is on the site of two houses built during the Georgian period (1714–1830s), which coincides with a time of significant Black representation in Britain: an estimated 10,000–20,000 PAD lived in 18th-century London.[7] For poet Benjamin Zephaniah, who attended the opening, cultural geography was also key. He described the location as the heart of the Black community for his mother's generation (Dickens 2014).

Furthermore, three years later, on June 22, 2017, Windrush Square bore witness to another first in the UK: a memorial honoring African and Caribbean troops who fought for Britain in World Wars One and Two. The monument was conceived by the Nubian Jak Community Trust, a commemorative plaque and sculpture scheme that has highlighted the contributions of Black people in Britain. Founded in 2006 by Dr. Jak Beula, an entrepreneur and cultural activist, the trust had issued 36 blue plaques (permanent historical markers) around the country by 2020. Its London awardees include singer Bob Marley (2006) and pioneering Black newspaper publisher and activist Claudia Jones (2008). Beula said that the decision to create the memorial for the more than 2 million African and Caribbean military servicemen and servicewomen who participated in the two World Wars was an effort to correct a historical omission and to ensure that young people of African and Caribbean descent are aware of their ancestors' contribution to those wars. [8]

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6 "The New Cross Massacre", n.d. (https://blackhistorystudies.com/resources/resources/the-new-cross-fire/)

7 Black Cultural Archives — Our Story", n.d. (https://blackculturalarchives.org/our-story)

8 "First ever memorial to African and Caribbean Service Personnel unveiled in Brixton", June 22, 2017 (https://www.gov.uk/government/news/first-ever-memorial-to-african-and-caribbean-service-personnel-unveiled-in-brixton)

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Figure 3.3: The African and Caribbean War Memorial, 2017. Photograph: Vincenzo Albano / Art UK

Like other commemorations to Black figures, the process of creating the memorial was difficult. Beula said that it had first been scheduled to be placed at Tilbury Docks, London's principal port, which is northeast of the capital, but logistical issues delayed the project for three years before it found a home in Windrush Square.[9]

The next year saw the Windrush scandal engulf London and the nation. It stemmed from the UK Home Office's hostile environment policy, a set of administrative and legal measures intended to make staying in the UK so difficult that those designated as non-permanent residents would leave voluntarily. Thousands of people of Caribbean heritage were wrongly detained, denied legal rights, threatened with deportation, and even removed from the country or refused re-entry (Local Government Association n.d.).[10] Following the scandal which included the resignation of the then Home Secretary, the government officially backed a five-year effort to recognize Windrush Day, the anniversary of the arrival of Caribbean people on the *Empire Windrush* mentioned earlier.

9 Interview with Jak Beula, June 18, 2020.

10 "Commonwealth citizens without status," n.d. (https://www.local.gov.uk/topics/communities/commonwealth-citizens-without-status)

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In 2019, the square's future as a site of Black memorialization was called into question when Prime Minister Theresa May announced that a new memorial to the Windrush Generation would be erected in Waterloo, a railway station where many immigrants arrived. Trinidad-born actor and TV personality Baroness Floella Benjamin chairs the Windrush Commemoration Committee, which made the recommendation to house the memorial in Waterloo Station. She said that the location was symbolic because thousands of Windrush pioneers, including herself, had arrived at the station when they first came to London.[11] Not all members of the community agreed. Local activists condemned the site and the process through which it had been selected. Torrington said that the government had been arrogant and was treating the Caribbean community like children, imposing a monument on its behalf (Busby 2019).

Opponents of the Waterloo site argued that the memorial should be located in Windrush Square, which had become identified with Caribbean people.[12] Those against the plan included Lambeth councilor Sonia Winifred, a cabinet member for Equalities and Culture, who started a petition to support the fight. She also wrote to Sadiq Khan, requesting his support for the campaign.[13] However, the £1 million monument by Jamaican sculptor and painter Basil Watson, which features three figures – a man, woman, and child – dressed in their "Sunday best" and carrying suitcases (Khomami 2022), was unveiled on Windrush Day 2022, along with the memorial in Hackney discussed earlier.

