THE COLUMNS

HSD's Newsletter: Issue 67

by pupils; for pupils

The theme for this year's Black History Month is 'Time for change: action not words'. Editor of the BHM magazine and website, Catherine Ross, emphasised the importance of everyone stepping up and working together to make a positive difference. While BHM is key in celebrating black history, culture and heritage, we also need to spend time reflecting on the ongoing racial crisis across the world and in particular on our doorstep, in our community. In the wake of the Black Lives Matter protests that erupted in 2020,, as a school we've joined the wider community in committing ourselves to tackling racism. However, this movement requires ongoing commitment and. within the school community, we are planning a range of initiatives to educate ourselves and discourage racist attitudes and language. As Maishah and I discussed in assembly this week, a group of F6s are working with the Senior Leadership Team to involve the school in tackling racism and celebrating the diversity of culture and heritage we are so fortunate to have in our community. Firstly, we have created a drop-in session on Wednesday lunches in BH30, which is a safe space for you to express any concerns. You can also contact us on our email address reportracism@highschoolofdundee.org.uk about any worries you have, or if you would like some support. Furthermore, Black History Month may be incorporated into PSHE lessons, and over the coming months we are hoping to hold events such as football games in the playground for all pupils, regardless of gender and race, and a multicultural food festival to celebrate the range of cultures in our school. As always, if you have any ideas for how we can work together in this initiative, please feel free to contact us.

Editor-in-Chief, Sahar Jafferbhoy

“The World Was Silent When We Died”

A review of “Half a Yellow Sun” by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

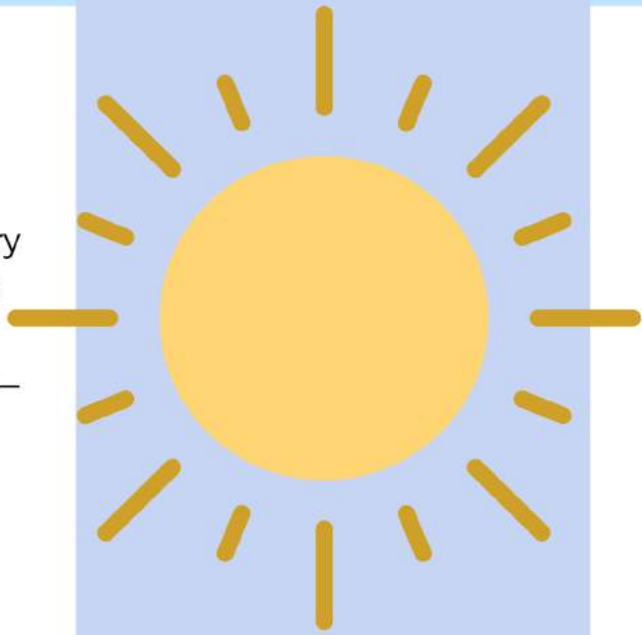
Tiwaloluwa Fasoranti

The book expands on the idea in the movie “Half of a Yellow Sun.” The author tells a heart wrenching account of a historical event in Nigeria called the “ Biafra War” (1967 – 1970).
Chimamda Ngozi Adichie’s recounts a `story of love, loyalty , betrayal , resilience, and hope. She humanises the war that has now become a distant memory in the history of Nigeria. The Biafra war began due to the massacre of the Igbo people in the predominantly Muslim Hausa North; thereafter, the Igbos of the south sought to establish their own state to become independent. As a counteraction, the Nigerian government declared war against Biafra. The war was catalysed by the remnants of British colonialism, which created fragmented national boundaries and provoked ethnic tension between the two groups. Although this book is a work of historical fiction, it is based on the real account of the Biafran War and continuing conflicts.

