



Emanuel School

# BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Monday 3rd - Friday 28th October

## WEDNESDAY

### Wilma Rudolph

Eva Hegan - Upper Sixth



### Student Profile

Luca Reid-James - Lower Sixth

Emanuel has always been and always will be a place I can proudly call home. Its warm and welcoming atmosphere allows all children to leave any problems and issues they may be struggling with on the bridge. The environment at school provides a safe space for young people, who can sometimes be easily influenced, to mould one another into the best versions of themselves. I honestly believe this is all possible due to the lack of harmful stereotypes and the absence of inequality. These are key fundamentals when providing students with equal opportunities to prosper and without a doubt are ingrained in school life at Emanuel. All pupils at Emanuel are extremely privileged to be educated here and that is why I take pride in the fact that Emanuel is striving to give less fortunate children the opportunity to attend through funding the Battersea Rise Trust.

It is extremely important to be aware of and praise those that achieved greatness without privilege or any advantages in life, for example William Brown. Brown was the first black female to serve in the royal navy. Having recently parted from her ex-husband, Brown was in search of a new path. However, she was at a huge disadvantage being female but also being black, Brown had a huge task ahead of her. Records state that she enlisted

in the early 19th century on 23rd May 1815 on the HMS Queen Charlotte and she served for upwards of 11 years. Not only did she have an extensive service but also a prestigious one as she was regarded as one of the most qualified and skilled members of the crew and led a group of elite top men who were known as the most skilled sailors aboard. She ended her service with a bang and became captain aboard Britain's premier battle fleet and was recognised as one of the most capable sailors in the entire Royal Navy.

It's stories like William Brown's that help illustrate the possibility of defying the odds, especially in this modern age. We must remember to pause occasionally to be thankful for all the privileges in our own personal lives and the lives of friends, family and colleagues. There are many hidden black influential figures like Brown that helped pave the way for the success of others but also the destruction of many negative views of the minority which were seen as normal by most of the world. It is because of people like Brown that the wheel began turning in the first instance and that is why Black History Month is of the utmost importance when helping commemorate and celebrate those that may have been overlooked in the past.



William Brown, First Black Female to Serve in the Royal Navy

### London fashion week

Leela Mace - Lower Sixth

London fashion week displays a variety of diverse designers, one of which is Labrum London, a modern-day menswear brand that was founded by **Fonday Dumbuya** in 2015. They aimed to 'bridge the gap between western and West African culture'. Fonday has brought Labrum to London Fashion Week and depicted the contrast between the positive and the negative side of the West African experience. His most recent collection fuses the classic British style with a mix of Sierra Leonean types of fabric. He stated, "All my fabrics are made by artisans in Freetown, Sierra Leone, then shipped to London where they are crafted into garments to be worn by models from all over the world." Fonday's west African heritage is reflected in certain garments of his clothing that are presented such as denim jackets, these items of clothing feature Nomoli figures from some of Sierra Leone's tribes. These figures are some of the earliest pieces of art from Sierra Leone and are thought to represent protection and good fortune.



Wilma Rudolph (1940-1994) was an American sprinter, a world-record-holding Olympian, and an international sports icon. Born in Tennessee, she was the 20th of 22 children and at the age of 4, was stricken with illness. Having been told by her doctor she would never walk again, and despite suffering infantile paralysis and polio as a child, she claimed 4 x 100m bronze at the 1956 Melbourne Olympics, aged just 16! Four years later in Rome 1960 she came back hunting for gold. Having already broken records in the heats, she ran in 11.0 seconds; the fastest women's 100m ever recorded! Rudolph astonished Rome again with a 24.0 second 200m time (her second gold of the games). In the 4 x 100m, this incredible athlete finished in 44.5 seconds, storming through to her third gold medal.

Wilma faced numerous racial roadblocks growing up in the segregated South. Travelling to track meets was difficult and her team was forced to stay in different housing than the white teams. Despite this, Wilma was considered the fastest woman in the world and the first American woman to win three gold medals. The year she did this (1960) was the first year the Olympics were covered internationally on TV which helped Wilma become an international star! She was one of the first role models for black athletes and for female athletes.

Wilma published an autobiography in 1977. She was inducted into the US Olympic Hall of Fame in the 1980s and established the Wilma Rudolph Foundation which supports young athletes.

"I loved the feeling of freedom in running, the fresh air, the feeling that the only person I'm competing with is me".  
Wilma Rudolph

"I don't know why I run so fast, I just run".  
Wilma Rudolph



# Jazz

Harry Maier - Lower Sixth

# Time for change: Action not words

Philip Olagunju - OE (1991-98)

# Nina Simone

Scarlett Rees Allen - Lower sixth

**'You can cage the singer but not the song'**

- Harry Belafonte

**'To play without passion is inexcusable'**

- Beethoven

Being a child in Greenville, North Carolina does not set you out from the crowd. Being a child in Greenville, from an African American background, and believing you would be the world's greatest pianist, does. At the age of 13, in 1934, Billy Taylor played his first 'gig' and was paid one dollar.