11 "Windrush memorial to be built at Waterloo station", June 22, 2019 (https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-48724128)

12 Torrington, Arthur, interview with Arthur Torrington, by author. London, July 13, 2020.

13 "Lambeth urges Home Secretary to restore faith in the government – by bringing Windrush memorial 'home' to Brixton", (http://www.brixtonbuzz.com/2020/06/lambeth-urges-home-secretary-to-restore-faith-in-the-government-by-bringing-windrush-memorial-home-to-brixton/)

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Figure 3.4: Cherry Groce Memorial Pavilion. Photograph: © Michelle Äärlaht 2

Meanwhile, in April 2021 the square saw the unveiling of a new memorial to a Black resident, this one for Cherry Groce, a local mother who was paralyzed after being shot by police in her home during a botched raid in 1985. She eventually died of her injuries in 2011. Groce's shooting again sparked an uprising over racism and police brutality. The memorial was the work of a foundation in her name, headed by her son, Lee Lawrence, and backed by prominent supporters including Lord Paul Boateng, the UK's first Black cabinet minister. Lawrence said that, although the project had faced enormous challenges, the community had never faltered in its pursuit of justice (Block 2020). At its unveiling, he called the memorial a fitting tribute to his late mother.[14] Designed by Black British architect Sir David Adjaye, the memorial is made up of a single column, symbolizing Groce's personal strength, while plantings on an attached pavilion represent hope. Its shape also echoes the lines of the nearby African and Caribbean war memorial. Lambeth council funded most of its £150,000 cost (Cobb 2020).

14 "Cherry Groce: Memorial unveiled for Brixton police shooting victim", April 25, 2021 (https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-london-56873938)

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Pan-Africanism: Symbols and Plaques in Remembrance of a Political Movement

At the dawn of the 20th century, London's position as the center of Britain's colonial empire drew to it a host of advocates for independence from its rule. Beginning in the 16th century, the empire comprised nearly a quarter of the world's land surface and it counted more than a quarter of its total population by the 19th century.[15] Among those in the city were the creators of a new movement: Pan-Africanism. Two of London's most influential early Pan-Africanists, Henry Sylvester Williams and John Archer are remembered with plaques and, in Archer's case, with a building, school and street in his name.

Called the "father" of the movement, Williams advocated unity among all African peoples and coined the term Pan-African. He was born in Trinidad in 1869 and came to England in 1895 after a career as an educator in his homeland. Williams had also spent some time in the USA and Canada, cofounding the pioneering and innovative Coloured Hockey League in the latter. Once he arrived in London, he and three other Trinidadian lawyers became apprentices at Gray's Inn, the historic hub for law and legal professions in the city. Supporting himself by lecturing for the Church of England Temperance Society, Williams traveled throughout the British Isles. In 1898, he married a white English woman who worked as a secretary with the society and the couple would go on to have five children.

The year before, in 1897, Williams formed the African Association to publicize injustices against African people worldwide and to promote their interests. Williams was committed to the fight against colonialism, consistently denouncing British rule as the "heartless" cause of their plight. He even led a deputation of Trinidadians to meet MPs, becoming the first person of African descent to speak in the House of Commons in 1900 (Kegan cited in Fryer 1984: 280).

Williams believed in the power of the collective and that all Africans, as well as their descendants, belonged to one "race," were unified in culture, and shared historical experiences directly related to the European enslavement of Africans. With this in mind, he organized the first Pan-African conference on July 23, 1900, drawing 37 delegates and ten other participants and

15 "British Empire, historical state United Kingdom", Updated August 14, 2022 (https://www.britannica.com/place/British-Empire)

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observers (Fryer 1984), including future Battersea mayor John Archer, composer Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, and the USA's most prominent Black activist and educator, W. E. B. Du Bois, who would later initiate the first Pan-African Congress in Paris in 1919.

The event was held at Westminster Town Hall (now Caxton Hall), a prominent venue in central London. In his opening address, its chair, Bishop Alexander Walters, acknowledged that the event was the first time that Black people from across the world had met to discuss their race, assert their rights, and organize themselves (Fryer 1984: 283). Attendees focused on issues including preserving the identity of the Black race and the need for the colonial powers to recognize the rights of all indigenous peoples. It ended with the African Association being renamed the Pan-African Association and an "Address to the Nations of the World," drafted by a committee headed by Du Bois, which was sent to heads of state where PAD were living and suffering oppression.