Throughout Adichie's prose, we get a glimpse into the lives of diverse and multifaceted characters trying to survive in the Free State of Biafra. A prominent character in the book is Odenigbo: a math professor at a university in Nsukka, a revolutionary thinker, and a passionate Biafran who struggles with the psychological impact of war violence. Olanna, Odenigbo's wife, belongs to the Nigerian elite and is coping with being thrown out of her
comfort zone while keeping her family together.Richard is a shy English expatriate who falls in love with Olanna’s fraternal twin, Kainene. Throughout the novel, he seeks to identify as Biafran, in order to break away from a coloniser identity.

However, he soon realises that his love for Kainene and his passion for Igbo art neither absolve him from his colonialist past nor make him Biafran. Ugwu is Odenigbo’s house servant, who transforms from a wide-eyed, village-bred boy to an intelligent young man who is forced to grapple with the “casual cruelty” that surrounds him while struggling to maintain his moral conscience. We watch as the once normal and relatively privileged lives of these characters are shaken and overturned by war.

The author manages to intricately weave divergent perspectives and aspects of the war into her story. She forces the reader to confront horrific scenes of rape, indiscriminate killings, constant air raids, famine, displacement, children's bellies inflated by malnutrition, and the image of a little girl's decapitated head with discoloured skin and rolled-back eyes. Yet simultaneously, she juxtaposes these harrowing scenes with moments of forgiveness, generosity, sacrifice, and love. Adichie presents a story that is thorough and complex—spanning the politics of race, gender, colonialism, culture, corruption, nationhood, and the fragility of human relationships—while also highlighting the international, historical context of the setting, as seen through references to the civil rights movements of the 1960s and the Cold War.



She does not present an isolated narrative of terror, nor one of a victim and perpetrator.
Rather, she provides a nuanced account of the Biafran War, and as a result, she empowers and humanises her characters. A recurring mantra in the novel—"the world was silent when we died"—refers to the global inaction in light of the Nigerians who fell prey to starvation and disease or were slaughtered by military forces on either side.

Biafra was an abandoned and unrecognised state, which only caught the attention of Western journalists and photographers who, for the most part, wished to reassert the image of Africa as a continent riddled with disease, poverty, and violence. However, this book gives voice to the survivors and causalities of the war. Half of a Yellow Sun provides the reader with an experience that humbles, informs, and ensures that such stories are not lost in history. It is a tale that eloquently demonstrates what it means to be human, to confront your own mortality, to fight for a cause, to be vulnerable, and to be at war with oneself in the midst of political turmoil.

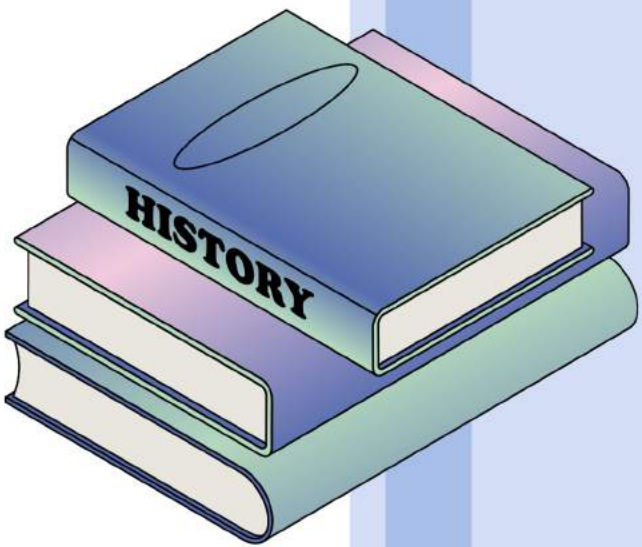
Remembering the Windrush Scandal

Ruby McIntee

Post-war Britain was on the path to recovering from the devastating impacts of the Second World War in 1948. The destruction of towns and cities left thousands without homes, and buildings across the country were decimated. Britain's fix: an immigrant workforce to rebuild the United Kingdom. In the Caribbean thousands of men and women who had served in the British armed forces after the war answered an advert to come to Britain where job opportunities were abundant; others just wanted to see the great England that they had heard so much about. The ship that facilitated this movement was the Empire Windrush. It left from the Caribbean and travelled thousands of miles, crossing the Atlantic Ocean to reach the UK, but it was by no means the only boat to set sail and transport many from the Caribbean to Britain, as many more ships set sail in the following years. These immigrants from the Caribbean helped tremendously in filling labour shortages and rebuilding Britain.