In the 1870s, African people walked the plains of America, chained and restricted. From their tragedy sprung music in the form of hymnal and blues. Never have songs evoked the sense of suffering and aspirational hope of a people, as blues and hymnal did for African slaves. Their words aspired to freedom, and their legacy made history.

Although the two events are 60 years or so apart, they are connected. One gave rise to one of the greatest genres of music, and the other is an example of how it was cemented as part of culture; but more importantly, as part of the attitude of the time.

Jazz is based on expression, and individuality. Most Jazz 'standards' (pieces of music which are commonly played, by a variety of musicians) only reveal the chords and a limited number of notes in the song. Jazz is therefore mainly expanded upon by the player's ability to improvise, making all performances different.

These basic concepts of Jazz display its variances from other genres, as playing well, and being popular, is only achieved by countering the established practices. All innovations are made through opposition to what came before.

These views were extrapolated into the world of the 50s and 60s. The only way to make change was to challenge what came before.

Singers such as Elvis Presley, arguably the cultural icon of the 50s, had connections to musicians who sang African Hymnal and Blues music, and would use this inspiration to innovate Rock and Roll, and to speak out against injustice in America, such as after Martin Luther King Jr's assassination.

Jazz also provided a stage for black musicians to leave their

Following the public murder of George Floyd in America by a police officer in May 2020, it seemed as though a tolerance threshold for racially motivated violence, and racism itself, had finally been breached.

Across the world, whether it was numerous "Black Lives Matter" demonstrations punctuated by passionate pleas for justice and equality from A-List celebrities, or large corporates adopting black squares as profile pictures on their social media platforms, it was clear that "enough was enough".

Now over two years on, the need for actions, and not words against racism, remains stronger than ever before.

I believe the first step towards taking action to abolish racism, is to acknowledge that it exists in the first place. George Floyd's death came as a shock to many, but racism existed long before that tragic day. Racism can present itself non-physically in workplaces, in team changing rooms, in canteens, at the local shops, and in schools. Racism isn't just extreme violence and offensive chanting from the terraces - it's more insidious, and outright denial or dilution of its existence is not the answer.

legacy. And although their music was criticised, their rhythmic styles and intoxicating melodies could not be understated or ignored by society. And the limits of the music did not end there. It also brought together groups of all racial backgrounds, forming bands, showing unity when there were cultural divisions. Forming some of the greatest known bands of the 20th century, not limited to, but including, the Billy Taylor Trio.

Realising there is no such thing as the world's greatest piano player, Billy Taylor continued to play, and in 1952, during a time of racial difficulties in America, he wrote his most acclaimed work, 'I Wish I Knew How it Would Feel to Be Free'.

Recommended listening:  
'I Wish I Knew How it Would Feel to Be Free' (Music Keeps Us Young).  
'The 'In' Crowd' Ramsey Lewis.  
'Hymn to Freedom' Oscar Peterson (Night Train).

Next, organisations and institutions need to take active steps towards removing inbuilt bias - through training and education. Vicarious learning through observing and listening to the lived experiences of racial minorities will only serve to remove preconceptions. This was the case with the #MeToo movement, where victims were encouraged and empowered to share their stories, and by doing so, lift the veil on the impact of corrosive misogynistic behaviour across the societal spectrum. The same opportunity exists for the fight against racism.

Wherever we are in the world, we have a duty to actively seek out these stories, to educate ourselves about the racism ingrained in our society, and to strive to make our communities better, more diverse, more equal places.

I'm grateful that my time at Emanuel was rich in diversity, equality and inclusion, and I'm encouraged that this spirit continues to this day.



Nina Simone, originally named Eunice Kathleen Waymon, was a singer/ songwriter from America but also a civil rights activist. To make a living, Simone started playing piano at a nightclub in Atlantic City. She changed her name to Nina Simone to disguise herself from family members, having chosen to play 'the devil's music'. Her musical style fused gospel and pop with classical music, with Johann Sebastian Bach being a key influence. In fact, she originally planned to be a classical pianist. Nina later addressed racial inequality in the United States in her song 'Mississippi Goddam'. She did this in response to the June 12, 1963, murder of Medgar Evers and the September 15, 1963, bombing of the 16th street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama, that killed four young black girls and partly blinded a fifth. She performed a civil rights song on her live album Black Gold in 1970 and when she reflected on her activism she wrote 'I felt more alive then, than I feel now because I was needed and I could sing something to help my people'. Her life was a huge inspiration to many women of colour as she was so brave to do something that was completely unprecedented.