Two months later, delegates also petitioned Queen Victoria to review the treatment of Africans in South Africa and then Rhodesia, today's Republic of Zimbabwe. The conference was reported in the leading London newspapers of the time, although somewhat pejoratively. The *Westminster Gazette*, for example, observed that it "marks the initiation of a remarkable movement on history; the [African] is at last awake to the potentialities of his future" (Sivagurunathan 2007: 259–60). Williams also understood the power of the pen and founded the first publication for and by Blacks in the UK, *The Pan-African*, whose editors wrote in its first edition in 1901: "No other but a Negro can represent the Negro" (Kegan cited in Fryer 1984).

Returning from a stint in South Africa, where he had practiced law in Cape Town and helped to promote African interests in a white-dominated country, Williams hoped to run for the UK parliament, believing that Africa needed a voice in legislative authority and that his experience on the continent had prepared him to be that voice. He made the Colonial Office aware of his views (Mathurin 1976: 131). He was, however, unsuccessful in his quest and in 1906 decided to run for local office instead, as a Labour candidate for the St. Marylebone borough council. Williams' victory made him the first Black councilor in the country and one of only a few Black people to hold public office in the UK at that time.

Williams was well connected in his party and constituency. Even as he worked on behalf of residents, he used those connections to assist Africa and

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PAD. He welcomed a wide variety of guests, including representatives of the Basuto nation, whom he helped to secure a meeting with the chairman of the Labour Party, Keir Hardie, regarding a land dispute with the British government (Westminster Council 2006). Williams was also actively advocating on behalf of Liberia. He met the nation's president, Arthur Barclay, on his 1907 official visit to London to discuss frontier issues and financial resources. Williams knew the nation's secretary of state, Frederick E. R. Johnson, who had played a prominent role in the 1900 conference. The following year he visited Liberia at Barclay's invitation but was chastised by the British government after the British consul sent home three confidential dispatches denouncing him. After his return to London, Williams decided to go back to Trinidad, where he died three years later at age 42.

In 2007, more than a century after his election and in recognition of his contribution to Marylebone, Westminster city council awarded Williams one of its green plaques for his work on the council (the body awards green plaques to honor the area's diverse cultural heritage and to highlight buildings associated with renowned people). The plaque is located on the front of his former home at 38 Church Street (Westminster City Council 2007).

A contemporary of Williams', fellow Pan-Africanist John Archer, was the first Black mayor in London, elected in 1913. He served various terms on Battersea borough council between 1906 and 1932. Archer was born in Liverpool to a Barbadian father and an Irish mother. He traveled the world as a seaman, living in the USA and Canada before he settled in Battersea with his wife, Bertha, a Black Canadian, in the 1890s. He studied medicine and ran a small photographic studio, getting involved in local politics as a supporter of the Liberal Party politician and trade unionist John Burns. His views were in part shaped by a play based on the novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, which his parents had taken him to see as a child (Creighton 2013). Active in Black politics, arguing for social justice and more rights within the African and Caribbean colonies, Archer was a close friend of the musician Samuel Coleridge-Taylor. In fact, they were both members of the African Association. Both were also representatives at Williams' first Pan-African conference.

In 1906, Archer was elected as a Progressive (Liberal) to Battersea borough council; at the same time, Williams won a seat as a councilor in Marylebone. Seven years later, in 1913, Archer was nominated for mayor. He triumphed despite a negative and racist campaign, including allegations that

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he did not have British nationality. He won by one vote, 40 to 39, against his fellow councilors. It is clear that Archer understood the global significance of this election, something that had never been achieved before. In his winning speech he said:

> I am a man of colour … I am proud to be. I would not change my colour if I could … my election tonight marks a new era. You have made history tonight. For the first time in the history of the English nation a man of colour has been elected as mayor of an English borough. That will go forth to the coloured nations of the world. (Phillips 2005)

His success was reported in the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People's (NAACP's) journal *The Crisis* in the USA in January 1914. Although thought to be the first Black man to be elected as a mayor in Britain, in reporting Archer's election the American *Negro Year Book* in 1914 also recorded that Dr. Allan Glaisyer Minns from the Caribbean had been elected mayor of the borough of Thetford, Norfolk in 1904 (Work 1914: 49).