Years later, in 2010, the Home Office destroyed landing cards belonging to Windrush migrants. The home office had kept no record of those granted leave to remain in the United Kingdom; they issued no paperwork proving the contribution made by these immigrants. This made it incredibly challenging for Windrush arrivals to prove their legal status as British citizens, particularly as many came from British colonies that were at the time not independent, meaning many kept no records of their legal status as they already believed they were British citizens.

This detrimentally impacted those who had rebuilt Britain. The Windrush scandal exposed the hypocrisy of the foreign office and brought to light the "culture of disbelief and carelessness" that permeated the governmental organisation.



The New Dr Who

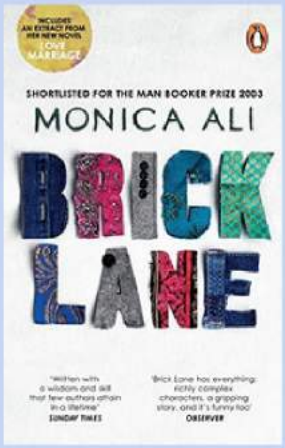
Izzy Clark

Those among the audience active in the science-fiction scene may have already heard the news that the next actor to play the lead role in the BBC's "Doctor Who" - the Doctor - has been cast. Ncuti Gatwa is the fourth Scottish actor to play the rotating role, as well as the first person of colour to do so. Born in Rwanda in 1992, Ncuti (pronounced "shoo-tee") and his family fled to Scotland in 1994 following the Rwandan Genocide against the Tutsi. Originally settling in Edinburgh, he later moved to Dunfermline, and then to Glasgow, to study at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland.

Following graduation, Gatwa joined the Dundee Repertory Theatre in 2013. There, he would act in several productions, including Hecuba, The BFG, Romeo & Juliet, and A Midsummer Night's Dream. His first major television role was as Eric in "Sex Education", a role which not only rewarded him award with a Scottish BAFTA and a National Comedy award; but also critical success, being lauded for his portrayal of a well-rounded and realistic character. In May 2022, he was announced as the newest actor to play the role of the Doctor on Doctor Who. He was expected to begin the role in October 2022, following previous actor Jodie Whittaker's exit, but his first appearance has since been delayed to autumn 2023, where he will appear in a special episode for the 60th anniversary of the show, starring alongside previous incarnation of the Doctor David Tennant.

Ncuti Gatwa will be the first actor of colour to officially play the Doctor. His tenure follows that of the aforementioned, Jodie Whittaker, the first woman to play the role. Up until Whittaker, every actor to play the Doctor had been male, and up until Gatwa, every actor had been white. Gatwa's casting marks a landmark moment for the show's commitment to diversity which they have touted as one of their key features since its revival in 2005. With the return of praised screenwriter Russell T. Davies to the show for Gatwa's tenure, fans wait with bated breath for how this next actor will interpret a role present on television since 1963, and how the showrunners will choose to tell his story...

Book Review: Brick Lane, Monica Ali



Brick Lane depicts a complex comparison and political commentary about gender roles in Bangladeshi tradition. The protagonist, Nazneen, is characterised as the epitome of an enfeebled, uneducated wife, trapped between two cultural discourses in London. The novel charts Nazneen's quest for freedom, paralleled by the epistolary sections illustrating her sisters grim and tragic life in Bangladesh. Ali tells the stories of the sisters, portraying their very different, yet fundamentally equal existences. Both women strive for independence, and to be free from the injustices and persecution of men, in order to find happiness. Throughout the novel, it is apparent that within the patriarchal structure depicted, men benefit while women often face punitive, if not deadly, consequences. Ali eloquently expresses the hardships women face, creating a captivating story.