Nonetheless, Archer faced prejudice in his new role and did not shy away from discussing it. He described receiving racist mail and questioned whether the opposition he faced was because of his color (Phillips 2005). He also continued his commitment to Black empowerment. In 1918, he cofounded the African Progress Union, becoming its first president and holding the post for three years. In a powerful speech at the union's inaugural meeting, Archer criticized Britain's view of Black people and people of color and pledged that they would claim their rightful place in the empire. He said that the association was demanding, not asking for, that right (Fryer 1984: 294). Furthermore, the organization's objectives were:

> to promote the general welfare of Africans and Afro-peoples; set up a social and resident club in London as a "home from home"; to "spread knowledge of history and achievements of Africans and Afro-peoples past and present"; and to create and maintain "a public sentiment in favour of brotherhood in its broadest sense." (Fryer 1984: 293)

The following year, Archer became a British delegate to the Pan-African Congress in Paris and later chaired the Pan-African Congress in London in 1921.

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He continued to work in politics for the remainder of his life. At his death in 1932, age 69, he was deputy leader of Battersea council.

Archer is remembered in a number of ways in the area he once oversaw. Archer House, part of the Battersea Village estate, was named after him when it was built in the 1930s. Two local schools (one now closed) were renamed in his honour in 1986 and in 2018 and there is also a John Archer Way. In addition, two blue plaques have been unveiled at his residence and place of work. The first is on the site of his former photography studio and home and was created in 2010 by the Nubian Jak Community Trust. It was part of a project called "The John Archer Role Model Project" and was funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund. Three years later, English Heritage unveiled another blue plaque at his former Battersea home. In June 2020, Wandsworth council launched a campaign to erect a statue celebrating Archer's mayoral achievements, following calls from the local community group Love Battersea. The council said that it would make a small initial contribution to the memorial but hoped to raise more funds with community help (Aron 2020b).

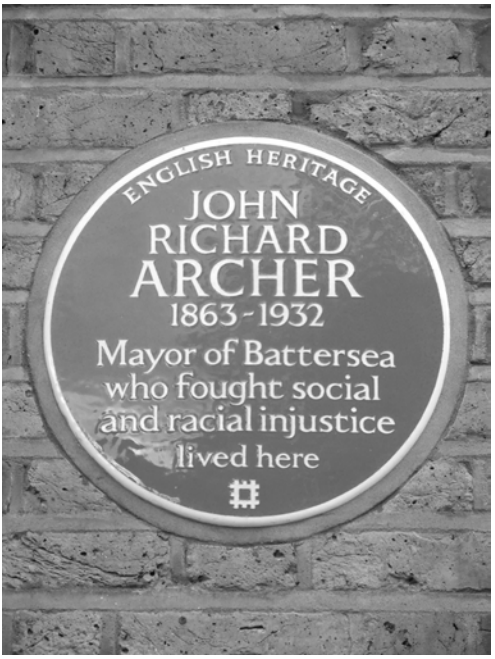

Figure 3.5: A blue plaque for John Archer. Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:Spudgun67

The Caribbean Presence: Remembering Mary Seacole

To date, London has several statues of Black figures. Among them is the Bronze Woman, which features a mother and child and is the first statue to be displayed in England honoring a Black woman. Its creation, which cel-

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ebrates the contribution of African-Caribbean people to the capital, was a community effort, spearheaded by the late Guyanese-born teacher, poet, and playwright Cécile Nobrega. Along with Olmec, a South London social enterprise firm, she worked for more than a decade to raise its cost of £84,000.[16]

Erected in Stockwell Memorial Gardens in South London near Nobrega's former home, it was unveiled by a group of Caribbean women in 2008. The occasion marked the 200th anniversary of the end of transatlantic enslavement and the 60th anniversary of the arrival of the *Empire Windrush*. Another more recent memorial to a woman, *Reaching Out*, was unveiled in August 2020 in an East London public art walk called The Line. Representing the "Black Everywoman," according to sculptor Thomas J. Price, it took two years to raise the funds to build the nine-foot bronze statue, which depicts a woman standing looking down at the phone she holds (Thorpe 2020). Megan Piper, director of The Line, said that the sculpture was pertinent and long overdue because it portrayed a contemporary Black woman rather than a historically celebrated white male figure (Paskett 2020).

In addition, the city's most prominent monument to a Black person also honors a woman, famed nurse Mary Seacole. The statue of the Jamaican-born immigrant stands proudly opposite parliament. It was unveiled in 2016, nearly 12 years after an official campaign to create it had begun. But the first efforts had in fact been made more than 20 years earlier, driven by residents of Caribbean origin seeking to restore the pioneering nurse to her rightful place in history; the statue celebrates a woman who is greatly admired by Black Britons.

Mary Seacole, who defied the British government to take care of soldiers during the Crimean War (1853–6), topped a 2004 list of 100 Great Black Britons. The list had been created after a British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) poll in 2002 to find "Great Britons" failed to produce any Black winners. Patrick Vernon, a Black British former Labour councilor, launched an alternative campaign in October 2003 during Black History Month to raise the profile of Black contributions to Britain. He explained that Black British history was not recognized by the dominant society, although Black people had been in the country a thousand years and had helped to shape it (Bloomfield 2004).

16 "A Deeper Look into Stockwell's Bronze Woman Statue", August 12, 2019 (https://www.southlondonclub.co.uk/blog/a-deeper-look-into-stockwells-bronze-woman-statue)

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Born Mary Jane Grant in Jamaica, Seacole was the daughter of a free Black woman and a white Scottish soldier. Her mother kept a boarding house for sick soldiers and taught Mary traditional African and Caribbean medicine at an early age. Seacole was proud of her heritage. In her autobiography, *Wonderful Adventures of Mrs. Seacole in Many Lands*, the first autobiography written by a Black woman in Britain (Robinson 2005: 213), she called herself a Creole and aligned with African slaves in the Americas (Seacole 1857: 14). After marrying Edwin Horatio Hamilton Seacole in Kingston, Jamaica, in 1836, from whom she received her surname, and after being widowed eight years later, Seacole traveled to England in 1854, attempting to volunteer as an army nurse in the war. Turned down by the British government, Seacole questioned whether racism was at the core of the government's refusal to allow her to join the war effort (Seacole 1857: 73–81; Gerzina 2003: 74).

Repeatedly faced with barriers from official organizations, Seacole was also rebuffed by the nurses who worked with Florence Nightingale, a contemporary nurse who later gained national recognition for her role in the war. Consequently, Seacole decided to go it alone and used her own resources to travel to Crimea to open an establishment to be called the British Hotel (Seacole 1857: 74). A partnership with a Caribbean acquaintance, Thomas Day, who had arrived in London unexpectedly, helped finance the trip. Accounts record that Seacole labored wholeheartedly, overcoming frequent thefts, particularly of livestock, at the hotel. Dr. Reid, a surgeon in the British army serving in the war, wrote a letter to his family in 1855 lauding Seacole's kindness and generosity (Simkin 2020).

When Seacole returned to England after the war ended in 1856, she was ill and destitute, narrowly avoiding bankruptcy. After prominent contributors, including members of the royal family, donated to a fund for her, she returned to Jamaica around 1860; however, the country had suffered an economic downturn in Seacole's absence. She bought land and built a house and a rental property. But, by 1870, Seacole was back in London, likely seeking to help in the Franco-Prussian War, according to historian Jane Robinson. Robinson believes that Seacole was spurned when she approached the husband of Florence Nightingale's sister, who was closely involved in the British National Society for Aid to the Sick and Wounded. Reportedly around this time, Nightingale wrote a letter to her brother-in-law implying that Seacole had kept a "bad house" in Crimea and was

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responsible for "much drunkenness and improper conduct" (Robinson 2005: 191).