Black History Month

Daniella Shonola

That's right, it's Black history month; the month where we get to celebrate our Black icons. You might know some of the more popular ones like Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King Jr, or even Beyoncé. But there are also a lot that you might not of heard of. For example, Mary Ellen Pleasant: she was a very enthusiastic activist; or Jesse Leroy Brown, a Navy pilot in the 1940s. These amazing people were a crucial part in Black history but are not talked about enough. This is exactly what Black history month is for, remembering the people that played an important role in Black history and giving them the credit and attention that is long overdue. This month is not only to be celebrated by historians or celebrities. No, this month is for everyone to celebrate the amazing Black people around them and believe that no matter the colour of your skin you can always be an achiever and make history because we've done it again and again and again. Happy Black history month.

MUSIC

Deputy Editor, Zara Taylor

Music has long been a powerful medium for self-expression, community, and change. Historically, music has been significant to the black community. Genres such as, 'blues' and 'jazz' have roots in black culture and have been highly influential to modern music. Meanwhile, despite Black artists shaping the current music scene, many have accused institutions like the Grammys of unfair voting practices that harm black success; with artists such as The Weeknd even boycotting future events. So in celebration of Black History Month I thought I would take this opportunity to discuss some of my favourite musicians, who also happen to be black.

An artist who I came across whilst scrolling through TikTok is Rachel Chinouriri. Her soft vocals paired with an indie-pop sound create beautiful music. Highlights in her discography include, 'So My Darling' and 'All I Ever Asked of You.' Her childhood and adolescence, heavily influenced by African culture as her family immigrated to the UK from Zimbabwe just before her birth, were critical to her success. In her late teens, she would go on to be inspired by the likes of Lily Allen. This combination, in addition to her great voice, forms a unique and special discography which is definitely worth a listen.

Another artist, who has received critical acclaim and who has worked in the music industry to produce Grammy nominated albums whilst still in high school is Steve Lacy. One of my favourite songs of his is 'Dark Red' which was featured on his 2017 EP. His talent across multiple instruments stems from childhood church attendance, in which he found his love of the guitar. As well producing his own music, he has co-produced for huge artists like Kendrick Lamar, Mac Miller and Tyler, The Creator.

'The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks' by Rebecca Skloot

Her name was Henrietta Lacks, but scientists know her as HeLa. Henrietta was an oppressed, poor, black woman whose cells - taken without consent - became one of the key tools of medicine, crucial in cancer research, the human genome, and the development of the polio vaccine.

'The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks' tells the story of an African-American woman who died in 1951, aged 31, of an aggressive form of cervical cancer. It also tells the story of her legacy: scientists took the HeLa cell line from Henrietta's tumour while she was still alive, and had it cultured in a lab. They found that the cell line was immortal; Henrietta died, but her cells live on. After Henrietta's death, HeLa was mass-produced and sold all over the world, the profits exploited by researchers and scientists.

To me, the science behind HeLa was not what was most fascinating; it was the ethical issues that the book raises. Henrietta doesn't give consent for the production and sale of her cells, and her family never see a single penny of the profits. In fact, it was not until 20 years after her death that the Lacks family would even learn of the life-changing news of their mother's "immortal" cells and their subsequent exploitation for profit.

The book tells a story inextricably connected to the dark history of experimentation on African Americans, the birth of bioethics, and the legal battles determining if we control the stuff that we're made of. Do you think we do?

EDITOR'S NOTE

Sahar Jafferbhoy

As Black History Month draws to a close, I would like to challenge you to make a difference to the communities we have been centering in this edition. Donate some money to a charity that works in Africa or keep donating to the Pakistan Flood Appeal. And read something, watch something, or find something out about all the wonderful people whose words, ideas, music and lives have, for too long, been ignored.

Have a great weekend!

THE COLUMNS TEAM