Seacole eventually connected with members of the royal circle and became a personal masseuse to the Princess of Wales. She died in 1881 at her London home and was largely forgotten. The drive to recognize Seacole came nearly a century after her passing and was community-led. In 1973, the Lignum Vitae Club, a Jamaican women's organization in London, together with the British Commonwealth Nurses War Memorial Fund restored her grave in the Hammersmith cemetery where she had been buried. The Jamaican government enthusiastically supported the effort. According to a press release from the Jamaican High Commission in London dated November 20, 1973, the High Commissioner for Jamaica, Sir Laurence Lindo, and his wife Lady Lindo, who was president of the Lignum Vitae Club at the time, attended the unveiling of the "reconsecrated" grave. In addition, the High Commission reported that "[t]he Nurses Association of Jamaica will maintain it in repair forever."[17]

In 1979, a group of Caribbean women approached the MP for Hammersmith, Clive Soley, (now Lord Soley), asking him to join them at Seacole's gravesite. It had been almost a century since Seacole's death and her contributions had long been forgotten. However, Soley, who had lived through World War Two, said he appreciated Seacole's war efforts and those of the women who had come from the Caribbean in 1939–40 to help during the war (Soley 2018). Soley, who did not commit to helping then, would later help raise funds to build a statue in her honor. The plan to honor Seacole continued, however. In 1980, community activist Constance (Connie) Mark took up the mantle, cofounding the Mary Seacole Memorial Association. Her activism had begun in her Jamaican birthplace where she had experienced racism first-hand after being denied a pay increase while working as a medical secretary in the Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS) during World War Two (Haigh 2018). Beula, who had met Mark when he was 17, said the activist made Seacole a household name. The Nubian Jak Community Trust would posthumously honor Mark in June 2008, with a blue plaque at the retirement complex named after Mary Seacole in Hammersmith, where Mark lived during the final years of her life.

17 "Mary Seacole's Grave Restored in London", November 26, 1973 (https://www.nlj.gov.jm/BN/Seacole_Mary/bn_seacole_mj_063.pdf)

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Despite the efforts of stalwarts such as Mark, the Seacole statue met with considerable resistance. In a 2012 article in the conservative *Daily Mail* newspaper, opponents argued that Seacole's importance had been exaggerated by proponents of multiculturalism (Walters 2012). Meanwhile, supporters of Florence Nightingale also alleged that Seacole was overshadowing the former's achievements and that Seacole was not technically a nurse. Others tried to argue that naming her as a Black heroine was just political correctness because she was mixed race and not really Black (Gander 2016). This viewpoint focuses on a biological categorization rather than a social and cultural one, as this book prescribes. Meanwhile, in 2013, then Education Minister Michael Gove bowed to Seacole's detractors and removed her from the national curriculum, saying that students should learn about traditional figures such as Oliver Cromwell and Winston Churchill. The suggestion was met with outrage, leading him to make a U-turn shortly afterwards. Operation Black Vote, a non-profit organization created to broaden Black participation in electoral politics, played a central role in the fight to keep Seacole on the national curriculum, starting a petition that attracted more than 35,000 signatures.

Figure 3.6: The Mary Seacole statue. Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:Sumitsurai

The job of realizing a Mary Seacole statue would eventually fall to the Mary Seacole Memorial Statue Appeal. Lord Soley chaired the charity which was set up in 2004. The group was renamed the Mary Seacole Trust after the statue was unveiled. Funded through donations from thousands of individual supporters, as well as from a small number of larger donors,

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the organizers raised more than £500,000. The chancellor of the exchequer (the UK government office that oversees public spending) also provided a £240,000 grant to help pay for the installation and a small memorial garden. Floella Benjamin unveiled the statue, which stands in the gardens of St. Thomas's Hospital. Tottenham MP David Lammy called the occasion a "seminal moment for Londoners, and for the Black community particularly."[18] Today, the statue symbolizes Mary Seacole's contribution as a nurse in particular and the contributions of Black people to British society in general.

Windrush Square, the symbols and plaques honoring London's Pan-African pioneers, and the Seacole statue demonstrate the importance of places – spaces grounded in reality in which humans have embodied personal meaning (Pedraza 2019) – that emphasize equality, justice, and democracy (Gieseking et al. 2014: 393). Such spaces contribute to one's racial identity (Winkler 2012) and belonging. In a city that was built on the backs of the enslaved, enriched by colonial oppression, and nurtured by populations of marginalized residents, PAD are insisting that these histories be made visible in the public domain – often claiming their own spaces – and that London clearly, unequivocally, and publicly acknowledges all who have contributed to its economic, social, and cultural development in the past and make a commitment to doing so in the future.

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